

## **Dying For Home: The Medicine and Politics of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France**

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**Dying For Home: The Medicine and Politics  
of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France**

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# *Dying For Home: The Medicine and Politics of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France*

Nostalgia was first conceived as a clinical entity in the seventeenth century, and understood as an extreme psychological and physical reaction to dislocation. The condition was interpreted as a rupture of bonds thought to bind individuals to their local environment.

This dissertation analyses the medical and political meanings attached to nostalgia in nineteenth-century France. It traces the medical and psychiatric history of nostalgia, and its rise and decline as a nosological category. In contrast to other extant interpretations, it shows how nostalgia was constructed in largely spatial terms. Nostalgia's subsequent temporalisation and internalisation reflect the emergence of new models of subjectivity within French psychology and psychiatry.

The dissertation also shows how an examination of a neglected account in medical history can enrich our understanding of French nation-building and nationalism. It demonstrates that medical discussions of nostalgia informed, and were informed by, larger political considerations. In particular, it examines the role of nostalgia in debates about identity, patriotism and national belonging. Even after its demise as a clinical category, the concept continued to carry important ideological meanings relating to the role of the physical environment in human development, and the equation of physical displacement and pathology continued to influence French psychiatric and political discourses until the *fin de siècle*.

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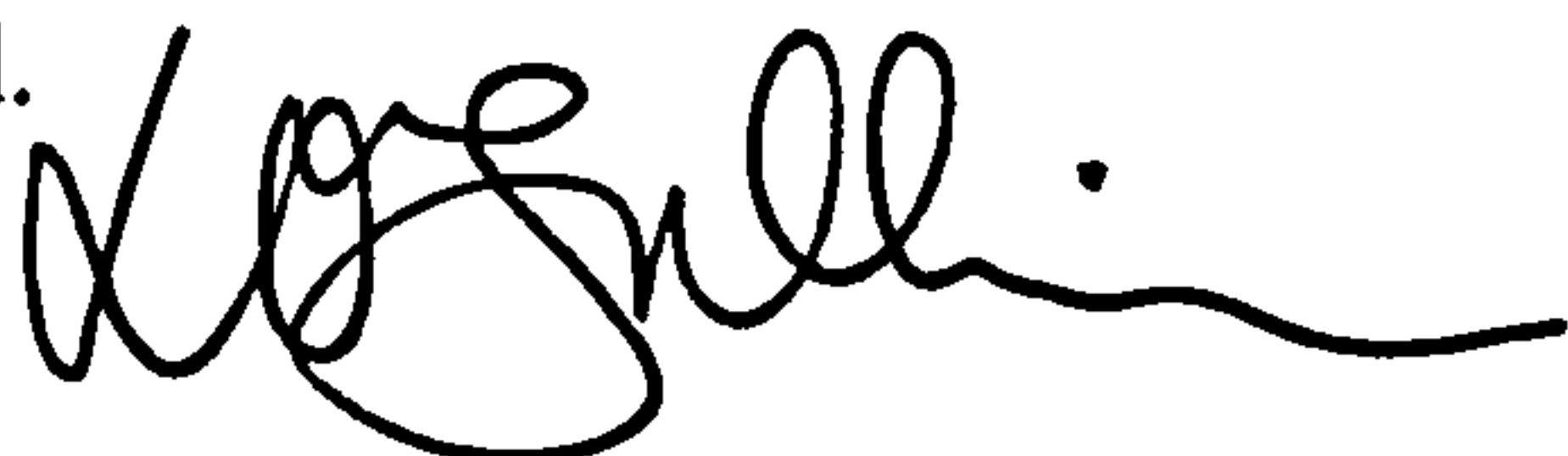
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All of the work presented in the thesis is my own, except where clearly indicated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa O'Sullivan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lisa O'Sullivan

## Section 1

### *Chapter 1 - Introduction*

Nostalgia has been the theme of so many works of literature, history, and criticism, that it is tempting to view it as a universal concept. However, the category has its own history. Far from being a global, or universal, human experience, nostalgia was for several centuries a highly specific clinical entity. The diagnosis of nostalgia was applied only to certain populations or groups, and thought to reveal much about the limits of their physical and psychological flexibility. This doctorate traces one aspect of nostalgia's history, examining its changing place in nineteenth-century French medicine and culture. In doing so it contributes new insights to the history of French medicine. It also demonstrates how medical and political ideas combined to make nostalgia an important ideological, as well as a clinical, tool. Changing meanings of nostalgia as a medical entity reflected political pressures, relating to questions of homeland, national identity and belonging.

Originally conceived in the seventeenth century by Johannes Hofer, a Swiss doctor, nostalgia was understood as a form of pathological, often fatal, homesickness.<sup>1</sup> Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the term was

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<sup>1</sup> Hofer coined the word 'nostalgia' in 1688 to describe what he believed to be a set of symptoms constituting a discrete clinical entity. He created the term by joining the Greek *nostos* (return to the native land) and *algos* (suffering or grief). According to Hofer the disease primarily struck young people forced from their homes. Their imaginative reconstruction of visions of home became so engrossing and overwhelming that they diverted the energy needed by the body for normal functioning. This caused disruption to the organs, and finally death. Hofer justified the need for new terminology on the grounds that existing descriptions of homesickness, such as *das Heimweh*, and *la maladie du pays*, failed to recognise the distinctly pathological forms the desire for home could take. 'Medical

used across Europe almost exclusively in its original clinical sense. Nostalgia depended upon a belief that 'home' was so central to identity that a loss of place could be equated with a loss of self.<sup>2</sup> It was defined as a psychological and physical reaction to the rupture of natural bonds binding between people and to their home environment. These bonds were considered so fundamental to subjectivity that their disturbance commonly led to considerable physical or psychological disturbance, or even death.

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century discussions of nostalgia varied between European countries.<sup>3</sup> However, its treatment consistently assumed that the disease revealed important aspects of human physiology and psychology.

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Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688', trans. by Carolyn Kiser Anspach, *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, 11 (1934), 376-391.

<sup>2</sup> For a twentieth-century expression of this idea, see Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of topophilia. The cultural geographer argues that the external cultural and physical environment shapes the worldview of its inhabitants. Topophilia describes the sense of connection felt by an individual for her or his surroundings, in effect a diffuse concept, but a concrete personal experience. Tuan's formulation is less overtly determinist than eighteenth-century theories of evolution, which saw group development as directly linked to the resources and pressures of their specific environment. However, both share a sense that attachment to one's surroundings is a fundamental function of the human psyche and physical body. See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974). For a discussion of eighteenth-century environmental theories, see James C. Riley, *The Eighteenth Century Campaign to Avoid Disease* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> For a review of German understandings of nostalgia, where it was used as a forensic term describing female insanity, see Charles (Karl) Arthur Alfred Zwingmann, 'Heimweh' or 'Nostalgic Reaction': A Conceptual Analysis and Interpretation of a Medico-psychological Phenomenon' (doctoral dissertation, Stanford, 1959). André Bolzinger also provides a translation and analysis of Karl Jaspers's work on nostalgia as a forensic category in 'La Nostalgie selon Jaspers : une thèse de médecine en 1909', *Évolution psychiatrique*, 64 (1999), 259-70. In contrast, the immunity of the Anglo-Saxon 'race' to nostalgia became a boast of the English medical establishment. They asserted that it was one of the (few) types of melancholia to which the English were not especially prone. See 'Nostalgia', *Annotations, The Lancet*, June 24 1899, p.1727. Nostalgia did appear in English medical encyclopaedias, for instance being included in Tuke's medical dictionary of 1892. However, far from indicating an English position on the disease the entry, by a German contributor, provided a blended picture of the Continental forms of the condition. See 'Nostalgia', *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine*, ed. by Daniel Hack Tuke (London: J. A. Churchill, 1892).



While doctors argued over its exact aetiology, the idea that nostalgia described a profound human inclination remained largely unchallenged within medicine until the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Then, the rise of a clinically-based medicine in which autopsy, anatomical lesions, and specific disease vectors were increasingly important combined with new psychiatric thinking and broader socio-political change to undermine nostalgia's credibility as a viable diagnosis. Until that time, the *a priori* existence of nostalgia was assumed to form an integral component of human nature at a particular stage of its development. This was an impression strengthened in the French literature by a love of drawing case studies from history and literature, whether describing the exile of the Jews in Babylon or Ulysses' voyages.<sup>5</sup>

The following chapters provide medical and political case studies of nostalgia, showing how ideas of what it meant to be 'at home' and 'away' informed

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<sup>4</sup> Hofer's failure to distinguish between 'home' as a physical, cultural or emotional category created a fundamental ambiguity that allowed a wide variety of explanations for the condition. Nostalgia initially became incorporated into the medical lexicon as *Schweizerkrankheit* or the 'Swiss disease'. Early mechanistic explanations, most closely associated with the Swiss naturalist Johann Jakob Scheuchzer (1672-1733), suggested that nostalgia was a purely physical disorder caused by the changes in atmospheric pressure experienced by mountain dwellers moving down to lower altitudes. Other interpretations viewed the home in socio-cultural terms, as relating to local habits, customs and languages. In this analytical framework, it was frequently remarked that just as the sounds of Swiss milking songs affected only the Swiss, the bagpipes could cause mass nostalgia among Scottish troops, but did not seem to have pathological effects on other groups (regardless of whether nostalgia was considered of physical or psychological, ethnic or cultural, origin, the Swiss and Scots remained closely identified with the disorder throughout its medical history). See Anspach, Introduction to Hofer's 'Dissertation' p.376, Rosen, 'Nostalgia', pp.343-345 and Jean Starobinski, 'The Idea of Nostalgia', *Diogenes*, no.53 (Spring 1966), pp.81-103, pp.87-89.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, see Jean-Louis Alibert, *Physiologie des passions : ou nouvelle doctrine des sentiments moraux*, 2 vols (Paris : Béchét Jeune, 1827), p.393.

models of identity and pathology.<sup>6</sup> In particular I consider how nostalgia framed re-negotiation of concepts of 'home', national identity, and the influence of physical place over the course of the century. The history of nineteenth-century French forms of nationalism has been the subject of intense historiographical and theoretical speculation. Yet in that literature, medical perspectives on questions of nationality have been largely overlooked. This dissertation suggests that the medico-psychiatric concept of nostalgia provides an important avenue through which to explore different models of national belonging that developed throughout the century.

While present in eighteenth-century nosologies, nostalgia became an object of sustained medical interest only in post-Revolutionary France. This interest was largely prompted by the rise of new medical paradigms, emphasising clinical observation and character of the doctor. It also responded to questions about national identity raised by the French Revolution. The Republic demanded that older loyalties give way to a new model of national belonging, relying on rational choice, which challenged earlier conceptions about the nature of subjectivity that saw patriotism as an outcome of innate preferences for the local environment. For medical practitioners, nostalgia became a case study demonstrating the apparent ability of French citizens to overcome their inherent characteristics and embrace citizenship of a modern state.

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<sup>6</sup> These questions are addressed from a literary perspective in *Home and its Dislocations in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. by Suzanne Nash (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). One chapter, by Michael Roth, 'Returning to Nostalgia' (pp.25-43), explores nostalgia as a clinical category. However, the focus of the text is on literary expressions of homelessness and dislocation, and these are not analysed in terms of nostalgia.

The revolution of 1789 saw the birth of a very particular and powerful conception of nationhood. To be a member of the French state henceforth relied on a will to belong. It involved committing oneself to a set of ideals and political systems. The nation and the people were one and the same, with the nation the sovereign expression of the people's will.<sup>7</sup> As Lynn Hunt has noted, the French Revolution sought national regeneration in which the creation of a new political and moral order was linked to a consensual community with its own ritualised language and behaviours.<sup>8</sup> With highly variant regional identities, customs and languages, calls could not yet be made to a unified sense of French identity except in so much as this was understood in abstract terms of this commitment. 'Home' was no longer to be considered in terms of place, but as membership in the national community.

Yet, during the Revolutionary wars, French doctors were faced with epidemics in which soldiers apparently died from nostalgia, that is the loss of home, rather than on the battlefield protecting the fledging French nation. Such deaths appeared to suggest that patriotism had natural limits.<sup>9</sup> This apparent paradox could only be resolved through a recognition that different, and potentially competing, objects could represent 'home' for the individual.

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<sup>7</sup> The principles of popular sovereignty, social equality and nationalism were most influentially expressed in Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès' *What is the Third Estate?* of 1789. Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat?* (Paris : 1789) and *What is the Third Estate?*, trans. by M. Blondel (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963).

<sup>8</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p.27.

<sup>9</sup> See Marcel Reinhard, 'Nostalgie et service militaire pendant la Révolution', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 30, no.150 (1958), 1-15.

It raised new and pressing questions about the relationship of nostalgia and patriotism. Should the nostalgic soldier be considered patriotic in his love for home, or the very reverse, since he appeared to reject the call of the nation? How should the nature of the home craved by the nostalgic be understood - physical environment, familiar cultural habits, a particular language, or an attachment to childhood? What attachments could, or should, the nostalgic be encouraged to develop in place of this desire for home?

