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Of Myth and Memory: Collective Memory in the French World War II Museum

Elisabeth S. Bloxam
College of William and Mary

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**Of Myth and Memory:
Collective Memory in the French World War II Museum**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Modern Languages
at the College of William and Mary

by

Elisabeth Bloxam

Accepted for _____
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

Michael Leruth, director

Loïc Bourdeau

Ronald Schechter

Williamsburg, Virginia
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Acknowledgements

My fascination with the memory of the Second World War began in seventh grade, a time far removed from honors theses and collective memory theory. I am grateful first for the opportunity to have studied a topic with such deep personal meaning.

In many ways, it feels as if my research has been nearly a decade in the making; however, this particular honors thesis is also the very linear result of a year of planning, research, and writing and it owes its current state to the support of several faculty members. I would first like to thank my advisor, Professor Michael Leruth, without whom this thesis would probably not exist. His unflagging enthusiasm has encouraged me when my own reserves were running low and I am so grateful for his advice, patience, and ever-supportive constructive criticism. Additionally, I would like to thank my committee members, Professors Ronald Schechter and Loïc Bourdeau, who have actively supported my research over the past several months.

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Finally, I must recognize the family and friends who have provided me with an incredible support system over the past several months. My friends have been a constant source of comfort and inspiration. I am particularly grateful to those who in recent months have joined me during late nights at the library, offered to edit drafts, or simply taken the time to ask me about my research. Of course, my greatest support system throughout this journey – both the literal trip to France and the thesis-writing process – has been my family. I would like to especially thank my mom, who took the time to proofread each of my chapters and was always willing to sit quietly on the other end of the phone when I needed someone to listen.

In writing this honors thesis, I have become all too aware of the way in which memory, both personal and collective, shapes the way in which we view and understand the world. I would therefore like to dedicate this thesis to my four grandparents – Bill, Jacqueline, Roy, and Betty (or, as I have always known them, PopPop, Nanny, Boompa, and Preshy) – who have each had a greater impact on *my* world than I could ever express.

Introduction

“By themselves, monuments are of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation’s rites or the objects of a people’s national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory.” — James Young¹

“Les Français sont connus pour leur passion de l’histoire. Leur propre histoire, de préférence, ou plus exactement les visions successives qu’ils se font d’elle et ce qu’ils croient y percevoir eux-mêmes.” — Pierre Laborie²

“L’essence d’une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses.” — Ernest Renan³

One of the most contentious and problematic periods in French history, World War II and the Occupation have presented huge challenges from the standpoint of collective memory and problematized existing forms of commemoration. Even as France prepares to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the period continues to fascinate, divide, and inspire debate. This honors thesis will examine the complex mechanics and dialectics of collective memory in postwar France through a critical analysis of the museums dedicated to World War II that have emerged over the past seventy years.

In the decades since the end of World War II, the French have turned increasingly to museums as sites both of remembrance and pedagogy. Though museum creation has slowed in recent decades, there are at present over 400 museums in France dedicated to various aspects of the Second World War.⁴ While the sheer proliferation of these institutions reflects a continued

¹ James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2.

² Pierre Laborie, *Le chagrin et le venin: La France sous l’Occupation, mémoire et idées reçues* (Paris: Bayard, 2011) 1.

³ Ernest Renan, “‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?’ Conférence prononcée le 11 mars 1882 à la Sorbonne,” in *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation? Littérature et identité nationale de 1871 à 1914*, ed. Philippe Forest (Paris: Pierre Bordas et fils éditeur, 1991), 34.

⁴ Sebastian Hervouet, Luc Braeuer, Marc Braeuer, *Guide des Musées 39-45 en France* (St. Nazaire: Éditions le Grand Blockhaus, 2012), 3.

preoccupation with *les années noires*,⁵ the commemorative and communicative nature of the museum institution provides a unique lens through which to analyze the evolution of collective memory. This thesis posits a connection between the development of the French World War II museum and the evolution of French collective memory. It will analyze the early memorials and “first generation” museums of the immediate postwar period (1945-1969) within a climate of repression and selective commemoration epitomized by the Resistance Myth, a heroic but misleading national narrative that was propagated by the French government under Charles de Gaulle. It will then trace the evolution of the “second generation” museum as both a critical historiographical institution and later as a site of tourism and spectacle – developments that reflect the disintegration of the national narrative and the “deheroization” or demythologization of the French Resistance as well as the museological trends and spectacular cultural policies of the period (1970-1995). This study will conclude by positing the appearance of a third generation of museums dedicated to World War II within the last two decades (1995-present). These institutions, which seek to balance commemorative and pedagogical goals, present the Resistance in a restructured – though not entirely unprecedented – light.

Theoretical Foundations of Collective Memory Studies

The study of collective memory is a relatively recent discipline: it was not until 1925 that sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first introduced the term *mémoire collective* into the French lexicon. Despite the novelty of the field, the study of collective memory has already attracted several significant works of scholarship, such as that of Pierre Nora and Jan Assmann, which, along with the pioneering work of Halbwachs, are particularly pertinent to this thesis.

⁵ The term *les années noires* has long been used to describe “the dark years” of French World War II experience. Its first significant use may have been Jean Guéhenno’s 1947 autobiographical text, *Journal des années noires (1940-1944)*.

Although nearly a century has passed since the publication of his first book, Halbwachs remains among the foremost theorists in the field of collective memory studies.⁶ His studies of collective memory – *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (1925) and *La Mémoire Collective* (published posthumously in 1950 following the author’s death at Buchenwald) – examine memory as a social function, rather than a psychological process. For Halbwachs, *collective memory* refers to a particular group’s understanding of the past; it is shaped both by the past experiences of the group’s members and by the present needs of the group. Individual memory formation – what Halbwachs refers to as *autobiographical memory* – is inextricably linked to an individual’s membership in a group or society. He claims that no one person possesses truly “individual” memories; rather, even autobiographical memories are marked by an individual’s identity within a society or specific social group.⁷ Halbwachs also distinguishes between collective memory and what he calls *historical memory*, which only begins to be formed “when social traditions are broken and living contact with the past has been lost.”⁸ In other words, historical memory arrives to fill the void created when collective memory can no longer be transmitted from generation to generation. Halbwachs’ observations provide an invaluable general framework for discussions of postwar French collective memory; however, it is important to note that his work predates World War II and that it therefore cannot, unlike more recent works of scholarship, be used to analyze the finer shifts in collective memory brought to light by this particularly problematic and painful period in French history.

⁶ Halbwachs may have coined the phrase “collective memory” but historian Nicolas Russell argues that the concept is an ancient one. He cites eighteenth-century French texts and practices of ancient Greece to illustrate that the concept of a collective conscious has existed for centuries, even millennia. See “Collective Memory Before and After Halbwachs,” *The French Review* 79, no. 4 (March 2006): 792-804, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25480359>. Halbwachs was further influenced by his mentor Emile Durkheim, who had previously suggested in *De la division du travail social* (1893) that societies were held together by what he called a “collective conscience.”

⁷ Several have criticized Halbwachs’ argument against the existence of individual memory; Young argues that “individuals cannot share another’s memory any more than they can share another’s cortex” (*The Texture of Memory*, xi).

⁸ Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (December 1997): 1377, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2171068>.

In his famous three-volume series *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (published between 1984 and 1992), French historian Pierre Nora incorporates more recent French experience into an otherwise wholeheartedly Halbwachsian approach to collective memory. In describing these *lieux de mémoire*, or sites – that is, physical locations as well as traditions and commemorations – “où se cristallise et se réfugie la mémoire,”⁹ Nora posits a connection between collective memory and physical space.¹⁰ In a reflection of Halbwachs’ distinction between historical and collective memory, Nora characterizes memory and history as two elements “in fundamental opposition.”¹¹ According to Nora’s definition, memory is an ever-changing and ever-present phenomenon; history, on the other hand, represents “the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”¹² Nora argues, perhaps overdramatically, that “history is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.”¹³ He warns against an entirely historiographical approach to the past, which could prove detrimental to French identity, carefully established upon centuries of collective memory.

In the 1990s, German Egyptologist Jan Assmann began to further explore the intricacies and implications of collective memory. Drawing on the scholarship of both Halbwachs and art historian Aby Warburg, Assmann posits a distinction between *communicative memory* and institutionalized *cultural memory*. The former is, in effect, a retooling of Halbwachs’ definition of collective memory: a form of memory that “lives in everyday interaction and communication”

⁹ Pierre Nora, “Entre Mémoire et Histoire: La problématique des lieux,” in *Les Lieux de Mémoire: I, La République*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), xvii. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of this text are from Marc Roudebush, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 7-24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>. For consistency, excerpts of Roudebush’s translation will be sourced to the corresponding page of the original text.

¹⁰ A similar conflation of collective memory and physical location is posited by both Halbwachs and contemporary historian Paul Williams, whose study of so-called ‘memorial museums’ will be discussed in depth in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

¹¹ Nora, “Entre Mémoire et Histoire,” xix.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, xx.

between all members of a community and informs the individual memories of members of that group.¹⁴ As it is transmitted through informal oral exchange with other group members, communicative memory has a limited “lifespan” of approximately three or four generations. In contrast to Halbwachs, however, Assmann rejects the stark division between memory and history, arguing instead that “in the context of objectivized culture and of organized or ceremonial communication, a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory.”¹⁵ According to this interpretation, cultural memory represents a new step in the evolution of memory as, unlike communicative memory, it can be “exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms” and used to reconstruct a group’s shared past.¹⁶ Although further separated from lived experience than communicative memory, cultural memory maintains close ties to the group and to group identity.

The Merits of Remembering, Forgetting, and Preserving the Past

In dramatically characterizing memory and history as two diametrically opposed elements, Nora set the stage for a debate about the validity and value of collective memory that continues to occupy scholars. Over the past several decades, collective memory has established itself within, if not entirely in opposition to, the academic study of history and the very concept of remembering has been studied in contrast to the choice to forget. In the case of French collective memory of World War II, such debates are further complicated by the conflicted and traumatic nature of the period.

¹⁴ Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 111.

¹⁵ Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (Spring-Summer 1995): 128, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/488538>.

¹⁶ Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 110.

Although most scholars now seem to at least nominally reject the inherent opposition between history and memory posited by Nora,¹⁷ collective memory continues to occupy a special place within historical discourse. Historian Kerwin Lee Klein argues that memory is gaining ground “as a supplement, or more frequently as a replacement, for history.” He further suggests that this development reflects, among other things, “an increasing discontent with historical discourse.”¹⁸ The attribution of memory’s rising within the study of history to a growing dissatisfaction with the existing discourse reflects the influence of postmodernism, famously defined by Jean-François Lyotard as “incredulity toward metanarratives.”¹⁹ Susannah Radstone succinctly explains the postmodern valorization of memory: “Postmodernism’s problematizations of grand narratives, objectivity, universality and totality prompted a turn to memory’s partial, local, and subjective narratives.”²⁰ In other words, in criticizing the validity and oppressive nature of grand narratives, postmodernism problematized the very concept of an objective, universal history and encouraged a return to memory.

However, other scholars find fault with this recent valorization of collective memory. Historian Bradford Vivian provides a particularly compelling criticism of the adoption of “ancient tropes” (such as those employed by Nora) to describe memory and history in terms of life and death, respectively.²¹ He further argues that Nora’s endorsement of memory over history “posits a vibrancy of memory that might never have existed in the first place.”²² Historian

¹⁷ Klein writes: “Indeed, the declaration that history and memory are not really opposites has become one of the clichés of our new memory discourse. In preface after preface, an author declares that it would be simplistic to imagine memory and history as antitheses and then proceeds to use the words in antithetical ways in the body of the monograph.” “On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 128.

¹⁸ Klein, “On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse,” 145.

¹⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), xxiv.

²⁰ Susannah Radstone, “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics,” *Paragraph* 30, no. 1 (2007): 21, doi: 10.3366/prg.2007.0015.

²¹ Bradford Vivian, *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 32.

²² *Ibid.*, 34.

Charles Maier questions the possibility of a *memory surfeit*, suggesting that “we have in a sense become addicted to memory.”²³ According to historian Susan Rubin Suleiman, this emphasis on collective memory can be harmful, as collective memory possesses a sense of moral authority that gives it the dangerous power to “lead not only to dogmatism and kitsch but to political instrumentalization of every kind.”²⁴ In a similar vein, Susan Crane cites the “nationalist, revisionist temptations” of collective memory in arguing for a revised understanding of the field that places further emphasis on the role of the individual.²⁵

In debating the merits of *mémoire* and *oubli*, it is helpful to consider the collective memory of French experience in World War II within the emerging field of trauma studies, which applies the concept of psychological trauma to the collective. Sociologist Jeffrey Alexander provides a succinct definition of *cultural trauma*, which occurs “when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness.”²⁶ He further argues that “trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain” but rather “the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity.”²⁷ In other words, a painful event is not in itself traumatic; rather, it is the manner in which the event comes to affect the collective identity that is traumatizing. The post-World War II evolution of periods of repression and obsession in France can therefore be studied as a cultural trauma – or perhaps a series of cultural traumas – in its own right. Trauma studies is a relatively new discipline, having emerged in the early 1990s during

²³ Charles Maier, “A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial,” *History and Memory* 5 no. 2 (Fall-Winter 1993): 140, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25618655>.

²⁴ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 7.

²⁵ Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” 1375.

²⁶ Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

what Susannah Radstone refers to as “the ‘turn to memory’ in history.”²⁸ However, discussions of suffering on the national level date back to the nineteenth century: in “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” (1882), French philosopher Ernest Renan underlined the importance of “un héritage de gloire et de regrets” to the formation of a nation, further arguing that “la souffrance en commun unit plus que la joie.”²⁹

Although national trauma can provide a unique opportunity for nation-building and encourage unity, it can also be destructive. In his study of national trauma in American history, Arthur G. Neal argues that collective trauma can both form and disturb national identity: “While in some cases national trauma results in enhancing a sense of unity within a society, there are other cases in which collective traumas have fragmenting effects.”³⁰ Renan argues that a level of national forgetfulness is necessary for the creation of a unified society: “L’oubli ... [est] un facteur essentiel de la création d’une nation, et c’est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger.”³¹ For Renan, *forgetting* therefore provides a way to move beyond traumatic experience with a renewed self of collective identity. However, as Vivian points out, when it comes to the memory of the Holocaust, “forgetting is tantamount to a sin against humanity – a failure to accept the moral burden of testifying for those who cannot speak.”³² In France, this concept of a *devoir de mémoire*, particularly as it concerns the memory of victims of the Deportation, continues to prove challenging.³³

²⁸ Radstone, “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics,” 21.

²⁹ Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?,” 41.

³⁰ Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 31.

³¹ Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?,” 34.

³² Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 32.

³³ For a critical analysis of the origins of the *devoir de mémoire*, see Sébastien Ledoux, “Écrire une histoire du ‘devoir de mémoire’,” *Le Débat* 170 (2012): 175-185, doi: 10.3917/deba.170.0175.

Collective Memory in the Memorial and Museum Landscape

Many works of scholarship have been devoted to the representation of collective memory in memorials and museums. Although both memorials and museums have much to tell us about the way in which people remember the past, museums occupy a unique role in the organization, preservation, and transmission of collective memory.

Both memorials and museums reflect the ideology of the society and time period in which they are constructed. Historian Serge Barcellini posits the monument as “a reflection of the dominant ideology in which it was created.”³⁴ Young, quoted in the epigraph at the beginning of this introduction, offers a slightly more nuanced argument in suggesting that memorials take on importance within the sphere of collective memory as they become part of a group’s commemorations and rites.³⁵ Therefore, the memorials of the early postwar period, as well as the commemorative rites that surrounded them, provide invaluable insight into the postwar French psyche. The museum, too, bears the impact of the period in which it is created; however, unlike permanent monuments of stone and concrete, museums represent “an ongoing reciprocal mediation” that is constantly being renovated and revised.³⁶ The evolution of the French World War II museum therefore reflects changing attitudes to the war within French society.

Furthermore, as key instruments in education and the communication of memory, museums play a vital role in the organization, preservation, and transmission of the past. Historian Susan Crane emphasizes the intimate relationship between memory and the museum institution by comparing the museum to a shell that “houses and protects” memory.³⁷ According

³⁴ Serge Barcellini, preface to *Mémoires de pierre: Les monuments commémoratifs en France après 1944*, by Mechtild Gilzmer, trans. Odile Demange (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2009), 5. Translation my own.

³⁵ Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 2.

³⁶ Susan A. Crane, “Of Museums and Memory,” in *Museums and Memory*, ed. Susan A. Crane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

to Crane, the museum both preserves memory in its archives (thereby ensuring that memory is “valued and remembered institutionally”) and transmits it through displays (through which memory is “incorporated into the extra-institutional memory of the museum visitors”).³⁸ She further posits that in providing an “organizational principle for the content of cultural identity and scientific knowledge,” the museum represents an extension of memory itself.³⁹ In addition to organizing and selectively presenting the past in its displays, Jean Davallon argues that the museum actually has the unique ability both to “‘revivifier’ l’histoire” (to bring history to life through *mises en scène*) and “‘refroidir’ la memoire” (to treat the memory of a group as “un fait d’histoire”).⁴⁰ In other words, the museum has the power to bring *history* to life by presenting it within striking displays and reconstitutions while also imbuing *memory* with a sense of historiographical legitimacy. In this way, Davallon argues, museums stand “au croisement de la mémoire et de l’histoire.”⁴¹ A similar concept is proposed by art historian Daniel J. Sherman, who explains that the role of the museum is “to transform [memory], to produce in visitors a new and different set of memories as the basis for collective identity.”⁴²

While other analyses within the field of museum studies have focused on similarities across different genres and generations of museums, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, professor of museum studies, posits a study of the *effective history* of museums. She argues that a comparative study of museum history – “focusing on when and how ‘museums’ in the past changed, and in which way and why long-standing practices were ruptured and abandoned” –

³⁸ Ibid, 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jean Davallon, “Conclusion du Colloque,” in *Des Musées d’histoire pour l’avenir*, ed. Marie-Hélène Joly and Thomas Compère-Morel (Paris: Éditions Noesis, 1998), 355.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Daniel J. Sherman, “Objects of Memory: History and Narrative in French War Museums,” in *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 53, www.jstor.org/stable/286899.

can help to explain “apparently all too sudden cultural shifts.”⁴³ This thesis will take a similar approach in analyzing the major changes within the museological landscape between the immediate postwar period and modern day France.

Thesis Overview

This thesis will analyze the collective memory of a particularly traumatic period in French history through the lens of museification and memorialization. It will take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of French collective memory, drawing upon the work of historians, sociologists, and scholars of museum and collective memory studies to present a comprehensive look at the evolution of collective memory within the museological landscape. Each of the following chapters will examine a distinct trend in the remembrance and museification of World War II and the Occupation in France as it relates to the major political, social and historical developments of the period and manifests itself in a number of specific examples that will be the focus of case studies.

Following a brief consideration of the military, social, political, and ideological factors that contributed to the heterogeneity of French experience during World War II, the first chapter of this thesis will examine the emergence of memorials and museums between 1945 and 1969. During this immediate postwar period, the French Resistance emerged as a means to rally the French population behind an exclusive national narrative, later termed the Resistance Myth, which selectively and exaggeratedly portrayed French collective behavior during the war years in a heroic light while downplaying traumatic memories of deportation, divergent narratives of

⁴³ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992), 11. The author takes a thoroughly Foucauldian approach to her study of the art museum throughout its Renaissance, classical and modern epistemes.

resistance, and the moral failures and ambiguities of the Occupation. The evolution of this selective memory is reflected in the “first generation” institutions that emerged in the memorial and museological landscape and perpetuated the Resistance Myth. This analysis will feature the case studies of the Mémorial de la France Combattante (inaugurated at Mont-Valérien in 1960), the Mémorial de la Déportation (inaugurated at Struthof in 1960), and the Centre National Jean Moulin (opened in Bordeaux in 1967).

The second chapter will analyze the French World War II museum’s evolution from a commemorative and blatantly mythological site to a historiographical and critical institution between 1970 and 1995. These developments occurred within a period of significant political and social development that ultimately led to the discrediting of the Resistance Myth and a period of obsessive national soul-searching. The “second generation” museums that emerged between 1970 and 1995 reflect both the evolution of collective memory (specifically, the emergence of divergent narratives of wartime experience and the phenomenon of “memory on trial” that followed the disintegration of the Resistance Myth) and broader museological trends (the emergence of *new museology* and its emphasis on representation of marginalized groups). This chapter will incorporate the case study of the Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation (opened in Lyon in 1992).

The third chapter will focus on the further evolution of the museum institution as a place of spectacle and tourism in the 1980s and early 1990s. This development will be analyzed in relationship both to the spectacular cultural policies promoted during the Mitterrand presidency and to the emergence of memory tourism in France. Though distinct from the increasingly historiographical and critical approach analyzed in chapter two, this phenomenon reflects a further desacralization of the Resistance Myth and the commodification of memory. Case studies

of the Mémorial de Caen (opened in Caen in 1988) and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère (opened in Grenoble in 1994) will provide compelling examples of this phenomenon.

Finally, the fourth chapter of this thesis will examine the further evolution of French collective memory of World War II since 1995 as well as its representation in what ought to be considered a third generation of museums. These institutions, which remain for the most part unstudied by historians, combine aspects of both first and second generation museums. Like the museums of the 1980s and early 1990s, they retain both a critical, historiographical approach and a focus on the many facets of French wartime experience. However, their emphasis on contemporary moral implications of the past and on their own memorial role suggests a further evolution of collective sentiment and an ideological and cultural restructuring of the French Resistance in 21st century France. This chapter will conclude with case studies of the Mémorial de la Shoah (opened in Paris in 2005) and the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté (opened at Struthof in 2003).

This thesis will highlight changes in French perceptions of *les années noires* and situate this evolving collective memory within the physical space of the first, second, and third generation World War II museum. It will analyze the effect of collective memory on the museum institution while studying the museum's effect on memory through its role as a communicative and pedagogical institution. Furthermore, an analysis of these museums will allow for a discussion of the merits of history and memory and will reveal the close relationship between history, memory and the museum institution. Although it may attempt to provide an objective account of the past, the museum ultimately and invariably reflects the collective interests and shared experiences of the society in which it is created.

Chapter One

Myth and Memory in the First Generation WWII Museum (1945 – 1969)

“No discourse, no place, no symbol can, by itself, account for the plurality of ordeals undergone by the forty million contemporaries who lived through the dark years.” — Olivia Wieviorka¹

The Great War had devastated France, but left her united: despite the physical cost of the war, the country had emerged in 1918 a confident and cohesive nation. World War II was an entirely different story: although France again emerged victorious in the summer of 1945, its people found it impossible to collectively articulate their wartime experience. The deep societal and ideological divisions that had separated the population from the start of the Occupation, coupled with the trauma of the 1940 defeat and the dark years that followed, continued to polarize the French people and ultimately prevented the development of any organic collective sentiment. With no obvious national narrative to unite them in a period of national crisis, the French would find their rallying point in the compelling, if highly exaggerated, image of the French Resistance as a national movement. This *mythe de la Résistance*, as it would later be defined by French historian Henry Rousso, was initially successful in uniting the French people behind the image of the French Resistance. Furthermore, the specificity of this narrative, which prioritized the experiences of certain resistance networks, served as an invaluable political tool for the wartime hero and rising politician Charles de Gaulle. The evolution of this selective collective memory is reflected in the memorials and early museums dedicated to World War II that emerged in France during the immediate postwar period – or perhaps more appropriately, in the lack thereof.

¹ Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present*, trans. George Holoch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 6.

Although French political leaders like de Gaulle were able to forge a sense of unity through the prioritization of a narrative of resistance, a lack of true national consensus made commemoration problematic. As historian Marie-Hélène Joly succinctly argues: “Even if, at the time of the liberation of France, a political consensus was achieved to safeguard the heritage of the Resistance, no unanimous national memory of this heritage or unequivocal commemoration was possible.”² As a result, post-World War II France saw little of the large-scale memorialization that had occurred in the years following World War I. While the lack of a strong national narrative at the end of the war complicated the development of memorial architecture and museological projects on a large scale, a small number of memorials and “first generation” museums did come into being between 1945 and 1969. These sites – which include the Mémorial de la France Combattante at Mont Valérien (1960), the Mémorial de la Déportation at Struthof (1960), and the Centre National Jean Moulin in Bordeaux (1967) – reflect the narrative specificity and political utility of the Resistance Myth in the immediate postwar period.

France, Conquered and Divided

In order to more fully comprehend the actions of the French people in the postwar period, it is important to first understand the impact of France’s defeat in World War II and of the Occupation that followed. Although the French ultimately emerged on the side of the victors in 1945, they were haunted by the embarrassment of their 1940 defeat, by the repressed guilt of the Vichy regime, and by the lingering divisions of the Occupation.

² Marie-Hélène Joly, “War Museums in France,” in *Recollections of France: Memories, Identities and Heritage in Contemporary France*, ed. Sarah Blowen, Marion Demossier, and Jeanine Picard (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 35.

