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The time of the interval:

Historicity, modernity, and epoch in rural France

ABSTRACT

With recognition that historical consciousness, or “historicity,” is culturally mediated comes acknowledgment that periodization of history into epochs is as much a product of cultural practice as a reflection of historical “fact.” In this article, I examine popular “modernist” invocations of epoch in rural France—those positing traditional pasts against fluid presents with uncertain futures—which scholars frequently subordinate to analyses of collective memory and identity politics. Submitting this “response” to French modernity to temporal analysis reveals an additional critique in this periodization, one that valorizes enduring social time over processual temporalities, with implications for the temporal frameworks and ideology of anthropologists. [*cultural rupture, enduring time, epoch, historicity, modernity, processual temporality, France*]

An enduring memory of my work in the village of Monadières on the coastal plain of Languedoc in southern France is of my conversations with a burly, soft-faced fisherman, Raymond Cabart, in his dining room above the wind-flecked lagoon that the village overlooked. We spoke of fishing, given that Cabart labored in that profession all his working life, progressing finally to president of the Prud’homie de Monadières (Monadières Fisherman’s Tribunal), and was at the time on the cusp of retirement (*la troisième âge*). But we also spoke of his memories of the village past and of how, to his mind, *tout a changé*—everything in local life had changed. Our conversations were memorable because Cabart was a shrewd and knowledgeable informant. But what also made an impression was the presence of a third person in the room: Cabart’s grandmother. Raymonde Cabart, as she was named, then in her late nineties but still a big-boned, imposing woman, was seated throughout our conversations in her armchair, surveying the lake’s turbid waters. Madame Cabart’s husband had been a fisherman, as had his father before him. In fact, the craft of lake fishing was profoundly embedded in previous generations of the family, as was the name Raymond Cabart itself, which made its first appearance in the village archives in 1698—although oral accounts would have it that such men had *always* lived in Monadières. So whenever today’s Monsieur Cabart desired to liven up his accounts of fishing on the lake *à l’époque* (in the old days), he would call on Raymonde—herself often referred to by villagers as *l’histoire vivante* (the living history) of Monadières, in full command of her faculties and seated sagely at the window—to supply a brief anecdote or an affirmative nod heavy with the experience of her long life lived exclusively in the village.

For those who characterize modern times through tropes of movement and change, transience and flux—that dominant processual idiom of the present epoch (Arendt 1958:294–313; Braun 2007; Harris 1996:6–8)—the temporal fabric of the life of Raymond Cabart, and that of Raymonde Cabart, as conjured in this vignette, offers arresting tokens of stasis and the enduring.¹ Indeed, their names alone surely lend a nominative

synchrony to past time and generations, as they are partly engineered to do. But Monsieur Cabart is lodged in my mind for contrastive reasons, linked explicitly to the themes of this article. He was the first person to speak to me of the epoch of *changement continuuel*—that time of incessant change—that was said to have gripped life in Monadières since the mid-1960s. The first person of many, I should add, at least among les Monadiérois, the indigenous inhabitants of the village. When I let it be known that I was interested in learning about Monadières, I was frequently greeted with a knowing nod of the head and referred to le changement continuuel that now manhandled daily life. Likewise, I would usually be informed that tout a changé—everything has changed—and then be offered a range of empirical contrasts between life now and in a preceding epoch of communal stability as evidence of this fact. But this characterization of recent history in the guise of adjacent but contrastive historical epochs, intervals in the so-called flow of time (*le temps qui coule*) punctuated by the caesura of a monumental rupture in village life that was said to have occurred in the mid-1960s, was not reserved solely for me. It seemed to serve as a bedrock temporal fabric for the everyday events of the present, a pervasive frame of historical reference that was always to hand, furnishing a resource, moral and temporal, with which les Monadiérois could interpret the vagaries of daily existence and invoke their collectivity. Life in Monadières was often said to exist in a flux of changes, in which all that was once solid, for local people, had apparently melted into air. But this “erratic time,” as one might term it in Georges Gurvitch’s (1964:31) typology, with certain qualifications, seemed at the very least to be offset by the enduring time of how things used to be and in this way, perhaps, was subverted in the same gesture.²

One well-trodden path of anthropological inquiry arising from this ethnographic anecdote, it is clear, concerns the topic of collective memory and its role in group identity (e.g., Fentress and Wickham 1992; Halbwachs 1992). Another seeks out how such temporal ideologies or “myths” are ritually established and operate in relations of power (e.g., Bloch 1977). I touch on such themes below. But an equally valid and opportune set of questions concerns themes of historical periodization and epoch, my focus here, and by extension, a range of issues concerning the place of time and temporal analysis—and the doxic character of temporal ideologies—in anthropological theory. Debates about how to periodize historical time are a mainstay of historiographical theory (Besserman 1996:5–10) and, with the approximation of anthropology and history, have also become a concern for historical anthropologists (e.g., Donham 1999). That said, the topic has been less widely debated by colleagues studying the ways in which people experience social and historical time in lived experience, or what has been termed our “historicity” (Hirsch

and Stewart 2005a; Lambek 2002)—of which historiography is acknowledged as a distinctive, if hegemonic, mode (Samuel 1994).³ Indeed, in the recent historiographical literature, there has been a shift from grounding periodization in objective criteria (e.g., Bloch 1953) to “postmodern” acknowledgment that definition and experience of epoch are at least partly constructivist—or one might say “mythic,” in character (Besserman 1996; Toohey 2003). The perception that, as culture is historical, history is also cultural (Lambek 2002:11; Stewart and Hornblower 2005) has led to a similar reflexive conception of periodization among anthropologists, which grounds its analysis as much in relation to social practice, and, ideally, the intrinsically temporal qualities of lived experience, as historical “fact” and ultimately places the periodization of past time and lived-through epochs within concordant if distinctive frames.

In the limited anthropological literature on the topic, one touchstone is Olivia Harris’s (1995) account of how popular periodization in parts of Latin America is tied to ethical and political criteria; her analysis supplies the forceful ethnographic insight that the cultural upheaval and rupture that followed the Spanish conquest is not granted the same epoch-making saliency among Aymara-speaking peasants in highland Bolivia as it is among Westerners (Harris 1995:9). More recently, working with the lineage of time studies, Hirsch and Stewart have tied the notion of “epoch” to a model of historicity grounded in the anthropology of time, arguing that, from a temporal perspective, epoch is an organic, relational mode of time in which “past and future . . . exist in a simultaneous manner” (2005a:270). Likewise, “social relations,” they write, “are implicated in myriad epochal moments” (Hirsch and Stewart 2005a:271), which are socially configured and contingently experienced, whatever their “factual” basis (see also Hermann 2005). Hirsch (2007) has subsequently extended this position, identifying epoch as a performative scale-making project (cf. Tsing 2000; Wagner 1986). Historiographically defined epochs, of key significance to Western historicity, are thus but one “modern” mode of living in time (Blumenberg 1983; Rabinow 2008), although epoch making can be elevated to a key and pervasive structuring principle of sociality, which has not been widely commented on as a temporalizing practice, even if it has, arguably, underpinned many celebrated anthropological pillars of understanding (e.g., Turner 1967, 1969; Van Gennep 1909).⁴

In a general sense, then, the concepts of “epoch” and “periodization” are codependent: People cannot periodize without a sense of difference between epochs—even if these can take many contingent cultural forms. Likewise, the ways in which we symbolize and experience epoch in everyday practice do not have to invoke periodization and do not necessarily refer to the grand epochs of concern to historians, from which the term’s popular usage often derives.⁵ Indeed, any discrete set of circumstances might be

said to constitute an epochal moment or interval: On a bedrock experiential level, for example, this notion of epoch overlaps with Edmund Husserl's (1966) theory of internal time consciousness, in which, through the sociocultural workings of memory and anticipation—what Husserl terms “retentions” and “protentions”—we transcend the contingency of the differentiating “now” to inhabit an “extended present,” an epochal moment that endows experience with its seemingly “flowing” quality. Epochal intervals therefore operate at multiple, coexisting scales, which can be said to constitute assemblages of overlapping social spheres—or holographic, emergent ontological realities, depending on one's outlook (Deleuze 2004; Henare et al. 2007; Hodges 2008; Wagner 2001). They also correlate with, or assimilate, discourses of epochal and other forms of change in complex ways (cf. Donham 1999; Robbins 2007). Such observations enforce the importance of studying both local historicities and the workings of their epochal practices. Likewise, they incarnate the intrinsic multiplicity of social and historical time, those myriad epochal moments of which Hirsch and Stewart write (cf. Adam 1990, 1998; Bender and Wellbery 1991; Glennie and Thrift 1996; Gurvitch 1964). At root, they are also usefully grounded in the insight that concepts such as “sociality,” “temporality,” and “historicity” are effectively coterminous (Hirsch and Stewart 2005a; Hodges 2008).