In apparently embodying conflicts between home and the homeland, nostalgia acted as a medicalised forum where new ideas about what national identity might mean could be played out. Take this meditation on the nature and forms of patriotic feeling, from a medical thesis submitted to the Paris Faculty of Medicine in 1831:

An innate feeling in the heart of man makes him prefer the place of his birth to all the other places, his country to all others. The sacred love of the nation effortlessly draws its most sublime devotions from this noble source. But nature has not given the same inclinations to all men and this love of nation does not make all their hearts beat with the same energy. What in some gives rise to the most sublime deeds... all too often, in less strongly tempered minds, gives rise only to pain, moral decrepitude and disease.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> G. L.V. Pillement, 'Essai sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1831)1, no28, p.5. *'Il est un sentiment inné dans le cœur de l'homme qui lui fait préférer le lieu de sa naissance à tous les autres lieux, son pays à tous les autres pays. L'amour sacré de la patrie puise sans efforts*

Such references to ‘pain, moral decrepitude and disease’ were characteristic of an extensive early-nineteenth century medical literature examining nostalgia. The statement makes a number of assumptions about the nature of human subjectivity which were typical of this literature: that all human beings have an instinctive, unthinking preference for their native land; that patriotism is a secondary phenomenon relying on its association with this innate love; and that if the relationship between people, patriotism and the homeland is dysfunctional or disturbed, the result is misery and disease. While it has become a commonplace argument that nationalism has ‘pathological’ forms, this formulation reversed the dictum, insisting that pathology is found in those unable to use their love of home as the basis for nationalist feeling.

This dissertation lies at the intersection of medical, military and political history, and demonstrates the permeability of boundaries between these disciplines. The figure of the ‘nostalgic’ reflected continuing cultural and medical disquiet about the demands for physical and psychological flexibility generated by political and social change. Such was the symbolic importance of place and land in France, that conditions in which physical displacement

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*ses plus sublimes dévouements à une aussi noble source ; mais la nature n’a pas dévolu à tous les hommes les mêmes penchants, et cet amour de la patrie ne fait pas battre leur cœur avec le même énergie. Ce qui, chez les uns, devient la cause des plus belles actions ... ne produit souvent, dans un esprit moins fortement trempé, que douleur, qu’affaïssement moral et maladie.’*

Given the nuances of language and meaning that were central to debates over the nature of nostalgia, significant quotations have been included in the French original in the footnotes. Unless indicated, all translations are my own, and spelling has been standardised to modern French.

was equated with pathology became profoundly enmeshed in political debates over the nature of the nation, and how membership of that nation was to be determined. I focus on medical and psychiatric speculation over forms, pathologies, and limits of attachment to place.

The aim throughout this dissertation is to examine the often highly self-aware ways in which medical writers and practitioners used their discussions of disease to explore what it meant to be French and the nature of patriotism. Nostalgia's rich medical and psychological history is inseparable from the political pressures to which it responded, and in turn, informed. It demonstrates how theoretical concerns, social agendas and political environments can combine to shape the ways diseases are understood and treated. Thus, clinical readings of nostalgia reveal profound assumptions about the relation of the individual subject to his home, social community and the state.<sup>11</sup> The disorders under discussion here likewise raise questions about the ways, and extent to which, identity is fashioned in response to environment, whether physical, political or social.

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<sup>11</sup> The use of the masculine here is deliberate, as nostalgia was overwhelmingly considered as a male disorder, and unless otherwise indicated, men are the subjects of my discussion. The highly gendered construction of the condition relates to its particular associations in France. Nostalgia was normally considered a feminine condition in Germany, and largely gender-neutral in North America. See Charles Zwingmann, "Heimweh" or "Nostalgic Reaction"; Lisa Herschbach, 'Fragmentation and Reunion: Medicine, Memory and Body in the American Civil War' (doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1997).

## 1.1 The French context

Recent historiographical approaches to the history of medicine have questioned the validity of so-called ‘internal’ accounts, which treat change within medicine as purely driven by intellectual and theoretical advances within the discipline. Instead, there has been a call for historical approaches treating medicine as an embedded social and cultural practice. There is a need to take into account the internal and external processes driving the medical profession, such as status and professionalisation, as well as the experiences of patients, lay practitioners, and those outside the elite institutions.<sup>12</sup> These concerns are particularly acute in the nineteenth-century French context, where, as Jacques Leonard has shown, medicine was a highly politicised profession throughout the nineteenth century. Doctors had a significant presence in the parliamentary assemblies of successive regimes and played a large part in debates over public policy.<sup>13</sup> This influence extended past public health and hygiene to include measures on education, secularisation and work practices. In addition, the second half of the century saw socio-political

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<sup>12</sup> Historical accounts which provide important insights into the socio-political aspects of the medical profession and patient experience in nineteenth-century France include Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ian Dowbiggin, *Inheriting Madness: Professionalisation and Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Dora Weiner, *The Citizen-Patient in Revolutionary and Imperial Paris* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Jacques Léonard, *La Vie quotidienne du médecin de province au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1977) and *La Médecine entre les savoirs et les pouvoirs: histoire intellectuelle et politique de la médecine française au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Léonard, *La Vie quotidienne*, pp.230-231.

concerns about national health and decline increasingly articulated in the language of pathology.<sup>14</sup>

The varieties of French models of nationalism, and integration of provincial populations into the national community, has been the subject of intense, and often deeply divided, analysis. Fundamental debates in the study of nations and nationalism have been structured around questions of the voluntary or involuntary character of national belonging, and the modern or perennial nature of nations. Theorists of nationalism have written much about the need for modern political states to ‘enrol’ their own populations into the national body, and the French situation has often been used as an exemplar of those forms of nationalism that emphasise the constructed and voluntary nature of nationhood.

The model of voluntary national identity had its roots in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s vision of the social contract, and was contrasted by contemporary commentators to ‘cultural’ conceptions of nationalism associated with German theorists such as Johannes Herder.<sup>15</sup> Voluntary models emphasise the ability of individuals, in principle, to choose the nation to which they

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<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>15</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Contrat social ou principes du droit politique* (Paris : Garnier Frères, 1800), Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, trans. by T.O. Churchill (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968). On the French reception of such models of nationality, identified with German thinking, see Gérard Noiriel, *Population, immigration et identité nationale en France XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris : Hachette, 1992), pp.10-15.



belong.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, organic models see nationality as a given, something into which an individual is born. ‘Modernist’ accounts of nationalism complicate the voluntary nature of enrolment into a national identity, linking the emergence of new economic and institutional structures and practices to the construction of modern nation states. They argue that ‘national identity’ is an abstract concept, a collective expression of belonging to a nation state, primarily created through state apparatuses or by the processes of modernisation themselves.<sup>17</sup> These debates are highly germane to changing interpretations of nostalgia, since its history as a clinical category demonstrates potential limitations perceived to be imposed by both voluntary and involuntary models of national belonging.

In the French context, Eugen Weber’s *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976), an account of rural communities during the Third Republic, has become a key reference point in the investigation of the ‘enrolment’ of populations into a national identity.<sup>18</sup> While it remains a classic text in the field, Weber’s analysis has been criticised for its generalisations and periodisation. For example, his analysis has been portrayed as relying on a few, arguably

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<sup>16</sup> For a summary of these positions, see Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates About Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp.2-7.

<sup>17</sup> Classic ‘modernist’ accounts are Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1997); Eric Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); *Nationalism in Europe 1815 to the Present*, ed. by Stuart Woolf (London: Routledge, 1996)

<sup>18</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France 1870 - 1914* (Stanford: California, Stanford University Press, 1976).

atypical, regions and stereotypes of city and country, peasant and citizen.<sup>19</sup> Fernand Braudel, amongst others, has complicated Weber's claims by demonstrating the difficulties of dating change in the French countryside. This results from a broad range of markers that can be used to measure the transformation of rural life, from income levels to technical advances. The heterogeneity of rural practices and technologies, and local responses to innovation also make the picture more complex.<sup>20</sup>

On a broad cultural level, however, Weber's thesis remains extremely useful. Weber argues that the transformation of peasant life, and its integration into the national body, occurred through a discrete set of factors: standardised education, new cultural and economic practices and improved communication and transport technologies. These were precisely the factors that contemporary commentators believed contributed to overcoming nostalgia. They were seen to act as prompts through which local (often ethnically or linguistically based) loyalties associated with nostalgia were transformed into

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<sup>19</sup> For instance, Ted Margadant argues that Weber's general argument about rural modernisation misconstrues the pattern of urban development and economic growth, which depended far more on cash crops, rural industry and rural to urban migration than he suggests, and that his periodisation of cultural change and political awareness is only accurate for the most isolated regions of the nation. John Merriman makes similar criticisms of Weber's periodisation, noting that some regions of France continue to retain their cultural differences to the present day, while also emphasising that considerable economic and cultural integration had taken place well before the Third Republic. See Ted W. Margadant, 'Tradition and modernity in rural France during the 19th century', *The Journal of Modern History*, 56 (1984), 667–697, pp.679-680. John Merriman, review, Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, *Journal of Modern History*, 50 (1978) 534-536, p 535. Also see Robert Tomb, 'Peasants, Frenchmen and 'Cultural Historians'', *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 1117 – 1125.

<sup>20</sup> See Fernand Braudel, Chapter 10, 'Progress all the same', *The Identity of France*, trans. by Siân Reynolds, 2 vols (London: Fontana Press, 1960), pp.400-410. Also, Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp.3-4.

patriotism for the political state. In this guise the cure of nostalgia was used as an argument for the state's ability to 'enrol' its citizens. As such, this dissertation adds a new, medical, dimension to Weber's thesis. However, it also demonstrates the importance of the criticisms directed at his work. For contemporary medical practitioners, nostalgia had all but disappeared by the Third Republic. It implies that, rhetorically at least, the process of assimilation of the peasant population into the national body documented by Weber was considered by the contemporaneous medical profession to have been completed.

The historicisation of nostalgia also illuminates and complicates the current historiography of nationalism and nation building in other ways. For medical practitioners just after the French Revolution nostalgia acted as a reminder that political commitment to forming part of a nation was thought to be an insufficient basis for patriotism, demonstrating the need for a sense of belonging to be *felt*. As Benedict Anderson has emphasised in his study of nationalism, the national community must be felt and willed, as well as 'imagined'.<sup>21</sup> Anthony Smith argues similarly that a weakness of modernist accounts of nationalism, with their focus on the constructed nature of nations, is their failure to acknowledge the emotional depth of loyalties to historical national identities. His critique of modernist accounts forms the basis for an

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<sup>21</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), p.59.

alternative narrative - the ethnosymbolic - that seeks to link modern nations and nationalism with earlier collective cultural identities and sentiments.<sup>22</sup>

The tensions highlighted by Smith between modern and pre-modern identifications were those perceived to be in conflict in post-Revolutionary cases of nostalgia. When military doctors engaged in the Revolutionary wars made the claim that they had learnt to cure nostalgia, they linked this cure to their ability to imbue their patients with a new form of national attachment. This was a patriotism no longer reliant on place, but on membership of the national community. The possibility that homesickness could be replaced with patriotic fervour was a powerful argument for the potential of voluntary and rational civic nationalism to engage its citizens' emotions. However, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, the desire of doctors to act as agents of the state by impressing a sense of patriotic duty upon their patients began to be shaken by political upheavals in the following decades. Doctors begin to speculate about the forms of government that could best generate emotional attachment in their people. In addition, the extent to which emotional attachments and loyalties were voluntary or innate was subject to continual reassessment. Within these debates, nostalgia had a privileged place. Inherent ambiguities in the diagnosis made it a useful category to be deployed in support of diverse ideological positions, where it could act as a demonstration of the 'natural' or innate sources of patriotism and attachment.

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, *The Nation in History*, pp.62-63.

For most political theorists of the nineteenth century, the criteria around which membership of French citizenship should be determined were never entirely free of linguistic or ethnic factors. Clinical nostalgia could be seen to demonstrate the pathological potential of such models of national community, in which belonging was conceived in concrete terms of connection between an individual and a locale. However, nostalgia could also be valorised as the extreme position of otherwise laudable sentiments and in this guise was central to ethnic or racial visions of nationality that relied on inter-relating the concepts of 'blood' and 'soil.'<sup>23</sup>

A combination of imperial ambition, fears of degeneration and new evolutionary theories saw a hardening of racial boundaries in the later part of the nineteenth century. It brought new urgency to questions surrounding whether one could choose to become a member of a nation. Increasingly it was argued that nationality formed an integral part of one's inheritance.<sup>24</sup> Different narratives about nostalgia presupposed distinct answers to these questions of where the lines of national belonging should be drawn; whether along local, national, supra-national, racial, or political lines. As such, nostalgia in its nineteenth-century forms cannot be understood without considering theories of race and ethnicity, and their relation to nationality.

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Ignatieff's *Blood & Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: BBC Books / Chatto & Windus, 1993) demonstrates the persistence of this model of nationalism linked to place and ancestry.