The swift and surprising invasion by Nazi Germany in the spring of 1940 dealt a shocking blow to French national pride.³ This *étrange défaite*, as it was famously referred to by historian Marc Bloch in his 1940 book of the same name, has been more recently characterized by historian Haim Shamir as “one of the most humiliating defeats in the annals of modern warfare.”⁴ The defeat of an army widely considered to be among the world’s greatest was humiliating enough, but Hitler added further insult to injury by insisting that the armistice dictating the terms of France’s surrender be signed in the Compiègne Forest, at the very location – and in the very same railroad car – where the Germans had accepted defeat in World War I just 22 years prior. Per the terms of the armistice, the Germans took de facto control of the northern and western regions of France, a position they would maintain for the entirety of the war. While the Germans controlled this *zone occupée*, the French were initially left in nominal control of a *zone libre* in the southern half of the country.⁵

The signature of the armistice and the subsequent development of the Vichy government formalized French collaboration with Nazi Germany. Although Franco-German collaboration was widespread on both the state and individual level, the extent and nature of the interaction varied greatly. For some in the Vichy administration, collaboration was a pragmatic method of survival; for others, it was an ideological decision.⁶ To some conservatives – like author Charles

³ The French had declared war on Germany in September 1939 following the Nazi invasion of Poland. However, historians agree that the Allies greatly underestimated the threat posed by Nazi Germany during this *drôle de guerre*, or phoney war. The French realized their mistake after the May 1940 invasion of the Low Countries, but it was too late: the Battle of France that followed lasted little over a month before the signature of an armistice. For more on the military defeat of France in World War II, see Alistair Horne, *To Lose a Battle: France 1940* (London: Macmillan, 1969); Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Octagon Books, 1968); and Stanley Hoffmann, “The Trauma of 1940: A Disaster and its Traces,” *Historical Reflections* 22, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 287-301, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41299059>.

⁴ Haim Shamir, “The drôle de guerre and French Public Opinion,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no 1 (January 1976): 129, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260006>.

⁵ This summary does not take into account all of the geographic divisions that were imposed on France: a closer look would point to the annexed territories of Alsace and Lorraine, to the closed zones around the northern borders, and to the zones of Italian occupation in the southeast.

⁶ In 1968, historian Stanley Hoffman introduced a now widely-accepted distinction between *collaborators* (those who collaborated with the Germans for pragmatic reasons, often of self-preservation) and *collaborationists* (those who actively

Maurras, who infamously referred to Nazi victory in 1940 as a “divine surprise” – the Vichy regime represented a timely *révolution nationale* that would regenerate their country from the state of moral decay into which the much maligned secular Third Republic had led it and set France back on the right path. This National Revolution promoted so-called traditional French values and even adopted a new national slogan, replacing *liberté, égalité, fraternité* with *travail, famille, patrie*. Historians like Henry Rousso and Stanley Hoffman have recently studied these policies as part of *les guerres franco-françaises*, a greater cycle of ideological conflict that constitutes a cold civil war within France itself.⁷ At the time, many French people accepted and even supported the values espoused by the National Revolution; however, the exclusionary policies of Vichy – including the identification and exclusion of Jews and other so-called “undesirable” groups within the French population – were more controversial.

The interior resistance began to gain momentum within the first year of Occupation, as Pétain’s unpopular policies led “a nation of reluctant collaborators” to turn gradually to resistance.⁸ Although often romanticized as a unified network of patriotic *résistants*, the French Resistance was neither as widespread nor as immediate a phenomenon as would later be purported. The term *Résistance française* actually refers to a wide variety of resistance networks and movements, which remained divided along regional, political, and ethnic lines for the majority of the war.⁹ In addition to the various internal resistance groups, the Free French rallied

supported Nazi ideology). He argued that collaborationists could not have existed without the level of state and individual collaboration already present in Vichy France. See Hoffman, “Collaborationism in France during World War II,” *The Journal of Modern History* 40, no. 3 (September 1968): 375-395, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1878146>.

⁷ According to historians, this war ‘between the French and the French’ dates back to the French Revolution. For more on the concept of the *guerre franco-française*, see Henry Rousso, “Vichy, le grand fossé,” *Vingtième Siècle* 5 (January-March 1985): 55-80, doi:10.3406/xxs.1985.1115.

⁸ Thomas R. Christofferson and Michael S. Christofferson, *France during World War II: from Defeat to Liberation* (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2006), 143.

⁹ It was not until later in the war that these networks began to unify: in January 1943 came the unification of the *Mouvements Unis de la Résistance*, followed by the merging of the eight major networks in the *Conseil National de la Résistance* in May 1943.

support from their headquarters in London and, from 1942 to 1944, Algiers. It was through his leadership of the *Forces françaises libres* that General Charles de Gaulle rose to fame and ultimately came to embody the French Resistance. Despite the multiplicity of networks and resistance movements, both internal and external, that developed over the course of the war, active participation in the Resistance remained relatively low. Reports from Supreme Allied Headquarters reveal that the French Resistance had fewer than 400,000 members (approximately two percent of the adult population) at its height of membership in 1944; during the first two years of the war, it is likely that the number was closer to 50,000.¹⁰

It is tempting to discuss the Occupation in dichotomous terms – Free and Occupied France, collaboration and resistance – but although the geographic divisions of the country and the roles played by *collabos* and *résistants* surely hint at the enormous diversity of wartime experience, the reality was much more complex. Historian Olivier Wieviorka lists “deportation, resistance, forced labor in Germany, rationing, bombing, fighting in the *Forces françaises combattantes* of General de Gaulle” among the many “different and, strictly speaking, incomparable situations” in which the French people found themselves.¹¹ Given the utter lack of societal and ideological homogeneity between 1940 and 1944, it is unsurprising that these lingering divisions prevented the development of any organic consensus or collective sentiment in the immediate postwar period. Wieviorka offers the following analysis of the implications of such social and ideological divisions:

If one agrees that memory is in part the reflection – or the mimesis – of an experience lived through collectively, one must recognize that the heterogeneity of conditions [during World War II and the Occupation] thwarted the emergence of a common memory.¹²

¹⁰ Jeffrey Folkner, “The Nature and Extent of the French Resistance against Nazi Occupation during World War II,” (Honors thesis, Providence College, 2011).

¹¹ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6.

In other words, collective memory posits a certain unity and sense of shared experience that was nowhere to be found in France in 1945. This heterogeneity of experience as well as both a lingering sense of embarrassment and the repressed guilt of collaboration and counterrevolution made it impossible for the nation to come to a consensus about the war. Deeply divided at a critical moment, France was desperately in need of what historian Michael Kelly refers to as a “common language” – that is, a tool “with which to articulate the experience of the present and of the immediate past.”¹³ The French Resistance was to fill this void, providing a rallying point for the French people and giving them a way to forget the embarrassment of their military defeat and the dark years that followed. Though only a small percentage of French people had ever participated in acts of resistance, the image of *la Résistance française* became a lens through which the entire French population could rewrite its national narrative.

The Myth of the French Resistance and its Postwar Memorialization

In the summer of 1944, World War II was slowly but surely coming to a close in France. In preparing to reunite their divided and occupied nation, French military and political leaders faced what Olivier Wieviorka describes as a “titanic task.” In the years immediately following the war, they would have to “simultaneously to bury the dead, exalt the heroes, punish the traitors and hurl them into an ocean of opprobrium – or oblivion – compensate the victims, and provide them with a status.”¹⁴ It was in these final days of war, as the French began to imagine a life beyond Occupation and Vichy, that the Resistance Myth was born.

On August 25, 1944, Charles de Gaulle – at this point, head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic – spoke before jubilant crowds in the newly-liberated city of

¹³ Michael Kelly, “War and culture: The lessons of post-war France,” *Synergies: Royaume-Uni et Irlande* 1 (2008): 93, <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/id/eprint/80106>.

¹⁴ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 3.

Paris, which he characterized as a city “libéré par lui-même, libéré par son peuple avec le concours des armées de la France, avec l’appui et le concours de la France tout entière, de la France qui se bat, de la seule France, de la vraie France, de la France éternelle.”¹⁵ De Gaulle’s speech, which lacked any mention of French complicity in the war and only once referenced the Allied forces who had aided greatly in the liberation of France, foreshadowed what would quickly become the dominant narrative in postwar France: the inaccurate notion that a large percentage of the French population had actively resisted the Nazis. This phenomenon, later dubbed *résistantialisme*, or the “Resistance Myth,” by Rousso, both exaggerated the merits and achievements of the Gaullist Resistance and avoided any mention of French complicity in Nazi German operations.¹⁶ This mythicized narrative permitted the development of a sense of unity, however artificial, for a divided population.

The “eternal” France introduced in de Gaulle’s August 1944 speech would become a central aspect in the legacy of the French Resistance, allowing the French to claim – as they would for decades to come – that *la République* had remained incarnate in the French Resistance throughout the dark years of the Occupation and the Vichy Regime. The crimes of collaboration were not, of course, entirely ignored. In the months surrounding the end of the war, a brief yet brutal period of extrajudicial *épuration sauvage* led to the rounding up of suspected collaborators, who were summarily executed or – in the case of women accused of having had affairs with Germans – publicly humiliated. The subsequent *épuration légale* brought the trials of thousands of alleged collaborators, including high-profile figures like the Vichy Head of State Philippe Pétain and his collaborationist Prime Minister Pierre Laval. However, these purges were

¹⁵ Charles de Gaulle, “Discours de l’Hôtel de Ville de Paris,” August 25, 1944.

¹⁶ The ideas described by Henry Rousso in *Le Syndrome de Vichy* have been articulated in varying terms. Rousso spoke of *résistantialisme* and *le mythe résistantialiste*, which has been translated as the *Resistance Myth*. For the purposes of this thesis, these terms will be used interchangeably, with preference given to the widely-accepted English translation.

more representative of an attempted return to normalcy than of an effort to exact justice. At Pétain's trial in 1945, prosecutor André Mornet tellingly referred to the four years of Vichy rule not as something to be vindicated or criminalized but rather as "four years to erase from our history."¹⁷ Having dealt with the most visible perpetrators of Franco-German collaboration, French leaders sought to unify the population under the idea that it was the French Resistance – and not the aberrational Vichy Regime – that best exemplified French wartime behavior.

However, the Resistance Myth did more than create a sense of artificial unity for a divided population; it also served as a useful political tool for de Gaulle throughout his career and postwar public life. The political utility of the Resistance Myth lay in its exclusivity: it promoted a specific image of resistance and prioritized Gaullist Resistance over other groups. Although Rousso argues that Gaullists and Communists alike had a "common interest in exaggerating the scope of French resistance," it became clear in the postwar period that it was the "certain idea of France" promoted by the *Gaullist* Resistance – and not Jewish, Communist, or foreign resistance movements – that would become the national narrative.¹⁸ Central to the image of Gaullist Resistance was de Gaulle himself: even though his Free French Forces had not joined with the internal resistance networks until 1943, de Gaulle had become inextricably associated with the dominant interpretation of *la Résistance française*. As a result, "to challenge de Gaulle's legitimacy was to challenge the narrative of common purpose that he alone could articulate" (i.e., the unifying power of the Resistance Myth).¹⁹ It was an image that would follow de Gaulle for the rest of his life; though he would later return to public office as the founder and

¹⁷ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 3.

¹⁸ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 303.

¹⁹ Gino Raymond, "Sarkozy-de Gaulle: Recycling the Resistance myth," *French Cultural Studies* 24 no. 1 (February 2013): 97, doi: 10.1177/0957155812464165.

first president of the Fifth Republic (1958-1969), he is primarily remembered for his wartime role.²⁰

Although small memorial plaques and steles were erected independently by the friends, families, and former comrades of fallen soldiers and *résistants* in the months following the end of the war,²¹ the lack of an organic collective consensus manifested itself in a lack of widespread commemoration in the immediate postwar period. However, the memorials and museums that did emerge in France between 1945 and 1969 not only attest to these lingering divisions but also reflect the selectivity and political utility of the Resistance Myth. The monuments created between 1945 and 1969 – including Mémorial de la France Combattante and the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu²² – tended to memorialize specific groups who were, more often than not, *résistants*. Additionally, the monuments at both Mont-Valérien and Struthof have become symbols of a very specific sacrifice or moment in time. This selective approach to commemoration was perhaps necessary for the creation of a coherent monument, as no one site could have possibly encapsulated the entire, complicated war in the years immediately following its conclusion; however, such selectivity has not always been well-received. The specificity of these sites has become the subject of debate and criticism in recent decades, with groups and individuals lobbying, often successfully, for additions to existing commemorative sites.

²⁰ Wieviorka cites a 1995 survey in which the majority of French people identified de Gaulle primarily “as a Resistance figure, not as the founder of the Fifth Republic” (*Divided Memory*, 178).

²¹ Serge Barcellini and Annette Wieviorka, *Passant, Souviens-toi!: Les lieux du souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1995), 12.

²² The Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu, which will be further discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, was inaugurated in Paris in 1956. Although unique in its memorialization of Jewish victims of the Deportation, this monument is similar to other postwar memorials in the specificity of its commemoration.

Selective Memory and the Mémorial de la France Combattante

Nowhere is the mythification of the French Resistance more palpable than at the former military fortress of Fort Mont-Valérien. A pink sandstone monument commemorates the place where over one thousand men were imprisoned and executed by the Nazis between 1941 and 1945 (fig. 1). Once a site of religious pilgrimage, Mont-Valérien now cultivates a unique type of civic commemoration and has become a national symbol of the sacrifice of *la France combattante*. However, the memorial has been criticized in recent decades for the selective nature of its commemoration.

Following the signature of the Armistice in June 1940, the fortress at Mont-Valérien was occupied by German troops looking to take advantage of its isolated location to imprison and execute *résistants*. By the autumn of 1941 the fortress had become the Nazis' primary site of execution in the region.²³ Over the following three years, over one thousand men, most of them associated with the Resistance, were executed by firing squad in a small clearing. Among the *fusilés* were members of the Resistance, both French and foreign, who had been sentenced to death by Nazi military tribunals, as well as political hostages, who were executed in retaliation for acts of resistance in accordance with the Nazi-imposed *code des otages*. To avoid giving Parisians the opportunity to rally around and martyrize the executed *résistants*, their bodies were transported anonymously to local cemeteries and buried in mass graves.

Mont-Valérien was liberated along with the city of Paris in August of 1944 and quickly took on yet another role as “a place of painful commemoration.”²⁴ This development came thanks not in small part to the actions of Charles de Gaulle, who visited the fortress on

²³ During this period, executions of male *résistants* continued at the nearby Fort de Vincennes and *stand de tir de Balard*, or Balard shooting range. As French law forbade the use of firing squads on women; female prisoners at Mont-Valérien were transported to other sites for execution.

²⁴ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *In the Shadow of the General: Modern France and the Myth of De Gaulle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14.

November 1, 1944 – a full six months before the official end of the war in Europe. This visit, strategically scheduled for All Saints’ Day, was but the first of many de Gaulle would make to the site. He returned on June 18, 1945 for what historian and biographer Sudhir Hazareesingh describes as “a short, restrained ceremony ... in which, accompanied by his close companions, [de Gaulle] would light a memorial flame to honor the dead of both wars.”²⁵ The lighting of two flames – one at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe, one at Fort Mont-Valérien – effectively linked the sacrifices of soldiers in World War I and World War II, a sentiment that de Gaulle would repeat on numerous future occasions in an attempt to downplay internal division and emphasize World War II as an exclusively Franco-German conflict.

Though annual ceremonies here continued to commemorate the sacrifice of the Fighting French and its allies throughout the early postwar period, the creation of a permanent monument at Mont-Valérien took decades. After de Gaulle’s return to power in 1958, the newly-elected president of the Fifth Republic prioritized the creation of a memorial at the site. Architect Félix Brunau, the inspector general of public buildings and palaces and himself a former member of the Free French Forces, was given the task of designing the monument, which was later inaugurated on June 18, 1960. In a fitting reflection of the changing face of the Fifth Republic, Brunau’s design broke with tradition. Instead of accentuating the connection between the periods of 1914-1918 and 1939-1944, as de Gaulle himself had once been so keen to do, Brunau chose to emphasize the uniqueness of the Second World War, a period of time he referred to in a letter to de Gaulle as “that most sorrowful and most heroic page of our history.”²⁶

Brunau’s monument, which remains a popular site of commemoration today, is simple but striking. Built out of pink sandstone native to the Vosges Mountains, it stretches 100 meters

²⁵ Ibid, 72.

²⁶ Félix Brunau, as quoted in Hazareesingh, *In the Shadow of the General*, 82.

along the southeastern exterior wall of the fortress, not far from the clearing where executions were carried out. Along the monument sit sixteen bronze reliefs, each sculpted by a different artist and depicting a different aspect or symbol of the war. A *croix de Lorraine*, the symbol of the Free French Forces, stands in the middle of the monument, an arresting twelve meters in height. The stone cross, below which burns an eternal flame, is engraved with the words of de Gaulle: “Quoi qu’il arrive, la flamme de la Résistance ne s’éteindra pas” (fig. 2).²⁷ Located directly behind the memorial is a crypt, in which are interred the bodies of sixteen soldiers; one tomb remains empty, awaiting the remains of the last *Compagnon de la Libération*.²⁸ Celebrations marking the anniversary of de Gaulle’s Appeal of 18 June are held every year at the site; de Gaulle himself continued to attend them until his death.

In the 54 years since its inauguration, Mont-Valérien has undoubtedly become a symbol, but not necessarily one reflective of those who died there. As a journalist for *Le Monde* observed in 2005, “nothing [at the Mémorial de la France Combattante] directly evokes those who died at Mont-Valérien.”²⁹ Rather, the fortress symbolizes a more specific sacrifice – that of the Fighting French.³⁰ Criticism about this highly selective (and rather deceptive) commemoration led to the 1962 addition of a *parcours du souvenir*, which created a physical link from the Mémorial to the chapel where prisoners spent their final hours and to the clearing that served as a discreet site of execution. According to Serge Barcellini and Annette Wiewiorka, this addition was a deliberate

²⁷ These words were first uttered by Charles de Gaulle on June 18, 1940. In this speech, the anniversary of which is still commemorated annually, de Gaulle urged the French people to join him in resisting the Nazi Occupation.

²⁸ Issued by the *Ordre de la Libération* in the immediate postwar period, the title *Compagnon de la Libération* was awarded to 1038 individuals, 18 military units and five cities in recognition of heroic acts during the Liberation of France. See “Compagnons de la Libération,” *Ordre de la Libération*, updated November 4, 2013, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_doc/4_1_compagnon.html.

²⁹ Philippe Dagen, “Une cloche de bronze à la mémoire des fusillés du mont Valérien,” *Le Monde*, September 19, 2005, http://www.lemonde.fr/shoah-les-derniers-temoins-racontent/article/2005/09/19/une-cloche-de-bronze-a-la-memoire-des-fusilles-du-mont-valerien_689266_641295.html. Translation my own.

³⁰ For Hazareesingh, the memorial represents “the high point of [the] mythification of the Gaullian memory of the Resistance” (*In the Shadow of the General*, 81).

attempt to appease former members of the Communist Resistance, for whom the two sites held particular importance.³¹ In recent decades, further efforts have been made to bring attention to the individual identities of those executed at the site. In the mid-1990s, the French senator and former Minister of Justice Robert Badinter began a campaign to commemorate the *fusilés* of Mont-Valérien; his 1997 proposition called for the creation of an additional monument engraved with the names of executed hostages and *résistants*.³² After years of discussion and planning, a new monument – a bronze bell featuring the names of approximately 1010 *fusilés* – was installed in 2003 near the chapel where prisoners at the fort spent their final hours.

The Mémorial aux Martyrs et Héros de la Déportation

Nestled deep in the Vosges Mountains, several kilometers from the closest town and accessible only by a winding mountain road, Struthof still possesses the sweeping panoramas and steep slopes that made it a popular skiing destination in the years before the war. Those who manage Struthof today acknowledge the challenge of reconciling the beauty of this site with the dark chapter of history it represents. A prominently-displayed plaque bears the words of Léon Boutbien, a member of the French Resistance: “Ceux qui admireront la beauté naturelle de ce sommet ne pourront croire que cette montagne est maudite parce qu'elle a abrité l'enfer des hommes libres.”³³ This “hell of free men” was KL-Natzweiler, the Nazi concentration camp where over 50,000 men – including Boutbien – were imprisoned between 1941 and 1944.³⁴ The

³¹ Barcellini and Wiewiorka, *Passant, souviens-toi!*, 174-175.

³² Sénat de France, *Rapport no. 40: Proposition de loi relative à l'édification d'un monument au mont Valérien portant le nom des résistants et des otages fusillés dans les lieux de 1940 à 1944*, presented by Robert Badinter, October 16, 1997.

³³ Wall text, Musée de KL-Natzweiler, Struthof, France.

³⁴ A variety of different names have been used to refer to the camp. As a result of its proximity to the Alsatian town of Natzwiller, the camp bore the German name “Konzentrationslager Natzweiler” (KL-Na), or “Natzweiler Concentration Camp.” It was also referred to during and after the war as the “camp du Struthof” or “camp du Natzwiller.” Today, the site’s official website lists two acceptable names: KL-Natzweiler (to specifically refer to the Nazi concentration camp) and Struthof (to designate the camp, monuments, and museums). However, German historian Mechthild Gilzmer argues in *Mémoires de pierre* (2009) that the official name for the camp is now “Natzweiler-Struthof.”

former camp is now the site of a national memorial and cemetery, a museum, and a recently-opened center of research. For the French, Struthof has come to symbolize the sacrifice of the deported members of the Resistance in a manner of selective commemoration not unlike that at Mont-Valérien, whereby the individual stories and diverse backgrounds of those executed were overlooked in favor of adherence to the dominant narrative.

KL-Natzweiler was constructed after the annexation of Alsace and Moselle in 1940, when the Nazis decided to build a concentration camp in Alsace in order to exploit the region's natural resources. The decision to open the camp at Struthof, a tourist destination known for its ski slopes, was made after the discovery of pink granite on the nearby Mont-Louise in the fall of 1940. The first prisoners arrived at KL-Natzweiler on May 1, 1941; in the three years that followed, approximately 52,000 deportees were imprisoned, either in the central camp or at one of the Nazis' many annex camps.³⁵ The conditions which had made Struthof ideal for vacationing skiers – the steep slopes, reliable snowfall, and unobstructed views – only made life worse for prisoners, who worked twelve hours per day in the local quarry. In the summer, they were scorched by the sun; in the winter, temperatures dropped dramatically and snow accumulated in massive drifts. Despite the harsh conditions, KL-Natzweiler continued to function until autumn 1944. In September, aware of the imminent arrival of Allied soldiers, the Nazis decided to evacuate the camp and move prisoners to concentration camps further east. American soldiers arriving in November to liberate the city of Strasbourg found only the empty shell of the camp.

³⁵ The name KL-Natzweiler actually refers to a network of Nazi concentration camps. In addition to the central camp in the Vosges Mountains, this network included approximately 70 annex, or satellite, camps in Germany and France. The first of these camps was opened in December 1942; the last, in January 1945.

At the end of World War II, Struthof quickly became a site of commemoration. Camp survivors were invited to observe the Journée des Internés et Déportés Politiques in 1945, in which year a cross was erected at the base of the camp to serve as a temporary monument. However, the camp itself continued to serve as an internment camp for Germans and French collaborators during the early postwar period. It was not until 1949 that the management of the site was turned over to the Ministère des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre and that discussions about the creation of a permanent memorial began. A proposition brought before the French government in 1951 argued that the creation of a national necropolis at the site was necessary to “the honor of the nation” and that such a site would “allow [the victims’] families, as well as young people and the nation as a whole, to come in pilgrimage to reflect on and venerate their memory.”³⁶ The following decade saw the classification of the camp and nearby gas chamber as historical monuments in 1951, the creation of the Comité National pour l’Érection du Mémorial de la Déportation in 1953, and the launch of a *souscription nationale*, or national fundraising effort, to fund the creation of the memorial in 1954. On July 23, 1960, a mere five weeks after a similar ceremony at Mont-Valérien, President Charles de Gaulle presided over the inauguration of the Mémorial aux Martyrs et Héros de la Déportation and of the national necropolis (fig. 3).

Today the Mémorial towers over the remains of the concentration camp and the surrounding valley in an abstract spiral of concrete and white stone intended to suggest both flame and smoke. Architect Bertrand Monnet explained the symbolism of his design in a 1960 interview in *Le Monde* later paraphrased by Barcellini and Wiewiorka: “The circle that defines

³⁶ “L’ancien camp de Struthof doit être reconnu comme nécropole nationale demande plusieurs députés,” *Le Monde*, September 20, 1951, http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1951/09/20/l-ancien-camp-de-struthof-doit-etre-reconnu-comme-necropole-nationale-demande-plusieurs-deputes_2061367_1819218.html. Translation my own.

the base of the monument represents captivity, while the continual ascension of the lines speak to spiritual escape, the only escape possible for the deportee. The monument opens toward France, the land of liberty.”³⁷ An abstract skeletal figure, intended to represent the martyred deportee is engraved on the inside of the monument. Below the Mémorial and the national necropolis visitors can walk through several reconstituted camp buildings, including a museum that will be discussed later in this chapter.³⁸ At the base of the camp, the emphasis on the sacrifice of the Resistance is reflected again in the presence of a stone *croix de Lorraine*, dedicated “à la gloire des résistants français exécutés ou disparus dans les prisons nazies” (fig. 4).