What might this latter statement imply? One touchstone for the study of temporal experience is the work of Nancy Munn. In her seminal article “The Cultural Anthropology of Time,” she defines this experience in a phenomenological vein as the product of multiple, coexisting temporalizing practices. She writes,

[Human temporality is] a symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices. People are “in” a sociocultural time of multiple dimensions (sequencing, timing, past-present-future relations, etc.) that they are forming in their “projects.” In any given instance, particular temporal dimensions may be foci of attention or only tacitly known. Either way, these dimensions are lived or apprehended concretely via the various meaningful connectivities among persons, objects, and space continually being made in and through the everyday world. [Munn 1992:116]

This penetrating if abstract statement aside, it is debatable to what extent demarcating temporal experience as a discrete dimension of sociality is either practical or theoretically justifiable. Temporality, historicity, and sociality are clearly problematic to differentiate, as all social experience is temporally and historically constituted (cf. Hirsch and Stewart 2005a:263). If this was, in fact, the defining insight that led to the processual and historical turn in the social sciences in the 1970s, as a reading of seminal works by Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Anthony Giddens (1979), Eric Wolf (1982), or Johannes Fabian (1983) can reveal (Hodges

2008:399–403), the question of how people experience and socially produce the temporal qualities of lived experience, their cultural efficacy, and indeed their relationship to material timescapes (Adam 1998) has remained significantly undertheorized until relatively recently. A current view might be that analysis of the intrinsic cultural dynamics and multiplicity of historical time should be better integrated across the board into scholarly models of social practice, rather than being developed as a specialist concern of the discipline termed the “anthropology of time,” as Munn had argued in 1992.⁶ Furthermore, one could also argue that this analysis should take a “posthuman” form that accounts for nonhuman agency in such sociotemporalizing practices (Deleuze 2004; Latour 2007; Pickering 1995). A further aim of this article is thus to sketch how scholars might consider the periodization and experience of epoch in this light.

With these remarks in view, I explore the dominant strategy among Monadiérois for periodizing village history. For methodological purposes, this analysis is largely referenced to fieldwork undertaken during the late 1990s among adults in their late twenties and older. Younger individuals were undoubtedly aware of this epochal schema, although their orientation was shifting away from the village, and they were perhaps more likely than their elders to refer to cultural periodizations common to French youth culture (see Hodges 2002). As an illuminating comparative foil, I also consider the wider context of periodization in rural France. First, I sketch out several temporal frames that allow a glimpse of Monadiérois periodizing practices from both experiential and historical perspectives. Second, I offer reflections on the character of Monadiérois historical periodization and related epochs with the aid of ethnography from farther afield in France. A concluding discussion indicates the potential significance of the topic for anthropology, with reference to the temporal issues mentioned above.

The Monadiérois and “modern” history

Monadières is a village of some six hundred permanent inhabitants and lies on a lagoon bordering the Mediterranean Sea some ten kilometers from the southern French city of Narbonne.⁷ The lake supports one of the two economic activities for which the village is locally renowned: It is still fished by a handful of artisanal fishermen, predominantly for eels. As for the other economic pursuit, much of Monadières's arid, stony earth is planted with vines whose grapes produce the local variety of Corbières wine. The village population, however, is far from constituting an integrated, indigenous community living off fishing and agriculture. Whereas 55 percent of permanent residents do claim to be from the village, the other 45 percent are recent immigrants, and 30 percent of the housing stock belongs to second-home owners. Briefly and reductively, the

various inhabitants of Monadières—as recognized by local people and the anthropologist—include Monadiérois (who are usually of at least second-generation descent and might be said to constitute a “kindred”⁸); incomers, or recent immigrants; second-home owners; and many seasonal tourists. Any sense of community is therefore fragmented, and ongoing tensions exist between Monadiérois and other groups—whom many Monadiérois view as “colonizing” the village in a pejorative sense, contributing to their marginalization and dispersal as a social group and driving up house prices to an unaffordable degree. Agriculture and fishing are also no longer the dominant local sources of employment. Less than 13 percent of the village now lives exclusively off viticulture and fishing, as opposed to 75 percent in 1946, and more than 60 percent of the active population work in the shops, service industries, and factories of nearby Narbonne.⁹ The decreasing importance of Monadières as a site of economic activity, however, has recently been countered. Since the 1980s, many individuals—chiefly incomers—and the local council have begun to cash in on the growing numbers of heritage and cultural tourists visiting the village, and since 2000 this local industry has begun to modestly flourish. If Monadiérois feelings of being overrun are difficult to articulate within a typical political-economic framework, then, as many Monadiérois and incomers work in similar classes of employment in Narbonne, they are reflected in other domains. The village council, for example, now largely comprises incomers, and the “intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2003) of Monadiérois is increasingly disciplined and utilized in incomers’ heritage tourism projects (Hodges 2009). The inability of young Monadiérois to purchase homes in the village is also a serious development and point of discord, even if many of those selling houses for inflated sums are themselves Monadiérois.

As I stated at the beginning of the article, the dominant Monadiérois periodization in which I am interested was pervasive and diffused in different domains of everyday practice. As no discrete analytical focus such as a key ritual “interpellates” Monadiérois historicity with this temporal outlook,¹⁰ below I sketch out a selection of ethnographic and historical perspectives on Monadiérois “living traditions.” This review also seems appropriate as, rather than a distant epoch, I am referring to history that many Monadiérois informants lived through, so it is of interest in terms of how historicity emerges from historical time.¹¹ For present purposes, this perspective is necessarily reductive: Being Monadiérois was also, of course, about being integrated in wider historical processes and living traditions as Languedocian and French citizens, for example, and in relational terms it was about being different from other social groupings, both in contemporary terms and time remembered (cf. Zonabend 1984).

Fishing and viticulture

The political-economic contexts of core relevance to the Monadiérois are a starting point for discussion. Despite significant recent change in viticulture and fishing—both analytically validated and locally perceived—their long-term presence in the locality signals their status as significant local living traditions of socioeconomic practice. Both fishing and wine growing were largely undertaken by Monadiérois, and both activities were closely identified with them. Indeed, when discussing them, Monadiérois often invoked the long-term association of these practices with the village, as did other residents, and Monadières had been recognized as a *village des pêcheurs* (fishing village)—the more distinctive of the two identities in a wine-growing region—long before this term was used in local tourist brochures. In this respect, as centerpieces of economic life in the *commune* in the past, fishing and wine growing had infused all aspects of everyday life, shaping the timescapes of the lake and countryside and leaving their mark on village architecture. Their continuing visibility also provides a symbolic counterweight to recent historical turbulence and decline. Monadiérois can still confidently state, for example, “There have always been fishermen in Monadières” [Il y a eu toujours des pêcheurs ici] and temporalize the boats that motor out each morning as symbolic evidence of this long-term continuity. Or they can trace the long-term history of particular vineyards in terms of kin relations. Vague as such temporal statements might be—historiographically speaking—in emotional terms they are exceedingly powerful and invoke a wide cache of associations, revealing the many forms historicity assumes even in a historiographically rich society such as France.