<sup>24</sup> See Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, Oxford, 1982); George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

## 1.2 Historiography

Clinical nostalgia has been the subject of surprisingly little historical attention. In its modern, temporal sense, nostalgia has been used as a framing concept in a number of literary studies of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> However contemporaneous understandings of the concept have rarely been explored. Thus, French military histories occasionally note the identification of nostalgia as a problem in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies, but provide little analysis of the disorder.<sup>26</sup> Only a handful of medical and cultural historians have directly focused on the disorder's history. George Rosen has produced a useful review article on nostalgia in a number of national settings, and Stanley Jackson included the diagnosis in his history of melancholy and depression.<sup>27</sup> Philosopher and historian Jean Starobinski has explored the broader place of nostalgia in the history of medicine in a number of articles.<sup>28</sup> His accounts take a schematic, pan-European approach. In contrast, my study concentrates on examining the details of nostalgia's trajectory in French medical and political life.

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<sup>25</sup> Ann Colley's study of homesickness and separation, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture*, and Richard Terdiman's *Past / Present: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, are helpful examples of the use of nostalgia in its modern sense to explore nineteenth-century literary concerns. Unusually, both also point to clinical meanings of the term. See Richard Terdiman, *Past / Present: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Ann C. Colley, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> For instance Reinhard, 'Nostalgie et service militaire pendant la Révolution'.

<sup>27</sup> Rosen, 'Nostalgia', 'Percussion and Nostalgia'; Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression*, pp.373-380.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Starobinski, 'The Idea of Nostalgia'; 'La Nostalgie : théories médicales et expression littéraire', *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 27 (1963), 1505-1518; and 'La Leçon de la nostalgie', *Médecine et Hygiène* (Sept 20 1961), 683-685.

Cultural historian Michael Roth has also considered nostalgia in its French clinical expressions.<sup>29</sup> However, he analyses nostalgia as a 'disease of memory', when, for contemporary writers, it was considered a disorder of imagination, and as such carefully delineated from dysfunctions of memory. Roth's analysis of nostalgia encapsulates the difficulties of producing historically sensitive reading of the condition. As will become clear throughout this dissertation, nineteenth-century nostalgia was primarily conceived along a spatial rather than temporal axis, associated with imagination rather than memory. The relative lack of historical attention, and confusion about its nature, reflects the new and changed meanings attached to nostalgia. At the start of the nineteenth century nostalgia was a purely clinical term, used only in the most specialised literature. By the century's end it was a vague and sentimental desire, the province of poets and philosophers.

In a literary context, nostalgia was first used by Honor de Balzac (1799-1850) in 1834. While Balzac prided himself on his medical knowledge and use of clinical terminology, he considerably broadened the meanings of many of the terms he used. Nostalgia was no exception. Balzac used nostalgia in *La Comédie Humaine* to designate passions and obsessions ranging from the religious to the erotic and gastronomic. His treatment of nostalgia established

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<sup>29</sup> Michael S. Roth, 'Remembering Forgetting: Maladies de la Memoire in Nineteenth-Century France', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 49-68; 'Dying of the Past: Medical Studies of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France', *History and Memory*, 3 (1991), 5-29; 'The Time of Nostalgia : Medicine, History and Normality in Nineteenth-century France', *Time and Society*, 1, no.2 (1992), 271-286.

it as a thwarted passion that could be directed towards any number of, often impossible, dreams.<sup>30</sup>

This expanded sense of the concept was also used by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) in his *Le spleen de Paris* (published posthumously in 1869). Baudelaire described a gambler smoking cigars with the devil, who found that the smell of tobacco evoked nostalgia for pleasures and countries ‘as yet unknown.’<sup>31</sup> Clinical nostalgia had depended on a tangible and specific object of desire but Balzac and Baudelaire’s adoption of the term significantly extended its meanings. It is their usage of nostalgia which has become the dominant reading of the term, a transferred sense in which retrieving a desired object, or finding a place of belonging, seems all but impossible. It is tempting to say that this process was one by which *mal du pays* became *mal du siècle*. Certainly in the literary context, such terms were used interchangeably. Stendhal, Balzac and Baudelaire all noted in their correspondence that they had been struck by nostalgia. However their use of the term was very loose, as a metaphor for spleen, ennui and melancholia, all conditions that medical writers of the first half of the century clearly differentiated from nostalgia.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Moïse Le Yaouanc, *Nosographie de l’humanité Balzacienne* (Paris : Maloine S.A., 1959), pp.420-423.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Baudelaire, ‘Le Joueur généreux’, *The Poems in Prose*, ed. and trans. by Francis Scarfe, vol.2 (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1989), pp.126-131. ‘*Nous fumâmes longuement quelques cigares dont la saveur et le parfum, incomparables donnaient à l’âme la nostalgie de pays et de bonheurs inconnus, et, enivré de tous ces délices...*’, p.128.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, while serving as an aide de camp in December 1801, Stendhal recorded that he was suffering from ennui, melancholia and nostalgia. ‘*Il paraît que ma maladie habituelle est l’ennui ... j’avais quelques symptômes de nostalgie et de mélancolie.*’ Stendhal, *Œuvres intimes*, ed. by V. Del Litto (Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p.21. Likewise, Balzac



Considerable attention has been paid to conditions such as ennui, *mal du siècle*, and spleen as markers of an emerging consciousness distinctly modern in its outlook, born out of French Romanticism and in reaction to the long periods of reaction after the upheavals of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. While conceptions of each overlapped, and changed over time, what all shared was a sense of dis-ease or dis-junction between the individual and his or her world. At their core was a sense of instability or incoherence. They were marked by a sense of dissatisfaction without a cure; in all of them, modern life was associated with a sense of a breakdown of meaning.<sup>33</sup> In its transferred sense, nostalgia became largely synonymous with these terms, as it had lost its concrete object of desire, and thus its specificity. However, as nostalgia began to lose its internal coherence, the concerns which underlay the original conception of the disorder – connection to the land, the formation and transformation of identity, the basis for national feeling – were generally refracted into new clinical languages (explored in Chapter 4).

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complained in a letter of 1845 that he was taken by spleen, nostalgia, or ennui. '*Je suis repris par le spleen, compliqué de nostalgie, ou si vous voulez, par un ennui que je n'ai jamais éprouvé.*' Quoted in Le Yaouanc, *Nosographie de l'humanité Balzacienne*, p.404. According to his mother, Madame Aupick, in a letter to his friend Charles Asselineau, Baudelaire suffered from nostalgia. This occurred during the aborted sea voyage that his parents had encouraged him to make. Apparently his condition was so acute that the doctor on board advised his immediate return to France. See W. T. Bandy, *Baudelaire devant ses contemporains* (Monaco : Editions du Rocher, 1957), p.51.

<sup>33</sup> On changing medical ideas about spleen over the century see Henry Le Savoureux, 'Contribution à l'étude des perversions de l'instinct de conservation : le Spleen' (medical thesis, Paris, 1913), 30, no.230. On ennui, see George Steiner, 'The "Great Ennui"', in *Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Re-definition of Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), pp. 13-27 and Reinhard Kuhn, *The Demon of Noontide: Ennui in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

The use of the word 'nostalgia' increased dramatically from the 1880s, long after its clinical uses had been joined by other readings. Changes in the usage and meaning of nostalgia are described in *Appendix 1*. It uses Etienne Brunet's statistical analysis of the core nineteenth and twentieth century French vocabulary to track the incidence of the term outside the medical literature.<sup>34</sup> Such changes in meaning immediately give rise to a number of methodological issues. These relate to the problems of giving historically sensitive interpretations of categories whose meanings have altered significantly.<sup>35</sup> It is an especially important caveat in the case of nostalgia, as its shift in meaning has been so profound that its original sense is almost completely lost.<sup>36</sup>

Nostalgia, as we now understand it, acts to idealise a past situation, cloaking its harsher realities with sentiment. Twentieth-century nostalgia has inherited only the transferred meanings of the term, and so is read as a wistful, mawkish, even kitsch sentimentalisation of the past.<sup>37</sup> This change makes it

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<sup>34</sup> Etienne Brunet, *Le Vocabulaire français de 1789 à nos jours : d'après les données du Trésor de la langue française* (Paris : Librairie Champion, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> In his work on depression George Rousseau has similarly pointed to the specific historiographical difficulties that arise whenever categories of analysis have been so transformed over time that it becomes impossible to read older categories without some reference, even if unconscious, to their newer forms. His discussion centres on the psychologisation of *melancholia* over the nineteenth century, when it became studied in terms of the newer medical term, depression. This is the opposing trajectory to the one taken by nostalgia over roughly the same period. Georges Rousseau, 'Depression's Forgotten Genealogy: Notes Towards a History of Depression', *History of Psychiatry*, 11, no.41 (2000), 71-106, p.75. A number of cultural historians have grappled with these methodological issues within the context of hysteria, See *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. by Sander L. Gilman et al (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> This is especially the case in English, but holds true for French and German as well.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York, London: Norton, 1991), pp.105-06.

particularly difficult to 'read' nostalgia seriously as a disease. It has also made the term a useful shorthand to refer to conservative or reactive political programmes. Broadly speaking, feminist and Marxist schools of thought have seen in nostalgia a weapon for the denial or rejection of change.<sup>38</sup> Works such as *The Past is Another Country*, *Theatres of Memory* and *The Invention of Tradition* have shown how the past can be evoked in particular ways in order to serve contemporary political needs, a process in which nostalgia in this new sense operates as a powerful tool.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, the loss of a concrete and redeemable object of desire at its heart has fundamentally altered modern conceptions of nostalgia. Susan Stewart's description of nostalgia is a useful, and widely quoted, example of the concept's application in recent literary theory. She states that:

Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience ... This point of desire which the nostalgic seeks is in

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<sup>38</sup> For instance, see Lynne Huffer, *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures: Nostalgia, Ethics and the Question of Difference* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.19. 'The structure underlying nostalgic thinking reinforces a conservative social system ... because nostalgia is necessarily static and unchanging in its attempts to retrieve a lost utopian space, its structure upholds the status quo.'

<sup>39</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, vol. 1, *Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994); *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); David Lowenthal, *The Past is Another Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

fact the absence that is the very generating mechanism of desire

... nostalgia is the desire for desire.<sup>40</sup>

In this model, the whole point of nostalgic representation is that it has no real object. As such, it creates a self-perpetuating sense of lack, even as it indulges the desire to attempt to fill that lack.

The role granted to nostalgia in psychoanalysis generally follows a version of this interpretation, so that nostalgia is seen to act both as screen affect and screen memory. In these terms, nostalgia offers an idealised substitute past that allows the repression of mourning for past losses or of traumatic experiences in that past.<sup>41</sup> Such readings rely on a dis-association of nostalgia and homesickness, and a naturalisation of the relationship between nostalgia and the past. Such interpretations cannot be usefully employed to provide a historically nuanced account of the disorder's history. The psychoanalytic and psychological literature relating to nostalgia is small and disparate. Most of it tends towards unsophisticated readings of nostalgia, which broadly reflect its new meanings. The exception to this trend is the work of Andre Bolzinger and other contributors to *L'Évolution psychiatrique*. Contributors to this journal continue to access nostalgia as an historical construct and a potentially useful diagnostic category revolving around issues of physical exile and return.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p.23.

<sup>41</sup> David S. Werman, 'Normal and Pathological Nostalgia', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association*, 25, no.2 (1977), 387-98 is typical of this approach.

<sup>42</sup> For instance see A. Ayouch Boda, 'La Nostalgie, exil', *Évolution psychiatrique*, 64 (1999), 271-9; André Bolzinger, 'Pour le Tricentenaire de la nostalgie', *Évolution psychiatrique*, 54

The lines of connection and dis-connection between modern readings of nostalgia and those of its original form present a fruitful area of further enquiry. Here, however, the focus is on the reconstruction of nostalgia's ideological, political and social meanings in nineteenth-century France. In fact, the success of nostalgia in its transferred sense, where it is understood as acting to mask negative or traumatic aspects of the past, has almost completely obscured the term's own history. In addition, in its new sense, nostalgia has become an extremely useful category through which to explore acute nineteenth-century French concerns with relationships of past and present, the sense of rupture and loss associated with the Revolution, agricultural decline, modernisation, and colonial expansion. However, its very usefulness in this context has tended to further detach the modern concept from its historical and clinical roots.

My project aims to restore a sense of history to a term that has become too loosely identified with a refusal to see the past clearly. Thus, there is an emphasis on differences and disjunctions between the original category and its modern successors. For instance, interpretations of nostalgia within a psychoanalytical frame have been avoided. While the focus of this thesis is pre-Freudian, debates surrounding nostalgia were pregnant with the issues that were to be of such concern to Freud about the role of the past, childhood, and trauma in the development of subjectivity. Psychoanalytically- informed

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(1989), 219-25; André Bolzinger, & J.-P. Bouillault, 'La Nostalgie dans les thèses de médecine de 1820 à 1830', *Évolution psychiatrique*, 55 (1990) 619-631.

histories of nostalgia already exist, and they provide sometimes intriguing insights. For instance, in the more sophisticated analyses of nostalgia, such as those by Jean Starobinski and Michael Roth, the disease is understood as regression, a fantasised retreat to the conditions of childhood, a return to oneness with the mother. This is an entirely viable reading, as far as it goes, and one that reflects the symbolic importance of the maternal figure in nostalgic desire. However, as mentioned, such readings act to de-historicise the category by assuming that the fundamental rupture or loss experienced in nostalgia is a temporal and universal one.