Criticism of the site’s selective approach to memorialization began to emerge in the 1970s, a period that will be discussed in further depth in the next chapter. A 1978 article in *Le Monde* criticized the emphasis on the “patriotic” sacrifice of those who perished at the camp: “The patriotic explanation, as noble as it may be, is insufficient. ‘Mort pour la France ... mort pour la patrie’ ... but the crosses [at the national necropolis] only honor the *résistants* and political deportees. The mentally ill, the undesirables, the mixed races, will remain forever unknown.”³⁹ Among these “forever unknowns” are the victims of a particularly disturbing Nazi initiative: the Jewish skeleton collection. Organized by August Hirt, a Nazi pseudoscientist at the Institut d’Anatomie Normale at the Reich University of Strasbourg (founded by the Nazis in 1941), the collection was intended to serve as a scientific display of the racial inferiority of non-Aryans. 86 concentration camp prisoners were identified as “specimens” and sent to Natzweiler-Struthof in 1943. All were gassed in an improvised gas chamber a few kilometers away from the

³⁷ Barcellini and Wieviorka, *Passant, Souviens-toi!*, 415-416. Translation my own.

³⁸ Following the decision to preserve the camp in 1949, the majority of the camp’s buildings were burned down for sanitary purposes. Only four buildings – including the cell block, crematorium, kitchen block, and one dormitory – were preserved. They have since been restored (and, in the case of the dormitory, turned into a museum) and reopened to the public.

³⁹ Pierre Meyer, “Les absents du Struthof,” *Le Monde*, January 2, 1978, http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1978/01/02/les-absents-du-struthof_2989549_1819218.html. Translation my own.

main camp. Though a plaque identifying the *chambre à gaz* as a historic monument was installed in 1970, it took another 35 years for the victims to be identified and commemorated.

The Jewish skeleton collection is only one example of a distinct narrative that diverges from the more commonly accepted story of deportation and resistance typically commemorated at Struthof. According to the site's official website, "l'histoire et la mémoire du site ont évolué au rythme de la conscience collective française."⁴⁰ For the most part, however, the commemoration of these diverging narratives as the result of an evolving collective conscience is relegated to the Mur du Souvenir, or Wall of Remembrance. This low granite wall is located at the bottom of the camp in the former *fosse aux cendres*, the ash pit where Nazis haphazardly tossed the remains of cremated victims. The wall features over a dozen granite plaques, each dedicated to a different group of deportees, from the unknown martyrs (at whose plaque de Gaulle stopped to pray during a ceremony in 1960) to the members of the Polish Resistance (whose plaque was inaugurated in 1976). The wall also includes a plaque in memory of the Jewish prisoners gassed at the camp in 1943; installed in 1989, it was the result of an international effort spearheaded by an American visitor who had been "particularly galled" by the lack of commemorative marker.⁴¹ Most recently, in 2010, the Mur du Souvenir received a plaque to the memory of those deported for their homosexuality.⁴²

Despite efforts to develop a more inclusive level of memorialization, it is interesting to note that German historian Mechtild Gilzmer characterizes Struthof primarily as a "lieu de mémoire concret sur le sol de France pour les victimes du groupe des résistants français

⁴⁰ "Une Mémoire vivante," Struthof, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/fr/le-haut-lieu-de-memoire/presentation/une-memoire-vivante>.

⁴¹ Steven Greenhouse, "A Visitor's Sorrow and Pity Yield a Memorial," *New York Times*, July 2, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/07/02/world/a-visitor-s-sorrow-and-pity-yield-a-memorial.html>.

⁴² "Une plaque à la mémoire des déportés homosexuels dévoilée au camp du Struthof," *Le Parisien*, September 25, 2010, <http://www.leparisien.fr/strasbourg-67000/une-plaque-a-la-memoire-des-deportes-homosexuels-devoilee-au-camp-du-struthof-25-09-2010-1082604.php>.

déportés.”⁴³ This idea – that Struthof represents a very tangible and concrete place of memory for deported members of the French Resistance – is evident at the site today. It is the reason why one sole flag – *le tricolore* – flies high over a camp that imprisoned people of thirty different nationalities and why plaques around the site commemorate *les morts pour la France*. Although the experiences of other groups have been gradually resurrected and memorialized on the Mur du Souvenir, it is the Mémorial – a physical incarnation of the sacrifice of the *résistant déporté* – that dominates the camp today.

Emergence of the First Generation World War II Museum

Beginning in the mid-1960s, the French turned increasingly to museums to commemorate World War II. Although the majority of museums in France dedicated to World War II would not be inaugurated until the 1980s and 1990s as part of a greater, second wave of museification that will be analyzed in the chapters to come, a handful of museums emerged in the late 1960s and very early 1970s.⁴⁴ These institutions – which include the Musée de KL-Natzweiler (1965), the Centre National Jean Moulin (1967), and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de Besançon (1971) – marked a new stage in the evolution of World War II commemoration.

The emergence of these museums can be attributed to a variety of causes: veterans and former *résistants* growing anxious that their stories would be forgotten; specific groups hoping to promote their own marginalized narratives in a more inclusive commemorative space; or even local politicians hoping to receive a boost by reminding constituents of their own wartime exploits. Perhaps most importantly, the very institution of the museum provided a more

⁴³ Mechtild Gilzmer, *Mémoires de pierre: Les monuments commémoratifs en France après 1944*, trans. Odile Demange (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2009), 146.

⁴⁴ Joly estimates that approximately three quarters of museums dedicated to World War II in France were opened after 1980 while around one quarter date from between 1954 and 1979 (“War Museums in France,” 36).

appropriate milieu for the conflicted and contentious memory of World War II. The example of the Musée de KL-Natzweiler, which opened in Struthof's sole remaining camp barrack in 1965, reflects the utility of the emerging World War II museum institution. Envisioned as "un complément au Mémorial," the museum was considered a necessary addition to and further source of contextual information for the existing memorial.⁴⁵

Joly has categorized the museums that appeared in France during the 1960s and 1970s as "first generation" museums, as they were created by the same generation who had lived through World War II. First generation museums were usually funded by groups of former *résistants*; as a result, according to Joly, "their museum narrative is memorial rather than historic, based on personal, lived experiences."⁴⁶ Therefore, although these early museums perhaps allowed for the presentation of a greater number of narratives than a more traditional monument, these highly personal and commemorative sites still perpetuated the Resistance Myth, albeit in a somewhat broader and more varied version. Joly additionally characterizes first generation museums by their appearance: created "without recourse to the professional help of historians, museum curators or exhibition designers," they are often small, crowded, and visually unappealing.⁴⁷ Though few and far between, these early museums reveal important information about the postwar French psyche.

Case Study: The Centre National Jean Moulin

No study of early World War II museums in France would be complete without mention of the Centre National Jean Moulin. Inaugurated in 1967, it is among the oldest museums in

⁴⁵"La création d'un musée du Struthof," Struthof, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/fr/le-haut-lieu-de-memoire/la-memoire-du-campapres-guerre/la-creation-dun-musee-du-struthof>.

⁴⁶Joly, "War Museums in France," 37.

⁴⁷Ibid.

France dedicated to the Second World War and is often used as an example of the “first generation museum” as defined by Joly. The Centre National Jean Moulin is a particularly valuable case study, as its inexplicable focus on Jean Moulin reflects both the specificity of the Resistance Myth and its use as a political tool.⁴⁸

As was the case for many such museums, the creation of the Centre Jean Moulin was made possible by the support of veterans and former members of the French Resistance, including Jacques Chaban-Delmas, the then-mayor of Bordeaux who was himself an *ancien résistant* and rising Gaullist politician. The museum opened in Bordeaux on February 4, 1967. Though it moved to a larger, more central location in 1981, its appearance has not changed greatly since the late 1960s. It therefore remains an excellent example of the type of museum that emerged in the early postwar period.

The museum’s permanent exhibits, which are spread over three floors, are dedicated to the Resistance (first floor), the Deportation (second floor), and the Free French Forces (third floor), though this organization is not immediately apparent. Visitors are given relatively no guidance, but are rather left to explore the museum on their own. The amount of information presented on the first floor alone is overwhelming. On the walls, every inch is covered with propaganda posters, enlarged photographs (primarily of de Gaulle and other famous *résistants*), and maps of obscure military ventures (fig. 5). Glass cabinets display everything from revolvers and radio equipment to miniature French flags. With the exception of some small plaques, few of these objects are labelled. According to historian Henning Meyer, this organization – or, as it may appear, lack thereof – is typical of a first generation museum. Meyer writes: “In the absence

⁴⁸ For more about the creation of the museum, see Henning Meyer, “Jacques Chaban-Delmas et le Centre national Jean Moulin de Bordeaux,” *Revue Historique de Bordeaux et du Département de la Gironde* 3 no. 7-8 (2005). Meyer is one of few historians who has written extensively about the Centre National Jean Moulin; as a result, this analysis draws heavily from his work.

of a museologist or professional historians, the objects are not integrated in a historic landscape and no interpretation or context is given.”⁴⁹ With little funding to update exhibits or hire professional curators, first generation museums often do little more than present donated objects. The third floor, dedicated to the Free French Forces, is laid out in a similar manner, with rooms full of photographs, model airplanes, and newspaper clippings.

The Centre National Jean Moulin is among the oldest museums in France dedicated to the Second World War, but the exceptionality of the Centre extends beyond its date of construction. Meyer points out that early museums dedicated to World War II were almost always constructed on pre-existing *lieux de mémoire*; that is, they were built on sites that already possessed great significance. Unlike Mont-Valérien or Struthof, Bordeaux is not a *lieu de mémoire*; in fact, the city has few ties to either the Resistance or Jean Moulin. Rather, the Centre Jean Moulin was constructed “en absence d’un ‘haut fait’.”⁵⁰ The decision then to build a museum in Bordeaux dedicated to one of the French Resistance’s greatest heroes is confusing. It can be seen, on one level, as a purely pragmatic and economically-driven decision for a city looking for a way to create a successful museum in the postwar period. The Centre was inaugurated just a few years after the celebrated installation of Jean Moulin’s remains in the Panthéon, alongside those of Voltaire, Rousseau, Hugo, and Jaurès. How could a museum named after the popular hero be anything but a success?⁵¹ Another explanation posits the Centre National Jean Moulin as a point

⁴⁹ Henning Meyer, “Une approche d’évolution des musées d’histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale à partir de trois exemples : le Centre National Jean Moulin de Bordeaux, le Mémorial de Caen et le Centre de la mémoire d’Oradour-sur-Glane” in *Les Musées de la nation: Créations, transpositions, renouvelés*, ed. Anne-Solène Rolland and Hanna Murauskaya (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008), 108. Translation my own.

⁵⁰ Henning Meyer, “Les musées de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et la transmission de la mémoire,” in *La France, l’Allemagne et la seconde guerre mondiale : quelles mémoires?*, ed. Stephen Martens (Pessac: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2007), 193.

⁵¹ Whether the decision to open the Centre Jean Moulin in Bordeaux was politically self-serving or just fiscally responsible, it seems one thing is clear: the museum’s creators knew what they were doing. Since its creation, the museum has been relatively successful, averaging between 20,000 and 25,000 visitors a year – a much higher number than the average first generation museum. Meyer attributes this success to the museum’s central location in downtown Bordeaux as well as to a steady stream of school field trips.

of unification for the people of Bordeaux, rallying them around a myth of resistance. The building of the Centre therefore played much the same role for the city of Bordeaux as the fabrication of the Resistance Myth did for the French nation as a whole.

The creation of the Centre could also have been the self-serving political decision of Mayor Chaban-Delmas. After all, it was almost certainly Chaban-Delmas' status as a well-known supporter of de Gaulle that had led to his election as mayor in 1947. It therefore stands to reason that the Resistance would remain an important factor in his continued political success. Meyer suggests that "Chaban-Delmas clearly sought to intensify the memory of the Resistance in a town where no major Resistance event ever took place – and to which Jean Moulin had no personal connection" in order to solidify his own legitimacy as a rising Gaullist politician, who was later to serve as prime minister (1969-72) before making an unsuccessful bid for the presidency (1972).⁵² This interpretation becomes all the more likely when one considers the weight accorded to the museum's namesake, Jean Moulin. The *résistant's* 1964 interment in the Panthéon had not just been proof of his popularity; according to historian Richard Golsan, it also marked the appropriation of Moulin as a Gaullist symbol.⁵³ For further proof of political motivations, Barcellini and Wiewiorka point to the museum's dedicatory plaque, which references Moulin's role as a special emissary of General de Gaulle – a title that is "evoked only in rare inscriptions which wish to insert Jean Moulin into the Gaullist narrative."⁵⁴ The Centre National Jean Moulin therefore does not just commemorate the efforts of the French Resistance, but also serves as a subtle promotion of the Gaullist narrative.

⁵² Henning Meyer, "Memory of World War II in France: National and Transnational Dynamics," in *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 138.

⁵³ Richard J. Golsan, "The Legacy of World War II in France: Mapping the Discourses of Memory," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Richard Leebow, Wulf Kansteiner, Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 80.

⁵⁴ Barcellini and Wiewiorka, *Passant, Souviens-toi!*, 207.

Conclusion

In 1945, after five years of war, occupation, and political upheaval, France faced perhaps its most daunting challenge: the reconstruction of a divided and war-torn country. Rather than dealing with the “unpleasant facts” of *les années noires*, the French government “chose to favor denial.”⁵⁵ Although the immediate postwar period has been likened to a period of collective psychological repression, during which the French avoided any mention of their own wartime experience, an analysis of the limited number of memorials and museums that emerged between 1945 and 1969 reveal that the memory of World War II was not entirely repressed. Rather, the French relied upon an exaggerated narrative of national resistance to frame their discussions of the past during a challenging period of accelerated economic, social, and political change. The most unsavory aspects of the war, including the harsh realities of collaboration and anti-Semitism, were simply ignored in favor of the glorious narrative of the Gaullist Resistance.

By emphasizing this Resistance Myth in their support for commemorations, memorials, and first generation museums, French leaders were able to fabricate a semblance of national unity. This selective national narrative was initially successful, as the French – buoyed by postwar economic success and newfound confidence in their charismatic leader, Charles de Gaulle – were all too happy to embrace their inner *résistants*. However, this selective memory could not endure. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the French began to question and criticize their roles in the war in what would become a decades-long preoccupation. In conjunction with other political, social and cultural factors affecting collective memory, this obsession with the past – which Rousso would later dub *le syndrome de Vichy* – would also have a profound impact on the museological landscape.

⁵⁵ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 8.

Chapter Two

Memory, on Trial and on Display (1970 – 1995)

“Museums may tell a truth, but they can never tell the *whole* truth: to acknowledge the subjectivity of the truth on offer should allow the visitor to engage with it, reflect upon it, and make up their own mind.” — Sarah Blowen¹

The “Resistance Myth,” whose origins in France are discussed in the previous chapter, emerged in the years following the end of World War II as a way for the French to deal with their conflicted feelings about the war, Occupation, and Vichy. It was initially successful in uniting the French people behind a common, exclusive narrative of Gaullist Resistance while repressing the unpleasant realities and divergent experiences of the war. However, the 1970s marked the beginning of a new phase in the collective memory of the war. Characterized by the opening of national archives and the emergence of a younger generation increasingly distanced from the specter of the Occupation, the period of 1970 to 1995 saw the challenging, discrediting, and eventual disintegration of the Resistance Myth as a hegemonic discourse and the emergence of a decades-long preoccupation with the troubled memory of World War II. While a succession of French presidents tried – and failed – to “[bury] the memory of those hard times in the sands of oblivion,”² a critical rhetoric developed in many elements of French civil society. The emergence of such criticism, both within France and abroad, further spurred the French people to reconsider the role they had played in the war.

This new critical rhetoric, in conjunction with other political, social, and cultural factors affecting collective memory during the period, had a profound impact on the museological

¹ Sarah Blowen, “Lest we Forget: Memories, History, and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère,” in *Memories, Identities and Heritage in Contemporary France*, 77.

² Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 104.

landscape. The “second generation” museums that emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s differed greatly from those of the early postwar period. These institutions were larger and provided a more inclusive look at the many narratives of the war; furthermore, they touted their primary historical – rather than memorial – function. The growing popularity of the World War II museum as well as its development as a critical and historiographical institution reflects both the increased fascination and growing skepticism that surrounded the collective memory of the war.

This chapter will examine the disintegration of the Resistance Myth and the emergence of alternative wartime narratives through a case study of one such second generation museum: the Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation in Lyon.

The Emergence of Critical Rhetoric

In France and around the world, the 1960s saw the rise of a questioning generation who took an unprecedentedly critical look at the actions of their elders. In France, much of this criticism targeted the Gaullist regime, including the way it had handled the problematic legacy of World War II. The Resistance Myth, which had once so successfully focused attention on the actions and legacy of the French Resistance, was called into question. The critical rhetoric that emerged in the work of Marcel Ophuls and Robert Paxton, among others, found a ready audience in a period already plagued by political and economic turmoil.

The memory of World War II pervaded films and novels of the period, the most influential of which was undoubtedly Marcel Ophuls’ *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*. Released in 1969, this inflammatory documentary featured dozens of interviews with *résistants* and collaborators from the city of Clermont-Ferrand. The interviews revealed not only the acceptance of the German occupation by many of the town’s citizens, but also a deeper sense of anti-Semitism and unapologetic support of Vichy on the part of several interviewed. Despite its positive

international reception (a 1972 American reviewer praised Ophul's attempt "to puncture the bourgeois myth – or protectively askew memory – that allows the French generally to act as if hardly any Frenchmen collaborated with the Germans"³), the film was initially banned on French television. At the time of its release, Jean-Jacques de Bresson, the head of the French national broadcasting service and a former *résistant*, explained that the film "destroys myths that the people of France still need."⁴ Though the documentary did not air on French televisions until 1981, its importance in the development of French memory of World War II cannot be overstated. In fact, in his analysis of postwar France, historian Tyler Stovall calls it "the single most important factor in reopening the debate about Occupation France."⁵

The myths of the postwar period were struck a further blow with the 1973 arrival of Robert Paxton's *La France de Vichy* (originally published in the United States as *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*). In the book's prologue, Paxton declared: "This is not another book about why France fell. It is about what Frenchmen decided to do next."⁶ Paxton rejected previous historians' attempts to sympathetically portray Vichy as a "shield" that aimed to spare the French people through measured collaboration with the Nazis. Instead, he argued that the officials of Vichy had not just accepted Nazi policies, but rather enthusiastically promoted them – as well as similar policies of their own making – in accordance with their own ideological convictions. Furthermore, Paxton argued, the collaboration of the Vichy Regime had neither improved French citizens' quality of life, nor protected citizens from forced labor, nor prevented the further partitioning of France itself. In short, Vichy had failed to shield its citizens. The book's overwhelming success in France was particularly surprising given that the historian –

³ "Truth and Consequences," *TIME*, May 27, 1972. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,910312,00.html>.

⁴ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 106.

⁵ Tyler Stovall, *France Since the Second World War* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), 90.

⁶ Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 3.

an American, no less! – had received little acknowledgement for prior analyses of the politics of the Vichy Regime. Historian Moshik Tempkin attributes the success of *La France de Vichy* to its provocative nature as well as its timing: the controversial book simply “appeared in the right place at the right time.” Arriving on the heels of the student-fueled protests of May 1968, “it caught the attention of a generation eager to find fault with their fathers and elders.”⁷

The critical rhetoric expressed by the likes of Ophuls and Paxton emerged within a climate of political and economic unease that sociologist Henri Mendras would later famously liken to a second French Revolution.⁸ Beginning in the early 1960s, France had been roiled by political protests – first against the polarizing Algerian War, then regarding the Six-Day War in Israel. However, it was the student protests of May 1968 which, as Rousso would later famously claim, “cracked the mirror.” These revolts against the education system were quickly revealed to be a broad critique of political authority, of changing French society, and of de Gaulle himself. Historian Richard Golsan characterizes the protests as “an act of defiance against the older – wartime – generation. [As a result, a] troubled past that had been largely passed over in silence by the parental generation was no longer taboo.”⁹ Furthermore, while France’s economic success had been successful in masking the growing sense of political unease, the 1970s heralded the inglorious end of the “Trente Glorieuses” – the period of economic prosperity that France had enjoyed since the end of the war. The oil crisis of 1973 and the economic downturn that followed “inaugurated an age of suspicion toward political, economic, and intellectual elites” – a suspicion that, according to Wiewiorka, “extended to former heroes whose glorious past was now called

⁷ Moshik Tempkin, “‘Avec un certain malaise’: The Paxtonian Trauma in France, 1973-1974,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (April 2003): 292, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.wm.edu/stable/3180659>.

⁸ See Henri Madras, *La Seconde Révolution française: 1965-1984* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

⁹ Golsan, “The Legacy of World War II in France,” 80.

into question.”¹⁰ It was within this landscape of suspicion and criticism that the works of Ophuls and Paxton, among others, made their mark.

The protestors in May 1968 had wanted change and they got it. After having rebounded from his inept handling of the protests, de Gaulle lost a popular referendum in 1969 and resigned. De Gaulle had not always been popular; in fact, during the May 1968 protests, he had become the object of unprecedentedly vicious rhetoric and caricature and was even forced to briefly flee the country. However, his departure from the presidency in 1969 was nonetheless an abrupt change. Within the sphere of collective memory, it heralded the beginning of the end of the Resistance Myth as a national narrative.

Deheroization of the Resistance, Disintegration of the Myth

While the larger-than-life figure of de Gaulle had given substance and credibility to the Resistance Myth, the celebrated Gaullist narrative was a fable that de Gaulle’s successors were unable – or perhaps just unwilling – to maintain. The three presidents who followed de Gaulle – Georges Pompidou (1969-1974), Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (1974-1981), and Francois Mitterrand (1981-1995) – approached the memory of World War II in different yet similarly insufficient and ineffective ways. They showed “little interest either in resuscitating the resistance myth and its fading glories or in leading the nation in a collective soul-searching over the realities of the Dark Years.”¹¹ Instead, their memorial policies contributed to “a confusion of memory”¹² and a gradual deheroization of the Resistance.

Georges Pompidou’s 1969 ascension to the presidency was remarkably unremarkable; a political scientist noted with surprise that the transition to “Gaullism without de Gaulle” had

¹⁰ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 113.

¹¹ Golsan, “The Legacy of World War II in France,” 81.

¹² Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 122.

occurred “with little of the unrest or violence that some ... had predicted.”¹³ Though a Gaullist, Pompidou had no ties to the French Resistance – a fact that distinguished him from most of the members of his party and greatly influenced his “schizophrenic” memorial policy.¹⁴ On the one hand, Pompidou attacked the existing image of the war presented by the Resistance Myth: he discouraged the idea of a national World War II museum and openly criticized the Resistance in interviews. At the same time, however, he opposed a reexamination of the war: his government banned the broadcast of documentaries that took a critical look at the war and denied researchers access to Vichy archives.¹⁵ Perhaps most controversially, Pompidou issued a pardon to Paul Touvier, a Nazi collaborator whose 1987 trial and subsequent conviction for crimes against humanity will be discussed later in this chapter. When forced to defend his actions, Pompidou encouraged the French people to “draw a veil over the past, to forget a time when Frenchmen disliked one another, attacked one another, and even killed one another.”¹⁶

Pompidou’s successor, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, was further removed from the war, having been only eighteen at the time of the liberation of Paris and having played only a relatively minor role in the Resistance. As a result, a reporter noted early in his presidency that he approached the Resistance with neither “excessive veneration nor impatient irritation towards this glorious past” but rather with “a kind of respective familiarity.”¹⁷ However, historians have noted a discrepancy between Giscard’s speeches, in which he consistently maintained a relatively Gaullist rhetoric, and his actions with respect to the Resistance and its place in national memory. Among Giscard’s most controversial policies was his decision to do away with national

¹³ Howard Penniman, “French Elections, 1969,” *World Affairs* 132, no. 2 (September 1969): 101, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20671090>.

¹⁴ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 122.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

¹⁶ Georges Pompidou, as quoted in Golsan, “The Legacy of World War II in France,” 81.

¹⁷ Gilles Vergnon, “Au nom de la France: Les discours des chefs d’État sur la Résistance intérieure (1958-2007)” in *Vingtième Siècle* 112 (October-December 2011): 146, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41330202>. Translation my own.

celebrations of May 8 (V-E Day); some interpreted this decision, advertised as a step in rebuilding Franco-German relations, as a slight to former *résistants*. Ultimately, Giscard's memorial policies – which, not unlike Pompidou's, vacillated between criticism and inaction – contributed to what Golsan characterizes as a “gradual deheroization of the Resistance Myth”¹⁸ that would only continue under his successor.