Viticulture and fishing have also shaped Monadiérois social organization in multiple ways. Families, in particular, have been marked by their involvement with one or both activities, which leaves an indelible impression on family memory, status, and alliances as well as the identity infusing patronyms. The impact of these socioeconomic activities likewise has extended into wider cultural practices. Until recently, for example, the *vendange* had been a key highlight of the year, when patronymic branches of the Monadiérois would harvest grapes together. In turn, the *fête de la vendange* was a time when all Monadiérois would assemble to celebrate the successful harvest. The *barrage* (blockade) of the lake with nets in the autumn months, when the best fishing is done, was a time of similar importance for fishermen, as was the fisherman’s fête (*fête des pêcheurs*) in July. The rituals of viticulture and fishing had once dominated the temporal fabric of the village calendar and at the time of my fieldwork still reached out from the economic dimension of life to embrace its many other dimensions.

Both these living traditions had suffered significant decline, which was frequently commented on by local

people. With respect to chronological periodization, the watershed in the fortunes of the viticulture industry was usually dated to the 1960s and was attributed by most Monadiérois to the mechanization of agriculture and the turbulent wine market. That said, both were in evidence beforehand. For fishing, the 1960s likewise provided the most widely acknowledged periodization. Such explicitly recognized ruptures, often prefaced in conversation by admissions that “tout a changé,” were viewed as momentous developments by older Monadiérois, with an accompanying sense of loss, and were widely invoked when speaking of these industries in everyday conversation. At times of more intense reminiscence, further detail would be provided, as in wine grower Jean Martin’s recollection that the shift from working in a communal fashion alongside other laborers to working in isolation on a tractor had been emotionally draining for him and others over many years. The communal features of viticultural work were frequently recalled and, along with the communal life of harvest and fetes, were seen as recompense for the hard physical labor involved; they were also compared advantageously with the more regimented and diversified contemporary division of labor, which, if easier on the hands and back and the pocket, was somehow less meaningful. As for fishing, contemporary pollution of the lake by nearby factories and overfishing enabled by technological breakthroughs were frequently contrasted, by older fishermen in particular, with a previous subsistence ethic whereby those in the fishing community viewed themselves as custodians of the lake for future generations of Monadiérois and they relied on sail as the chief way of getting around. The form such invocations tended to take in everyday discussion was of an epochal past of stability—how it was, with no particular epochal time frame except the invocation of its enduring qualities—set off from a present, post-1960s epoch of uncertainty and flux. Such reflections might have been more common at harvest time, for example, or during the height of the autumn fishing season, but they could also be prompted involuntarily by an everyday sight or sound jogging one’s memory and provoking reminiscence. These changes to key economic practices were routinely cited as the core element of the changement continuuel that had beset the village, and the Monadiérois, since the 1960s.

Fêtes, food, and nicknames

Several other significant living traditions presented similar periodizing typologies, and here I sketch three of them briefly. Fêtes were identified by many Monadiérois as central to village life. Shortly before a *sardinade* organized by the Monadières Bowls Club (la Boule Monadiéroise), for example, an acquaintance told me with evident anticipation that “you don’t know Monadières and the Monadiérois until you’ve been to a sardinade.” Large quantities of sardines

would be grilled in the open air over charcoal and washed down with liberal amounts of the local Corbières wine. Indeed, this is currently the set piece of the yearly calendar of fêtes and, outside the annual Christian celebrations, the only communal fête that persists.

However, the village bowls club was only inaugurated in the early 1970s, partly at the instigation of two outsiders to the village—as was its fête (cf. Boissevain 1992). The fêtes in the village have, of course, changed more over previous centuries than even the oldest Monadiérois can recall. Suffice it to say that for older people, the village fête had “always” fallen on November 11—from 1888 until the 1950s, that is. And this is still felt by many to be the appropriate date—coming as it does after the end of the grape harvest and during the barrage of the lake—although no one celebrates it anymore. In the *longue durée*, however, celebrations in honor of the French monarchy provided annual relief from the daily grind for many generations of Monadiérois before the French Revolution (Guiffan 1979). And for today’s younger generation, the sardinade has always played that role. Undoubtedly, this pattern of periodic modulation will continue. The synoptic continuity here lies in the endurance of the social archetype of the village fête. And such occasions have allowed Monadiérois to celebrate and revitalize sentiments of belonging.

That said, older Monadiérois regularly complained that “people just don’t know how to have fun anymore” [Les gens ne savent plus comment s’amuser], as Lucienne, a Monadiéroise in her eighties once expressed it to me, claiming that fêtes had been much more enjoyable in the old days. Perhaps this sense derives from the fêtes’ previous relations with the viticultural and fishing calendars, which augmented their significance—although my elderly friend Lucienne also insisted on the diminished intensity of the celebrations. Similarly, a more complex division of labor among Monadiérois, along with the presence of “estrangers”—as incomers and tourists were called in patois—has made for decreased intimacy and *communitas* (Turner 1969). Indeed, many Monadiérois stay away from village fêtes today because of their presence. Once again, then, despite the modulating continuity of a living tradition of village fêtes, a periodization is emerging: For Monadiérois, today’s fêtes are colored by the absence of the celebrated *fêtes d’antan*, which are identified with that enduring pre-1960s epoch. Complaints about today’s fêtes were frequently to be heard when people got to talking about the customary and communal life of the village. The village “back then” was *comme une famille* (like a family), I was often told, although Monadiérois kinship relations showed no signs of diminishing in everyday significance and the previous century had been marked by significant in- and out-migration prompted by the crisis-stricken viticultural economy.

A further example of enduring if modulating living traditions involves food. The symbolic importance of food has, of course, been widely commented on by anthropologists (e.g., Sutton 2001) and is a self-evident touchstone for rural France. Various local dishes are often codified as *typique* (typical) to Monadières—occasionally through use of the term *traditional* (*traditionnel*), sometimes alluding to “our customs” (*nos coutumes*). In casual conversation, perhaps when cooking or just discussing food in general, people would identify certain dishes as characteristic of life in the “old days.” They used locally hunted game or fish from the lake. Indeed, these dishes would often function as core symbolic tokens, and some are cooked and eaten in Monadiérois households today. A particularly celebrated local dish is the *bourride d'anguilles*, an eel and potato stew often inferred to be unique to the village, although variations on this theme are cooked elsewhere along the coast of Languedoc. Discussions of this dish that I witnessed inspired stock stories of former cooking practices. Many people told, for example, of women in the past preparing live eels for cooking by rolling them underfoot on the compacted stone streets outside their houses to clean the eels' slippery skins. They would vividly evoke how the women cut their heads off while they were still alive and peeled the skins from their bodies like a glove. The *bourride* and other fish-based cuisine, such as soft-shelled crabs, along with the consumption of foods such as coot, snails, and wild asparagus, were widely acknowledged as typical of the village and of the Monadiérois more generally.

That said, the frequency with which this local cuisine is consumed has fallen markedly, and its invocation as characteristic of the way of life of Monadiérois was often purely symbolic and sometimes recognized as such. The actual duration of certain foods as living traditions is also difficult to ascertain. Whatever their long-term history, it is also likely that their current status as “traditional” is something of an “invention” (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1985), inspired in part by heritage commodification of local food produce, in part by strategies of periodization and the related positing of a “traditional” Monadières by Monadiérois. Such home-cooked food was nevertheless still central to Monadiérois identity and gatherings and was locally symbolized as a clear and distinctive marker of the identity of the village as a place (cf. Sutton 2008).