To provide a more historically accurate reading of nostalgia as a clinical entity, it needs to be considered as belonging as much within the frame of the biological and geographical sciences as within the history of psychiatry. Treating the image of the 'home' as purely a representation of childhood distorts the ways in which the disorder was understood at the time. It not only makes doctors' therapeutic use of a return home little better than a naïve attempt to indulge the patient's fantasy, but fails to account for the apparent success of these cures. The temptation to read nostalgia ahistorically, that is to apply its modern meanings to its nineteenth-century uses, produces a tendency that runs through the secondary literature to overstate nostalgia's connection to memory and the past. As I will demonstrate, this association of nostalgia is

a modern phenomenon, a result of the metamorphosis tracked throughout this dissertation.<sup>43</sup>

### 1.3 Scope of the thesis

The focus of this work is on the experience of nostalgia within France.

Nostalgia in the French colonial context, whether in émigré or exiled communities, has been similarly neglected as the subject of academic inquiry.<sup>44</sup> Nostalgia is rarely acknowledged as an important category in the French colonial sphere. Yet, as works by Alice Bullard and Bertrand Taithe indicate, while nostalgia carried many of its connotations and associations with it to the Pacific and African arenas, these contexts also produced local readings of the disorder. For instance, in New Caledonia, exiled French Communards insisted that nostalgia was decimating their ranks. The penal administrators disputed this claim. They argued that by their actions, the Communards had proved their lack of patriotic attachment to France, and therefore could not claim to be suffering the disorder.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Reflecting the tendency towards anachronism encouraged by the temporalisation of nostalgia, a number of pieces examining the condition can be found in the *Bulletin de psychologie*'s special issue on memory. See *Bulletin de psychologie*, Group d'études de psychologie de l'Université de Paris, 42 (1988-1989).

<sup>44</sup> Medical studies of European expansion have tended to focus on mortality and disease, rather than psychology. For instance, see Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>45</sup> Bullard, 'Fatal Nostalgia', Chapter 7, *Exile to Paradise*, pp.182-209 and Bertrand Taithe, 'Colonial Performances of the Hygienic Body: colonisers of the French Empire c. 1860-1930' [unpublished typescript].

The changes in usage of the term in France shifted the subsequent meanings attached to nostalgia in both Anglophone and Francophone worlds. However, it is most clearly within French psychology and literature that nostalgia lost its literal association with the physical home and took on a temporal form. The relative neglect of nostalgia as an object of historical study means there is not a cohesive body of historical research to which this dissertation responds. Instead, I have built the entity 'nostalgia' out of the diverse fields in which it appears - incorporating medical, cultural, social and intellectual French history.

I am especially indebted to a number of cultural historians. The most pertinent examples are Jan Goldstein's and Ian Dowbiggin's work on the professionalisation of psychiatry in France. Both of these works demonstrate how medical change was fuelled by internal and external pressures, including the drive towards professionalisation and the need to negotiate changing political, religious and cultural climates.<sup>46</sup> Robert Nye has also demonstrated how the late nineteenth century saw French political and social concerns increasingly expressed in medicalised and criminalised terms.<sup>47</sup> Matt Matsuda's examination of different sites where a specifically modern sense of memory was developed in France has also informed my approach.<sup>48</sup> All of

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<sup>46</sup> Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ian R. Dowbiggin, *Inheriting Madness: Professionalisation and Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> See Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics*.

<sup>48</sup> Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).



these authors have emphasised the importance of professional, political and cultural contexts to changes in French medicine and psychiatry. My treatment of nostalgia shares this awareness of the situated and often highly politicised nature of medical theory and practice.

The relative neglect of nostalgia as an object of study is far from indicating that it was a peripheral or minor disease in the nineteenth century. Rather, it relates to the confusion of the term with a form of memory, and reflects particular historiographical pre-occupations. Situated as it was as a condition that encompassed mental, environmental and biological explanations, nostalgia does not fit easily either into accounts of medicine's increasing reliance on scientific disciplines, nor the emergence of psychiatric discourses. For this reason, I will have, perhaps surprisingly for the contemporary reader, very little to say about 'memory' in the sense of 'collective memory', which recent decades have seen become an important tool for the analysis of the formation of cultural and national identity. This historiographical approach, most thoroughly explored in Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire* project, emphasises the socially constructed nature of public memory and its political uses.<sup>49</sup> However, my interest is less with the construction of shared memories, than with the ways that individuals were believed to negotiate and express their feelings for place and home in the context of the modern state.

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<sup>49</sup> See Pierre Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et histoire : la problématique des lieux', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris : Gallimard, 1997), pp.xvii-xlii. For a discussion of some of the problems with Nora's approach, see Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London Cornell University Press, 1998), pp18-19.

The work of Michel Foucault, as well as that of numerous historians of psychiatry, has rightly emphasised the importance of the asylum to the development of new ideas about insanity and normal psychology, while simultaneously aiding in the consolidation of psychiatry as a profession.<sup>50</sup>

Yet, in their very nature, early conceptions of nostalgia offered a rebuke to the asylum, since its cure could only be effected outside its realm. Subsequent claims that nostalgia had been successfully treated in an asylum setting undermined its legitimacy as a diagnosis. Such cures, like those in army hospitals, raised questions about the need for sufferers to be returned to their homes.<sup>51</sup> A focus on the asylum and identification of the late nineteenth century as the apogee of French psychiatry has guided historiographical attention, and deflected attention from disorders that cannot be contained in its lens.

While the consolidation of psychiatry saw the emergence of numerous new conditions, nostalgia was a condition belonging to earlier models of subjectivity. While it persisted for much of the nineteenth century, the diagnosis became increasingly anomalous. Nostalgia no longer sat easily within the medical corpus, or within new psychiatric discourses. By the end of the century it was already becoming discounted as a condition and was

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<sup>50</sup> In the French context, see Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1972); Ian R. Dowbiggin, *Inheriting Madness*, especially Chapter 4, 'Alienism and the Psychiatric Search for a Professional Identity: the *Société médico-psychologique* 1840-1870, pp. 76-92, and Chapter 6, 'Hereditarianism, the Clinic, and Psychiatric Practice in Nineteenth-Century France', 116 – 143.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Lasègue, review, *De la Nostalgie*, by Auguste Haspel, *Archives générales de médecine*, 25 (1875), 760-763, p.763.

associated with none of the florid theatricality or theoretical advances of diseases identified with this period. Conditions such as hysteria and split personality were linked to new models of the mind, and unlike nostalgia, have remained highly culturally charged concepts retaining some sense of their clinical heritage.<sup>52</sup>

The loss of nostalgia's theoretical centrality is most obvious in the lack of records associated with the disorder. The most significant source materials for this work are nineteenth-century medical monographs and published theses. Scrutiny in Parisian medical and military archives revealed little use of nostalgia as a diagnosis in hospital registries over the period examined.<sup>53</sup> This is puzzling given its ubiquity in the standard reference works. On one level, it suggests that the diagnosis was more useful as an ideological tool for doctors than as a practical diagnostic category. However, the number of case studies documented in the published literature belies this conclusion.

In fact, the relative absence of nostalgia from registries and hospital records can be largely explained by institutional and record-keeping practices. The Salpêtrière and Bicêtre admission books held at the *Archives de l'Assistance*

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<sup>52</sup> See for instance Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) and Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995). Showalter and Hacking have very different approaches, but both use nineteenth-century disorders as starting points from which to draw conclusions about issues pertinent to late twentieth-century controversies – such as multiple personality, chronic fatigue syndrome, Gulf War syndrome and recovered memory.

<sup>53</sup> AP-HP 5 Q/1 Bicêtre, 6R / 21 Salpêtrière, Archives de l'Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris .

*Publique- Hôpitaux de Paris* use only general classifications. Reflecting the enormous influence of theories of monomania on French psychiatric theory, these are most commonly *monomanie* or *lypemanie*. Both terms were introduced by Esquirol in 1810 and used widely as diagnoses over the next decades. A monomania was a form of madness characterised by a single obsession or *idée fixe*, and lypemania a sub-category, being a monomania with delusions.<sup>54</sup> Both were general categories, which did not reveal the exact nature of the *idée fixe* (for example erotomania, dipsomania or kleptomania – all monomanias first described during this period). Nostalgia was, like so many older disease categories, integrated into the language of monomania. Esquirol, for example, discussed nostalgia in his *Des maladies mentales* as a form of lypemania, potentially leading to suicide.<sup>55</sup> Being considered only in terms of a specific type of monomania, nostalgia was therefore unlikely to be named in such records.

Similarly, at the archives of *L'armée de la terre*, held at the *Château de Vincennes*, extremely detailed records are kept for all members of the territorial army. Research by military historian Paddy Griffiths suggests that evidence relating to nostalgia can be found. Griffiths mentions archival sources at the *Château* that discuss nostalgia in the French Army during Greek and Algerian expeditions. However as records are organised by military unit, a search for individual cases of nostalgia entails exhaustive

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<sup>54</sup> See Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, pp.152-155, for a discussion of monomania that makes clear the importance and ubiquity of the diagnosis in the first half of the century.

<sup>55</sup> See E. Esquirol, *Des Maladies mentales considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal* (Paris : J.-B. Ballière, 1838), 546-547.

examination of the records of individual battalions, an analysis outside the scope of this investigation.<sup>56</sup>

Added to these institutional factors, nostalgia's symptomology and demography increase its opacity. One of its primary signs was extreme introversion. The patient retreated to an internal world centred on visual evocations of the beloved home, in which language had a minor role. Silence was such a key characteristic of the disease that verbal expressions of homesickness were taken as a sign of malingering, since simulating the disease could win a soldier a *cong *, or home-leave. The paucity of first hand accounts of nostalgia is also increased by the often-fatal prognosis of the disease, and the common illiteracy of many of the young soldiers struck by it. This means that accounts by sufferers are rare. Stendhal and Balzac's references to their nostalgic suffering are typical of the brevity of patient accounts.

Nonetheless, nostalgia has a rich archival resource. It became a favoured dissertation topic for experienced military practitioners returning to complete their studies. Their accounts are expressions of ongoing medical concern with dislocation and identity, especially focused on the impact of warfare on a young rural population. They reveal not only the clinical construction of a medical object, but the political meanings embedded within it. Nostalgia enabled practitioners to give meaning and voice to the suffering of their

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<sup>56</sup> See Paddy Griffiths, *Military Thought in the French Army, 1815-51* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989).

patients, and an arena within which they could express their own anxieties about the impact of social and political change on the health of the population.

## **1.4 Chapter outlines**

The dissertation has two broad sections. The first examines nostalgia in its clinical and theoretical settings, and considers the ‘end’ of nostalgia as a discrete clinical category. The second section explores some new forms taken by nostalgia between 1850 and 1914. In these chapters, I examine expressions of nostalgia found in overlapping demographic, medico-legal, psychological, psychiatric and nationalist narratives.

Chapter 2 gives a largely internal account of nostalgia’s use in French medicine from the late eighteenth century. Its focus reflects the lack of sustained historiographical attention paid to the diagnosis. Close analysis of medical conceptualisations of nostalgia aims to correct the interpretative biases towards memory and the past found in contemporary uses of the term. Instead, I argue that nostalgia should be understood primarily as a disorder reflecting medical pre-occupation with the concept of ‘connectivity’. This pre-occupation related to the theorisation of mind-body relationships, and biological bonds believed to link populations and individuals to their local environments. As such, I emphasise the role of nostalgia in geographical and environmental medicine, and the role given to imagination in forming and maintaining ‘connectivity’.

In Chapter 3, I examine how military and political events shaped understandings of nostalgia. In particular, I focus on the highly politicised nature that nostalgia and its cures assumed in the first decades of the nineteenth century. I demonstrate how, in the context of the Revolutionary wars, practitioners believed that in curing nostalgia they were helping patients realise their place as citizens in the French nation. This became complicated – if not completely overturned – during the Napoleonic and Restoration periods. External political pressures prompted medical writers to re-interpret the notion of ‘home’, question the nature of nostalgic desire, and the part they themselves played in re-orientating their patients’ loyalties and emotional attachments.

Such debates about the nature and direction of nostalgic desire provide another perspective on the role of the army as ‘forge of the nation’. Much has been written about the place of the military in the ‘nation-building’ attempts of successive French governments.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, the secondary literature has emphasised the high levels of political activity of doctors within military and political spheres throughout the century.<sup>58</sup> However, there is little discussion of the roles played by *diseases* in these arenas. In this chapter, I argue that practitioners used nostalgia as a measure of the political will towards different models of nationalism. It was especially useful in determining the boundaries of acceptable French identities.

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<sup>57</sup> For instance, see Robert Tombs, Chapter 2, ‘War’, in *France 1814-1914* (London: Longman, 1996), pp.34-60.

<sup>58</sup> See Léonard, *La Vie quotidienne*.