Though decidedly different than those of his predecessors, François Mitterrand's memorial policies were characterized by a similar ambivalence and ambiguity. His presidency saw the reinstatement of May 8 celebrations, the long-awaited trials of several Vichy and German officials, a burst in museum creation (as part of a broader policy of cultural activism), and endeavors to memorialize previously ignored groups (including national commemorations in honor of “victims of racist and anti-Semitic persecutions”) – all attempts, according to Wieviorka, “to celebrate World War II and the Resistance in a more positive way.”¹⁹ However, Mitterrand continued to argue the aberrational nature of Vichy: it was impossible, he explained, to blame *la République* for the actions of a handful of collaborators. Mitterrand's own personal background further muddied the waters. An avowed anti-Gaullist who had publicly opposed the former president on numerous occasions, Mitterrand had made a career in presenting himself as a model of the “interior” resistance, a pedigree which had helped him to victory over Giscard in the 1981 election. However, a 1994 biography by investigative journalist Pierre Péan argued that Mitterrand's decision to join the Resistance had been a strategic rather than ideological decision. In Péan's *Une Jeunesse Française*, the president was portrayed as an opportunist and pretender

¹⁸ Golsan, “The Legacy of World War II in France,” 78.

¹⁹ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 123. In analyzing Mitterrand's more inclusive and balanced memorial policies, Wieviorka acknowledges their theoretical effectiveness while noting their meager actual impact: “These developments should have helped turn the memory of World War II into a pacified domain, offering civil society a single message, hailing the courage of Resistance fighters, honoring the sacrifice of soldiers, mourning the victims of the Shoah, denouncing the crimes of Vichy. But this was not the case” (*Divided Memory*, 126).

who maintained strong ties to his Vichy past. Though not unchallenged, Péan's book arrived at a politically opportune time, stirring up existing suspicions which Mitterrand's "clumsy denials" were unable to assuage.²⁰ His career and legacy were permanently affected.²¹

Although each approached memorial policy in a different way, the presidencies of Pompidou, Giscard and Mitterrand were similarly marked by their unwillingness to uphold the Resistance Myth as well as by their inability to reframe the slowly crumbling national narrative. In an attempt to quietly put the war behind them, French leaders only wound up further dividing the population. Public pressure for justice grew as it became clear that the French people were not ready to, in the words of Pompidou, "draw a veil over the past."

Memory on Trial

The passage of amnesty laws in the 1950s had put a stop to the *épuration légale*, drawing "a veil of legal oblivion" over the crimes of the war.²² However, the renewed obsession with World War II that began in the 1970s led to an increase in discussions of culpability on both the individual and national level. In the 1980s and 1990s, this newfound obsession with wartime guilt, combined with the emergence of a more assertive French Jewish community (as evidenced through the formation of organizations like Fils et Filles de Déportés Juifs de France, or FFDJF, in 1979),²³ led to the so-called "memory trials" of the 1980s and 1990s. These trials – of the Nazi officer Klaus Barbie, the collaborator Paul Touvier, and high-ranking Vichy official Maurice

²⁰ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 132.

²¹ Golsan posits Mitterrand's career trajectory as a kind of microcosm of postwar collective memory, from an initial story of "largely unalloyed resistance" to the resurfacing of "the repressed Vichy past" (*The Legacy of World War II in France*, 84-85).

²² Éric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, trans. Nathan Bracher (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 74.

²³ See Jacques Fredj, *Les Juifs de France dans la Shoah* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011).

Papon – offered the French a way to purge themselves of their collective guilt through a sort of second *épuration légale*.

The memory trials began in mid-1980s, with the arrest of Klaus Barbie, a Gestapo officer nicknamed “Butcher of Lyon” for his violent torture tactics. Barbie, who had escaped France after the war and settled in Latin America, was extradited to France in 1983. He was put on trial in May 1987 and was ultimately found guilty of crimes against humanity. The trial, which was heralded as overdue justice for Barbie’s victims, attracted extensive international media attention and even spurred the creation of a new World War II museum in Lyon. However, the verdict did not depart from the established theory that Nazi Germany had been the aggressor and France the victim: the Resistance Myth emerged, in the words of historian Joan Wolf, “bruised but still resonant.”²⁴ Rather, it was the trials of French collaborator Paul Touvier and high-ranking Vichy official Maurice Papon, in 1994 and 1998 respectively, which would require the courts to examine the complicity of the Vichy regime.²⁵

Public pressure for the prosecution of Paul Touvier, a collaborator who had been living in hiding since 1944, had begun several years earlier in 1971, with the offering of a presidential pardon for the former member of Vichy’s pro-German *Milice*. The pardon had been little more than a technicality, as the statute of limitations on Touvier’s original death sentence – issued *in absentia* in 1946 – had expired years before; however, the 1972 publication of an article detailing Touvier’s criminal wartime activities sparked public outrage. Pompidou’s urging to “draw a veil

²⁴ Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 125.

²⁵ Not everyone went to trial. René Bousquet, a Vichy official who had facilitated the deportation of almost 200 children from Paris was indicted by the French government in 1991 for crimes against humanity. He was assassinated in 1993, a matter of weeks before his trial was set to begin. Jean Leguay, a Vichy official charged in 1979 and again in 1986 for crimes against humanity, died from cancer in 1989 before standing trial. Others received punishment elsewhere: French courts sentenced Gestapo officer Kurt Lischka to life in prison *in absentia*, but after being extradited to Czechoslovakia, he spent 25 years living freely in Germany before eventually being arrested.

over the past” did little to quell public sentiment and in 1981 Touvier was indicted for crimes against humanity for the 1944 execution of seven Jewish hostages. He was not put on trial until 1994 – a trial which, according to Conan and Rousso, “promised to provide an outlet for the animosities that had been built up over the decades.”²⁶ As French courts were struggling to apprehend Touvier, the actions of another collaborator were brought to light. This time, it was not an insignificant *milicien* who was under fire, but Maurice Papon, a high-ranking civil servant in the Vichy government who had enjoyed an illustrious career after the war, including almost a decade spent as the Prefect of Police for Paris (1958-67) and a later stint as Budget Minister (1978-1981). The Papon trial, which lasted a staggering six months was, according to Golsan, “not simply that of a single individual but the symbolic trial of an entire regime.”²⁷ Ultimately, both Touvier and Papon were found guilty: Touvier was sentenced to life in prison, while Papon received a much lighter ten-year sentence.

Critics of both trials questioned the validity of the charges, as the legal concept of “crimes against humanity” had been established without a statute of limitations to aid in the prosecution of Nazi war criminals and had never before been applied to a French citizen.²⁸ One journalist wondered “if the definition of crimes against humanity in France had not been stretched to the breaking point.”²⁹ Furthermore, although several prominent historians had served as expert witnesses for the prosecution, the trials did not reflect an attempt to create an objective

²⁶ Conan and Rousso, *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, 82.

²⁷ Richard Golsan, *The Papon Affair: Memory and Justice on Trial* (New York: Routledge, 2000), xi.

²⁸ At the time of Barbie’s extradition, the French legislature had unanimously passed a law removing the statute of limitations for crimes against humanity; some critics would later argue that it was never meant to be used to charge French citizens. Per a 1992 Court of Appeals ruling, the prosecution was required to prove that Touvier had acted on behalf of the Nazis (who, unlike Vichy, qualified as a regime “practicing a politics of ideological hegemony”) in ordering the hostages’ murder. As no proof of such a link existed, witnesses and prosecutors distorted the facts of the case to reach a conviction; as a result, Golsan argues that “any satisfaction that could be derived from the verdict had to be tempered by the knowledge that it had had to be secured by taking very serious liberties with the historical record” and by deviating from legal precedent (*The Papon Affair*, 15).

²⁹ Golsan, “The Legacy of World War II in France,” 97.

history. Rather, Conan and Rouso argue: “It was difficult for historical truth to find its place among the imperious demands of memory, the sophistry of a legal code subjected to political issues, and the ritualized logic of criminal court proceedings.”³⁰ Although many criticized their procedural flaws or the “memorial militancy” they represented, these memory trials were almost universally acclaimed as a step in the right direction because they promoted an increased focus on both French Jewish identity and the crimes of Vichy and because they fostered a critical and questioning spirit in the discussion of French guilt. The trials of the 1980s and 1990s have additionally been studied by historian Susan Rubin Suleiman as a watershed moment in the history of the Resistance and by H.K. Kedward as a turning point in the role of the historian;³¹ however, it is the impact of the trials on the museological landscape that is of particular interest in this chapter.

Transformation of the World War II Museum

In addition to massive changes within the sphere of collective memory, this period in France – particularly from the mid-1980s to early 1990s – saw large changes in both the number and nature of museums dedicated to World War II as a result of both the disintegration of the Resistance Myth and the emergence of a new museological approach. Characterized by Joly as “second generation” museums, these institutions are particularly noticeable for the increased attention they pay to alternate wartime narratives and for the emphasis they place on their own historical integrity (as opposed to the memorializing and even mythologizing ethos of earlier institutions).

³⁰ Conan and Rouso, *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, 122.

³¹ See Susan Rubin Suleiman, “History, Heroism, and Narrative Desire: The ‘Aubrac Affair’ and National Memory of the French Resistance,” *South Central Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 54-81, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40039826>; and H.R. Kedward, “Resiting French Resistance,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999): 271-282, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679404>.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the museification of this period is its scale: Joly estimates that close to 75% of all museums dedicated to World War II in France were opened during the 1980s and 1990s.³² Historians have articulated several possible causes for this proliferation, including the increased preoccupation with the war and the desire to capitalize on the major “anniversary years” of 1984 and 1994. However, it is important to note that the proliferation of French museums dedicated to World War II during this period is consistent with a greater global trend of museification. Scholars estimate that 95% of existing museums worldwide were opened after 1945, the majority of which, according to cultural anthropologist Sharon Macdonald, were opened post-1970.³³ The increased number of museums dedicated to World War II in France can therefore also be interpreted as the result of a broader museological trend.

The museums that opened in the 1980s and early 1990s are markedly different both in style and content from their predecessors. Unlike earlier institutions, which were for the most part limited in size, scope, and funding, second generation museums tend to be well-funded by local government and private organizations (as well as by the occasional national subsidy³⁴) and can afford the latest in museum technology. No longer the pet projects of *anciens résistants*, these institutions entrust their collections to professional curators, historians and even scenographers and feature ambitious promotional and pedagogical aims. Joly argues that much

³² Joly, “War Museums in France,” 34.

³³ Sharon Macdonald, introduction to *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 4.

³⁴ Although the museums were supported primarily through local or private funds, the French government did occasionally intervene. Wieviorka points out that between 1988 and 1999, several museums (among them: the Mémorial de Caen, the National Historic Site of the Resistance in Vercors, and the Center of Memory of Oradour) received French and European funds.

of this evolution reflects attempts to cater to the growing expectations of the museums' ever-increasing public, a phenomenon which will be examined in further detail in the next chapter.³⁵

Following in the wake of the delegitimation of the once culturally normative Resistance Myth, second generation museums also differ from their earlier counterparts in the increased level of attention they pay to alternative wartime narratives. Thanks in part to a growing cognizance of French Jewish identity, many museums of this period focus more heavily on the Holocaust, a trend reflected most obviously in their names. "Musées de la Résistance et de la Déportation" emerged throughout the country: in Besançon in 1971, in Tarbes in 1989, in Toulouse in 1994, in Saint-Etienne in 1999. The experience of *les déportés* was but one alternative narrative that came to the museological forefront during this period. A national network of museums – of which the largest is the Musée de la Résistance Nationale, which opened in the Paris suburb of Champigny-sur-Marne in 1985 – was developed to commemorate the Communist Resistance, whose story had effectively been buried by the Gaullist Resistance Myth in the immediate postwar period. Although Olivier Wieviorka argues that this development was the direct result of the "fragmentation" that followed the dissolution of the Resistance Myth,³⁶ the phenomenon is also undoubtedly a reflection of the broader representational critique that emerged in the 1980s and encouraged an increased focus on previously ignored groups within museums and other academic disciplines.³⁷

Lastly and perhaps most importantly for this study, the second generation museums of the 1980s and 1990s tend to emphasize their value as historical – rather than commemorative – institutions. Unlike first generation museums, for whose creators the war was both personal and

³⁵ Joly, "War Museums in France," 37.

³⁶ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 121.

³⁷ Macdonald, introduction to *A Companion to Museum Studies*, 3.

ever-present, second generation museums present information compiled by teams of historians, for whom World War II is a less personal and therefore more easily scrutinized topic. The popularity of teams of historians and *conseils scientifiques* reflects a more objective, scientific approach to the past and one that stands in stark contrast to the personal, commemorative institutions of the immediate postwar period. Given the complicated status of collective memory in 1980s France, this emphasis on history – and the “near effacement of memory” described by Sherman – hardly comes as a surprise.³⁸ At a time when the collective memory of a nation was being challenged and repudiated, “historical” museums arrived to fill the void and provide visitors with a factual, critical look at the past. Not unlike the so-called “memory trials,” these museums carefully present evidence and make judicious arguments relevant to the different sides of the story in the hope that a well-informed public might reach conclusions about the events in question that are at once accurate, discerning, and just.

Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation

The Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation, which opened in the city of Lyon in October 1992, is in many ways a typical second generation museum. Its organization, presentation and essentially scientific approach to history are all characteristics of the newer museological trends present in museums of the 1980s and 1990s.³⁹ Even its name – Centre d’Histoire – reflects historiographical rather than memorial aspirations. However, a closer look at

³⁸ Sherman, “Objects of Memory: History and Narrative in French War Museums,” 51.

³⁹ This analysis focuses primarily on the CHRD within the contexts of its original 1992 opening. However, the museum has continued to evolve in recent years. According to a press release from the museum’s official website, the museum’s permanent expositions were updated in 2012 to “répondre aux attentes d’un public toujours plus exigeant et rendre compte des avancées de la recherche historique” (“20 Ans du CHRD: Une Nouvelle Exposition Permanente,” Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation). It is as a result of these renovations that some of the museum’s characteristics are similar to those of more recent museums.

the museum reveals both the impact of recent renovations and the direct influence of the memory trials of the 1980s.

In analyzing the Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation, or CHRDR, it is interesting to first compare the existing museum to its predecessor, a 1960s-era institution that fits well within Joly's definition of a first generation war museum, discussed in the previous chapter. This first Musée de la Résistance opened on May 8, 1965, and, like other museums of its time, was limited both in size – it was housed in a room rented from the city's Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle – and in scope. Like Bordeaux's Centre Jean Moulin, the museum had been created with the support of several former members of Lyon-based Resistance networks, including then-mayor Louis Pradel. Unsurprisingly, its exhibitions therefore focused primarily on the stories of *résistants* and political deportees. According to the CHRDR's permanent exhibition catalogue, “les collections de ce premier musée reflètent le parcours de ceux qui les ont réunis, anciens résistants et déportés politiques, et renseignent peu sur la déportation des Juifs.”⁴⁰ It quickly became apparent that, at hardly 100 square meters, the Musée de la Résistance was too small to accommodate its growing collections and in 1980, an organization was created to discuss the expansion of the museum.

Although the idea of enlarging the original Musée de la Résistance emerged in the early 1980s, the CHRDR traces its creation to a specific moment in time: the 1987 trial of Klaus Barbie. The arrest, trial, and subsequent conviction of the infamous Nazi official “reawakened the collective memory of the people of Lyon” and spurred the creation of a new museum dedicated to World War II.⁴¹ After several years of planning and fundraising, the Centre d'Histoire de la

⁴⁰ Isabelle Doré-Rivé, ed, *Une ville dans la guerre, Lyon 1939-1945: Les collections du Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation* (Paris: Fage Editions, 2012), 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 14. Translation my own.

Résistance et de la Déportation opened on October 15, 1992. The museum attracts approximately 60,000 visitors a year and between its creation in 1992 and brief renovation in 2012, attracted approximately 1 million visitors.

Today, visitors to the museum begin their visit on the second floor, from whence they follow a distinct path through the permanent exhibition. This organization, which physically guides visitors through a predetermined chronology, is a hallmark of second generation museums. In the case of the CHRD, the order is *chrono-thématique*. After a brief explanation about the history of the museum itself (fig. 6), visitors are first introduced to wartime life in Lyon. This section, titled “Une Ville en Guerre,” features black-and-white photos of crumbling buildings, ration cards, and an assortment of Vichy propaganda posters. The exhibition continues chronologically through the unification and organization of the Resistance – with three sections entitled “Vers l’Unification,” “La Lutte Armée,” and “Le Danger” – before ultimately concluding with sections dedicated to “La Déportation des Résistants” and “La Persécution et la Déportation des Juifs.” Throughout the permanent exhibition, the focus is decidedly and, given the ambitious goals of the museum, perhaps surprisingly local. Photos depict familiar city landmarks and a map of “les lieux de la répression” marks locations of suppressed uprisings and Nazi brutality within the city of Lyon.

In comparison to the cluttered assemblages of yellowing newspapers and peeling photographs found in many first generation museums, the strategic displays within these sections of the CHRD’s permanent exhibition are almost clinically precise. Within the permanent exhibition, a series of large white signs spell out historical context and provide an easy-to-follow narrative. Photos are cropped, enlarged and impeccably captioned, while a relatively small number of artifacts are highlighted. Small video screens (a result of the museum’s 21st century

renovation) appeal to more tech-savvy visitors, who may choose to watch newsreel footage or listen to personal testimonies while attached headsets play audio in French or English.

While the first half of the permanent exhibition owes much of its current appearance to a recent renovation, the second part of the exhibition has remained unchanged since the museum's 1992 opening. Visitors step through a hallway and into a reconstituted city street, complete with propaganda posters and graffiti – “Vive la France Libre” – before continuing into the reconstruction of a home interior, complete with clandestine print shop. This dramatic, immersive approach was favored by creators of the original Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation, as explained in a museum press release:

Les concepteurs de l'ancienne exposition, issus du monde du théâtre, avaient créé un univers volontairement sombre et oppressant, faisant de leur scénographie un élément à part entière de l'information qu'ils souhaitaient transmettre au public. Bâti sur une double métaphore, celle de la nuit et de d'enfermement, le concept muséographique se traduisait par un parcours contraint souvent étroit, scandé par reconstitutions: une salle de cinéma, un wagon de déportation, l'intérieur d'une maison de résistant et sa cave clandestine.⁴²

Though it fits many characteristics of a typical second generation museum, what makes the Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation unique is its close connection with the memory trials of the 1980s, particularly that of Klaus Barbie. The influence of the trial on the CHRDR is apparent to visitors before they even set foot inside. Plaques outside the museum entrance identify the building as the former École des Services de Santé Militaire, which served as Gestapo headquarters from 1942 to 1944. It was in this building, later almost entirely destroyed by Allied bombs, that Barbie employed infamously brutal interrogation techniques on Jewish and Resistance prisoners. Upon entering the museum, visitors walk past a theatre that is permanently dedicated to showing excerpts from Barbie's 1987 trial, which was taped for its

⁴² “20 Ans du CHRDR: Une Nouvelle Exposition Permanente,” Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation, http://www.chrd.lyon.fr/static/chrd/contenu/Colonne_droite/presse/CHRDR_20ans.pdf.

historic significance (fig. 7). According to the CHRD website, the footage – which includes testimony from dozens of Barbie’s victims and plays five times a day – is watched by close to 20,000 visitors a year.

The impact of Barbie’s trial is felt more subtly throughout the rest of the CHRD. The concept of “memory on trial” seems omnipresent, as if the museum has become a courtroom and the city of Lyon has been brought before the jury. Just as victims of Barbie’s atrocities received the opportunity to speak about their experiences, so too does the city of Lyon get its chance to testify. In addition to video *témoignages*, the evidence submitted includes artifacts – letters, ration cards, clandestine newspapers – and images of smoky, rubble-filled streets. Throughout the course of the museum’s expositions, visitors are provided with all the essential facts about life in the occupied city. Before exiting (through the gift shop, naturally), they are guided into one last room. Rows of benches sit before a large screen displaying photographs and videos from the September 1944 liberation of Lyon. After a few hours of earnest exploration, a moment of reflection in the quiet darkness of this last room is inevitable. As images of the Liberation flash across the screen, it is up to the visitor to decide. To what extent were the city and its inhabitants culpable in the crimes of the Occupation? Does the city of Lyon, once nicknamed “la capitale de la Résistance” by Charles de Gaulle, deserve its title?

Conclusion

In France, the years between 1970 and 1995 marked a period of immense change. Under Presidents Pompidou, Giscard, and Mitterrand, the nation experienced government without de Gaulle for the first time since the creation of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Within the sphere of collective memory, the revelations made by the likes of Ophuls and Paxton led to the collapse of both the myth of the French Resistance and the equally mythical theory of the aberrant nature of

the Vichy regime. The disintegration of the Resistance Myth led to a greater focus on multiple wartime narratives, to a national call for justice, and to a syndromic distrust of collective memory. Change occurred as well on the museological front, as the 1980s and early 1990s in particular saw the evolution of the second generation museum in response to the changing memory landscape.

First, the disintegration of the unified image of *la Résistance française* proved beyond a doubt the idea that “any kind of simplistic analysis or statistical breakdown, any neat polarization between those who resisted and those who collaborated was totally inadequate.”⁴³ In other words, scholars were forced to admit that the French experience of World War II would never be as simple as the Resistance Myth had made it out to seem. It became apparent that there could never be any one story – or, to use Lyotard’s term, *grand narrative* – of French wartime experience or any one answer to lingering questions of resistance and responsibility. In a reflection of this fragmentation of the wartime narrative, second generation museums emerging in the 1980s and 1990s increasingly focused on stories of deportation as well as, if not in place of, tales of heroic resistance, and also included the experience of resistance movements outside of the Gaullist tradition.

Furthermore, revelations about the extent of the complicity and collaboration, both practical and ideological, within as well as outside of the Vichy government shocked the nation, leading individuals and civil organizations to call for justice and investigate French culpability in the crimes of the Occupation. The resulting memory trials of the 1980s and 1990s placed the French courts “at the crossroads of the principle stages of history of the memory of the

⁴³ John Flower, “A continuing preoccupation with the Occupation,” *French Cultural Studies* 25 (2014): 301, doi: 10.1177/0957155814534144.

Occupation.”⁴⁴ As a result, there is a noticeable shift from the commemorative museums of the immediate postwar period: rather than being concerned with remembrance and homage, museums begin encouraging visitors to think about greater questions of responsibility. This critical courtroom-like atmosphere pervades museums like the Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation, where visitors are provided with evidence of Lyon’s wartime experience and asked, to a certain extent, to judge for themselves the culpability of the people of Lyon.

Perhaps most importantly, the spectacular disintegration of the Resistance Myth launched a period of obsession with World War II and of suspicion of collective memory, both of which are reflected in the changing museological landscape. The spike in museum creation in the 1980s and 1990s, explained partially by the “anniversary years” of 1984 and 1994, reflects this desire for increased discussion and analysis of World War II. During this period, the suspicion of political elites and resistance heroes described by Wieviorka extended to the realm of collective memory, as the French people began to question the validity of their “memory” of the war. This suspicion of memory itself is reflected in the increased focus on the historiographical role of the museum institution and on the emphasis placed on its professional, scientific approach to the past.

Beginning with the presidency of François Mitterrand and the spectacularization of culture that resulted from his cultural and memorial policies, museums – particularly those dedicated to World War II – began to evolve further as sites of tourism and spectacle. This evolution will be examined as a distinct phenomenon in the third chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁴ Conan and Rouso, *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past*, 75.

Chapter Three

The Spectacle of Memory (1981 – 1995)

“All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.” – Guy Debord¹

In the late 1980s, the local government of Nord-de-Calais was looking for a tourist attraction to bring visitors to an economically stagnant region. They turned to La Coupole d’Helfaut-Wizernes, a fortified bunker complex that had been built during the Occupation to serve as a launch base for German missiles and abandoned after the war. Local authorities reopened the site for a *journée portes-ouvertes* on June 20 and 21, 1987. After a surprisingly large turnout – 20,000 people flocked to La Coupole over a period of two days – plans to transform it into a permanent museum began in earnest.² Ten years later came the opening of La Coupole, Centre d’Histoire et de Mémoire du Nord-Pas-de-Calais. Despite the emphasis on history and memory in its name, it is telling that the museum’s website describes La Coupole first and foremost as “un grand site touristique.”³ Although the museum is still a decidedly “second generation” institution, its creation nonetheless represents a new direction in the evolution of the French war museum as a site of tourism and spectacle.

As examined in the previous chapter, the second generation museums that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s were the result of a range of factors, including mounting evidence about the dark side of French wartime experience and the radical critical spirit of the late 1960s that

¹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 12.

² Delphine D’Haenens, “Le Jour où ... Yves Le Maner, contour d’Histoire,” *La Voix du Nord*, October 6, 2013, <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/culture-loisirs/le-jour-ou-yves-le-maner-contour-d-histoire-ia0b0n1597964>.