A third important living tradition was related to that distinctive rural French art of belonging: the granting of sobriquets (nicknames). These have an expansive history in the French countryside. They are effectively a popular comic art form (Hassoun 2000; cf. Segalen 1980; Zonabend 1979), and their “grotesque” character, often focused on bodily caricature, is traceable to living traditions of popular humor and folk culture dating from at least the Middle Ages (Bakhtin 1984:303). Sobriquets are also a key component of local identity practices, and in Monadières (as

elsewhere) nearly every Monadiérois and Monadiéroise had been granted one at some stage. Some had come to replace given names in frequency of use. Nicknames ranged from the obscene to the timid, were often inspired by noted features of the local way of life, and could be used to designate families as well.

Sobriquets were also used between villages all across France (cf. Bernardy 1962). The nearby villagers of Peyriac, for example, had long been known as *les ventres-bleus* because of the diseases that frequently struck the village in the past, especially malaria. This ill health was attributed by Monadiérois, probably correctly, to the village's sheltered position in relation to the prevailing winds, which enabled waterborne disease, in particular, to linger. Whereas the use of sobriquets among Monadiérois was still in evidence during the 1990s, their use to refer to neighboring villages had diminished. Given the increased mobility of young Monadiérois, it was also inevitably perceived to be a living tradition in regression.¹²

Guy Cadas and the “knife”

“Nostalgia,” Nikos Papastergiadis writes, “is usually understood as the rebounding away from the threatening aspects of the present and the search for safer grounds in the past” (1993:167). In this sense, it is palliative and regressive, searching out a blissful if temporary shelter from the demands of the present. However, as Papastergiadis points out, it can also function critically, subjecting the present to comparison with remembered or invented pasts or with imagined futures that inspire a sense of purpose in life.¹³ A personalized vignette reflects his observation. Guy Cadas was born to Monadiérois emigrants in Lyon but spent his childhood holidays in Monadières and returned to the village in his early thirties after the deaths of his Monadiérois grandfather and younger brother. He too dated major changes in the village to the 1960s, when he was growing up, and characterized the previous epoch in largely holistic and enduring terms. He evoked it principally through recollections of artisanal work (his grandfather was a fisherman), communal fêtes, and family life and was fascinated with collecting stories of this epoch from older Monadiérois. He would often recall life in the village past nostalgically, sometimes even joking, “I wish I could just wipe out everything that's happened, and live back then like it was.” The pain associated with this attitude, which he mockingly called the “knife,” caused him to view everything about contemporary life in the village in a purely negative light. This very radical contrast was an intensification of that drawn by other Monadiérois. It is the temporal modality, one might propose in passing, of exile or even grief.

However, sometimes Guy would remember more constructively, drawing on the past for energy to empower the present and to live vitally, as he believed others in the

village had lived before him. At the same time, he actualized the past epoch with a view to criticizing recent historical changes in the village with greater subtlety. One evening when we were talking after dinner at his house, for example, he brought up the question of disputes in the village. “In the past,” he said,

quarrels were about family matters. Whereas now, you know, they’re about pieces of land—that’s to say, property. In the past, land used to be passed down within Monadiérois families, whereas now people with money have more control over the place. . . . And all these outsiders who’ve moved into the village, it’s like they’re taking over. They’ve all gone into village politics, and now they run the place, not the Monadiérois. That isn’t right.

Such attitudes were representative of many Monadiérois. And Guy’s detailed associations of the village landscape and material culture with the memory of an enduring communal village past—and their contrast, in turn, with symbols of the present epoch of flux, such as the new housing estate or visitors’ cars with their foreign number plates in the village streets in summer—illustrate how this form of historicity could take a concrete, nonnarrative form.¹⁴ Overall, Guy’s nostalgia was underwritten by this periodization and could be both critical and palliative. Its emphasis depended on factors that, at a general level, often seemed to center on the state of play of his jobs, personal relationships, and general mood.

The “disintegration” of living traditions

Between the lines of this overview, then, I have begun to highlight the ways and contexts in which Monadiérois frequently and unfavorably contrasted a contemporary epoch of changement continué with an age of the enduring—tout a changé—enabling or resulting from the perception that activities such as fishing, viticulture, village fêtes, and other local practices were effectively in decline. I now briefly consider the perceived disintegration of Monadiérois living traditions.

Foremost among these emblems of rupture were *les clubs*, the gatherings of neighbors or families in the evenings to tell stories and recount the day’s events. In summers in the old days, *les clubs* would pull up chairs outside in the street and talk away the evening while taking advantage of an opportunity to enjoy the cool night air (*prendre le frais*). In winter, they would meet indoors in smaller groups, usually comprising close family, to pass the dark evenings in company. Frequently, the gatherings would also be occasions for communal work, and in Monadières, one common recollection was of fishermen and their wives mending their cotton nets in the streets of the old village on summer evenings. The passing of *les clubs*—which have also been known as *veillées* elsewhere in France¹⁵—was univer-

sally attributed to the arrival of television in the 1960s and was mourned by all Monadiérois old enough to remember them. That said, no one appeared particularly keen to turn off the TV and reinvent the gatherings, whose disappearance was, in reality, due to a complex range of factors. Instead, when prompted to recollect, people tended to explicitly speak of them as having come to an end. Yet they operated as a forceful symbol of the communal character of an epoch that was no more—as they also do across rural France as a whole.

Speaking Occitan was another living tradition that was widely acknowledged to have ruptured, despite the preservation efforts of regionalists in the 1970s, and as elderly Monadiérois have passed away over the last decade, it is said that the living language is about to disappear for good. Some younger Monadiérois can still understand “*le patois*,” as it is popularly called, although few people below their sixties can speak it with any degree of competence. However, the older generation frequently explained that *patois* had been their first language, and they would still speak it at home. In fact, it was often claimed that *patois* was the language of the village before the 1960s, which was probably true, and its persistence over the *longue durée* lends a historical depth and continuity to the pre-1960s Monadiérois epoch that, with respect to other practices, it does not possess.

Briefly, church going, and religious belief more generally, is another living tradition that was acknowledged to have largely disintegrated after the 1960s. Annual rituals such as *la fête des pêcheurs*, in which the priest blessed the lake waters to bring good fortune to the fishermen—as was common throughout Mediterranean France—had also died out, testifying to the diminishing influence of the church. That said, organized religion was often viewed as a yoke from which people had been set free—a positive consequence, then, of the advent of the Monadiérois modern epoch.

I do not have space here to address heritage tourism depictions of contemporary Monadières that are similar in some respects to Monadiérois evocations of the pre-1960s epoch (see Hodges 2009). Nor can I address the interest of an “amateur ethnographer” and other incomers in the village past, which was characterized by a similar periodization (Hodges 1999:271–306). However, this similarity points to how Monadiérois periodization was also a local incarnation of a wider pastoral mythologization with a lengthy historical genealogy, as detailed by writers such as Raymond Williams (1993).

Monadières in the longue durée

A further frame for these developments can be provided by the viewpoint from the *longue durée*. There is an image in the French imagination, and farther afield, that until

relatively recently the nation's countryside was populated by an enduring peasantry. To a degree, this image mirrors the contingent periodization emerging here. It is a mainstay of both French popular culture—as reams of popular novels and local history books to be found in any hypermarket will attest—and the writings of eminent historians such as Fernand Braudel and Henri Mendras, who date the disappearance of the French peasantry to the postwar period.¹⁶ The notion that a contemporary epoch of change-ment *continuel* was preceded by an epoch of enduring time of significant length might thus be said to be characteristically French to the extent that, through the work of French historiographers, it has even influenced professional historians and shaped one of academic historiography's most celebrated concepts—the “*longue durée*.” That aside, it is quickly clear from a study of the history of Monadières, the greater Narbonne area, and, indeed, the plain of Languedoc more generally, that this region merits its own epochal framework.