Throughout the time nostalgia was considered a clinical disorder in France it was associated with the countryside and tradition, regardless of whether these were thought of as commendably pure, or hopelessly backward. Chapter 4 explores issues of dislocation and belonging as they were articulated in the medical literature in the framework of a modern, largely urban, setting.<sup>59</sup> By examining the question of how the experience of the modern city produced new forms of pathology associated with disconnection and dislocation, I show how the medical and psychiatric issues once associated with nostalgia became re-directed.

French medical writers overwhelmingly argued that nostalgia disappeared in the face of 'modernity'.<sup>60</sup> While they did not define their use of the term, the phenomena they used to describe the 'modern' landscape of late nineteenth-century France included industrialisation and urbanisation, rural depopulation, new technologies, and mass education. I use 'modernity' and the 'modern' in

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<sup>59</sup> As Felicity Callard has pointed out in her study of agoraphobia, while the experience of the modern city as articulated by Simmel and Benjamin has been the focus of extensive exploration, relatively little attention has been paid to the specifically *psychiatric* explorations of the anxiety and shock integral to their conceptions of urban life. My work addresses Callard's enquiry from another angle. Felicity Jane Callard, 'Forms of Agoraphobia: Accounts of Anxiety, Space, and the Urban Dweller from the 1870s to the 1990s' (doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2001), p.16.

<sup>60</sup> This concept carries with it multiple meanings when used in nineteenth-century sources, and 20th century historical and cultural studies. As critic Rita Felski argues, the 'modern' is best understood as a 'family of terms', in which 'modernity' is used as a periodizing term that may include features of the following: 'modernisation', as a set of socio-economic phenomena including scientific and technological innovation, the development of the nation state, industrialisation, and urbanisation; 'modernism', describing a self-consciously positioned and reflexive artistic movement; and, in the French context, 'modernité', describing a particularly urban culture marked by a sense of dislocation and ambiguity. See Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp.11-13.



their sense, referring to a range of socio-historical phenomena. In addition, I use these terms to describe particular, and contradictory, experiences of temporality and historical consciousness whose expression is a characteristic of late nineteenth-century France. In the French setting, the 'modern' can be considered as a profound sense of rupture from the past engendered by the Revolution, resulting in the experience of dislocated 'modernité'. It can be understood as an awareness of historical time as linear and irresistible, engendering a sense of temporal displacement in which a culture feels fundamentally estranged from its past.<sup>61</sup>

It was in this environment, where connections to the past could seem irredeemably severed, that nostalgia began to take on temporal meanings. At the same time, a lack of attachment to place engendered by modern conditions was perceived to be emerging as a threat. Issues of attachment and the locus of identity evoked in nostalgia were now absorbed into discussions of newly emerging conditions. This was most evident in the apparent epidemics of insane travelling seen in the last decades of the century. Here, *aliénés voyageurs*, or insane travellers, were said to have compulsively fled their homes in altered states of consciousness. The sudden medical interest in compulsive travelling reflected a broader cultural unease with the apparently endless change inherent in modernity. In these conditions, physical

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<sup>61</sup> Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), pp.5-13. On the defining aspects of modern culture, the 'acceleration of history', and the post-revolutionary French 'memory crisis' see Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), especially pp.15-18; 53-54; Pierre Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et histoire : la problématique des lieux', pp.xvii-xlii; Terdiman, *Past / Present*, pp.3-4.

displacement was joined to internal dissolution or dissociation of the self, as it had been in nostalgia. In contrast, however, these new disorders, while continuing to associate a loss of place with a loss of self, seemed to demonstrate that 'home' no longer existed as a stable entity on which to base identity.

As medical and psychiatric interest in the links between dislocation and pathology became redirected towards new clinical constructions, nostalgia's increasingly temporal conceptualisations caused it to become associated with the investigation of memory. Chapter 5 examines the ways in which nostalgia became incorporated into discussions of memory, which was itself becoming the focus of intense scrutiny. The chapter focuses on Théodule Ribot (1839-1916), France's most influential *fin de siècle* psychologist. In his work, Ribot redefined nostalgia in such a way that it became normalised as a psychological state, operating consciously as a type of memory or recollection. Yet at the same time, by situating it within a specific developmental stage, he reinforced its connections to questions of civic and racial identity.

Ribot's theoretical importance lies in his expansion of the notion of memory, so that it became a determinant of identity in an unprecedented manner. His correlation of nostalgia with memory marked a re-association of the body and nation that moved away from theories of civic nationalism, towards those that defined communality in terms of an implicitly racial past, in which internal hierarchies of civilisation and primitiveness were mapped onto group

development. Just as individuals were shaped by their personal past, groups were seen to be influenced by hereditary instincts that acted like memories over a longer time scale.

The linkage of psychic potential to heredity resulted in a distinct change in the attitude to nostalgia and the potential of its cure. While some individuals could indulge themselves in nostalgic memories, others continued to operate within a nostalgic connection to identity and landscape. Nostalgia became a category associated with 'primitive' bodies and ethnic groups who could not adjust to modernity and its demands for mobility. The nostalgic body effectively disappeared from the French landscape, a repressed narrative expressible only outside of medical or psychological discourse.

Arguments over criteria on which the boundaries of national belonging could be drawn were exemplified by the place granted to France's Jewish population. Their initial emancipation after the Revolution did not result in a straightforward acceptance into the national community. Rather, their place in the French nation was increasingly questioned. In part this occurred as the result of the growing dominance of new theories that emphasised shared historical and racial past as precursors to a legitimate French identity. The perceived relationship of French Jews to issues of home, homeland and connectivity were therefore acute.

The final chapter draws attention to the medical characterisation of Jews as the most 'cosmopolitan' of peoples, who simultaneously suffered from a

‘fatality of race’, unable to let go of their ancient identity. Whether supremely deracinated or overly nostalgic, this racial inheritance was seen as preventing Jews from fully taking on the rights and responsibilities of modern citizenship. I use the figure of the ‘Wandering Jew’, himself the object of much historiographical attention, as a representative case study that draws together medical and psychiatric ideas about the healthy level of connection to home and homeland explored throughout this dissertation.

The discussion then focuses on the work of Max Nordau (1849 - 1923). Nordau’s ‘twin’ careers as influential critic of modernism and Zionist leader have rarely been contrasted.<sup>62</sup> I suggest that key aspects of French political Zionism cannot be properly understood without taking into account the role of complex ideas about the home informed by medical ideas concerning connectivity and the land. At the same time, Nordau’s work provides an early and important example of the mobilisation of nostalgia, in its new sense, for political ends. Nordau effectively constructed an anti-modern narrative that aimed to re-cast the Jews as a supremely nostalgic ‘nation’, whose national and racial rehabilitation could only be achieved through a return to the land of Israel. In re-asserting the need for connectivity between an individual and both the landscape and the social body as necessary precursors for a stable

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<sup>62</sup> An exception to this is *Max Nordau (1849-1923), Critique de la dégénérescence, médiateur franco-allemand, père du sionisme*, ed. by Delphine Bechtel, Dominique Bourel and Jacques le Rider (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1996).

<sup>1</sup> Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe, ‘Un Soldat nostalgique, promptement guéri par quelques entretiens avec un de ses compatriotes.’ in ‘Réflexions et observations sur l’influence du morale sur le physique’, *La Décade philosophique, littéraire et politique*, nos.11,12 (1801), 69-75, 134-167, p.134.

identity and healthy life, Nordau demonstrated the residual strength of the thinking behind clinical nostalgia. He also pointed to the political force that appeals to such attachments continued to hold throughout the twentieth century.

## *Chapter 2 - Place and physiognomy: nostalgia's construction as a clinical entity*

In 1795 (An IV of the new Republic) a detailed case study of a wounded soldier was published in the *Décade Philosophique*, a new journal devoted to medical, literary, scientific and philosophical speculation. The case described C. Lecomte, a soldier brought to the military hospital at Nantes during the Revolutionary wars. Having undergone successful surgery, Lecomte became 'distracted, sad, dreamy, and gloomy', fell into a 'melancholic stupor', and developed problems with his breathing and digestion.<sup>1</sup> By closely questioning Lecomte and, more particularly, his neighbours, his surgeon developed a clear diagnosis:

His noble desire to see his beloved homeland once more, his bitter memories, the loss of his everyday pleasures and his despair of ever regaining them, all these constituted, in their intensity, conjunction, and effects, a very marked case of nostalgia.<sup>2</sup>

At this time, nostalgia was already a well-known condition, and had become of special interest to the French medical community because of its high incidence in the military.

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<sup>2</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Réflexions', p.135. '*Le désir exalté de revoir une terre natale et chérie, le souvenir amer, le regret de ses jouissances habituelles, le désespoir de leur possession ultérieure, formaient par leur intensité, leur ensemble et leur effet une nostalgie bien prononcée.*'

In the immediate post-Revolutionary period, France was undergoing a massive programme of conscription in order to fight on a number of fronts. The Revolutionary armies appeared to be plagued with epidemics of nostalgia, for instance, one in the army of the Rhine, at the beginning of An III (1794); another in An IV (1795) in the army of the Alps.<sup>3</sup> The seriousness with which nostalgia was viewed by the French military was demonstrated on 18 November 1793. In an attempt to maintain the strength of the army and reduce desertion, all convalescent leave was cancelled in the Army of the North, except for the sufferers of nostalgia.<sup>4</sup>

Conscripts, especially those from a rural background, were proving to be the disorder's main victims. According to an 1803 report on medical hygiene, one twentieth of the army of 1793 and 1794 suffered from nostalgia, with the entire requisition of conscripts from some regions' armies dying from the condition.<sup>5</sup> C. A Gaillardot, a long serving military surgeon, similarly stated that 'almost all the Bretons who formed part of the army of the Moselle in An II, perished thus', a level of fatality which eventually led doctors to grant all Breton soldiers permission to visit home.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Guerbois, 'Essai sur la nostalgie', p.15. '*Quant à moi, j'en ai vu deux bien terribles; la première, à l'armée du Rhin, pendant le commencement de l'an II; la seconde, à l'armée de l'Alpes, au commencement de l'an VIII. Voici d'abord quelle a été celle de l'armée du Rhin et les circonstances qui l'ont amenée.*'

<sup>4</sup> George Rosen, 'Nostalgia: a 'forgotten' psychological disorder', *Psychological Medicine*, 5 (1975), 340-354, p.347.

<sup>5</sup> G La Chèse, 'Essai sur l'hygiène militaire' (medical thesis, Paris, 1803), 4, no120, p.36.

<sup>6</sup> C.A. Gaillardot, 'Considérations sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1803), 9, no287, p.13. '*Presque tous les Bretons, qui faisaient partie de l'armée de la Moselle en l'an 2, périrent ainsi.*'

The description of Lecomte's illness and treatment is typical of the new therapeutic models employed by military practitioners. With such high levels of nostalgia being diagnosed, they could no longer take advantage of the one sure cure for this often-fatal disorder by sending their patients home. Instead, they turned to new approaches in an attempt to cure nostalgia on-site. In the case of Lecomte, the surgeon, Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe, approached the disorder in a novel way. Rather than trying to distract Lecomte from his desire for home, Moreau de la Sarthe identified with his preoccupations and sought to find them an outlet:

At first I did not attempt to deprive the patient of the pictures and memories of his homeland, the touching memories, family scenes and early pleasures with which his active imagination constantly surrounded him. I myself spoke to him of the subjects that seemed to interest him most; I gave him hope for speedy return; in short, I approved his sorrows and his delirium.<sup>7</sup>

Moreau de la Sarthe located the onset of Lecomte's disease as a point at which he had been 'struck and deeply moved by a voice and sounds in which he recognised the accent of his native region.'<sup>8</sup> Having decided that 'the cause of the illness could, by certain provisions, become its most assured remedy',

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<sup>7</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Réflexions', p.137. *'D'abord je ne cherchai point à éloigner du malade ces tableaux de patrie, ces souvenirs de patrie, ces souvenirs attendrissants, ces scènes de famille et de jouissances premières, dont son imagination active l'entourait sans cesse. Je lui parlai moi-même des objets qui paraissaient l'intéresser davantage; je lui présentai l'espoir d'un prochain retour; enfin j'approuvai ses chagrins, son délire.'*

<sup>8</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Réflexions', p.136. *'Frappé et profondément ému par une voix et des sons auxquels il reconnut l'accent du pays qui l'avait vu naître.'*



he then identified the soldier whose accent had originally sparked Lecomte's nostalgia.<sup>9</sup> Informing him of Lecomte's background, the surgeon introduced the two, and encouraged Lecomte to confide in his compatriot like a trusted family friend. His fellow soldier was in turn instructed to enter 'wholeheartedly and in detail' into Lecomte's concerns.<sup>10</sup>

Through interviews with his doctor and compatriot, Lecomte was eventually moved to 'abundant tears that hitherto a spasm of concentrated sadness had scarcely allowed to flow.'<sup>11</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe argued that the release afforded by these tears was not only emotional, but also acted directly on the body's physical functioning. Lecomte's nostalgia had led him to direct all his energy towards the imaginative reconstruction of scenes of home, causing a diversion of energy from his physical system and so disturbing the proper functioning of his organs. With the emotional blockage removed, movement of his vital energies to his organs could recommence. Moreau de la Sarthe concluded that this psychological, or moral, cure for a condition in which he 'would have exhausted in vain all the pharmaceutical resources' had resulted in Lecomte's complete return to 'reason, health and life'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Réflexions', p.137. '*La cause du mal pouvait, par certaines dispositions, en devenir le remède le plus assuré.*'

<sup>10</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Réflexions', p.137. '*Avec abandon et détail.*'

<sup>11</sup> Moreau, 'Réflexions', p.137. '*Des pleurs abondants, que jusqu'alors le spasme d'une tristesse concentrée avait laissé couler à peine; tous ces moyens eurent le plus prompt et le plus heureux effet.*'

<sup>12</sup> Moreau, 'Réflexions', p.137. '*J'aurais en vain épuisé toutes les ressources pharmaceutiques... à la raison, à la santé et à la vie.*'

This example is only one of the many published in the first years of the Republic in which nostalgia became incorporated into a narrative where its cure involved a realignment of sufferers' subjectivity, a learnt containment of their affective life, and a coming of age. Here, I focus on the literature produced around nostalgia in the decades after the Revolution.<sup>13</sup> This account aims to understand the place of nostalgia in contemporary medical theory. However, for practitioners like Moreau de la Sarthe, medicine was always political, and thus curing nostalgia also had social, political and practical implications.