³ “Qu’est-ce que *La Coupole*?” La Coupole, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.lacoupole-france.com/le-centre-d-histoire/presentation/quest-ce-que-la-coupole.html>. The museum is then described as “un site exceptionnel ... un des grands vestiges de la Seconde Guerre mondiale” and, finally, as a place both of historical and scientific significance and of education.

pervaded French society, questioning all established narratives. The disintegration of the Resistance Myth and the emergence of divergent wartime narratives encouraged a critical approach to history within the second generation museum, which submits a wide range of rigorously compiled evidence for the presumably objective consideration of the contemporary visitor. At the same time, the spectacular cultural policies promoted during the Mitterrand presidency and the emergence of memory tourism within a broader societal context of cultural spectacle and consumption also contributed to the changing face of the French World War II museum.

Museums constructed during the Mitterrand presidency (1981-1995) tend to incorporate modern technology to an unprecedented level, to cater to the expectations of a growing tourist population, and to include a presentational element that is nothing short of spectacular. These changes can and should be examined as the reflection of an increasingly demanding and technologically-savvy museum public. However, it is also important to note both the influence of contemporary cultural policy and the growth of the memory tourism industry as well as the impact of the evolving collective memory of the French wartime experience. This spectacular approach to history suggests a further desacralization and deheroization of the Resistance Myth that allows the history of the war to be transformed into spectacle.

Through the case studies of the Mémorial de Caen (opened in Caen in 1988) and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère (reopened in Grenoble in 1994), this chapter will continue the analysis of second generation museums, focusing particularly on the effect of the development of memory tourism and the spectacularization of public culture in France on the museological landscape.

Spectacularization of Culture during the Mitterrand Administration

In order to analyze the changing face of the World War II museum in the 1980s and early 1990s, it is important to understand the evolving cultural landscape within which these institutions developed. During the presidency of François Mitterrand, high-profile cultural activism on both the national and local level contributed to the increasingly spectacular nature of public culture. The most tangible result of Mitterrand's cultural policy was of course the *Grandes Opérations d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme*, an architectural program commonly referred to as *les grands travaux*, which comprised some of the biggest physical changes to the city of Paris since the work of Haussmann.⁴ However, the 1980s saw the altering of more than the Parisian skyline: together, Mitterrand and his Minister of Culture Jack Lang changed the landscape of French cultural policy and French culture itself.

Although the Ministry of Culture is a relatively recent invention, the concept of state involvement in the realm of culture is a time-honored tradition in France. It began with the earliest monarchs, whose patronage of the arts, or *mécénat*, represented an early form of national cultural policy, and continued during and after the French Revolution. Cultural policy took on a renewed importance in the post-World War II period, as a dramatically weakened France sought to solidify its reputation as a world leader in the production of art, literature, and all things “cultural.” During the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, André Malraux (the first Minister of Culture, 1959-1969) emphasized the uniqueness of French cultural production while attempting to offer the masses greater access to canonical “high culture” and to the production of the

⁴ Among these “grand projects” were the long-awaited renovation of the Louvre Museum and the addition of I.M. Pei's glass pyramid; the construction of the Institut du Monde Arabe; the building of the Opéra Bastille; and the creation of a massive new building – referred to as *le site François-Mitterrand* – to house the collections of France's national library. Some of the projects – like the construction of La Grande Arche de la Défense and the transformation of the Gare d'Orsay into a world-class art museum – had begun during the Giscard presidency; however, by the time of their completion in the 1980s, each bore the distinctive stamp of Mitterrand.

modernist avant-garde through initiatives like local *maisons de la culture*. Cultural policy experienced a further resurgence and a dramatic restructuring in the 1980s during the presidency of François Mitterrand. After being elected in 1981, Mitterrand appointed Lang minister of culture (a position of Lang was to occupy 1981-1986 and again 1988-1992) and quickly doubled the budget of the Ministry of Culture. The arrival of the flamboyant, energetic, and publicity-savvy Lang marked what historian David Looseley describes as “the most colorful and most controversial era in the Ministry’s history.”⁵ Mitterrand and Lang’s policies were marked by an expansion of the very definition of culture, by an increased emphasis on the economic benefits of cultural spending, and by a tendency toward spectacle.

The period saw an unprecedented attempt to democratize culture as Lang sought to expand its reach and bring the ethos of decentralization (epitomized in the *lois Defferre* of 1982 and 1983) into the realm of culture. While the majority of Mitterrand’s famous *grands travaux* centered on building projects within and just outside of Paris, the cultural policy espoused by Lang also affected smaller towns and cities around the country. Thanks to the example set by Lang and Mitterrand, local spending on culture rose exponentially, almost doubling during the first decade of Mitterrand’s presidency.⁶ Lang justified increased spending in the realm of culture with an impassioned and oft-repeated response: “L’économie et la culture sont un même combat!” In other words, money spent on “the finer things” was not wasted, as culture provided economic stimulation. When asked to defend his spending, Lang would make the argument that the French government had derived benefits far beyond the recovery its expenditures: “L’argent investi nous a été rendu au centuple en visiteurs, en créations d’emploi, en développement

⁵ David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun: Cultural Policy and Debate in Contemporary France* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 233-234.

économique, en rayonnement international.”⁷ The emphasis on the fiscal utility of expenditures in the cultural sphere during the Mitterrand presidency has been examined as an attempt to transcend the traditional separation between culture and economy.⁸

In addition to expanding the geographic reach of culture, Lang expanded its very definition. Unlike Malraux, who had prioritized so-called “high culture” and scoffed at the intellectual significance of popular culture, Lang embraced its cultural value. He encouraged the foundation of a center for comic books in the city of Angoulême and later facilitated the creation of the first Fête de la Musique, a 1982 festival promoting music *pour tous* and *par tous*. For Lang, it seemed, anything and everything could be culture. As he would later reflect, “Ce mot [culture] est en effet d’une extrême ambigüité dans la langue française. Il contient tout et le contraire de tout.”⁹ This cultural pluralism – or *le tout-culturel*, as it was branded by Lang’s critics – had its roots in the sociopolitical and countercultural movements that had begun in 1960s and led to such theoretical works as Michel de Certeau’s *La culture au pluriel* (1974), which promoted the concept of a more inclusive definition of culture.¹⁰ However, a parallel can also be drawn between the all-encompassing image of culture promoted during the Mitterrand presidency and the increased focus on representational inequality that emerged in the 1980s. In accepting and supporting cultural activities outside the sphere of traditional or “big C” culture,

⁷ Jack Lang, “Les Grands Travaux: Entretien entre Jack Lang et Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent,” in *Jack Lang, batailles pour la culture: Dix ans de politiques culturelles*, ed. Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent (Paris: La Documentation française, 2013), 107.

⁸ Even for those who accepted the legitimacy of Lang’s claim, this association of culture and economy was not always well-received. Lang was criticized for expanding the definition of culture to the extent that it was “indistinguishable from market speak” (Jim McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy* [Berkshire: Open University Press, 2004], 69).

⁹ Jack Lang, “Tout est culture: Entretien entre Jack Lang et Maryvonne de Saint Pulgent,” in Saint Pulgent, *Jack Lang, batailles pour la culture: Dix ans de politiques culturelles*, 57.

¹⁰ Historian Emmanuelle Loyer posits a direct connection between the events of May ’68 (the *tout-politique*) and Lang’s policies. See Emmanuelle Loyer, “1968, l’an I du tout culturel?,” *Vingtième Siècle* 98 (April – June 2008): 101-111, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20475323>.

Lang rejected the limited definition of French culture and promoted underrepresented and undervalued forms of cultural expression.

The cultural activism of the Mitterrand presidency was particularly notable for its endorsement of a spectacular approach to culture.¹¹ Often, this manifested itself through actual spectacles – as exemplified in the proliferation of cultural festivals, or *fêtes*, in France between 1981 and 1995 (including the aforementioned Fête de la Musique and the Fête du Cinéma, first held in 1985). However, spectacular elements pervaded many of Mitterrand’s other initiatives, from the president’s televised visit to the Panthéon on his first day as president in 1981 to his willingness to “sacrifice functionality to monumentality” for the stylized glass towers of the Bibliothèque de France in 1989.¹² The epitome of this spectacular approach came in 1989, with the bicentennial celebration of the French Revolution. Designed by graphic designer and advertising filmmaker Jean-Paul Goude, the parade was an ironic, postmodern, and “operatic” extravaganza of massive proportions that blurred the lines between patriotism, history, publicity, and performance.¹³

In their analysis of visual culture as spectacle pedagogy, Charles R. Garoian and Yvonne M. Gaudelius posit an interesting distinction between spectacle as “an insidious, ever-present form of propaganda in the service of cultural imperialism” and as “a democratic form of practice that enables a critical examination of visual cultural codes and ideologies.”¹⁴ This tension –

¹¹ For a more positive take, see John MacAloon, “Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Society” in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. John MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984).

¹² Looseley, *The Politics of Fun*, 64; *Ibid.*, 187-192.

¹³ For more on the spectacle of the bicentennial, see Stephen Laurence Kaplan, *Farewell, Revolution: Disputed Legacies, France, 1789/1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Érik Neveu, “Le défilé Goude du bicentenaire,” *Réseaux* 148-149 (2008): 203-237, doi: 10.3917/res.148.0203; and Michael Leruth, “François Mitterrand’s ‘Festival of the World’s Tribes’: The Logic of Exoticism in the French Revolution Bicentennial Parade,” *French Cultural Studies* 9, no. 25 (1998): 51-80, doi: 10.1177/095715589800902503.

¹⁴ Charles R. Garoian and Yvonne M. Gaudelius, “The Spectacle of Visual Culture,” *Studies in Art Education* 45, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 299, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1321066>.

between spectacle as an oppressive political tool and as a means of encouraging a creative, critical conversation – is reflected in both the creation of and the reaction to the French World War II museums that opened between 1981 and 1995.

The Emergence of Spectacle in the Museum

Recent technological advancements and the critical spirit of the May '68 generation had already led curators and museumgoers alike to reevaluate the museum institution.¹⁵ In the wake of the “spectacularization” of public culture inherent to the cultural policies of Mitterrand and Lang, things changed further. Across the board, museums began to focus more of their attention on the appearance, rather than the content, of their exhibitions: the emphasis was not so much on *what* was being presented, but on *how* it was being presented. As a result, French museums dedicated to World War II that were built in the late 1980s and early 1990s are particularly marked by the theatricality of their presentation and their reliance on technology. They have been further characterized by critics as catering too much to their audience and resorting to oversimplified, spectacular recreations of the past.

It is important to note that these institutions still fit the definition of the second generation museum as described by Joly and expanded upon in the previous chapter: both the museums in Caen and Grenoble are historiographical institutions that present a critical look at French wartime experience. However, these museums also contain a level of technology and theatricality unprecedented in earlier institutions. Museums like La Coupole and Le Mémorial de Caen boast flashy websites and exhibitions with slick audiovisual effects, while sites like the

¹⁵ For more on the evolution of the museological landscape during this period, see Rebecca DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art: The Politics of Artistic Display in France after 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For a critical analysis of one such postmodern exhibit – Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput’s 1985 *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Pompidou – see John Rajchman, “The Postmodern Museum,” *Art in America* 73, no. 10 (1985): 111-177.

Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère feature reconstitutions more reminiscent of movie sets than historical institutions. Additionally, many museums seek out the expertise of scenographers, often with experience in film or theatre. Historian Valery Casey argues that curators and scenographers look to guidelines of consumer economy when designing their exhibits; as a result, these museums prioritize “the visitor’s perceptual and aesthetic experiences in the context of other consumer experiences.”¹⁶ While some have criticized the inclusion of new media in recent museums, other scholars in the field of museum studies, like Eilean Hooper-Greenhill and Michelle Henning, argue that the predominance of media and technology in recent museums may in fact suggest an epistemic break in museological evolution and the emergence of a new genre of postmodern museum.¹⁷

Critics of the new, visitor-focused museology argue that the commercialization of the museum inherent to such an approach risks encouraging a simplification of history. Jean Davallon, professor of museum studies, suggests the possibility that museums are rejecting a more traditional museological approach in favor of directly appealing to their public, “un public qui va, en ce cas, visiter l’exposition comme on va voir un spectacle.”¹⁸ In the case of museums dedicated to World War II, some critics argue that spectacular reproductions may be misleading or even downright dangerous. In his analysis of memorial museums, for example, Williams argues that “the insertion of objects into an obviously fabricated visual environment risks compromising their interpretation as *evidence* of atrocity, precisely because we associate drama with manipulation.”¹⁹ Casey argues, however, that museum visitors are savvier than ever. She posits that spectacular representation is by no means a new phenomenon but has rather always

¹⁶ Valerie Casey, “Staging Meaning: Performance in the Modern Museum,” *TDR* (1988-) 49, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488658>.

¹⁷ Michelle Henning, “New Media,” in Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, 306.

¹⁸ Jean Davallon, “Le musée est-il vraiment un média?” *Publics et Musées* 2 (1992): 117, doi: 10.3406/pumus.1992.1017.

¹⁹ Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 101.

been a part of the museum narrative. She contends that in postmodern museums, “the techniques of representation are made visible through their excess, and the visitor registers the spectacle created.”²⁰ These concerns suggest a mutual exclusivity of museological integrity and commercial success that will be addressed in the case studies later in this chapter.

According to Williams, the use of spectacular reproductions and other theatrical elements is particularly effective in the “high stakes” atmosphere of the World War II museum, which “can produce drama more effectively than other types of museums.”²¹ La Coupole provides a textbook example of a “high stakes” museum with a heightened sense of theatricality. Since its conception, the museum has been the site of spectacular displays designed to attract tourists. A flashy website – like the entirety of the museum’s exhibitions, offered in French, English, German and Dutch – welcomes visitors “aux frontières de l’humanité” and offers a virtual tour of the museum’s permanent exhibitions and 3-D planetarium (opened in 2012).²² Still, historian Yves Le Maner, the museum’s former curator, resists the idea that the museum is in any way *ludique* – preferring to describe it as “pedagogical without being boring.”²³

Memory Tourism and *Lieux de Mémoire*

Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire* has revolutionized the way in which scholars and laypeople alike discuss the past. Since its first use in 1984, the term – which entered French dictionaries in 1993 – has been adapted by scholars, governments, and even “sites of memory”

²⁰ Casey, “Staging Meaning: Performance in the Modern Museum,” 81.

²¹ Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 96.

²² “La Coupole: Centre d’Histoire et Planétarium 3D,” accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.lacoupole-france.com>.

²³ Hervé Vaughan, “Yves Le Maner s’apprête à refermer la porte de son histoire avec la Coupole,” *La Voix du Nord*, February 17, 2011, www.lavoixdunord.fr/Locales/Saint_Omer/actualite/Secteur_Saint_Omer/2011/02/17/article_yves-le-maner-s-apprete-a-refermer-la-po.shtml. Translation my own.

themselves.²⁴ More importantly, the publication of Nora's text has ushered in a period of nostalgia in which anything can become a *lieu de mémoire*. As a result, the phenomenon of *memory tourism* has emerged as an unexpected product of the blooming tourism industry and the increased fascination with history and collective memory.

As succinctly defined by sociologist Roberta Bartoletti, memory tourism is “a form of marketing of nostalgia.”²⁵ It represents a marriage between the disinterested realm of culture and the self-interested realm of economy that occurs when *lieux de mémoire* become tourist destinations. Memory tourism is closely related to several other forms of niche tourism, such as “dark tourism,” “war tourism,” and “cultural tourism.” For Bartoletti, however, memory tourism is unique in that “can develop everywhere that there are embodied memories that can become universal, that can be generalized: it does not need anything else.”²⁶ In other words, unlike forms of tourism associated with structures with a specific architectural or historical significance, memory tourism can develop at any site with memorial importance. In the last several decades, the concept of memory tourism has become widespread in both political and academic circles. It was the topic of national discussion in France, when in 2011 a national survey on the economic effects of memory tourism in France revealed that a staggering 6.2 million visitors – 45% of them foreigners, primarily from England, the United States, and neighboring countries – had travelled to *sites mémoriels payants* in 2010.²⁷ More recently, the growing field of memory

²⁴ For more on the international impact of Nora's text, see Hue-Tam Ho Tai, “Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 906-922, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2692331>.

²⁵ Roberta Bartoletti, “Memory Tourism and Commodification of Nostalgia,” in *Tourism and Visual Culture: Theories and Concepts*, edit. Peter Burns et al. (Oxfordshire: CABI, 2010), 40.

²⁶ Ibid, 41. Bartoletti further distinguishes between memory tourism in which tourists feel connected to the memories of another group and another brand of memory tourism in which tourists “experience a revival of their own memories, which can be living and embodied memories, or of the memories of their ancestors” (“Memory Tourism,” 42). It is this second definition which is particularly relevant to the case of World War II museums.

²⁷ “26 mai 2011: Premières assises du tourisme de mémoire,” Ministère de la Défense, last modified September 23, 2011, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/site-memoire-et-patrimoine/a-la-une/26-mai-2011-premieres-assises-du-tourisme-de-memoire>.

tourism was the subject of a 2014 international conference in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, where scholars met to discuss “The Play and Interplay of Tourism, Memory, and Place.”²⁸

If what it means to be a site of memory tourism is rather vague, what it means to be a *successful* site of memory tourism is even more so. Sites of memory tourism must attract enough visitors to be economically viable, but cannot achieve this success at the expense of their own integrity. Effective memory tourism sites are able to reach a broader audience while still maintaining rigorous historical veracity in terms of what they present. A June 2011 issue of *Les Chemins de la Mémoire* posits that at effective sites of memory tourism, “the economic component does not supplant the memorial dimension.”²⁹ However, sites of memory tourism must also be appealing to visitors. According to historian Sandra Richards, curators of “successful” sites must aim “to shape a necessarily multifaceted, complicated history into a comprehensible narrative that is affectively present; like theatre practitioners, they seek to transform an abstract absence into a palpable presence.”³⁰ This challenge – of creating a “palpable presence” from a complicated, abstract narrative – is further complicated in the case of World War II museums. Williams wonders: “Might a growing willingness to make atrocities the subject of evocative visitor experiences see the memorial museum move in the direction of a morbid theme park?”³¹

In France, museums dedicated to World War II occupy a unique role within the ever-expanding field of memory tourism. Williams posits that the touristic appeal of such sites is due to their “high stakes” nature: they give the visitor – “who will probably never be asked to

²⁸ Conference blog, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://memorytour.hypotheses.org>.

²⁹ “Pourquoi un tourisme de mémoire?” *Les Chemins de la Mémoire* 216 (June 2011): 2, <http://fr.calameo.com/read/000331627ddc574fe8be0>.

³⁰ Sandra Richards, “What Is to Be Remembered? Tourism to Ghana’s Slave Castle-Dungeons,” *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 4 (Dec. 2005): 618, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25069733>.

³¹ Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 102.

confront such life and death situations” – the opportunity “to experiment mentally with the furthest boundaries of what life can involve.”³² In many cases, museums dedicated to World War II are located upon existing *lieux de mémoire*, often in a conscious effort to capitalize on the site’s appeal or to draw connections to local collective memory.³³ Other museums have become sites of memory in their own right.

History as Spectacle at the Mémorial de Caen

The Mémorial de Caen, a museum in Normandy that bills itself as a *Cité de l’histoire pour la paix*, is perhaps the epitome of the spectacular museum (fig. 8). According to historian Benjamin C. Brower, this slick, neatly-packaged site of spectacle represents a significant break in tradition: not only does it attempt to redefine the institution of the museum with a perhaps unparalleled level of commercialism, but it also approaches the presentation of information in a new and spectacular way.³⁴ The Mémorial de Caen is particularly notable for its emphasis on scenography, its use of spectacular reconstructions, and its limited incorporation of artifacts within permanent exhibitions.

Discussion of a museum in Caen began in the 1980s under the direction of the city’s mayor, Jean-Marie Girault. A native of Normandy and first responder to the 1944 bombings of Caen (which destroyed an estimated 70% of the city), Girault pioneered the creation of a memorial to *la ville martyre*. In its initial stages, the museum was called Musée de la Bataille de Caen and was intended to feature extensive exhibitions about the wartime experience of the city

³² Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 142-143.

³³ Sherman describes the intersection of location, authenticity, and advertising in the case of the Mémorial de Verdun, a WWI memorial opened in 1967 that nevertheless bears many of the traits of the museums discussed in this thesis (“Objects of Memory,” 71-72).

³⁴ Benjamin C. Brower, “The Preserving Machine: The ‘New’ Museum and Working through Trauma—the Musée Mémorial pour la Paix of Caen,” *History and Memory* 11, no. 1 (1999): 77-103, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/history_and_memory/v011/11.1brower.html.

of Caen in sections of the museum entitled “The Price of Victory” and “The Martyrization of Normandy.”³⁵ This focus was ultimately dropped; civilian losses and the destruction of Caen figured little into the completed design.³⁶ Rather, the museum, which was inaugurated on June 6, 1988 with great aplomb, presents an overarching view of World War II, including its causes (1919-1939) and lasting effects (1945-1989).

Like other second generation museums, the Mémorial de Caen emphasizes its foremost role as a historical institution. As the museum boasts on its website and in press releases: “Toute l’histoire est au Mémorial de Caen!” This emphasis reflects both the museum’s own historiographical vocation and a strategic attempt to capitalize on the popularity of such an approach to the past. In his analysis of the Mémorial de Caen, Sherman argues that “the institutional prestige of the museum and the vaunted scholarly credentials of its organizers [including Henry Rousso, a member of the museum’s *conseil scientifique*] play an essential legitimating role” and attempt to balance the nostalgic association with memory suggested by the site’s name.³⁷ However, despite this emphasis on the museum’s own historicizing function, Sherman posits that the Mémorial de Caen “produces less memory as history than history as spectacle.”³⁸ While the work of the *conseil scientifique* is evident in the museum’s content and chronological organization, it is the work of scenographer Yves Devraïne that has left the greatest mark on the museum. A trip to the Mémorial de Caen is a veritable trip back in time, a

³⁵ Ibid, 85-86.

³⁶ Brower hypothesizes that this omission was due in part to the fact that the vast majority of French civilian casualties were the fault not of German troops but of Allied bombs. The creators of the museum, eager to secure financial support from groups of American and British veterans, did not want to alienate potential donors. Poulot posits another, equally economic reason: in focusing on larger questions of war and peace, the Mémorial also avoids competition with the myriad of neighboring museums which primarily deal with the local history of World War II.

³⁷ Daniel J. Sherman, “Objects of Memory: History and Narrative in French War Museums,” *French Historical Studies* 19 no. 1 (Spring 1995): 61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/286899>. Sherman further suggests that the choice of the term *mémorial* to describe the Caen museum was a strategic decision that allowed the creators of the Mémorial to defend their own increasing costs: who could criticize spending on a memorial?

³⁸ Ibid, 62.

voyage historique made possible by the exhibitions' linear and all-encompassing approach.³⁹ Visitors follow a carefully planned unidirectional path through 5600 square meters of the museum's permanent exhibition, which covers nearly a century of world history. This chapter's analysis will focus primarily on the spaces dedicated to World War II and the Occupation – “La Faillite de la Paix,” “La France des Années Noires,” and “Guerre Mondiale – Guerre Totale” – which, according to the museum's guide, comprise the heart of the museum.⁴⁰

The first exhibit, “La Faillite de la Paix,” anchors its visitors in the historical context surrounding the outbreak of World War II through a presentation of the political developments of the interwar period (1919 – 1939). The exhibit itself is structured around a gently downward-sloping spiral ramp; the visitor's descent into the exhibit is intended to mirror the descent of the European continent into war (fig. 9). Sherman provides the following analysis of the exhibit:

The first section ... is structured literally as a downward spiral, with changing wall materials corresponding to the deteriorating political climate in Europe. Contemporary footage of Nazi rallies runs on multiple video monitors that grow steadily larger, and presumably more menacing, as the installation progresses in time. The sequence culminates in a theatrically bare room featuring an electronically distorted recording of a Hitler speech and a large projected photograph of the Fuhrer.⁴¹

This first exhibit provides a striking example of the emphasis placed on scenography at the Mémorial de Caen. In fact, in the section of the museum guide dedicated to “La Faillite de la Paix,” roughly one third of the text is devoted to the design of the exhibit;⁴² what is important, it seems, is not the historical information being presented, but the manner in which the visitor becomes immersed in it. In continuing to the next exhibit, visitors pass through a dimly lit tunnel

³⁹ Michèle Perissère, “Le Mémorial de Caen: un musée pour la paix,” in *Des Musées d'histoire pour l'avenir*, ed. Marie-Hélène Joly and Thomas Compère-Morel (Paris: Éditions Noësis, 1998), 184. Translation my own.

⁴⁰ Centre régional de documentation pédagogique de Basse-Normandie, *Mémorial de Caen: 70e Anniversaire de la Bataille de Normandie* (Caen: Canopé, 2014), 4 (hereafter cited as Mémorial de Caen brochure).