Since at least the late 18th century, the area has been subjected to significant capitalist economic development. Initially, this took the form of large-scale wheat farming, which supplanted the polycultural peasant economy in the 18th century. Subsequently, the region became the focus for violent speculation in viticulture, largely underwritten by merchant capital based in Paris, and it has been buffeted by a series of natural and financial viticultural crises from the late 19th century to the present day. Since the 1970s, the coastal strip has been overrun by state-sponsored tourism developments, and more recently the villages of the interior have become the focus for a decentralized heritage-tourism infrastructure branded “Cathar Country” (le “Pays Cathare”)—after the heretical protestant Cathars whose ruined medieval castles dot the landscape. This characterization has caught on among incomers in Monadières, and over the last ten years, as with such trends in other picturesque rural areas of western Europe, it has contributed to the spike in purchases of second homes.

In contemporary times, this historical turbulence and rupture has also been felt in artisanal lake fishing. Fishing practices had previously remained consistent in the *longue durée*, even if numbers of fishermen had risen or declined in line with the village population. The relevant technological innovations came in the 1960s with the introduction of outboard motors and nylon nets, which enabled a significant increase in catches. Today there are still a core number of fishermen in the village, who are largely indigenous Monadiérois, although they often need to supplement their income with part-time work in Narbonne or, to a lesser degree, through wine growing. In historiographical terms, then, the 1960s marked a period of significant historical change for fishermen and inaugurated the contemporary epoch of flux.

What I wish to take from this brief overview is that there have been significant historical modulations over the last 200 years and beforehand that rule out the possibility, of course, that in the *longue durée*, the practices of the Monadiérois can be said to have existed in a state of continuity—or in temporal terms, that the village existed in a state of enduring time. In this context, it might also be of value to explore to what extent Monadiérois periodizations have emerged in relation to the increasing disciplinary centralization of the French state. It is also clear that, since the 1960s, the temporal modalities of cultural and economic practices in the village have become significantly more future oriented than beforehand, even if that future is unpredictable. This is an argument I have made ethnographically elsewhere, detailing how the pace of social change has accelerated, elements of contingency and surprise in everyday life have been augmented, and so-called detraditionalization has become the dominant form of social reproduction (Hodges 2002). In sum, in historiographical and temporal terms, this period might well be classified as a distinctively “modern” epoch, or even one of erratic time, to invoke once again Gurvitch's (1964) typology, although such totalizations lack nuance and demand qualification. That said, the notion that an epoch of enduring time preceded it conflicts with the historical record.

Furthermore, such a shift to a more fully realized “modernity” can be evoked with various degrees of temporal complexity. Paul Heelas (1996), for example, outlines what he terms the “radical” modernist thesis, typified in social science by the work of Giddens and other writers proposing widespread “detraditionalization,” a decline in the significance of the past, and a growth in future orientation. He contrasts this thesis with a “coexistence” thesis, which emphasizes the naturally modulating character of living traditions, and proposes that social change and rupture constitute an inconsistent and contingent set of transformations even in the contemporary era and must be examined as such. The latter view tallies with claims that historical periodization is partly motivated by political and ethical criteria and comes with an implicit recognition of the multiplicity of historical time. It is a model of equal significance, of course, for examining the epochal claims of social scientists and those of the Monadiérois, whose dominant periodization, one can assert, also appears to be radical and “modernist” in character.

Historical periodization among the Monadiérois

There has constantly recurred in this account mention of the clean break that came about 1950, when an economic upheaval brought about a radical transformation of village life within a few years.

—Françoise Zonabend, *The Enduring Memory: Time and History in a French Village*

In this review, I have not comprehensively explored modulations in the living traditions of Monadièrois. I have examined those local practices that have been central to Monadièrois in recent times, but I have glossed over important topics such as transformations in kinship practices.¹⁷ I have also not detailed the coexisting temporalities that complexified everyday life or detailed the many other pasts and futures—local, familial, national, and international—evoked by Monadièrois; nor have I examined variations across this socially constructed grouping. This is, nevertheless, in keeping with my objectives. On one level, I have fleshed out how historical acceleration has affected the living traditions of the Monadièrois. What has also emerged is how the Monadièrois have taken hold of such experiences and articulated them in terms of local historicity. With respect to the latter, a periodization has emerged—which reveals how Monadièrois viewed their living traditions as in decline or ruptured and the future as uncertain. Thus far, their interpretation of events correlates with a historiographical assessment. But the Monadièrois model also draws on a mythologized paradigm of rupture with distinctive modernist overtones, which historians would be reluctant to endorse. What was changing was sometimes couched in terms of “our traditions” and “our customs,” and sometimes attributed to the agency of “history” (*l'histoire*).¹⁸ These tropes were used to evoke generalized notions of temporal continuity and discontinuity. But, as stated, such distinctions were usually drawn in a more diffuse manner by comparing and contrasting contingent practices in the contemporary epoch with life in an enduring past time. This epochal schema thus chiefly took a concrete and interpretative form.

Did this periodization simply filter, at a local level, objective ruptures in dominant historical processes in rural French life? Or was it, as Harris has written, “grounded in myths which posit a sharp break in the flow of events according to criteria which are themselves derived from ethical and political concerns” (1995:21)? Looking farther afield, Zonabend, writing of comparable perceptions of rupture as they appeared in the village of Minot in Burgundy during the late 1970s, would appear to favor the first interpretation. As she comments, in the past,

old things crumbled slowly, new things established themselves quietly; so people had this impression of controlling time. Around the fifties the rhythm of change speeded up. So the gradual adjustments and long movements of adaptation broke up, and a new era really began. This is what has created the tone of the present day and has marked it as a time of discontinuity and revolution. [Zonabend 1984:195]

Zonabend presents the Minot periodization as objectively reflective of real historical rupture, which she dates

to the 1950s. This perception of a tipping point was apparently triggered by an increased rate of historical change. But the existence of objective correlates for both Monadièrois and Minot periodizations in the historical record, which apparently justifies their characterization of the contemporary epoch, does not explain the essentializing modernist character of the “traditional” epoch that precedes both. In this respect, Zonabend’s claim that local people characterized pre-1950s Minot as stable precisely because it was, begins to appear questionable, and the notion that pre-1960s Monadières was a stable historical environment is contradicted by the historical record.

What is also interesting about the time scale of these changes is the chronological lapse. Monadières was shaken during the 1950s by the mechanization of agriculture, just as Minot was, and other important changes in customary life occurred during the same decade. Yet when I collected much of this article’s data—in the late 1990s—the date of periodization fell in the 1960s. One wonders what provoked the Monadièrois to regularly name the 1960s as the high water of the enduring, before a present of changement continuel entered in? One also wonders how individuals from Minot date their own epoch of changement continuel now. One can speculate, for example, that the periodization was generational. Thirty years is roughly the span of a generation as defined by demographers (cf. Corsten 1999). But this does not yet explain the use of the periodization by elderly people in Monadières who actually lived through such changes. And one must consider the character of the previous epoch, which would appear to be the telling detail. In part, the Monadièrois model contrasts the decline of key living traditions underwriting Monadièrois sociality with a period when such traditions were in better health. But living traditions that were in various forms of crisis during the contemporary period were in difficulty long beforehand as well. One can point to other historical transformations in Monadières that do not feature as periodizing markers, the Second World War being a case in point, when the population fell from 496 in 1936 to 371 in 1946 before gradually increasing again. The number of fishermen, by contrast, dropped from 31 in 1946 to 10 in 1968, before rallying during the late 1970s. Many variegated time scales for rupture could potentially crowd into view—constituting a local “coexistence model” of historical change, along the lines proposed by Heelas (1996). Indeed, when pressed, some villagers would slip from the more radical modernist paradigm of periodization, with its image of a homogenous, essentialized “traditional” epoch preceding a present of flux. In its place, they would invoke just such a “coexistence” model, which was historically nuanced, and might reference habitually “forgotten” experiences such as the grueling impact of the Second World War, which provoked substantial out-migration, or the arrival of numerous Catalan refugees from the Spanish Civil War who settled in

Monadières and of Italians who moved to the village in the 1920s to dig the new port, many of whom intermarried with Monadiérois. All were historical contingencies that could throw the radical modernist schema into disarray.