## 2.1 The Idéologues and medical reform

The description of Lecomte, the nostalgic soldier, comes from a set of articles by Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe (1771-1826), a central member of the Idéologue movement that dominated early nineteenth-century French medicine. The Idéologues, as Napoleon Bonaparte was to dismissively dub them, based their philosophy on *idéologie*, or the science of ideas. The loosely knit group emerged from the 'enlightened' salon of Madame Anne-Catherine Hélveticus (1719-1800).<sup>14</sup> In addition to Moreau de la Sarthe, key members of

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<sup>13</sup> I focus on 1794 -1815, the years at which France was at war. However, the literature I utilise extends beyond this date. Many health officers, drafted when they were medical students, were able to return to finish their medical degrees only when discharged from military service, often many years, if not decades later, and often wrote on nostalgia. Reinforcing the historical and historiographical association of the disease with the military sphere, they frequently leant on their military experiences of the disorder. On health officers returning to study see Dora Weiner, *The Citizen-Patient in Revolutionary and Imperial Paris* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.289.

<sup>14</sup> There has been considerable historiographical discussion over the constitution of the Idéologue group. For a summary of these discussions see Elizabeth A. Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.77-78. On the Idéologues and



the group included Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), Comte Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), Pierre-Jean-George Cabanis (1757-1808), Jean Louis Alibert (1766-1837) and Dominique-Jean Larrey (1776-1842) – a roll call of central individuals in the post-Revolutionary reorganisation of medicine, and the emergence of new theories of health.

The Revolution triggered a massive restructuring of medical practice and institutions. In 1793, the Convention formally abolished the *ancien régime* medical faculties, and a law of August 7 made all physicians, surgeons and pharmacists from 18 to 40 years of age liable to military service.<sup>15</sup> However, the lack of adequately trained medical staff for the military led to the almost immediate opening of three ‘health schools’ - effectively re-establishing the Paris, Montpellier and Strasbourg Faculties in December 1794 (An III).<sup>16</sup>

Modern ‘clinical’ or hospital based medicine, and the emergence of psychiatry, pathological anatomy, and experimental physiology as discrete

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their programme also see Martin Staum, *Cabanis: Enlightenment and Medical Philosophy in the French Revolution* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1980); Sergio Moravia, ‘Les Idéologues et l’âge des Lumières’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 154 (1976), 1465-86; Georges Gusdorf, *La Conscience révolutionnaire, les Idéologues*, vol. 8, *Les Sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale*, (Paris : Payot, 1978); Emmet Kennedy, *A Philosopher in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of Ideology* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978); and *L’Institution de la Raison : la révolution culturelle des Idéologues*, ed. by François Azouvi (Paris : J. Vrin, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Dora Weiner, ‘French Doctors Face War’ in *From the Ancien Régime to the Popular Front*, ed. by Charles K. Warner (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.51-92, p.58.

<sup>16</sup> Erwin H. Ackerknecht, *Medicine at the Paris Hospital 1794-1848* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967), p.34. Despite this, medicine remained largely unregulated in France and between 1791 and 1803 was a field open to anyone who cared to practice. It was only under Napoleon Bonaparte that it once again became illegal to practice medicine without a licence. Legislation passed on 11 March 1803 established two grades of practitioner, doctors of medicine and health officers (*officier de santé*), both of whom needed to be formally recognised by one of the schools of Medicine.

disciplines all commenced during this reorganisation and theoretical realignment.<sup>17</sup> Clinical medicine introduced new approaches to medical learning, description, diagnosis and practice, and profoundly shifting the professional and social role of the doctor.<sup>18</sup>

It would be difficult to over-emphasise the role of the Idéologues in these developments. Cabanis and Pinel, having been either not considered for, or deliberately excluded from, positions in the pre-Revolutionary medical faculties, were made professors at the new Paris school. Pinel remained the central figure of the Paris school from 1794 to his death in 1816, and his work in the Bicêtre and Salpêtrière asylums marked the beginning of a new era in the treatment of mental illness. Cabanis' work was hugely influential in setting out the Idéologue position on medical and philosophical questions. Another key figure, Larrey, was responsible for the development of mobile surgical units, which could treat soldiers near the battlefield. Larrey was made a Baron during the Napoleonic era, becoming the Surgical Chief of the

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<sup>17</sup> For the birth of clinical medicine in Paris the classic accounts remain Ackerknecht, *Medicine at the Paris Hospital* and Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique : une archéologie du regard médical* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1963). For a overview of nineteenth and twentieth century historiographical approaches to the Paris school see Caroline Hannaway and Ann La Berge 'Paris Medicine: Perspectives Past and Present', in *Constructing Paris Medicine*, ed. by Caroline Hannaway and Ann La Berge, Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1998).

<sup>18</sup> See Marie-José Imbault-Huart, 'The Teaching of Medicine in France and More Particularly in Paris in the 19th Century (1794-1892)' in *History of Medical Education*, ed. by Teizo Ogawa (Shizuoka: Saikon Publishing for Taniguchi Foundation, 1981), pp.55-82, Terence D. Murphy, 'The French Medical Profession's Perception of its Social Function Between 1776 and 1830', *Medical History*, 23 (1979), 259-278, especially pp.264-265.

*Grande Armée*, and was also to hold the first chair of anatomy at the military training hospital Val-de-Grâce.<sup>19</sup>

Moreau de la Sarthe served as a surgeon in the Nantes military hospital until an injury to his hand during an operation prompted his move to Paris, where he became assistant librarian at the Paris School of Medicine. He lectured on hygiene at the *Lycée Républicain* and published prolifically in journals such as the *Décade Philosophique*, which acted as a mouthpiece for Idéologue philosophies.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he took over from the great medical reformer Félix Victor-d'Azyr as editor of the medical section of the *Encyclopédie méthodique*. The *Encyclopédie méthodique*, in 206 volumes published over three decades, continued and expanded the encyclopaedic traditions of Diderot and d'Alembert.<sup>21</sup> Occupied in his post-surgical career with the theoretical aspects of medicine, Moreau de la Sarthe was especially interested in the workings of the emotions and their impact on health. His work on nostalgia formed part of a broader study on the relationship of physical and emotional spheres.

The Idéologues linked medicine, politics and social reform, and many of them became central figures in the instigation of practical reform in hospitals,

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<sup>19</sup> For an account of Larrey's life see André Soubiran, *Le Baron Larrey : chirurgien de Napoléon* (Paris: Fayard, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> On Moreau de la Sarthe see Paul Delaunay, 'La Médecine et les Idéologues : L.J. Moreau de la Sarthe', *Bulletin de la Société française d'histoire de la médecine*, 14 (1920), 24-70.

<sup>21</sup> *Encyclopédie méthodique : Médecine*, 14 vols, ed. by Félix Victor-d'Azyr, Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe (Paris : Mme veuve Agasse, 1797 - 1825).

asylums, and medical schools.<sup>22</sup> They aimed to integrate the study of ‘Man’ into that of nature, and so make humanity an object of scientific study. Within this all-embracing ‘science of Man’, or ‘anthropology’, the central discipline was a medicine that emphasised the inter-relationship of psychology and physiology. Nostalgia became an important condition in Idéologue thinking, as it appeared to support many of the philosophical underpinnings of their intellectual framework.<sup>23</sup> The ability of a change in external influences to create mental perturbation was already well established in late eighteenth-century thinking. As mind and body were understood as closely linked, passions emerged as central connections, able to affect both.<sup>24</sup> Nostalgia was a very particular reaction to changes in environment, and as such acted for the Idéologues as the example *par excellence* of the links between an individual’s identity, environment and mental state. It seemed to demonstrate, clearly and concretely, the impact of passions on the body and the external connections existing between individuals and their surroundings.

Nostalgia crossed what would now be considered widely disparate disciplinary boundaries, including psychiatry, public health, and environmental medicine. This increased its importance to the Idéologues, who

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew R. Aisenberg, *Contagion: Disease, Government, and the “Social Question” in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp.8-9.

<sup>23</sup> Medical members of the group who wrote on nostalgia included Alibert, Larrey, Pinel, and Moreau de la Sarthe. Larrey drew on his extensive military experience of the disease to argue for nostalgia as a form of insanity, and was the first to identify it as a purely mental disorder. See Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey, *Recueil de mémoires de chirurgie* (Paris : Compère Jeune, 1821), pp.163-168.

<sup>24</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1972), pp.242-245.

refused to separate medical, social and political reform. Even more importantly, for the Idéologues individual morality and hygiene (public health) were intimately related – unregulated emotions constituted a threat to the individual just as they did to the social order.<sup>25</sup> Members of the group were generally committed to a moderate republicanism, but were harassed and imprisoned during the Terror.<sup>26</sup> The Idéologue commitment to some level of hierarchy within the human species may well have stemmed from this experience. For example, Cabanis was a member of the Council of 500, influential in the reform of hospitals, and involved in the Brumaire coup. Like many other members of the group, his views were shaken by events during the Terror, leading to a commitment to more moderate or conservative forms of government. Likewise, the proliferation of medical publications, from the turn of the century until the 1830s, on the need to understand, and regulate, the passions, can be seen as a reaction to the violence and viciousness of the early revolutionary period.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2 Identity and environment

In their emphasis on connectivity, between mind and body, individual and environment, Idéologues drew on a number of intellectual traditions including eighteenth-century environmental and natural sciences, Hippocratic medicine, and Montpellier vitalism. All of these intellectual traditions contributed to

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, see J-L Alibert, 'De l'Influence des causes politiques sur les maladies et la constitution physique de l'homme', *Magasin encyclopédique, ou journal des sciences, des lettres, et des arts*, V (1795), 298-305.

<sup>26</sup> On the impact of the Terror see Staum, *Cabanis*, pp.147-150

<sup>27</sup> Williams, *The Physical and the Moral*, pp.94-95.

their belief that place, physiology and psychology, or 'character', were intimately connected, and could be considered within the same explanatory system. The underlying concept in such thinking was the impact of 'climate' on physiological and psychological variation.

In his 1802 *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme* (*The Moral and Physical Connections of Man*), one of the most influential Idéologue works, Cabanis used the Hippocratic concept of 'climate' extensively.<sup>28</sup> For Cabanis, climate had a broad range of meanings, 'not restricted to the particular circumstances of latitudes, nor cold and heat; it encompasses in an absolutely general manner all of the physical circumstances attached to each region.'<sup>29</sup> Rather than being immune to its influence, by virtue of being able to adapt their physical environment, he believed that humans were the 'most flexible of all the animals'. This meant that they were inclined to be imprinted by, and vary according to, their climate:

The physical analogy between man and the objects which surround him and which he must appropriate for his needs is at the same time so striking, that by means of a simple inspection one

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<sup>28</sup> The work was based on a series of memoirs read to the *Société médicale d'émulation*. The *Société* was founded in 1796 by Xavier Bichat, the founder of the discipline of pathological anatomy. It acted as a meeting place for clinicians, and was associated with Idéologue thinking.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme* in *Œuvres Philosophiques*, vol.14 *Auteurs Modernes*, ed. by Claude Lehec & Jean Cazeneuve (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1956), p.465. '*Le climat n'est donc point resserré dans les circonstances particulières des latitudes, ou du froid et du chaud; il embrasse d'une manière absolument générale l'ensemble des circonstances physiques attachées à chaque locale.*' For an exploration of the influence of Hippocratic thought on nineteenth-century medicine see Wesley, D. Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition* (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1979).



can almost always assign to an individual the nature and the climatic zone to which he belongs.<sup>30</sup>

So, for instance, quoting the ‘degeneration’ of Portuguese families on the islands of Cape-Verde, in which they came to resemble the indigenous population, Cabanis argued that behavioural changes prompted by the climate led in time to alteration of the organisms themselves, changes that would then be perpetuated through reproduction.<sup>31</sup> The more extreme a climate, the more pronounced the demands for adaptation placed on its inhabitants:

One observes each day, in regions with a distinct climate, that at the end of a small number of generations, foreigners have to some extent been stamped with its impression.<sup>32</sup>

The idea that individual subjectivity was shaped by environmental factors was part of a broader late eighteenth-century theoretical tendency towards defining populations and producing typologies. Important eighteenth-century thinkers, such as Voltaire, Diderot, Buffon and Helvéticus, all elaborated on the ways

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<sup>30</sup> Cabanis, *Rapports*, p.461-462. ‘*L’analogie physique de l’homme avec les objets qui l’entourent et qu’il se trouve forcé d’appropriier à ses besoins est en même temps si frappante, qu’à la simple inspection l’on presque toujours assigner la nature et la zone du climat auquel appartient chaque individu.*’

<sup>31</sup> The sense in which degeneration was being used by Cabanis followed Buffon’s usage in his *Natural History*. For Buffon, degeneration was the change undergone by populations in response to new, and non-ideal, environments. The word did not have the same sense of pathology and accumulative decline which it developed in the latter part of the century, especially after Bénédict Augustin Morel’s 1857 *Traité des dégénérescences*. See Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c1848-c1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.50-61.