⁴¹ Sherman, “Objects of Memory,” 63.

⁴² Mémorial de Caen brochure, 8-9.

– the aforementioned “theatrically bare room” – into an antechamber in which the *Ordre de Mobilisation Générale* of 1939 is prominently displayed. It is with this call to arms that the next portion of the exhibit begins.

“La France des Années Noires” follows a more traditional museal organization, leading chronologically from one room to the next in a discussion of life in Occupied France.⁴³ As visitors enter, a brightly-illuminated sign poses the dramatic question: “*40 millions de collaborateurs, 40 millions de résistants?*” (fig. 11). The question is intended to challenge visitors’ “binary understanding” of World War II France; however, it is along exactly these lines that the exhibit is divided, with Collaboration on one side and Resistance on the other.⁴⁴ In the section dedicated to the Collaboration, visitors are introduced to “the new, unashamedly authoritarian national order” of Vichy and its “anti-Semitic, xenophobic and collaborationist policies.”⁴⁵ Elsewhere, the quotations of infamous collaborators – among them, Philippe Pétain and Pierre Laval – are broken down and analyzed in a display that encourages a level of critical historical analysis. Just a few feet away, in the section of the exhibit dedicated to the French Resistance, stands an eye-catching reconstitution of a 1940s city street, complete with replica propaganda posters, graffiti, and even an antique-looking bicycle (fig. 10). According to the museum’s creators, such an exhibit immerses visitors in the experience of the French *sous l’Occupation* and “testifies to a troubled period in which the French people suffered hardship, rationing, and repression.”⁴⁶ However, Brower notes that this layout nonetheless privileges the Resistance, tempting visitors to bypass less visually appealing displays in favor of “the lively

⁴³ Historians Jean-Pierre Azéma and Henry Rousso were consulted in the creation of this section of the museum’s permanent exhibition; their plans for the exhibit included a focus on the complexity of wartime experience and a historiographical analysis of the period. However, Brower notes that few of their ideas are represented in the completed exhibit (“The Preserving Machine,” 80-81).

⁴⁴ Brower, “The Preserving Machine,” 81.

⁴⁵ Wall text, *La France des années noires*, Mémorial de Caen, Caen, France.

⁴⁶ Mémorial de Caen brochure, 10. Translation my own.

sounds of the past complete with full-size re-creations of its history.”⁴⁷ Although such a reconstitution is visually appealing and evokes an emotional response among visitors, critics note that it risks an oversimplification or even falsification of the past. Brower argues that such exhibits “give a simplistic and overly determined view of what choices were available; basically the Mémorial invites visitors to experience the Occupation only through its heroes and villains.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, Sherman suggests that the reconstituted city street conflates fact and fiction, risking “the ‘genre error’ of producing experience as spectacle.”⁴⁹ The Mémorial de Caen seems to embrace this potentially problematic conflation of past and present. An online advertisement on the site’s YouTube channel shows three generations of a family entering the museum only to become quite literally caught up in the experience of the war.⁵⁰

The spectacular nature of this reconstitution stands in stark contrast to the third and final section, entitled “Guerre Mondiale – Guerre Totale.” This exhibit tackles the period of 1941 to 1945, highlighting the expansion of the war in 1941, the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, and the ultimate conclusion of the war in 1945. This last section is the only one to deviate from an established path: visitors may instead choose their own itinerary and direction, visiting the different exhibits in the order they choose. This approach, more thematic than chronological, allows subjects to be presented without any implicit hierarchy.⁵¹ Additionally, though these displays deal with an admittedly wide range of material (in a marked departure from the emphasis on French wartime experience in the previous exhibit), all share an increased emphasis on the *object*. Even the more dramatically staged displays – like that of the Battle of Stalingrad in

⁴⁷ Brower, “The Preserving Machine,” 83.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁹ Sherman, “Objects of memory,” 64.

⁵⁰ “Le Mémorial de Caen, la cité de l’histoire pour la paix...,” YouTube video, 4:24, posted by MEMORIALCAEN, April 8, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=no5CenPD8wA>.

⁵¹ Pessièrè, “Le Mémorial de Caen,” 187.

“La Guerre Totale,” in which rubble from a destroyed factory is prominently displayed amidst photographs of destruction – center on actual artifacts rather than recreations.⁵² Sherman observes that after the drama of the previous exhibit, an exhibition that follows a more traditional format is ineffective and disappointing for visitors; he concludes that “it is simply too late to look at objects.”⁵³

No one can deny the appeal or financial success of the Mémorial de Caen: in 2013, the museum’s 340,000 visitors brought in over eight million euros in revenue.⁵⁴ Even Sherman, whose analysis reveals him to be a staunch critic, admits that “most visitors do find the Mémorial innovative, refreshingly unlike other kinds of museums.”⁵⁵ The museum continues to host temporary exhibitions and memorial ceremonies; in June 2014, it hosted dozens of ceremonies and conferences in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of D-Day, celebrated in France as *le Débarquement*. In the academic world, however, the museum’s reception has been mixed at best. Both Sherman and historian Dominique Poulot criticize the museum’s presentation for emphasizing scenography and spectacle and sacrificing historical analysis. Poulot further condemns the museum as “a spectacular commodification of history that excludes a critical, scholarly approach.”⁵⁶ Although marginally less harsh in his criticism, Sherman warns of the risks of visitors’ “uncritical embrace” of the Mémorial de Caen. According to Sherman, “the tremendous popularity of the Caen Memorial provides a warning, if any were needed, that

⁵² Memorial de Caen brochure, 12-21.

⁵³ Sherman, “Objects of memory,” 65.

⁵⁴ “Présentation du Musée,” Mémorial de Caen, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.memorial-caen.fr/musee/institution/presentation-musee>.

⁵⁵ Sherman, “Objects of memory,” 64.

⁵⁶ Dominique Poulot, “Musées et guerres de mémoires: pédagogie et frustration mémorielle,” in Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, *Les guerres de mémoires: la France et son histoire* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2008), 240. Translation my own.

historians cannot compete with spectacle, and that a commodified history is all too easily absorbed into spectacle's technologies."⁵⁷

However, not everyone shares Sherman and Poulot's rather pessimistic outlook. For others, the spectacle presented at institutions like the Mémorial de Caen is an effective way of, in the words of Richards, creating a "a palpable presence" from an abstract concept.⁵⁸ Brower argues that the Mémorial effectively inspires visitors to both feel connected to and think critically about the past. He argues that visitors to the Mémorial are not merely absorbing information, but rather "have found spaces in the museum's text in which they can critically work through the meanings of the war."⁵⁹ Brower posits a critical perspective on the part of the museum-going public (ignored by Sherman and Poulot) that challenges the perception that visitors are passive receptacles of information, mere audience members standing before a spectacle. These two arguments reflect the aforementioned distinction between spectacle as a type of cultural propaganda and a practice that encourages "a critical examination of visual cultural codes and ideologies."⁶⁰

Although the Mémorial de Caen is perhaps unparalleled in its commercialization of the World War II museum institution, it is not the only site to be impacted by the rise of memory tourism and the spectacular approach to public culture characteristic of the Mitterrand era. A closer look at the evolution of a similar museum provides an enlightening example for a study of both spectacle and tourism in the second generation French World War II museum.

⁵⁷ Sherman, "Objects of Memory," 74.

⁵⁸ Richards, "What Is to Be Remembered?," 618.

⁵⁹ Brower, "The Preserving Machine," 98.

⁶⁰ Garoian and Gaudelius, "The Spectacle of Visual Culture," 299.

A Tourist-Inspired Renovation at the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère

Six years after the opening of the Mémorial de Caen, another museum opening attracted national attention. Though a decidedly less ambitious venture than the Mémorial de Caen, the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère in Grenoble is a particularly interesting example for any study of French World War II museums. It began in the mid-1960s as textbook first generation museum, before a renovation in the early 1990s turned it into a modern, critical, and touristic institution. Its renovation highlights the differences between first generation museums of the immediate postwar period and second generation museums of the Mitterrand era. Furthermore, the emphasis on spectacle and visitor experience reflects the growing field of memory tourism as well as the influence of spectacular cultural policies.

The museum as it exists today began as a temporary exhibition dedicated to the *Résistance dauphinoise*.⁶¹ Organized by Henri Guillard and Pierre Dubois, this initial exhibit opened on August 23, 1963, on the 19th anniversary of the liberation of Grenoble. The success of the exhibition led to the creation of the Comité du Musée de la Résistance Dauphinoise and – three years later – to the opening of the Musée de la Résistance Dauphinoise.⁶² Blowen gives an account of the museum's opening on Deported Day, April 23, 1966:

The small apartment was crammed full with displays and objects giving an exhaustive presentation of the actions of the Resistance and the horrors of deportation. No wartime battle was forgotten as local and international perspectives jostled for space. A contemporary tourist brochure described it as '*un fourre-tout émouvant*' (a hotchpotch which tugs at the emotions).⁶³

⁶¹ The city of Grenoble was a center of Resistance activity during the war. In 1944, it became one of only five French cities to receive the title *Compagnon de la Libération*. For further analysis of the emergence of Resistance networks in Grenoble, see Limore Yagil's "Résistance et sauvetage des Juifs dans le département de l'Isère (1940 – 1944)," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 212 (2003): 54-74, doi: 10.3917/gmcc.212.0051.

⁶² The museum would later change its name, becoming the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation in 1970.

⁶³ Sarah Blowen, "Lest we Forget: Memories, History, and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère," in *Memories, Identities and Heritage in Contemporary France*, 71.

This first museum proved to be a modest success, attracting approximately 5,000 visitors per year. However, the museum could not meet the ever-growing expectations of its public.

Interestingly, as Blowen observes, it was not the content of the museum but its appearance that frustrated increasingly technologically-savvy visitors: “Younger visitors gained little from the peeling black and white photographs and did not stop to read the long explanatory notes.”⁶⁴ In 1986, it was decided that the twenty-year-old museum would undergo significant renovations.

Museum renovations – which marked “an unprecedented collaborative effort between former members of the Resistance and deportees and local cultural agencies” – took almost a decade.⁶⁵ Unlike the privately-owned Musée de la Résistance Dauphinoise, the new museum was a public project – a factor which ensured greater resources but a more complicated timeline. Furthermore, the museum was subject to the scrutiny of multiple groups, including former *résistants* and *déportés* as well as historians, museographers, and politicians.⁶⁶ Creating a space that met the needs of such diverse interests proved challenging; for the museum curators, Blowen explains, “the solution lay in the presentation.”⁶⁷ Under the guidance of Jean-Claude Duclos (then the assistant curator of Grenoble’s popular Musée Dauphinois), and scenographer Jean-Noël Duru (whose credits include the Musée Archéologique de Grenoble and the city’s Musée Champollion), the renovated facility was to become a new breed of museum, one that would be able to accurately depict the multiplicity of wartime experiences in Grenoble. For Duclos, it was important that the museum – and, in fact, any museum dedicated to World War II – be more than a traditional history museum. His vision was of a *musée de société* that would draw upon the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 68.

⁶⁶ For more on the actors involved in the creation of the MRDI, see Jean-William Dereymez, “De l’autre côté du miroir? Le musée départemental de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère,” in *Musées de guerres et mémoriaux: Politiques de la mémoire*, ed. Jean-Yves Boursier (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2005), 169-180.

⁶⁷ Blowen, “Lest we Forget,” 80.

collective memory of the department's inhabitants to provide a unique look at the wartime experience in the Isère department.

The renovated Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère, or MRDI, opened on August 1, 1994 – the fiftieth anniversary of the city's liberation. Although it has since received occasional minor updates (some of which will be addressed in the following chapter), the museum has remained mostly unchanged in the past two decades.⁶⁸ Today, visitors to the updated museum follow a primarily chronological itinerary – “punctuated by thematic developments” – that traces the history of World War II in Grenoble from the interwar period (in a section entitled “La Montée des Périls”) to the end of the war in 1945.⁶⁹ The museum's exhibits, spread over three floors, are marked by their reliance on reconstitutions and by the highly stylized presentation of their displays.

Visitors begin on the ground floor of the museum, where the interwar period is presented in an exhibit that firmly situates the visitor in Grenoble through photos and newspaper clippings depicting life in the 1930s city (fig. 12). It is worth noting that Blowen's characterization of the exhibit (“... it spirals upwards, quite literally taking the visitor through the ascent into war in Grenoble and the Isère”) is particularly reminiscent of similar descriptions of the opening exhibit of the Mémorial de Caen.⁷⁰ In a further similarity to the Mémorial de Caen, the MRDI places more of an emphasis on overarching ideas than on individual artifacts or pieces of evidence and can therefore be similarly characterized as “un musée d'idées plutôt qu'un musée d'objets.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ The museum first updated its exhibits in November 2001, adding more information about the experiences of Jews in Grenoble, the evolution of the *maquis*, and the postwar *épuración*. In April 2008, the museum renovated the section of its exhibit dedicated to the Deportation; among the changes was the addition of an animated map tracing the history of Nazi concentration camps. In May 2010, the museum renovated its final exhibit in order to place more emphasis on the connection between the visitor and the ever-present goals of the Resistance.

⁶⁹ “Le parcours muséographique,” Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.resistance-en-isere.fr/1199-parcours-museographique.htm>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷¹ Sherman, “Objects of Memory,” 61.

Blowen notes that, in keeping with the tenets of new museology, the MRDI makes only limited use of such sources: “If an object cannot be anchored to the central narrative thread of the museum, it has no place in the display.”⁷² Rather, the museum’s permanent exhibits rely heavily on visual displays of city streets and clandestine newspaper print shops that seek to incorporate the visitor into the narrative (fig. 13). Blowen describes these displays within a larger “visually dramatic *mise en scène*” in which “sounds, lighting, and ‘props’ – non original artifacts – are all utilized to encourage the visitor to respond emotionally to the display.”⁷³ She acknowledges that such a spectacular approach can risk “being nothing more than the institutional equivalent of a vacuous costume drama.”⁷⁴ However, she ultimately endorses the inclusion of spectacular elements, arguing that they produce a higher level of engagement when situated within a coherent and compelling narrative.

The case study of the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère provides compelling evidence of the emergence of memory tourism as a veritable industry during the mid-1980s. Although it differs from the Mémorial de Caen both in its scale and in its self-definition as a *musée de société* rather than purely historiographical institution, the MRDI’s emphasis on theatrical reconstitutions, incorporation of technological elements, and focus on visitor experience establish it firmly within this trend of “spectacular” second generation museums.

Conclusion

In addition to the more scientific and critical approach to the historical record of the World War II period and to the rejection of a sole “grand narrative” of French wartime

⁷² Blowen, “Lest we Forget,” 81.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

experience, the 1980s and early 1990s saw the conflation of many previously distinct spheres: culture and economy, trauma and tourism, history and spectacle. Within the museological landscape, French museums dedicated to World War II evolved to include increasingly spectacular displays as well as a greater focus on all-around visitor experience. Although these institutions contain elements of other second generation World War II museums, they also notably reflect both the spectacularization of culture and the growth of memory tourism that occurred during the Mitterrand era.

The case studies of the Mémorial de Caen and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de Grenoble, although markedly different, both reveal the degree to which spectacle in the museum was – and continues to be – both pervasive and contested. Reactions to both the Mémorial de Caen and the MRDI have included criticisms of their use of technology and, in particular, of their reliance on artificial reconstitutions rather than actual artifacts.⁷⁵ The scholarly default appears to be a distrust of such spectacular elements – an argument persuasively supported by historians like Sherman and Poulot; however, other scholars are more accepting of the use of spectacle in the modern World War II museum. These supporters, who include Brower and Blowen, posit an active, savvy museum-going public for whom the use of spectacle provides an exercise in questioning perceptions and illusions. Sherman cautions against “the risks that an uncritical embrace of the museal poses for historians” as “historians cannot compete with spectacle.”⁷⁶ Perhaps, however, history and spectacle need not be mutually exclusive spheres.

⁷⁵ For more on the role of the *object* in the postmodern museum, see Casey’s description of the object in “Staging Meaning” and Rainey Tisdale, “Do History Museums Still Need Objects?,” *History News* 66, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 19-24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42654330>.

⁷⁶ Sherman, “Objects of memory,” 74.

Chapter Four

Devoir de Mémoire, Droit de Savoir (1995 – present)

“On ne parle tant de mémoire que parce qu’il n’y en a plus.” – Pierre Nora¹

Since the watershed of museum creation leading up to the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation in 1994, France has seen far fewer new museums dedicated to World War II. Although the current wave of popularity of the ongoing World War I centennial suggests a possible resurgence in the decades to come, it appears that, for the time being, the era of French World War II museological proliferation has passed. Nonetheless, though limited in number, the new or significantly renovated museums that have emerged since 1995 represent a distinct new stage in the evolution of the French World War II museum.

The analysis of French World War II museums presented in this thesis has heretofore relied heavily on the distinction between the first generation museums of the 1960s and the second generation museums of the 1980s and 1990s introduced by historian Marie-Hélène Joly. While this thesis posits a further distinction between the “classic” second generation museums that serve as critical institutions (as discussed in chapter two) and others that occupy a space of tourism and spectacle (as examined in chapter three), the manner in which it addresses these institutions still corresponds broadly to Joly’s notion of the second generation museum. However, Joly’s classification of first generation and second generation museums proves inadequate for a discussion of the most recent wave of museification of the French wartime experience because it does not take into account the developments in the landscapes of collective memory and museology that have occurred within the past twenty years.

¹ Nora, “Entre Mémoire et Histoire,” xvii.

French museums dedicated to World War II have continued to evolve in recent years, as the French, further separated than ever from the painful memories of *les années noires*, have begun coming to terms with their role in the war. Museums opened between 1995 and 2015 bear many structural similarities to Joly's second generation museum, but distinct differences in the manner in which they approach the memory and history of the war suggest that these institutions represent a third generation of World War II museums. These institutions are noted for their emphasis not just on the *droit de savoir* – the “right” to learn about the past and, therefore, the necessity of the unbiased transmission of history (among the most essential characteristics of the second generation museum) – but also on the *devoir de mémoire*, or duty to remember. In both promoting a critical, increasingly objective knowledge of the past and presenting a renewed emphasis on commemoration, these third generation museums attempt to bridge the gap between *museum* and *memorial*. This conflation of memorialization and museology – or, to employ a more traditional dichotomy, of *memory* and *history* – reflects the advent of a new discourse that emphasizes both objective, scientific knowledge of the past and moral imperative.

This chapter will address the recent evolution of the museum and the current status of the French Resistance in French collective memory through an examination of several third generation museums and renovated sites, namely the Mémorial de la Shoah (which opened in Paris in 2005) and the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté (inaugurated at Struthof in 2005). Analyses of these case studies reflect the museum's changing audience as well as a restructured image of the French Resistance. Most importantly, however, they reflect a new approach to the collective memory of World War II.

The Resistance Myth Enters the 21st Century

The last twenty years have seen significant change in the treatment of the memory of World War II. Historians agree that France has made great strides from the frustratingly ambiguous policies of Mitterrand, who once remarked that he would “not apologize in the name of France.”² According to historian John Flower, the last two decades have emphasized an objective, balanced approach to the study of the past.³ Although united in their desire to make amends and ultimately move beyond the specter of *les années noires*, presidents Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy, and François Hollande have each adopted distinctive memorial policies. While Chirac’s presidency heralded an age of apology and increased focus on the memory of the Shoah, Sarkozy’s memorial policies can be examined as an unsuccessful bid to politicize the memory of the Resistance for his own benefit. As for Hollande, the jury is still out. Although the memory of the war is less contentious than it was several decades ago, memorial policy has been complicated by growing concerns about “the extent to which the general public [and, in particular, France’s youngest generation] has knowledge or even awareness of these events.”⁴

From the beginning of his presidency (1995-2007), President Jacques Chirac demonstrated a radical departure from the memorial policies of his predecessors, particularly those concerning the Shoah. In a speech at the Vel d’Hiv on July 16, 1995 – 53 years to the day after the infamous roundup of approximately 13,000 French Jews – Chirac delivered a blistering condemnation of the State’s active role in the Rafle du Vélodrome d’Hiver:

Il est, dans la vie d’une nation, des moments qui blessent la mémoire, et l’idée que l’on se fait de son pays. Ces moments, il est difficile de les évoquer, parce que l’on ne sait pas toujours trouver les mots justes pour rappeler l’horreur, pour dire le chagrin de celles et ceux qui ont vécu la tragédie...

² Francois Mitterrand, quoted in Marlise Simons, “Chirac Affirms France's Guilt in Fate of Jews,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/17/world/chirac-affirms-france-s-guilt-in-fate-of-jews.html>.

³ Flower, “A Continuing Preoccupation with the Occupation,” 303.

⁴ *Ibid*, 306.

... Il est difficile de les évoquer, aussi, parce que ces heures noires souillent à jamais notre histoire, et sont une injure à notre passé et à nos traditions. Oui, la folie criminelle de l'occupant a été secondée par des Français, par l'État français.⁵

While his predecessors had emphasized a separation between the actions of Vichy politicians and the collective guilt of France itself, Chirac asserted that it was *France* – “the homeland of the Enlightenment and of the Rights of Man” – that had done the “irreparable” in failing to protect and, in fact, actively deporting Jews.⁶ According to historian Paul Smith, the speech “reversed fifty years of orthodoxy and expressed regret and repentance for the behavior of the French state machinery.”⁷ The public apology was just the beginning: it heralded what historian Julie Fette refers to as a veritable “wave of repentance” among numerous state and private organizations, from the Catholic Church to the French police.⁸ In addition, this apologetic spirit manifested itself through attempts on behalf of the French government to bring the memory of the Shoah to the forefront, including the launch of the Mission Mattéoli in 1997,⁹ the issuing of an official apology on behalf of the French State in 1998, and the creation of the Fondation de la Mémoire de la Shoah in April 2001.

Though Chirac wholeheartedly condemned the actions of the French State, he was careful to distinguish this collaboration from the heroism of those who resisted. In his July 1995 speech, Chirac argued that the 1942 round-up had served as a wake-up call for many French citizens and marked “le point de départ d’un vaste mouvement de résistance.”¹⁰ According to Chirac, it was

⁵ Jacques Chirac, “Discours au Vel d’hiv,” July 16, 1995.

⁶ Ibid. Translation my own.

⁷ Paul Smith, “L’Histoire bling-bling – Nicolas Sarkozy and the Historians,” in *The Use and Abuse of Memory: Interpreting World War II in Contemporary European Politics*, ed. Christian Karner and Bram Mertens (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 126.

⁸ Julie Fette, “Apology and the Past in Contemporary France,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42843550>.

⁹ La Mission d’Étude sur la Spoliation des Juifs de France, nicknamed *la Mission Mattéoli* after Minister of Social Affairs Jean Mattéoli, was a government initiative that investigated the pillaging of the property of deported French Jews during and after the war and recommended compensation as appropriate.

¹⁰ Chirac, “Discours au Vel d’hiv.”

this image of France – “droite, généreuse, fidèle à ses traditions, à son génie” – that had existed, separate from Vichy, in the hearts of *résistants* and that had promoted “les valeurs de liberté, de justice, de tolérance qui fondent l’identité française.”¹¹ Historian Gino Raymond argues that this distinction emphasized the heroism of the Resistance and encouraged the French to “be legitimately proud of those who had continued to uphold the values of the Republic during the dark years of Occupation.”¹² However, other scholars have been more critical. For some, Chirac’s careful distinction between the actions of the French State (through the Vichy Regime) and the spirit of the Republic (incarnate in the personage of Charles de Gaulle and in the French Resistance) represented little more than revised Gaullist sentiment on the part of a neo-Gaullist president.¹³ This balance between the acceptance of responsibility and the promotion of a positive national image would prove particularly difficult for Chirac’s successor.

The French public had every reason to hope that the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012) would mark a turning point in the memory of World War II, which remained conflicted and contentious even in the latter years of Chirac’s presidency. As the first French head of state born after World War II, Sarkozy was further separated from the legacy of the war than any president before him. However, even he “could not resist the temptation to instrumentalize the heroic sacrifice of the Resistance.”¹⁴ His memorial policies – for example, a 2007 decree mandating that the famous last letter of Communist *résistant* Guy Môquet be read in classrooms across the nation¹⁵ and a suggestion in 2008 that French schoolchildren each “adopt”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Gino Raymond, “Sarkozy-de Gaulle: Recycling the Resistance myth,” *French Cultural Studies* 24 no. 1 (February 2013): 98, doi: 10.1177/0957155812464165.

¹³ Fette, “Apology and the Past in Contemporary France,” 81.

¹⁴ Raymond, “Sarkozy-de Gaulle: Recycling the Resistance myth,” 99.