That said, what commonly emerged from unchallenged Monadiérois accounts is the positing of a “golden age” of communal village life, an enduring time that stretched into the 1960s. This “age of tradition” was certainly tempered by many villagers with recollections of hardship and hard graft. Most Monadiérois were, above all, critically nostalgic (Papastergiadis 1993). But there is an undeniable similarity with the radical modernist paradigm. A past of organic community and enduring time is contrasted with a modern epoch of disenchantment and erratic time—articulated in local terms. In historiographical terms, it is indisputably a historical mythologization. The various futures evoked, then, entailed short-term continuity with the present—with what seemed the often implicit proviso that the unpredictable could be just around the corner and that change was indeed bound to arrive in the long term.

Table 1 evokes key aspects schematically. Some of the pairs listed are polar opposites, some evoke differences in values, some are perceived improvements, some are perceived deceptions. I have evoked many of them in context already. All have roots in objective historical processes that have evolved within the village, which are now ordered according to a polarizing before-and-after dichotomy. In some respects, they approximate wider traditional and modern polarities, with characteristic components—the decrease in religious practices, the increasing diversity of the population, the fragmentation in working practices, and the increasing uncertainty of life—reflecting the anal-

yses of modernity theorists (e.g., Beck 1992; Giddens 1990, 1991; Weber 1964). In other respects, they assert the contingencies of Monadiérois lived experience. One is thus presented with a local schema, perhaps influenced by more widely publicized mythologizations of European history and in certain respects reflective of wider trends in experience. Although the deployment of this interpretative model was always contextualized and given meaning by individual Monadiérois in particular circumstances, its qualities were consistent.

Was this periodization a response to the temporal dynamics of modernity? If you are a fisherman working out on the lake, you fix a point on the shore for reference. For what this periodization does, indeed, permit is the positing of group belonging in relationship to a shared past. Monadiérois were much more confident about what life was like in the past, and what they thought they had lost, than they were about the present day of presumed disintegration. One can therefore propose that Monadiérois most clearly defined themselves by what they were no longer and, in some respects, had never been. This reaction was thus in important ways a process of historical mythologization. Monadiérois had created a myth to meet contemporary needs—and one with recognizable overtones. First, the notion of an “enduring memory” is prevalent elsewhere in rural France, as noted by Zonabend (1984). Second, a parallel can be drawn with debates on the “invention” of tradition and nationalist valorizations of collective pasts (Anderson 1991)—although, in this case, it was Monadiérois “traditions” that were being at least partly “invented.” Third, the notion of a rural “golden age” is deeply ingrained in European mythologies (Williams 1993), although the Monadiérois incarnation has a distinctly local flavor. Finally, and importantly, the periodization presents what was in fact a heterogeneous population—in a commune marked by in- and out-migration since the advent of viticultural capitalism—as communal and dominated by the Monadiérois. This undoubtedly served to reinforce their claims to indigenous residence at a time when their hegemony over the locality has been challenged.

In this sense, Monadiérois actualized the village past as a resource for enhancing the viability of their most valuable living tradition—their sense of being Monadiérois. This periodizing practice was thus, indeed, indexed to identity politics, and productive of differentiated group belonging, although my analytical perspective allows for greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, its temporal qualities. As for the “generational” 30-year marker, one can propose that this operated as a shifting focal point that ensured that the group’s epochal moment under modernity was indexed to the concerns of the most active section of the population—those aged 20 to 50. In this sense, the vicissitudes of modern life facing adults could be contrasted with the relatively uncomplicated life of the older generation. In turn, use of the

Table 1: The dominant Monadiérois historical periodization

<i>Autrefois</i>	<i>Aujourd'hui</i>
Communal way of life	Increasingly diverse population
Village like a family	Living alongside <i>estrangers</i>
Communal work	Individualized work
Hard physical work	Easier work
Artisanal work	Less skillful work
No running water, washing machines, etc.	Comfort
Religion	Increasing secularism
No pollution	Lake and countryside polluted
Practical joking	Less self-entertainment
Real fêtes	Disappointing fêtes
<i>Le patois</i>	<i>Le français</i>
<i>Les clubs</i>	Television
Poverty	Relative wealth
Making do	Making money
Predictability	Uncertainty

Durables: The “kindred” (*les clans*), *La pêche*, *La vigne*, *Le village*, Being Monadiérois

Futures: Collapsed, but contingently, and in the short term, the same as the present

periodization by older people was an implicit acknowledgment of their marginality. One can qualify this historically grounded “mythic” schema, then, as ideological in character and, arguably, operating to enforce intergenerational power relations.

That said, this discussion is rendering in a synoptic fashion a temporalization that is, in fact, contingent to specific evocations. One might well think of epochs, of course, in lay terms as encompassing concrete historical periods of time; yet here I am discussing how epoch is invoked in lived experience. Recall Hirsch and Stewart’s comment that epoch is an organic, relational mode of time in which “past and future . . . exist in a simultaneous manner” (2005a:270). When people invoked the previous Monadièrois epoch, they did so quite frequently in terms of a spatialized historical period but also in terms of symbolically temporalized material culture, for example, with historical experience taking a nonnarrative form. Such evocations were, therefore, a form of temporalizing the past, involving the range of local practices this entailed. But invoking the contemporary epoch of *changement continuel* was seemingly a more complex temporal process, with relational, explicit or implicit acknowledgment of the previous epoch; contingent evocations of a contrastive present; and passing reference, in turn, to an often vaguely evoked, generalized, unpredictable local future of uncertainty and change, frequently merely by implication through the notion of “*changement continuel*” itself. (And this relational future, perhaps of necessity, did not tend to be defined with great detail beyond a vague evocation of difference, which is consistent with a collapsed time span. But it could, in turn, phase into a range of more concrete, nuanced, “coexistent” futures in Heelas’s sense, short or long term, if provoked.)

One can therefore qualify Hirsch and Stewart’s comments by stating that Monadièrois temporalization of the social “now” as part of a contemporary epochal moment is, indeed, an actualization of compressed relational time, incorporating both past and future orientations. But that temporalization of the past as epochal moments, although also an instantiation of such temporal simultaneity, evidently performs this process at one remove from present practices. That said, whether this statement pertains to epochal moments cross-culturally is debatable, as the cultural characterization of past and future dimensions of experience is variable, and, hence, invocations of epoch will also vary across cultures. This point requires fleshing out in a comparative study. Invocations of epoch in Monadières could also be weighted toward different dimensions of Harris’s (1995) referential categories: the political (e.g., claims over the locality rooted in long-term residence), the ethical (e.g., the enduring moral values of the Monadièrois), or the historically “objective” (selective reference to features of the past or the contemporary moment). In turn, this could naturally occur in nonexclusive combinations dependent

on the symbolic weighting of an epochal moment’s actualization. And, as a further observation, several theorists endorse the notion that an epoch is an organic mode of time that renders the personality of a contemporary or historical “time span” apparent, in which “the events occurring . . . have a definitive and non-arbitrary relationship to the sequence of the whole [and] are in themselves relations, each one subsuming and radically transforming what has gone before” (Wagner 1986:81; see also Hirsch 2007; Hirsch and Stewart 2005a). This characterization refers to a richly developed symbolic realization of an epochal moment, which was certainly manifested in Monadières. But given that epoch making is a performative, contingent scale-making practice, the density of an epochal moment’s actualization varied greatly, as did its context of realization, of course.