<sup>32</sup> Cabanis, *Rapports*, p.474. ‘*On observe chaque jour, dans les pays dont le climat a des caractères prononcés, qu’au bout d’un petit nombre de générations, les étrangers reçoivent plus ou moins son empreinte.*’

in which humans were shaped by their natural surroundings. By the end of the century it was an unquestioned assumption that human physical and cultural forms were profoundly influenced by climate. The 1790s saw the development of a vast literature positing a continual dynamic relationship between organisms and their environment.<sup>33</sup> Highly specific bodies were believed to be produced through the influence of locale, climate and custom. This led to a synthesis between earth sciences and environmental medicine, based on a common natural philosophy that ‘stressed the interrelationship between the components of nature, and took it for granted that the earth, atmosphere and solar system - in fact all aspects of the environment - affected living things.’<sup>34</sup>

Such environmental thinking also drew on the neo-Hippocratic thought developed in Montpellier in the eighteenth century. Although largely historiographically neglected, recent work has established the importance of the Montpellier Faculty to the post-Revolutionary Paris school.<sup>35</sup> The Montpellier school insisted that living systems were unique. As such, their study could not be reduced to the physical sciences as iatro-mechanical medical science had attempted to do. The ‘vitalist’ approach stressed the variability of living beings according to age, sex, temperament and climate. It

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<sup>33</sup> See Ludmilla J. Jordanova, ‘Earth Science and Environmental Medicine: The Synthesis of the Late Enlightenment’, *Images of the Earth: Essays in the History of the Environmental Sciences*, ed. by Ludmilla J. Jordanova and Roy. S. Porter (Chalfont St Giles: British Society for the History of Science, 1979), pp.119-146, p.121.

<sup>34</sup> Jordanova, *Images of the Earth*, p.121.

<sup>35</sup> See Elizabeth A. Williams, *A Cultural History of Medical Vitalism in Enlightenment Montpellier* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) and *The Physical and the Moral*.

was characterised by a renewed interest in Hippocratic medicine, especially the doctrine of temperaments and humoral theory.<sup>36</sup>

A particular climate was believed to influence and even form a people who not only shared physical characteristics, but temperaments, personalities, illnesses, behaviours, and language. The existence of such diversity, associated with a specific environment or climate, was a central tenet in the natural science of transformation. Most closely associated with the naturalists Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), long time head of the *Jardin de Roi*, and his protégé Jean-Baptiste-Pierre-Antoine Lamarck (1744-1829), theories of transformation provided the scientific background against which medico-philosophical speculation about the relationship between peoples and locales took place.

Both Buffon and Lamarck emphasised the need for organisms to adapt to the local conditions in which they found themselves. Buffon wrote extensively on classification and saw nature as subject to change according to its surroundings, so producing objects with fine gradations between them.<sup>37</sup> He

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<sup>36</sup> They also emphasised the role of emotions and environment on health, and the direct observation of disease, the last a key factor in the development of 'practical', 'observational' or clinical medicine, as it is now more commonly known. The influence of Montpellier can be seen in the courses on Hippocratic thought taught within the re-organised French medical schools, the intellectual allegiances of influential figures in the schools such as Pinel and Cabanis, and the Hippocratic aphorisms that made up part of the final thesis submitted by all medical students. See Thomas N. Bonner, *Becoming a Physician: Medical Education in Britain, France, Germany and the United States, 1750-1945* (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p.165.

<sup>37</sup> See Jacques Roger, *The Life Sciences in Eighteenth-Century French Thought*, trans. by Robert Ellrich (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, 426-474; Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières* (Paris : Flammarion, 1977), pp.181- 227.

and Lamarck believed the developing body was shaped by continual assimilation of physical agents, such as food, air, and soil. At the same time, the nervous system was thought to become accustomed to receiving particular impressions and stimulants. In turn, these became necessary for the proper functioning of the body and mental equilibrium. Lamarck extended Buffon's thinking on environmental influence to argue that localities not only acted over time to shape their inhabitants, but also caused them to change their habits and so acquire new characteristics, which they then passed on to their offspring.<sup>38</sup>

Lamarck was one of the first naturalists to introduce the concept of 'biology' in his work, which he considered as the science of organic movement. He was thus able to wed his theory of life to his geological and physical theories.<sup>39</sup> If physiological and psychological affinities between organism and environment acted as inherited characteristics, this made an individual predisposed from birth to be suited to certain surroundings. Peculiarities of climate or topography meant that even closely neighbouring groups could vary dramatically, such highly regionalised physiques indicating the specificity of the 'fit' between an environment and its inhabitants.

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<sup>38</sup> For a detailed exploration of theories of transformism and Lamarck's place in the debates surrounding them, see Pietro Corsi, *The Age of Lamarck: Evolutionary Theories in France 1790-1830* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>39</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, *Lamarck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.44; Corsi, *The Age of Lamarck*, pp.118-119.

Lamarck's arguments about alteration of species by the environment covered all organised beings, from plant to human life, responding to the same kinds of stimuli. His influence is clear in the arguments of many writers on nostalgia who maintained that it was the human expression of a universal instinct of attachment to the environment by which an organism had been shaped: 'In the immense scale of organised beings, from plant to man, it is as though a common instinct imbues them with this sweet and generous feeling of the love of native soil.'<sup>40</sup> The use of animal and plant metaphors in the nostalgia literature is striking. Deer, horses, dogs, homing pigeons, even bees, were said to display a need for their home environment, prompting some writers specifically to diagnose nostalgia in animals.<sup>41</sup> These examples served to demonstrate the ubiquity of a connection to place in all living things:

The native soil is not only loved by Man; all the organised bodies of this universe seem to unite to offer us touching evidence of this ... Plants, which also have their own life, themselves appear to flourish on the ground to which nature assigned their residence.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> José-Feliciano Castilho, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1831), 7, no.235, p.5. '*Dans l'échelle immense des êtres organisés, depuis le végétal jusqu'à l'homme, on dirait qu'un instinct commun verse en eux ce sentiment doux et généreux de l'amour de sol natal.*'

<sup>41</sup> For instance, in his *Physiologie des passions*, as well as numerous anecdotes about homing pigeons, dogs and plants, Alibert offered anecdotal evidence of the universality of this phenomenon in the attempt of the Governor of Cayenne, the Baron de Besner to naturalise French bees in that colony. Despite elaborate efforts to establish hives in the most favourable of conditions, these bees apparently refused to swarm anywhere but the mast of the ship that had brought them from France, and might be able to return them there. J.L. Alibert, *Physiologie des passions : ou nouvelle doctrine des sentiments moraux*, 2 vols (Paris : Béchét Jeune, 1827), pp.396-397.

<sup>42</sup> J.J.A. Martin, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1820), 8, no.250, pp.6-7. '*Le sol natal n'es pas seulement affectionné par l'homme; tous les corps organisés de cet univers semblent se réunir pour nous offrir un si touchant témoignage ... La plante, qui a*

## 2.3 Imagination and adaptability

Environmentally-based theories of subjectivity in the first half of the nineteenth century allowed nostalgia to be understood as a physical and psychological reaction to changes in climate. This interpretation relied firstly on a sensationalist position, holding that anatomy and physiology were the unique source of moral and physical attributes. It also depended on the belief that an individual's physical surroundings were internalised, making up his or her physical constitution and psychological character. There were therefore no contradictions in describing nostalgia as both psychological disorder and physical reaction to spatial displacement.

Understood as an extreme expression of the common biological instinct that tied all living creatures to their native soil, nostalgia became a sign of the difficulties of acclimatisation and the limits of human adaptability. It was a biological need for a specific environment in which 'the body declares that it can no longer live in these new conditions, clamours to return to the place it has left.'<sup>43</sup> Nostalgia suggested that there were certain groups of humans who, like 'exotic plant[s] transported into a foreign land', could not deal with climatic conditions that varied from their own.<sup>44</sup> This biological craving was

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*aussi sa vie propre, paraît elle-même se plaire davantage sur une terre où la nature a assigné sa demeure.'*

<sup>43</sup> Louis-Alexandre-Hippolyte Leroy-Dupré, 'De la Nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1846), 9, no.134, p.30. '*L'organisme déclare qu'il ne peut plus vivre dans ces conditions nouvelles; il demande à grands cris de retourner vers les lieux qu'il a quittés.'*

<sup>44</sup> Remi Joseph Allard, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1820), 5, no.139, p 6. '*Comme le végétal exotique transporté dans une terre étrangère.'*

the inevitable product of human development in which individuals built up a physical affinity with their surroundings.

In some cases the antagonism between an individual and alien surroundings would be so strong that he would be unable to undertake the 'work' (both physiological and psychological) necessary to acclimatise successfully, resulting in nostalgia. Thus, the statement that 'whether the air or the climate is good or bad, for the man who breathed it in his childhood it is always the best' was not an expression of a jingoistic preference for the home but rather a biological predisposition embodied in that individual, for those conditions which 'form[ed] part of his blood.'<sup>45</sup> The emotive force of nostalgic and patriotic attachment could be interpreted as the expression of this place-bound identity designed by 'provident Nature' to ensure the co-operation between the inhabitants of a region by convincing them of the 'singular charms', and 'rare and particular attributes' of their homeland.<sup>46</sup>

Such environmentally focused thinking was extended beyond individual cases, to suggest that whole peoples were tied to their native environments by a complex set of bonds, which could not be easily undone.<sup>47</sup> Certain such

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<sup>45</sup> Castilho, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie', p.14. '*Que l'air, que le climat soit bon ou mauvais, c'est toujours le meilleur pour l'homme qui l'a respiré dans son enfance... font partie de son sang.*'

<sup>46</sup> Alibert, *Physiologie des passions*, p.386. For a similar argument see also J.L.A. Pauquet, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie (medical thesis, Paris, 1815), 2, no.45, p.8.

<sup>47</sup> This was still a language of 'peoples' and 'nations', in which race differed from these categories only in degree, rather than acting as a substantively different grouping. As Nicholas Hudson demonstrates in his analysis of the evolution of the term 'race' from the Renaissance through to the Enlightenment, the category of race in the modern sense of a subdivision of human species was not used in eighteenth century dictionaries. The first

'physiognomies' were more fragile than others. Those habituated to a distinct or extreme environment would find change harder to deal with than those from more variable surroundings, a phenomenon most clearly demonstrated by nostalgia's propensity to strike mountain dwellers such as the Swiss and Scots. This was because they had developed a physiognomy specific to the peculiarities of their original climate:

Each fraction of mankind carries its own moral and physical physiognomy, all the more dangerous ... to the extent that it comes to him from places, climates, or habits.<sup>48</sup>

Nostalgia's demonstration of the limits of human adaptability had important consequences for military, colonial and exploratory projects. For many writers, it acted as an in-built warning against migration, an argument that found its fullest expression in Jean-Louis Alibert's 1825 *Physiologie des passions*.<sup>49</sup> Alibert argued that nostalgia operated as part of a geographic imperative on a global scale: 'This powerful love of the native soil is necessary to mankind ... in order to keep each man in his home.'<sup>50</sup> The

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recognisable use of the term in its modern sense was in the 1835 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*. Nicholas Hudson 'From "Nation" to "Race": The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1996), 247-264.

<sup>48</sup> Pilet, 'De la Nostalgie', pp.15-16. '*C'est ainsi que chaque fraction du genre humain porte sa physionomie morale et physique spéciale, d'autant plus dangereuse... qu'elle est plus tranchée, que cette physionomie lui vienne des sites, des climats ou des habitudes.*'

<sup>49</sup> Alibert was an *Idéologue*, and a leading figure in the development of dermatology and knowledge of diseases of the skin, with a long-term interest in the effects of emotional life on physiology.

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Louis Alibert, *Physiologie des passions*, p.385. '*Ce puissant amour de la terre natale est nécessaire au genre humain.... pour retenir chaque homme dans ses foyers.*' For a twentieth century expression of the idea that nostalgia acts as a prophylactic against mass



disorder had been imposed by Nature in order to prevent people flocking to the temperate and fertile regions of the earth, a process that would lead to overcrowding, conflict and bloodshed. In this reading, patriotism was an outcome of an in-built attachment, and therefore both a natural phenomenon and the concern of medical science. Complications in this straightforward reading of patriotism will be further explored in Chapter 3.