¹⁵ The decision to appropriate the last words of Môquet, the was particularly criticized by members of the French Communist Party, who argued that Sarkozy was appropriating a story of Communist Resistance for his own political purposes.

a deported child to study – were criticized for their alleged “willingness to invent, to reinvent, or to appropriate the myths and legends of the Second World War.”¹⁶ For Smith, these attempts to exploit collective memory for political purposes reflect Sarkozy’s “pathological determination . . . to seize upon the ‘shining’ episodes of French history and ignore the less palatable aspects.”¹⁷

It is perhaps too early to judge the memorial policies of François Hollande, whose presidency began in 2012. However, as a *Nouvel Observateur* article observed in October 2012, Hollande has been quick to insert himself in the collective memory discourse not just of World War II, but also of colonization and the Algerian War.¹⁸ Thus far, his most notable actions concerning the French memory of World War II have included the inauguration of a new memorial at Drancy in 2012, where he spoke passionately to teenage students about the importance of an understanding of the past,¹⁹ and the Panthéonization of four *résistants* in 2014, a decision that was fittingly announced at Mont-Valérien.²⁰ In highlighting previously marginalized narratives (including, in these examples, the stories of the Jewish deportees imprisoned at Drancy and of two female *résistantes*), underscoring the importance of continued commemoration, and placing an emphasis on education, Hollande appears to have embraced both the *droit de savoir* and the *devoir de mémoire*.

Although Hollande’s effect on the evolving collective memory landscape is still uncertain, it is likely that time will prove to be both a help and a hindrance in France’s ongoing struggle to come to terms with the historical and memorial legacy of World War II and the

¹⁶ Smith, “L’Histoire bling-bling,” 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁸ “Comment Hollande s’est emparé du devoir de mémoire,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 17, 2012, <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/politique/20121017.OBS6031/comment-hollande-s-est-empare-du-devoir-de-memoire.html>.

¹⁹ “François Hollande inaugure un mémorial de la Shoah à Drancy,” *Le Monde*, September 21, 2012, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/09/21/francois-hollande-inaugure-un-memorial-de-la-shoah-a-drancy_1763610_3224.html.

²⁰ “Hollande au Mont-Valérien pour l’annonce des ‘Panthéonisés,’” *Les Echos*, February 21, 2014, http://www.lesechos.fr/21/02/2014/lesechos.fr/0203332045971_hollande-au-mont-valerien-pour-l-annonce-des---pantheonises--.htm.

Occupation. The passage of time has brought a level of clarity and impartiality to the wartime narrative that could not have been achieved when the wounds of World War II were still fresh. The past seventy years have seen a more honest approach to the darkest aspects of *les années noires* and, as a result, have brought increased focus on the Shoah and French Jewish identity. In the past several decades, the passage of time has also allowed for a repositioning of the French Resistance in French collective sentiment and a reinvestment in the values it represents (without, it is important to note, a full-fledged return to the Resistance Myth of the immediate postwar period). As a 2012 *New York Times* editorial about the seventieth anniversary of the Rafle du Vélodrome d'Hiver acknowledged, the "more uplifting side to the story ... can only decently be told now that the darker truth is finally being accepted."²¹ However, the distance created by the passage of time is also problematic. While the lack of personal ties to the war allows younger generations to approach the memory of the Occupation from a more objective standpoint, it also increases the possibility that France's young people will be lost entirely to the civic and moral lessons to be learned from such a critical, objective examination of the period. Flower cites a survey conducted at the time of commemorations of the seventieth anniversary of the Rafle which found that almost 50% of those polled (67% among French teenagers) were unaware of the significance of the event.²² Without intervention, it seems that the question will soon be not *how* the public remembers the Occupation and World War II, but *if* they remember it at all.

A Third Wave of Museification

Though they retain many of the structural aspects of second generation museums, third generation museums represent a distinct development in the evolution both of the museum and of

²¹ Alan Riding, "Op-Ed: When Past is Present," *New York Times*, July 20, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/21/opinion/la-rafle-vel-dhiv-anniversary-exhibition.html>.

²² Flower, "A Continuing Preoccupation with the Occupation," 306.

French collective memory. These museums are distinguished by their increasing self-identification as sites of memory – such as *centers* or *memorials* – rather than *museums* and by their heightened focus on education, often through a focus on personal testimony and the contemporary moral applications of the wartime period. Most important, however, is the attempt in third generation museums to bridge the gap between *museum* and *memorial*, which reflects a new approach to the memory of the war in France.

It is important to note that museums opened since 1995 are at first glance not radically different from their predecessors. In fact, these museums possess several of the structural qualities of second generation museums. They have emulated their second generation predecessors in continuing both to highlight multiple narratives and perspectives and to include elements of theatricality and technology in a similar manner to the museums of the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the extent of the “spectacle” appears to be more limited: there are fewer reconstitutions and, in a change from the unidirectional exhibits found at sites like the Mémorial de Caen, more freedom is accorded to visitors, who may move throughout the exhibits at will. Additionally, while its incorporation of memorial elements suggests a similarity to institutions of the immediate postwar period, the third generation museum by no means represents a return to the memorial museums of the 1950s and 1960s. Though they contain commemorative and moralizing elements, these new institutions focus on multiple narratives of wartime experience and reflect a critical rather than mythological vision of the past.

Third generation museums perhaps most obviously distinguish themselves from earlier institutions by their tendency to avoid the term *museum* altogether. Instead of identifying as *musées de la Résistance et de la Déportation* like so many museums in the 1980s and early 1990s, these institutions are more likely to be labelled as *centres* – for example, the Centre

Européen du Résistant Déporté (2005) or Centre de la Mémoire d’Oradour (1999) – or even as memorials – for example, the Mémorial de Caen (1988)²³ or the Mémorial de la Shoah (2005). Joly hypothesizes that this “multiplication of neologisms” is due more than anything else to a general distaste for the word *musée*, which has come to be seen as boring and outdated.²⁴ However, the evidence also suggests that the avoidance of the term *museum* reflects a conscious and deliberate move away from the painstakingly historiographical approach of the second generation museum. This shift in approach is reflected in the small but not unsubstantial number of existing museums that have changed their names, including the Musée de la Résistance en Drôme et de la Déportation de Romans, which became a *centre historique* in 1994; the Musée-Mémorial des Enfants d’Izieu, which became the Maison d’Izieu, Mémorial des Enfants Juifs Exterminés in 2000; or the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère, which added the title “Maison des Droits de l’Homme” to its name in 2001. The official website of the site in Romans describes its 1994 renovation, which resulted in updated exhibits and a new center of research and documentation, as part of an effort to raise awareness among young people and give them the tools to prevent the repetition of history.²⁵

This focus on education – specifically aimed at younger generations – is another trademark characteristic of third generation museums, which “cherish public education as it is geared towards the future avoidance of comparable tragedies.”²⁶ It is often expressed through exhibitions dealing with events or issues beyond the scope of 1940s France. This “widening of

²³ The example of the Mémorial de Caen, inaugurated in 1988 and labelled as a “second generation” museum in Chapter 3, is surely outside of the scope and time frame of this chapter. However, historians argue that the success of the Mémorial de Caen encouraged other sites to take a similar nomenclatural approach.

²⁴ Joly, “Les Musées d’histoire,” in *Des Musées d’histoire pour l’avenir*, ed. Marie-Hélène Joly and Thomas Compère-Morel (Paris: Éditions Noesis, 1998), 59. Translation my own.

²⁵ “Origine et évolution du Centre Historique,” Musée de la Résistance en Drôme et de la Déportation, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://www.resistance-drome.org/origines.html>.

²⁶ Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 131.

the lens” can be geographical (examining, as in the example of the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté, resistance movements across the European continent), temporal (looking at anti-Semitism throughout French history), or both. Though this broader scope is an inherent component of the permanent exhibitions of many third generation museums, the trend is also reflected in older institutions. A look at the dozens of temporary exhibitions at the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère reflects this evolution. While temporary exhibits in the mid-1990s sought to fill holes in the regional history of Isère through exhibitions on regional resistance networks and local history, more recent exhibits have widened the lens through exhibitions focusing on specific Resistance movements (“Les Résistants de la Viscoise” in 2008; “Antifascistes et résistants italiens en Isère” in 2011) and modern cases of genocide in other parts of world (“Le génocide des Arméniens” in 2007; “Face au génocide, du Cambodge à l’Isère” in 2009).²⁷

Third generation museums also contain an increased emphasis on *témoignage*, or personal testimony. This approach, rejected in second generation museums for its unreliable nature, makes a return in the third generation museums of the 21st century as means of preserving communicative memory. As the number of living *résistants* and survivors of concentration camps is dwindling, the inclusion of personal testimony in the museum allows their stories to be preserved and communicated to younger generations in a simulation of the organic transference of memory described by Assmann.²⁸ In addition to appearing in the two museums that will be the subject of case studies in this chapter, this trend is also visible in the temporary exhibits of older museums. In 2009, a temporary exhibit at the Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la

²⁷ Les expositions temporaires,” Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.resistance-en-isere.fr/1194-les-expositions-temporaires.htm>.

²⁸ See the introduction for a discussion of communicative memory, as posited by Assmann.

Déportation in Lyon entitled “Visages (du Centre) d’Histoire” presented the photographs and testimonies of aging citizens in order to promote and preserve “the disappearing culture of direct, primarily oral, transmission.”²⁹ For Vivian, this renewed emphasis on memory as a means of transmission of the past reflects the “postmodern penchant for historical pastiche.”³⁰

It is interesting to note that the majority of museums built between 1995 and 2005 are constructed on existing *lieux de mémoire* – that is, sites with established importance to collective memory and, in some cases, established memorial monuments. Such is the case of both the Mémorial de la Shoah and the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté, which were constructed in close proximity to existing memorials, the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu and the Mémorial aux Martyrs et Héros de la Déportation, respectively. Further examples of this phenomenon include the Centre de la Mémoire d’Oradour, which opened in the *village martyr* of Oradour-sur-Glane in 1999;³¹ the Musée de la Mémoire, inaugurated at the former internment camp of Récébédou in 2003; and the Site-Mémorial du Camp des Milles, which opened in 2012. Given the association of location and memory posited by Halbwachs and Nora, this phenomenon – in which physical location takes on a renewed importance – supports the idea that collective memory experiences a resurgence within the third generation World War II museum. In his study of memorial museums, Williams argues that it is “a sense of place – rather than objects or images – that gives form to our memories, and provides the coordinates of the imaginative reconstruction of the ‘memories’ of those who visit memorial sites but never knew the event first-hand.”³² Similarly to the manner in which recorded testimonies in museum exhibits permit

²⁹ “Visages d’Histoire,” Centre d’Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation, accessed April 5, 2015, http://www.chrd.lyon.fr/chrd/sections/fr/expositions/expositions_passees/visages_dhistoire.

³⁰ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 169.

³¹ For more on the commemoration of Oradour-sur-Glane, see Sarah Bennett Farmer, “Oradour-sur-Glane: Memory in a Preserved Landscape,” *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 27-47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/286898>.

³² Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 102.

the continued transmission of communicative memory, the intimate connection between location and memory allows visitors to feel connected to an event that they themselves did not experience.

The characteristics identified – an avoidance of the term *museum*, an emphasis on personal testimony and the moral applications of history, and a connection with existing sites of memory – all support the idea of the third generation French World War II museum as a memorial museum, as defined by Williams. In positing the classification of these institutions as memorial museums, it is helpful to further reference Williams’ explanation of the motivations of this museological trend, which combines elements of memorials and history museums in a thoroughly postmodern institution. For Williams, “the coalescing of the two [memorials and history museums] suggests that there is an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts.”³³ In other words, history museums and memorials no longer suffice on their own. To effectively communicate their message to young people with no personal memory of the war, these institutions must combine elements of commemoration and historical analysis.

The Site-Mémorial du Camp des Milles is one such site, where museological aspirations are conflated with overtly memorial aspects. Inaugurated in 2012, the site commemorates the Camp des Milles, a tile factory-turned-internment camp whose wartime function remained almost entirely overlooked until recent decades. Today, it is a veritable memory complex, featuring an extensive museum and several memorial sites. Its official website advertises a three-pronged approach to the past: historical, memorial, and reflective (i.e., moral). A 2012 article in *Le Monde* gives the following description of the Site-Mémorial’s final exhibit:

³³ Ibid, 8.

A la fin du parcours, le visiteur est invité à “*identifier et combattre les expressions sans cesse renouvelées du racisme, de l’antisémitisme, du fanatisme et de l’intolérance*” et à analyser les mécanismes individuels et collectifs qui conduisent de la haine au crime contre l’humanité.³⁴

This description reflects yet another trend in the third generation or memorial museum: the increased focus on contemporary moral applications of World War II and the Occupation. This occurs through both positive reaffirmation of the values of the French Resistance and of the French Republic itself – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – and rejection of the ideological motivations behind wartime atrocities.³⁵ In almost every third generation museum dedicated to World War II, visitors are encouraged to identify and to reject the ideologies of racism, anti-Semitism, and intolerance that led to the Holocaust while embracing the values of *la Résistance*.

Though these moralistic approaches tend to be rather subtle, some examples are less so. Since a 2010 renovation, the final exhibit of the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère has included a unique audiovisual display with a blatant focus on contemporary moral applications of the Resistance. After selecting an identity (e.g., doctor, a cashier, a student, a shop owner), the visitor is presented with a scenario corresponding to one of the goals of the March 1944 meeting of the *Conseil National de la Résistance* (e.g., respect for the human person, equality before the law, and freedom of the press). The pedagogically-oriented audiovisual installation allows for the evocation of “the universal and timeless values of the Resistance”³⁶ and the promotion of civic activism.

³⁴ Florence Evin, “Un mémorial de la déportation au camp des Milles,” *Le Monde*, September 12, 2012, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2012/09/11/un-memorial-de-la-deportation-au-camp-des-milles_1757995_3224.html. Translation my own.

³⁵ The emphasis on ‘republican’ values in recent World War II museums is reflective of a greater social trend. See Michael Leruth, “The Neorepublican Discourse on French National Identity,” *French Politics and Society* 16, no. 4 (1998): 46-61.

³⁶ “Dossier de Presse – Résister Aujourd’hui: Nouvelle présentation de la partie finale du parcours du Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation,” Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l’Isère, 3, http://www.resistance-en-isere.fr/include/viewFile.php?idtf=9746&path=e8%2FWEB_CHEMIN_9746_1275467229.pdf. Translation my own.

A New Approach to History at the Mémorial de la Shoah

The Mémorial de la Shoah sits in the heart of Paris, just a few blocks from the Hotel de Ville and the bustling neighborhood of *le Marais*. The site, which is separated from the street by a heavily guarded fence, is surprisingly understated. The museum represents a clear departure from the second generation museum, both in the way it organizes its exhibitions and in the way it defines itself. In providing a moralizing and memorial framework for an otherwise “historical” presentation of the Holocaust, the Mémorial de la Shoah combines traditionally distinct elements in a thoroughly postmodern memorial museum.

The Mémorial de la Shoah as it exists today is the product of two earlier institutions, the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu and the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC). Founded by French rabbi Isaac Schneersohn in 1943, the CDJC worked clandestinely throughout the war to accumulate information and preserve the personal testimonies of French Jews. For Schneersohn, who relocated to Paris at the end of the war, these archival responsibilities were only the beginning. He envisioned a memorial that could “strike the imagination of the masses, something books and archives could not do” and spearheaded the creation of such a memorial in Paris.³⁷ After several years of fundraising, the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu was inaugurated in 1956. Historian Annette Wieviorka describes the “profound originality” of the site – designed by architects Alexandre Persitz, Georges Goldberg, and Louis Arretche – which for the first time combined a library and archival center under the same roof as a memorial.³⁸ The site, whose unique and innovative design has inspired similar

³⁷ Annette Wieviorka, “La représentation de la Shoah en France: mémoriaux et monuments,” in Boursier, *Musées de guerres et mémoriaux: politiques de la mémoire*, 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Though this has since become the norm (Wieviorka cites multiple such examples, including the Holocaust Memorial in Washington, D.C.), the concept was revolutionary in 1956.

memorials around the world, bears significance not just to French Jewish memory, but also to international Jewish communities.

A massive project to fully combine the Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu and the CDJC began in 1997. The renovated site – the Mémorial de la Shoah – opened on January 17, 2005 in honor of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a date which, since 2002, has marked Europe’s Holocaust Memory and Crimes Against Humanity Prevention Day. According to the museum’s website, the Mémorial de la Shoah marks “a new phase in the transmission of the memory and the lessons of the Shoah.”³⁹ It contains 5,000 square meters of public space, including a permanent museum exhibition, temporary exhibitions, archives, classrooms and auditoriums, and a library. Although its state-of-the-art museum and center of documentation reflect the influences of a critical historiographical approach (i.e., the second generation museum approach), the Mémorial de la Shoah remains highly memorial in nature. Before entering the building itself, visitors pass first through an open courtyard dominated by a bronze cylindrical statue bearing the names of Nazi extermination camps and by a five-story pediment with inscriptions in French and Hebrew. Visitors then pass the Mur des Noms, which features the names and birth dates of approximately 76,000 deported French Jews.⁴⁰ Finally, visitors traverse the dimly lit crypt before descending into the museum’s permanent exhibition.

The exhibition itself occupies only 1,000 square meters, one fifth of the total space open to the public at the Mémorial. Despite the compact size of the museum, its scope is ambitious: the exhibition begins with the arrival of Jews in Europe and traces the evolution of anti-Semitism

³⁹ “The Shoah Memorial, an instrument of our time,” Mémorial de la Shoah, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/index.php/en/discovering-the-shoah-memorial/presentation/presentation-of-the-memorial>.

⁴⁰ The creation of the Mur des Noms at the Mémorial de la Shoah can be analyzed within a greater trend of personalization at memorial sites in the early 21st century. Examples of this phenomenon include the bell at Mont-Valérien and the plaque to Jewish victims of pseudoscientific experimentation at Struthof, both inaugurated in 2003.

and Jewish persecution through the end of World War II. Traditional displays featuring photos, document facsimiles, and small collections of artifacts line the walls (fig. 14). Although the exhibition moves chronologically through a series of twelve “sequences,” there is no established *parcours*; rather, visitors are encouraged to linger and to take their time reading testimonies and perusing the exhibition’s displays. A museum press release explains: “Visitors may turn to the left for the history concerning France, where individual biographies can be consulted. On their right side, they will be able to see the European section. The exhibition [whose layout represents a departure from the strictly unidirectional exhibits of many second generation museums] is designed so that visitors can constantly move back and forth between collective history and individual life stories.”⁴¹ These individual life stories are displayed along with personal objects and photographs and include that of H el ene Barr, dubbed “France’s Anne Frank” after the 2002 recovery of her diary, which chronicled her experiences as a young Jewish woman in occupied Paris before her deportation and death at Bergen-Belsen. The inclusion of personal testimonies within the museum’s permanent exhibition reflects the M emorial’s stated goal to serve as “a bridge between the men and women who were contemporaries of the Shoah and those who did not experience this period of history.”⁴² The creation of a “bridge” between generations and the continued transmission of communicative memory is particularly important at institutions dealing with the Holocaust, like the M emorial de la Shoah; a failure to create a personal connection between visitors and survivors risks abstracting the Holocaust and allowing it to fall prey to disrespectful and even dangerous reinterpretations (including, most notably, revisionism and negationism).

⁴¹ “Presentation of the Shoah Memorial,” M emorial de la Shoah, 11-12, http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/images/media/pdf/en/Shoah_Memorial_EN.pdf

⁴² “Presentation of the Memorial,” M emorial de la Shoah, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://www.memorialdela-shoah.org/index.php/en/discovering-the-shoah-memorial/presentation/presentation-of-the-memorial>.

While partitions and hallways are the exception rather than the rule at the Mémorial de la Shoah, there is a distinct division between the two halves of the permanent exhibition. The first half of the exhibit provides a thorough chronological account of the events leading up to the Shoah, including the rise of the Third Reich and the first deportations of French Jews. The majority of the displays are contemporary to World War II, but a section titled “Chronologie de l’Antisémitisme en Europe” traces anti-Semitism in Europe as far back as the Babylonian Exile in 597 BCE. After passing through a section of the exhibition dedicated to the creation of extermination camps (with particular focus given to Auschwitz-Birkenau), visitors find themselves in a dimly lit hallway leading to the second half of exhibition. Here, the moral issues hit visitors closer to home as difficult questions of resistance and collaboration are raised. One sequence is dedicated to the plundering of Jewish property. Another argues that Vichy’s anti-Semitic outlook persisted even among *résistants*. Although the Mémorial does not shy away from the moral implications of the Collaboration, it stops short of condemning the French people. One explanatory plaque explains that although “the French were not particularly interested in the fate of French Jews” at the beginning of the war, “Vichy’s anti-Semitic policies were *not* implemented in response to expectation on the part of the population; they were a deliberate choice made by Vichy politicians.”⁴³ This distinction, which echoes that made by Chirac between the French State and the spirit of the Republic, distinguishes Vichy from the majority of the French people, who found the obvious persecution of French Jews to be “distasteful and upsetting.”⁴⁴

Before exiting the permanent exhibition, visitors pass through the Mémorial des Enfants (fig. 15), dedicated to the approximately 11,400 children deported from France during World

⁴³ Wall text, *Public Opinion*, Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris, France. Emphasis my own.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

War II. Located in a small antechamber slightly separated from the rest of the permanent exhibition, this minimalist display consists solely of dramatically backlit black-and-white photographs, each depicting a child who was deported and, with few exceptions, murdered. The current display features approximately 4,000 photographs, but museum curators have left a stretch of bare wall exposed as a reminder of the thousands of victims whose photographs have yet to be discovered. The memorial, perhaps the most moving display within the permanent exhibition, is also arguably among the most spectacular. While the sense of spectacle that pervades earlier institutions is largely absent at the Mémorial de la Shoah, the highly stylized display at the Mémorial des Enfants is not without comparison to a work of contemporary installation art.⁴⁵

Though the permanent exhibition of the Mémorial de la Shoah features many of the characteristics of the museums presented in the second and third chapters of this thesis, the museum clearly represents a departure from the second generation museum. The Mémorial's multidirectional layout and emphasis on personal testimony are both characteristics of this newest wave of museification. Additionally, although its focus on French Jewish experience is somewhat specific, temporary exhibits at the Mémorial allow for a "widening of the lens" beyond the parameters of 1940s France. In 2014, a temporary exhibit discussed genocide in Rwanda;⁴⁶ previous topics of temporary exhibitions have included "Les Juifs de Tunisie pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale" (2002) and "Juger Eichmann, Jérusalem 1961" (2011).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ The backlit display bears comparison to the work of artist Christian Boltanski, whose mixed-media art installations include *Autel du Lycée Chases*, a tribute to young Viennese Jewish victims of the Holocaust. For more on Boltanski's impact on the museum landscape, see Rebecca J. DeRoo, "Christian Boltanski's Memory Images: Remaking French Museums in the Aftermath of '68," *Oxford Art Journal* 27, no. 2 (2004): 221-238, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20107977>.

⁴⁶ "Rwanda, 1994," Mémorial de la Shoah, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/rwanda>.

⁴⁷ "Archives des expositions," Mémorial de la Shoah, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/index.php/fr/programme-des-activites/expositions/expositions-virtuelles-archive-des-expositions>.

Finally, like other third generation institutions, the Mémorial de la Shoah places education at the forefront of its mission. Through a critical and objective approach to the past, it provides its increasingly young audience with the “facts” of French Jewish experience. However, the presence of moralizing elements – such as the Mémorial aux Enfants and the inclusion of personal testimonies of victims of the Shoah – reflects a goal beyond the transmission of purely “historical” information. Williams hypothesizes that this conflation of history and memory in the memorial museum typically reflects a need for a more nuanced level of understanding of “terrible historical events;” this is undeniably the case in institutions devoted to the Holocaust, to which a completely historiographical approach proves impossible.⁴⁸ However, as explained in the museum’s mission statement, this conflation of historiographical and moralizing elements serves an additional purpose at the Mémorial de la Shoah:

By this description of the mechanisms which led to the extermination of nearly six million Jews, the exhibition aims to provide the public with tools to reflect on this period of history and to question the events of today’s world so as to remain vigilant against a possible return of intolerance from whatever source.⁴⁹

In situating traditional historical discourse within a moral framework, the exhibitions at the Mémorial de la Shoah encourage reflection, questioning, and – most importantly – vigilance. Visitors to the museum should emerge not only with a knowledge of the Holocaust’s devastating effects, but also with an understanding of its ideological causes, a heightened awareness of the social issues and injustices of their own society, and a renewed desire to identify and combat them in their daily lives. Although the Mémorial remains vague in addressing the “possible return of intolerance,” it is clear that, in a nation with ever-deepening societal divisions as well as a troubling resurgence of anti-Semitic discourse and acts, the stakes are high. The museum’s

⁴⁸ Williams, *Memorial Museums*, 8.

⁴⁹ “Presentation of the Shoah Memorial,” 12.

mission statement therefore serves as both a call to arms and a warning of the consequences of inaction.