Finally, on a broader theoretical note, the use of a temporally nuanced concept of historicity as a prism for examining the ways in which people inhabit historical time, and related scale-making practices such as periodization, can also extend the complex of concepts associated with memory, as discussed above. For it is clear that reference to pasts and futures is not necessarily undertaken for the purpose of remembering or envisaging. Indeed, invocation of the past can be mediated by other practices such as historiography and its popular manifestations, and in cases of historical mythologization, the past may not be invoked as an objective reference point. In the paradigm utilized here, “memory” as a concept has been subsumed into a historically and temporally nuanced conception of human sociality that allows for analysis of the diverse ways in which the past and future are referenced in cultural practice within an integrative framework.

The time of the interval

In the early nineteenth century there was a shift in the meaning of the term “epoch” from its older meaning of a “point of view” (originally from astronomy) to a totalizing view of the world as historically organized into periods.

—Paul Rabinow, “Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary”

Do you really think that the golden age exists only on porcelain teacups?

—Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary*, vol. 1: 1873–1876

I direct my concluding remarks to the relational character of the temporal personality of the contemporary era and what it might reveal about this periodization. What is also characteristic about the dominant contemporary Monadièrois epoch is its metaphorical grounding in *changement continuel*—despite the weighty tokens of

durability noted in the opening vignette and the ethnographic contingencies I have picked out in this discussion. Now, the notion that the modern epoch is one of flux is not by any means exclusive to the inhabitants of a small French village. Likewise, the notion that today's globalized societies largely exist in a state of incessant change is a truism for social theorists as is the subtext entangled in anthropological theory that all social life is, and always has been, fluxlike, processual, and in a state of becoming beneath the myriad social practices that constitute human diversity (Hodges 2008:399–403). Putting aside their differences, it would be uncontroversial to assert that such invocations—Languedocian, anthropological, and academic—are at a fundamental level processual in character.

Bearing in mind that Heelas (1996) and others have convincingly made the point that invocations of traditional and posttraditional epochs are relational in character, this correspondence is intriguing. To convert this curiosity into something more noteworthy, however, one needs to approach the concept of “process” from a critical viewpoint—which is hard to come by in an epoch when the “fluidity of time” is taken for granted (Hodges 2008). One 20th-century intellectual, however, is well-known for having taken to task both the concept of “process” and the “processual temporalities” of contemporary life in their various forms. Hannah Arendt was influenced by the work of Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, both notable for their distinctive approaches to time and temporality, and the temporal outlook of her work has recently drawn attention (e.g., Braun 2007). Her guiding concept of “natality” is underpinned by the philosophies of both these thinkers and is increasingly acknowledged as a precursor of Michel Foucault's (1976) influential concept of “biopower” (Agamben 1998; cf. Duarte 2004; Vatter 2006). According to writers such as Kathrin Braun (2007), it is also a critique of the hegemonic processual temporalities that, for Arendt, detrimentally underwrote many features of 20th-century life. Arendt viewed the trope of process as operating on multiple levels in society—some positive, many negative.¹⁹ In response—and briefly—she proposed an epochal temporality of the “time interval between birth and death” (Arendt 1958:97) that might act as a shelter in which to live out the span of a meaningful human life (cf. Braun 2007:19–21). This notion was itself grounded in the human capability to intervene in and disrupt processual time and, in turn, inaugurate novel, alternative processes, insights that lay at the heart of the natality concept. Moreover, it conceives of a world in the ontological grip of what would appear to be a temporally nuanced enduring time, “which is not in constant movement, but whose durability and *relative* permanence makes appearance and disappearance possible, which existed before any one individual appeared into it and will survive his eventual departure” (Arendt 1958:97, emphasis added). Her approach is therefore multilayered, allowing

for both recognition of the value of the process concept and the insights it affords into historical time and lived experience, while affording critique of its totalizing cultural dominance.

In temporal terms, then, I am proposing that the concepts of “process” and “fluid time” (Hodges 2008) are, arguably, dominant totalizing categories of modern experience and anthropological theory (if at times relatively flexible and productive ones), operating, in Peter Osborne's complex definition, “insofar as all such totalizations abstract from the concrete multiplicity of differential times coexisting in the global ‘now’ a single differential (however internally complex) through which to mark the time of the present” (1995:28). By contrast, Arendt's existential valuing of the “interval,” this self-consciously epochal approach to life, bears comparison, it seems, to popular adaptations of the modernist epochal interval among Monadièrois and farther afield. Monadièrois invocations of *changement* *continuel* clearly invoke wider processual tropes. In turn, the time of the interval in Monadières, this conjured epoch of a communal past, can be viewed to furnish an existential provision for inhabiting the uncertain, globalized, ultimately processual timescapes of contemporary French modernity, providing an “interval” in dominant narratives of *changement* *continuel* in which the enduring can reside. This evocation of an enduring past epoch thus supplies the alternative of a nonprocessual temporality, even if this is perceived to reside in the past and, by implication, perhaps, the possibility that such an enduring time can once again emerge. If its rationale is derived, to a large extent at least, from ethical and political concerns, it incorporates an additional temporal configuration whose stability is a multifaceted reference point for contemporary practices—that point on the shore from which Monadièrois can take their bearings. It is a popular correlate to Arendt's cultural and ontological critique. Epoch making is thus revealed as a strategic, political temporalizing practice selectively grounded in historical reference, rather than a realist polemic over definitions and boundaries—closer to the original astronomical significance of the term and, indeed, its Greek root *epoché*, meaning a “pause in a movement” (cf. Blumenberg 1983:457–81; Rabinow 2008:63).

A final significant point to draw out from this concluding discussion is that processual models themselves are cultural strategies for organizing time, embodying contingent temporal outlooks, rather than being “objective” representations of time's essence. And they might therefore be reflexively treated as such. The question of how anthropologists should make better use of process and, by implication, epoch as frames for theorization is therefore, in my view, both interesting and unresolved. Explicit acknowledgment of the cultural multiplicity of historical periodizations clearly echoes the critique of allochrony that Fabian (1983) endorsed. It points to the advantages of

grounding anthropology in an explicit, relational temporal ontology in which notions of epoch, and process, are as much emergent features of social practices—including analytical scaling—as objective reflections of historical time. In turn, this approach dovetails with contemporary post-Newtonian visions of history as comprising coexisting pluralities of times or temporalities, while asserting an enhanced, strategic role in such schemas for the concept of “epoch.” Whatever theoretical gains were brought by the substitution of the mythic temporalities of the ethnographic present with a Western commonsense model of constitutive, encompassing temporal process in the 1980s, this strategy—which is prevalent in anthropology today—is now in question. And if a novel, coherent temporal ontology for anthropological theory is yet to emerge from such insights, the case has recently been made for questioning our theoretical reliance on commonsense models of time and flux in a number of contexts (e.g., Hodges 2008; Robbins 2007; cf. Smith 1982). I would like to suggest, then, that thinking about the relationship between epoch and process is more important to anthropologists than it may at first seem. Analysis of these topics in the French ethnographic context draws into focus the doxic temporal assumptions in which we ground our theoretical models, which can only be exorcised through greater attention to temporal analysis in anthropological paradigms. This clarification would further an increasing temporal awareness among social theorists that may yet become a fully fledged “temporal turn” (Adam 1998; Deleuze 2004; Donham 2001; Guyer 2007; Hirsch and Stewart 2005b; Hodges 2008; James and Mills 2005; Pickering 1995; Robbins 2007; Serres and Latour 1995).