Widening the Lens at the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté

As analyzed in the first chapter of this thesis, the former concentration camp at Struthof has come to symbolize the sacrifice of the deported members of the Resistance. The site, which welcomes over 1,000 visitors a day, contains a museum, a national necropolis, and several memorial sites, including the Mémorial aux Martyrs et Héros de la Déportation. As of 2005, it is also the home of the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté (CERD), a site identified as “un lieu d’information, de réflexion et de rencontre.”⁵⁰ The mere existence of a new site dedicated to the experience of the *résistant* suggests a repositioning of the Resistance in French collective sentiment, while the organization and pedagogical goals of the institution reflect the orientation of a third generation or memorial museum.

Discussions of an international museum began in the 1980s, at which time the site was already undergoing renovations of its existing museum, which had suffered attacks of vandalism (and which later received a facelift as part of the creation of the CERD). This new museum was intended to transform Struthof into “un carrefour entre les générations, les pays et leurs histoires croisées.”⁵¹ After several decades of planning and fundraising, the CERD was inaugurated on November 3, 2005. President Chirac, present at the inauguration, encouraged visitors to “always

⁵⁰ “Dossier de Presse – Ancien Camp de Concentration de Natzweiler-Struthof,” Struthof, 5, http://www.struthof.fr/fileadmin/MEDIA/Pdf_Ressources/07_Mediatheque/telechargement/presse/Dossier_de_presse/DD_P_CERD_DPweb_02.pdf.

⁵¹ “La création du Centre européen du résistant déporté,” Struthof, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/fr/le-centre-europeen/la-creation-du-centre-europeen-du-resistant-deporte>.

remain vigilant” and to “ceaselessly combat those who promote hatred, racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance, both in France and around the world.”⁵²

The project of architect Pierre-Louis Faloci, the CERD is a somber, minimalist structure located mere meters from the camp itself (fig. 16). Upon entering the museum, visitors to the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté are greeted by a large map depicting the network of Nazi concentration camps across Europe. Along with the map display, visitors are presented with interactive terminals, each presenting images of infamous Nazi concentration camps. The goal of this first exhibition, according to the museum’s official website, is for the visitor to recognize “the scale of the Nazis’ machine of repression and death.”⁵³ This “shock and awe” approach is further reflected in the display of objects, donated from camps across Europe. According to the museum’s website: “A broken monocle, piece of a comb, little rag doll and chemistry book bear witness to life in the camps and life ‘before’. A Zyklon-B canister, barracks sign, and part of a disinfection vat evoke horror and death.”⁵⁴

Visitors pass through a small viewing area, where they are encouraged to stop and watch a film entitled *Vous qui vivez* before continuing into the museum’s permanent exhibition. Though the center’s cafeteria, bookstore, and temporary exhibition spaces are located aboveground, the “heart” of the museum’s permanent exhibition was constructed underground in what remains of the *Kartoffelkeller*. This so-called “potato cellar” was dug by prisoners of KL-Natzweiler between 1943 and 1944; its purpose remains unknown to this day. The structure was rediscovered during the construction of the CERD and today provides an eerie backdrop to the museum’s permanent exhibition. Architect Faloci describes the experience:

⁵² Béatrice Gurrey, “Au Struthof, M. Chirac appelle la jeunesse à résister et à ne pas oublier,” *Le Monde*, November 11, 2005, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2005/11/04/au-struthof-m-chirac-appelle-la-jeunesse-a-resister-et-a-ne-pas-oublier_706539_3224.html. Translation my own.

⁵³ “The Camps,” Struthof, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/en/the-european-centre/the-camps>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Le visiteur passe d'une lumière du jour à une lumière zénithale pour, petit à petit, arriver dans des zones quasiment noires au fur et à mesure que s'accroît l'extrême gravité du sujet pour ressortir, en fin de visite, vers la lumière naturelle.⁵⁵

If Faloci's desired effect was a sobriety reflective of the site's history, then he has succeeded: the quiet, dimly lit exhibition possesses a distinctly sepulchral nature. The permanent exhibition is organized in a U-shape around the walls of the room, while the remains of the Kartoffelkeller occupy the center (fig. 17). The exhibit (entitled "Contre la Barbarie: s'engager, résister, combattre") provides a chronological account of European resistance movements from 1919 to the present. Characterized by the museum's website as "a historical fresco," this exhibit contains fourteen sections, ranging from "The Rise to Power of Mussolini and Hitler" and "Europe under the Nazis" to "Resistance in Occupied Europe" and "Building Peace, Building Europe."⁵⁶ Information is presented through approximately 400 reproductions of photos, signs, and archival documents (fig. 18). The focus on European, rather than solely French, resistance networks represents the trademark "widening of the lens" that occurs in many third generation museums.

Like other third generation museums, the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté aims not only to inform its visitors (a reflection of the *droit de savoir*), but also to encourage them to reflect and remember (in the spirit of the *devoir de mémoire*). The museum's pedagogical aspirations and its memorial leanings are reflected by descriptions of the museum on its official website, which offers the following description of the site's educational purpose:

Recevant plus de 100,000 scolaires par an, le Centre européen du résistant déporté sur le site du Struthof a une importante mission pédagogique : celle de transmettre l'histoire bien sûr, mais au-delà de susciter chez chacun de ces jeunes visiteurs la conscience de son propre rôle en tant que citoyen pour la préservation du souvenir, la vigilance face aux menaces extrémistes et racistes qui font encore

⁵⁵ "Le point de vue de l'architecte," Struthof, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/fr/le-centre-europeen/la-creation-du-centre-europeen-du-resistant-deporte/le-point-de-vue-de-larchitecte>. Translation my own.

⁵⁶ "Permanent exhibition," Struthof, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/en/the-european-centre/against-barbarismcommit-resist-fight/permanent-exhibition>.

l'actualité et la transmission de valeurs fondamentales : liberté, égalité, fraternité.⁵⁷

The transmission of history is therefore secondary to the transmission of the moral applications of this history. Visitors – in particular, young visitors – are supposed to emerge from the site with a heightened awareness of the ideologies that led to the rise of fascism and continue to threaten democracy. Perhaps more importantly, they are meant to come away with an increased conviction in the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The conflation of these iconic values – the symbolic heart of the French Republic – with the experience of the deported European *résistant* suggest a further repositioning of the Resistance as an abstract moral ideal. In the CERD, as in other third generation or memorial museums, the *résistant* is no longer a mere fighter but rather, as characterized by Wieviorka, “a pioneer of human rights.”⁵⁸

Lastly, it is important not to forget that the CERD, like the Mémorial de la Shoah, was developed in many ways as a complement to the site's existing memorial. Visitors to Struthof arrive by way of the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté, which initially obscures all views of Mémorial aux Martyrs et Héros de la Déportation and of the camp itself. In visiting the permanent exhibitions at the CERD, they are therefore first exposed to the macrocosm – an entire continent of concentration camps and *résistants* – before being exposed to the particular experience of the deportees of KL-Natzweiler. The museum website provides the following characterization of visitor experience: “Then, with knowledge about the context that witnessed the birth and growth of Nazism, they walk through the gate and start visiting this place of remembrance.”⁵⁹ The CERD therefore provides an objective, historiographical framework within

⁵⁷ “Presentation,” Struthof, accessed April 6, 2015, <http://www.struthof.fr/fr/outils-pedagogiques/presentation>.

⁵⁸ Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 151.

⁵⁹ “Permanent exhibition,” Struthof.

which visitors can situate the emotional, commemorative experience of the camp and its associated monuments.

Conclusion

Scholars continue to insist upon the complexity of the period and the impossibility of one truly collective memory of World War II. However, it must be admitted that the past twenty years have seen the emergence of an increasingly objective, balanced, and comprehensive discussion of *les années noires* in the political, academic, and museological spheres. In the wake of the admission and acceptance of national guilt, French collective memory of the war has evolved to include both a greater focus on the Shoah – in particular, as the result of collaboration on the part of the French State – and a repositioning of the French Resistance as an abstract source of national values (though not, it is important to emphasize, a return to the exaggerated and erroneous ideology of the Resistance Myth). The memory of the Occupation and Vichy remains conflictual and capable of causing controversy, as evidenced by the failed memorial policies of President Sarkozy; however, World War II no longer seems to constitute the “ever-present past” once described by Conan and Rousso.

Although the passage of time has allowed for an increasingly objective approach to the war, it also poses problems in a country increasingly fragmented along racial, religious, and ethnic lines. As first-hand witnesses of the Holocaust grow scarce and “Occupation” and “Deportation” become little more than terms in a textbook, history risks falling prey to inaccurate reinterpretations. Journalist Jeffrey Goldberg, who posits the inoculating effects of the Shoah against overt anti-Semitism in post-World War II Europe, highlights the danger of this phenomenon: “What was once impermissible is again imaginable. Memories of 6 million Jewish

dead fade, and guilt becomes burdensome.”⁶⁰ Goldberg points to recent blatant attacks on the French Jewish community – including the March 2012 shooting at a Jewish school in Toulouse and the January 2015 attack on a kosher supermarket in Paris – as well as the increasing trivialization of revisionist sentiment – such as the irreverent humor promoted by controversial comedian Dieudonné M’bala M’bala, the inventor of the *quenelle*, a gesture “widely understood as an inverted Nazi salute” – as evidence of rising anti-Semitism in France.⁶¹

The museums that have emerged since 1995 therefore reflect both a new stage in French World War II collective memory and the heightened urgency of its transmission to the next generation. Increasingly frequented by visitors with little to no personal connection to the war and – in the case of their youngest target audience – only the most vague and perhaps even erroneous notion of what the conflict entailed, these third generation museums face a unique challenge. They must provide an objective analysis of the war while forging an emotional connection between past and present. Through personal testimony, an increased focus on ideologies and values, and a widening of the lens beyond the issues of 1940s France, these museums encourage young visitors to think critically about history and to apply the lessons of the past to present and future challenges.

⁶⁰ Jeffrey Goldberg, “Is it Time for the Jews to Leave Europe?,” *The Atlantic*, April 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/03/is-it-time-for-the-jews-to-leave-europe/386279>.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Epilogue

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” – George Santayana¹

On April 6, 2015, the 71st anniversary of the roundup and deportation of the children of Izieu,² President François Hollande visited the Maison d'Izieu to dedicate a new expansion of the existing site. Accompanied by Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, the Minister of Education, and Jean-Marc Todeschini, the Minister of State for Veterans and Remembrance, Hollande delivered a brief speech about the importance of the site. His address emphasized the tragedy of the Shoah and the necessity of continued transmission of “tous les aspects de notre passé” (including both “les pages lumineuses, les figures rayonnantes” and “les moments les plus sombres de notre histoire”).³ In characterizing the Maison d'Izieu as a symbol of fraternity and national engagement, Hollande also highlighted the responsibility of the French people to take action in a contemporary fight against intolerance and religious fundamentalism.

Hollande's speech at the Maison d'Izieu provides a reflection of the current state of French collective memory of the war, the evolution of which has been analyzed throughout this thesis, and its strong connection to the institution of the World War II museum. As argued in the first chapter of this thesis, the connection between museology and memory has existed since the immediate postwar period and the opening of the first generation of museums dedicated to World War II, which represented an attempt to repress the unpleasant facts of collaboration by instead

¹ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, vol. 1, *Reason in Common Sense* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 284.

² On April 6, 1944, Klaus Barbie ordered a raid on a Jewish orphanage in the French city of Izieu. In total, 44 children and their adult caretakers were arrested; almost all were then deported to Auschwitz and killed. Sabine Zlatin, the director of the orphanage who survived the raid, dedicated her life to the memory of *les enfants d'Izieu*; in addition to testifying about the roundup at the trial of Klaus Barbie, she actively campaigned for the creation of a *musée-mémorial* at the site (ultimately inaugurated in 1994).

³ François Hollande, “Cérémonie de commémoration de la rafle du 6 avril 1944 à la maison d'Izieu,” April 6, 2015, <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/ceremonie-de-commemoration-de-la-rafle-du-6-avril-1944-a-la-maison-d-izieu>.

commemorating a glorious story of resistance, with which all Frenchmen were invited to identify regardless of what they did, or didn't do, during the war and Occupation. Marked by their amateur approach to museology and the specificity of the narrative they presented, these museums possessed a mythologizing ethos not unlike the monuments that preceded them. As new evidence cast doubt on a once-authoritative national narrative of collective resistance, the French started to question their knowledge of and actions during the war: as a result, the 1970s and 1980s brought a period of national soul-searching, the rise of a strong French Jewish memory, and the disintegration of the Resistance Myth. On the museological level, a proliferation of museums dedicated to various aspects of the Second World War reflected both an increased fascination with the war and a growing sense of skepticism. These second generation museums evolved as places of divergent narratives and historical – rather than memorial – logic. Additionally, unlike the amateur museology of the early postwar period, the increasingly professional institutions of the 1980s and 1990s featured the work of teams of historians and scenographers who presented history as evidence for the judgment of the visitor. The stylistic evolution of the museum culminated during the Mitterrand presidency, when the cultural policies promoted by Mitterrand and Minister of Culture Jack Lang, combined with the burgeoning industry of memory tourism, led to the creation of spectacular, consumer-orientated sites in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The development of the museum as both a place of historiographical analysis and a tourist attraction reflects a further desacralization of the wartime narrative, through which World War II becomes the subject of both critical and spectacular interpretations. Since 1995, a distinct trend of museification has sought to bridge the gap between the historiographical nature of the history museum and the commemorative ethos of the memorial. While second generation institutions rejected memory in favor of a rigorously

historiographical and often appealing spectacular approach to the past, memory is vindicated in the third generation museum, providing a means through which postmodern institutions can keep the past “alive” and forge a personal connection with their young visitors. Within this third generation of museums, divergent and previously marginalized narratives have found their place alongside the once-dominant story of the French Resistance, which has itself been restructured as an abstract source of republican values. These institutions are places of education and commemoration, where the lessons of World War II are transmitted in an attempt to inform and inspire museum visitors.

The third generation museum – in particular, its valorization of memory, presentation of multiple narratives, and focus on ideologies and values – reflects the current French attitude toward World War II. A renewed focus on the Holocaust – including both an emphasis on personal testimony and an objective, critical approach to the active role of the Vichy regime in the deportation of French Jews – provides important reminders about the dangers of xenophobia and extremism in an increasingly fractured society. Meanwhile, a restructured focus on the abstract values of the Resistance encourages visitors to apply their newfound knowledge to the world around them as vigilant, active citizens; they are reminded, in the words of Hollande, that “face à la haine, rien n’est pire que l’indifférence.”⁴ The discourse surrounding this development reveals the political utility of this recent interpretation, wherein French leaders are able to selectively associate contemporary phenomena with aspects of this influential chapter of their nation’s history and, in doing so, make a strong political statement.⁵

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Hollande’s April 6 speech at the Maison d’Izieu is not an isolated example; he has referenced the contemporary moral implications of various aspects of World War II on several occasions, including a July 2014 speech at the Vélodrome d’Hiver and a January 2015 address at the Mémorial de la Shoah.

Given the current emphasis on the plurality and incomparability of wartime experiences, it is unlikely that France will witness the resurgence of the Resistance Myth – or any other similarly definitive narrative. In France, it seems, the time for such grand historical narratives has passed. Moreover, it seems equally unlikely that the French will soon forget *les années noires*. Rather, the French seem determined to emphasize the moral lessons – and thus, capitalize upon the political utility – of this particularly painful chapter in their national history. World War II is perhaps no longer unique in this manner: the aftereffects of colonialism and recent tensions surrounding immigration threaten to prove equally destabilizing and divisive. However, the evolution of the collective memory of World War II – as reflected in the historiographical, pedagogical, and occasionally commemorative institution of the museum – provides an interesting case study for the French people. In rejecting the myths of World War II and instead analyzing and reflecting upon the plurality of wartime experience and the moral implications of this “shared” past, the French can find a way to face challenges of the future.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. The Mémorial de la France combattante. Personal photo by author. July 2014.



Fig. 2. The Mémorial de la France combattante. Personal photo by author. July 2014.



Fig. 3. The Mémorial de la Déportation. Personal photo by author. June 2014.



Fig. 4. A *croix de Lorraine* at the base of the camp. Personal photo by author. June 2014.



Fig. 5. Permanent exhibition at the Centre National Jean Moulin. Personal photo by author. July 2014.



Fig. 6. Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation. An exhibition features a sign from the existing museum's predecessor. Personal photo by author. June 2014.



Fig. 7. Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation. A sign outside the museum auditorium advertises extracts from the Klaus Barbie trial. Personal photograph by author. June 2014.



Fig. 8. Exterior of the Mémorial de Caen, featuring a temporary façade. The fresco reads:
“La douleur m’a brisée, la fraternité m’a relevée. De ma blessure a jailli un fleuve de liberté.
Pain broke me, brotherhood lifted me up. A river of freedom sprang from my wounds.”
Personal photograph by author. July 2014.



Fig. 9. Permanent exhibition of the Mémorial de Caen.
Personal photograph by author. July 2014.



Fig. 10. Permanent exhibition of the Mémorial de Caen. A reconstituted city street features anti-Laval graffiti. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.

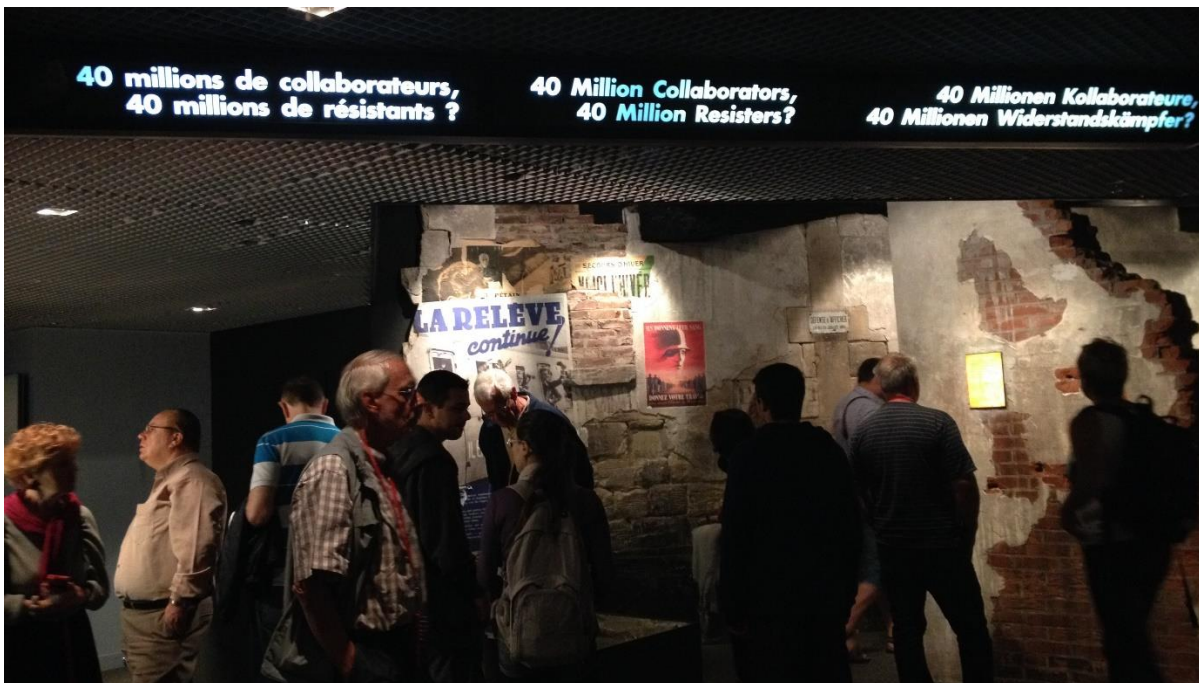


Fig. 11. Permanent exhibit of the Mémorial de Caen. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.

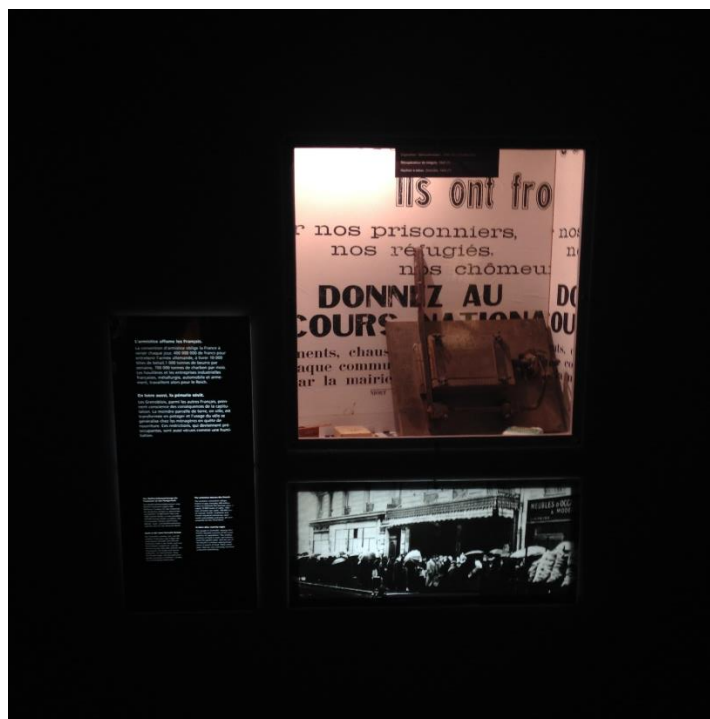


Fig. 12. Permanent exhibit of the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.



Fig. 13. Permanent exhibit of the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de l'Isère. Photo courtesy of MRDI Facebook Page, Grenoble, France.



Fig. 14. Permanent exhibit of the Mémorial de la Shoah. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.

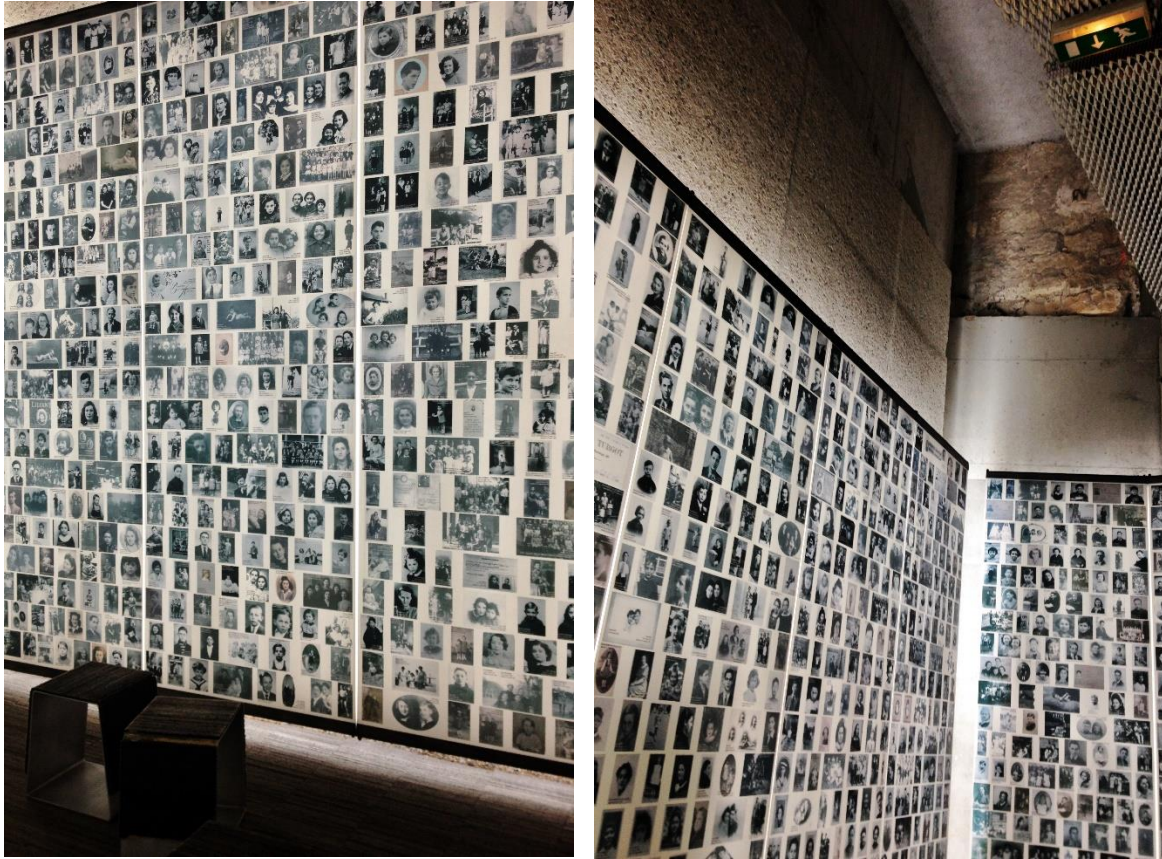


Fig. 15. The Children's Memorial at the Mémorial de la Shoah features approximately 4,000 photos of the over 11,000 French Jewish children deported during World War II. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.



Fig. 16. The exterior of the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.



Fig. 17. The permanent exhibition at the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté (CERD).
Photo courtesy of CERD, Struthof, France.



Fig. 18. A display within the permanent exhibition of the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté includes facsimiles of identification cards and passports of former *résistants*. Personal photograph by author. July 2014.

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