Notes

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1. By *temporal fabric*, I mean those contingent cultural media used in all manner of everyday practice for the evocation and or-

ganization of “temporal” phenomena and the coordination of activities. In terms of the latter, explicit media might include calendars, clocks, and so on, involved in practices of time reckoning but also other symbolizing media, such as language, with its complex temporal markers, and narrative genres (Gell 1992:118–126; Inoue 2004; Tonkin 1992:75–82).

2. For Gurvitch, erratic time is

an enigmatic series of intervals and moments placed within duration. This is a time of uncertainty par excellence where contingency is accentuated, while the qualitative element and discontinuity become prominent eventually. The present appears to prevail over the past and the future, with which it sometimes finds it difficult to enter into relations. . . . This is the time of global societies in transition, as our society of today so often is. [1964:32–33]

In enduring time, by contrast,

the past is projected in the present and in the future. This is the most continuous of the social times despite its retention of some proportion of the qualitative and the contingent penetrated with multiple meanings. . . . Among the social classes it is the peasant class, and among the global societies the patriarchal structures that appear to actualize this time. [Gurvitch 1964:31]

I invoke Gurvitch's classifications here for their temporal spotlight; they have evident parallels, however, with other formulations (e.g., Beck 1992; Harvey 1989).

3. Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart note,

“Historicity” describes a human situation in flow where versions of the past and future . . . assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions. . . . To understand historicity in any particular ethnographic context, then, is to know the relevant ways in which (social) pasts and futures are implicated in present circumstances. . . . A focus on historicity is thus inseparable, as we have implicitly indicated, from time and temporality. [2005a:262–263; cf. Lambek 2002:11–14]

4. An observation that also emerged from the first meeting of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) seminar series *Conflicts in Time: Rethinking “Contemporary” Globalization*, entitled “Heritage and the Negotiation of New Futures for the Past,” held at the Department of Anthropology, University College London in May 2008.

5. *The Chambers Dictionary* (seventh edition) defines *epoch* as “a point of time fixed or made remarkable by some great event from which dates are reckoned” and, hence, phrases such as *epoch making* or *epochal* as meaning “important enough to be considered as beginning a new age.” My use of terms such as *epochal moment* or *epochal interval* is distinct in character.

6. A convincing case can also be made, clearly, for grounding this integration in a unified concept of “timespace,” although its elaboration in anthropological terms is beyond the scope of this article—but see May and Thrift 2001.

7. I carried out one year's initial ethnographic fieldwork in 1996–97, with subsequent updates with key informants in the following years.

8. I deploy the term *kindred* here in a flexible sense, to denote the culturally recognized category by which Monadièrois trace kin relationships. Although each patronymic Monadièrois family

within the village (sometimes collectively referred to as *les clans* [the clans]) maintains a distinctive sense of identity, individuals trace kin relations bilaterally. As a result, I often heard it claimed that all the Monadiérois were related, and although some individuals within the grouping could trace no known common ancestors, common ancestry was generally accepted by all (and verified by an intensive study of civil records in the *mairie*). See Freeman 1961 for a technical definition that extends this usage and Zonabend 1984 for related use of the term in the French context. I should add that my use of the term *Monadiérois*, although reflecting local usage, masks the internal diversity of the group.

9. These figures are derived from the censuses of 1946 and 1999.

10. As structures the analyses of anthropologists such as Jean Comaroff (1985), for example, writing about Zionism and historical consciousness among the Tshidi of South Africa.

11. The term *living tradition* refers to that “dense, meaningful context for action and debate,” the “shared body of practices and meta-narratives” that constitutes an ongoing, modulating, malleable resource for social practice (Lambek 2002:273; cf. MacIntyre 1981:206–207). It is therefore a mode of social reproduction that evinces and enables analytical and indigenous perception of continuity (repetition—identity—remembrance) while incorporating discontinuity (difference), innovation, and emergence (cf. Deleuze 2004:93–94)—hence, its role as the focus of discussion here.

12. As elsewhere in rural France, practical joking, drawing on a stock repertoire of jokes, was also often cited as a feature of the old days that testified to the ability of people to entertain themselves, which they were now frequently described as having forgotten how to do.

13. Papastergiadis observes,

The critical stance which subjects the present to scrutiny is usually driven either by a projection into the past with a sense of plenitude and integrity, or by an imagined sense of unity in the future. The nostalgic paradigm is at the centre of all major sociological critiques of modernity . . . nostalgic comparisons [may be] motivated by a sense of sedimented moral unity and spiritual integrity which gives social existence a sense of purpose and meaning that modernity lacks, and because of this perceived sense of lack, the melancholic “sufferer” of nostalgia condemns the world as she or he feels that it is but a shadow of the “real” reality. [1993:167, see also pp. 48–49]

For other works that put “critical nostalgia” to effective use, see Benjamin 1992 and Berger 1979, 1989.

14. As Michael Lambek (2002) has detailed for other contexts, for example, writing of possession in Madagascar; or as Stewart (2003) has in writing of dreams of treasure.

15. A *veillée* in rural France is popularly understood as a vigil (*veille*) or a gathering of villagers who would work alongside each other during the evening, passing the time telling stories, for example.

16. Although it is a view disputed by the Romanian-born, U.S. historian Eugen Weber (1976), for example, who links the French peasantry’s “demise” to the arrival of the railways in the 19th century. This conflict over historical periodizations, and their relationship to the cultural predispositions of their advocates, would, of course, provide interesting material for further discussion and in this case is partly tied to the political saliency of the French peasantry in modern France (cf. Rogers 1987). See Harris 2004 for analysis of the cultural context for related debates between Braudel and Gurvitch over the place of historical continuity and rupture in historiographical models.

17. Loyalty to family, patronym, and kindred and an ethic of hard physical work were preeminent enduring Monadiérois values, along with a suspicion of the intentions and morality of outsiders. The domain for realization of the work ethic was, above all, in the practices of fishing and wine growing. Although some older Monadiérois involved in viticulture, for example, grumbled about the appetite for work among younger relatives who did not wish to become wine growers, in many respects the moral values of Monadiérois remained relatively consistent among those who stayed in the village.

18. The kinds of intensive discussion of the significance of local “traditions,” “customs,” and “history” illustrated by David Sutton (1998) for the Greek island of Kalymnos were not an explicit feature of Monadiérois lived experience—perhaps reflecting the greater importance of debates over Greece’s history to Greek nationalism. By contrast, the modernist periodization between stable past and uncertain present that Sutton (1998:48–51) briefly mentions was much more prominent.

19. “For Arendt the modern worldview is characterized by its emphasis on the idea of process, on the ‘how’ of phenomena, be they natural or historical, and by the corresponding loss of the idea of Being” (Passerin d’Entrèves 1994:53). This perspective arose with the increasing hegemony of scientific outlooks but was embedded in the spread of capitalist economic organization, in which working activity was subordinated to end products and profit (Arendt 1958). However, at the same time, Arendt champions the process character of action, which blasts open the continuum of time, interrupting the automatism of processes and thereby initiating novel ones. This processualism underpins her key existential concept of “natality,” which is centered on the human ability to bring novelty—acts, ideas, institutions, and so on—into the world. Arendt’s argument operates at a level of abstraction that begs ethnographic substantiation, and her ambivalence about process has sometimes led to confusion among her interpreters. But this ambivalence is arguably a multilayered approach, a forerunner of contemporary thinking on timespace and its multiplicity of trajectories and dimensions (e.g., Adam 1998; Deleuze 2004; Gurvitch 1964)—and most significantly, one that problematizes the use of process as a totalizing ground or frame.

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