The 'gateway' faculty that mediated between mind and body, and through which the environment influenced psychology, was believed to be the imagination. This view had a number of implications for the theorisation of nostalgia, which was primarily understood as a disorder of imagination. The imagination was thought of as the faculty most likely to be shaped by natural landscapes. The first impressions received by individuals were understood to impact most strongly on their imaginations, and remain the most influential throughout life, having indelibly inscribed themselves onto the physical organs.<sup>51</sup> A psychological preference for a certain type of landscape thus became one more facet to the 'fit' between people and place.

The connection of climate to physiology and psychology also meant that character could be inferred from geography. For instance, people in cold climates were thought to develop a more vigorous personality, because cold

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migration, within a framework of Gestalt psychology, see B. Ruml, 'Some notes on Nostalgia', *Saturday Review of Literature*, 29, no.25, June 22 1946, 7-9.

<sup>51</sup> Jules-M-É-B Moreau, 'Considérations sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1848), 10, no.138, p.9. Julien-Vincent Huet-Bienville, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1821) 6, no.190, p.5.

air contracted fibres in the cardiovascular systems, causing increased blood flow and energy. Likewise, an individual habituated to conditions where seasonal change was marked and rapid must operate in a 'perpetual oscillation' so as to balance the effects of these extreme atmospheric changes.<sup>52</sup> Those from more temperate regions had less stress on their organs and, as well as escaping the special problems attached to hot climates, had the potential flexibility to adjust to new surroundings. Such flexibility was both physiological and psychological, as imagination itself was held to be less powerful in temperate climates.<sup>53</sup> The inhabitants of the South of France, for example, could be described as having 'character filled with gaiety and cheerfulness; their feelings are prompt and not very durable, meaning that they cannot focus on one object for very long.'<sup>54</sup>

The relative immunity to nostalgia attributed to certain groups among the French in the nineteenth century, such as people from Provence and the Midi, was attributed to just such climatic influences, which endowed them with rapid imaginations and sensations.<sup>55</sup> This apparent immunity could sometimes affect military decision making. For instance in the Egyptian expedition of 1798-1799, Desgenettes selected men from the Midi on the basis that they

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<sup>52</sup> Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des lois*, pp.234-244

<sup>53</sup> 'Imagination', *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, ed. by Nicolas Philibert Adelon and Léopold Joseph Renaudin (Paris : C.L.F. Panckoucke, 1812-1822), vol.24, p.35.

<sup>54</sup> G. L. V. Pillement, 'Essai sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1831) 1, no.28, p.12. '*leur caractère rempli de gaiété, d'enjouement ; leurs sensations promptes, rapides, et par cela même peu durables, ne leur permettent pas de se fixer longtemps sur le même objet.*'

<sup>55</sup> Leroy-Dupré, 'De la Nostalgie', pp.32-33, J.-B.F. Descuret, *La médecine des passions ou les passions considérées dans leurs rapports avec les maladies, les lois et la religion* (Paris : Béchet & Labé, 1841), p.13.

would be better equipped to acclimatise in the Egyptian environment.<sup>56</sup>

Already, questions of adaptability were value-laden, both a potential strength and failing, with a proper balance needing to be found.

## **2.4 Curing through persuasion: moral treatments**

While nostalgia was constructed as a medical entity by the Idéologues in the context of environmental medicine, in the post-Revolutionary setting it also became widely discussed in reference to a new therapeutic model – the moral treatment. The Idéologues held that the moral sphere encompassed thoughts, ideas, passions, emotions, and desires; all the emotional and intellectual aspects of mental life. The moral sphere was influenced by physical sensations received from the body, and influenced it in turn. Moral cures relied on the idea that since mental or emotional change could impact directly on the workings of the body, effecting change in this sphere could likewise correct physiological malfunctioning.

The moral cure was most closely identified with a new and innovative treatment of mental disorders characterised by Philippe Pinel in his treatment of insanity.<sup>57</sup> The apocryphal story of Pinel freeing the inhabitants of Bicêtre asylum from their chains stands as the most powerful image of the new moral medicine ushered in by the Revolution. Echoing the Revolutionary call to

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<sup>56</sup> See Jean-Marie Milleliri, *Médecins et soldats pendant l'expédition d'Égypte (1798-1799)* (Nice : Bernard Giovanangeli, 1993), p.93.

<sup>57</sup> For an exploration of Pinel's use of moral methods in the treatment of insanity see Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.81-89.

liberty, this was seen as the ideal representation of Pinel's method of treatment, which largely eschewed physical restraint and aimed to use gentleness to restore rationality to the mad. Pinel's moral treatment built on the work of a number of non-medical practitioners, including superintendents and proprietors of insane asylums. Such figures included Francis Willis, a Lincolnshire cleric known for his treatment of George III; John Haslam of the Bethlehem Hospital; the monk Père Poutin and Pussin, the superintendent of the Bicêtre hospital in Paris.<sup>58</sup>

The truly liberating nature of such moral cures has been the subject of extensive critique, most notably in Michel Foucault's discussion of the internalisation of processes of discipline. Foucault argues that early-nineteenth century changes in the management of institutions such as asylums, schools, and prisons constituted a process in which measures of control and discipline were not made less coercive, but rather imposed new, internalised, forms of restraint. Rather than being exposed to brutal punishments, inmates had behavioural change imposed, change which they were then expected to regulate themselves.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, Pinel's approach can be understood in such terms. He relied on the internalisation of control, and aimed to teach patients self-regulation and constraint of the passions.

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<sup>58</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, pp.72-73.

<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir : naissance de la prison* (Paris : Gallimard, 1975).

This approach was not unique to Pinel, nor was it necessarily a gentle procedure. For instance, in his study of military hygiene, *La Santé de Mars* (1793), Jourdan le Cointe suggested that those nostalgics who could not be palliated with promises of future leave may need to be sent home immediately to avoid them infecting others with the complaint. However, should nostalgia reach epidemic levels, the only resource left was the threat, and application, of a particularly terrifying punishment, ‘such as a red iron applied to the belly or other means of this kind.’ He believed such drastic measures were preferable to the risks that unchecked nostalgia posed to the armed forces.<sup>60</sup>

Le Cointe’s cure was not designed to detect malingering, nor offered as proof that nostalgia was not a legitimate diagnosis. Eighteenth-century theories of madness had been heavily influenced by Lockean philosophy, leading to an emphasis on the disturbance of intellect or reason as the source of insanity.<sup>61</sup>

In contrast, for le Cointe and Pinel, unregulated emotions were the key to understanding insanity (by the end of the century this emphasis had shifted again to models focusing on insanity as failures of attention and the will, as is explored in Chapter 5). Moral treatment relied on the ‘schooling’ of the passions, and the use of specific passions to counter others. Hence, fear induced by the threat of such drastic treatments for nostalgia, were sufficient to provide other, counterbalancing emotions.

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<sup>60</sup> Jourdan Le Cointe, *La Santé de Mars, ou l’art de conserver la santé aux gens de guerre* (Paris : Batilliot, 1793), p.328. ‘Tel qu’un fer rouge appliqué sur le ventre ou d’autres moyens du genre.’

<sup>61</sup> On the impact of Locke’s thought in the theorisation and treatment of madness, see Roy Porter, *Mind-forg’d Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp.187-193.

The apparent success of such fear-induced cures saw nostalgia increasingly discussed in terms of mental illness. Baron Larrey, who gained extensive experience with the disorder during the Napoleonic campaigns, was the first practitioner to discuss nostalgia specifically as a form of insanity. Larrey described the initial manifestation of nostalgia as elated visions of the home, giving way to delirious fevers, gastro-enteritis and eventual death. In his autopsies of soldiers who had succumbed to nostalgia Larrey documented inflammation in the stomach, intestines and the brain. He believed that inflammation of the meninges (the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal column) was especially significant as this offered the 'undeniable proof that, in nostalgia, as in the exaltation of all sad passions of the heart, the brain really suffers.'<sup>62</sup> The connection of mental illness and the brain was an important theoretical claim. That mental disorders such as nostalgia produced actual physical changes in the cerebral tissues offered apparent proof that the physical brain and mind were one and the same thing. This acted as a useful demonstration of the veracity of the sensationalist model of human consciousness advocated by the Idéologues.

The sensationalist or 'physiological' approach to medicine treated mental life as a manifestation or property of the physical body, generated through the

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<sup>62</sup> Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey, *Recueil de mémoires de chirurgie* (Paris : Compère Jeune, 1821), p.188.

movement of physical sensations to the brain.<sup>63</sup> Cabanis somewhat controversially equated the digestive and nervous systems. He believed that both employed analogous processes, incorporating impressions and secreting them in a different form, an analogy which dualist philosophers found degrading to human thought.<sup>64</sup> This approach allowed, for instance, a condition such as nostalgia to be simultaneously located in the stomach and brain:

The brain and the epigastrium are affected simultaneously. The former concentrates all its forces on a single order of ideas, on a single thought; the latter becomes the seat of noxious pressures, of spasmodic constriction.<sup>65</sup>

Insistence on the centrality of the digestive system to emotional life was closely linked to a sensationalist position, since it implied that affective functions were determined by impressions received from the physical organs.

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<sup>63</sup> As Jan Goldstein has demonstrated in her discussion of the 'physiological' approach and its 'philosophical' opponent in early-nineteenth century French medicine, the physiological programme was identified with hostility towards religion, radical politics and breaks with tradition. An identification with the physiological school indicated a position approaching materialism, but was not intrinsically conflated with it. Taken to its logical conclusions, it could be read as an attempt to replace all abstract discussions about mental life with concrete descriptions of the processes of the nervous system and brain. In contrast, the philosophical current developed in reaction to the physiological, and tended to be supported by philosophers outside the medical arena. This programme treated the mind and body dualistically, with the mind having its own mode of working which could be investigated only through thought, and was not subject to the laws of the physical world. Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, pp.49-52, 244.

<sup>64</sup> Staum, *Cabanis*, p.202.

<sup>65</sup> Percy and Laurent, 'Nostalgie', *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, vol.6 (Paris : C.L.F. Panckoucke, 1812-1822), pp.265-281, p.273. '*Le cerveau et l'épigastre sont affectés simultanément. Le premier concentre toutes ses forces sur un seul ordre d'idées, sur une seule pensée ; le second devient le siège d'impression incommodes, de resserrement spasmodique.*'

The success of the moral treatment relied on the linkage of the moral and physical spheres.<sup>66</sup> Mental or emotional change could impact directly on the workings of the physical body. Effecting change in this sphere could likewise correct somatic malfunctioning. The relationship of the mind and body was, like the connections between people and locale, described in terms of connectivity and reciprocity. For Cabanis, ‘the great influence of what is called the moral on that which is called the physical is an incontestable general fact; innumerable examples confirm it everyday.’<sup>67</sup> His intellectual position depended on an intimate correspondence between the physical and the moral, so that mental disorder could be produced by, or produce, physical disease.

The linkage of the moral and physical spheres led to what Goldstein has termed ‘the paradox of moral cures’, which could be successfully employed to cure physical disease as well as mental disorders.<sup>68</sup> The *rappports*, or relations, between the development of the physical organs and of psychological tendencies, emotions and intelligence also had a political dimension. It was held up as a conclusive demonstration of the Idéologue belief in medicine’s importance as the key discipline in a new approach to the scientific study of

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<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Williams provides a detailed exploration of the theoretical base and ideological commitments which informed this movement. She notes that *morale*, which can be equally translated as ‘psychological’, ‘mental’ or ‘moral’, is not a term as ethically charged as the English ‘moral’ but that problems of morality were never far from the surface for the Idéologue physicians. See Williams, *The Physical and the Moral*, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> Cabanis, *Rappports*, p.604. ‘*La grande influence de ce qu’on appelle le moral sur ce qu’on appelle le physique est un fait général incontestable ; des exemples sans nombre la confirment chaque jour.*’

<sup>68</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, p.267.



humanity. According to Cabanis, ‘physiology, the analysis of ideas and moral factors, are nothing but the three branches of the one and the same science, which can justly be called the *science of Man*.’<sup>69</sup> Adherence to this particular system of medicine implied an inherent interest in questions of the variability, and more importantly, the potential improvement of human existence.

## 2.5 Transforming emotion

Questions about the limits of human perfectibility and adaptability returned in many guises in discussions of nostalgia. A commitment to moral cures did not necessarily imply a disbelief in nostalgia’s physical origins, although when it was considered as a problem of acclimatisation it was generally believed to admit fewer therapeutic interventions. However, successful moral cures tended to shift the aetiological emphasis away from the body to the mind. Such were the possibilities offered by these moral treatments that it led some doctors to doubt the strongly biological and instinctive origins with which nostalgia had traditionally been associated.

A version of the moral treatment formed a fundamental part of Moreau de la Sarthe’s therapeutic practice. In treating nostalgia, he focused on gaining the trust of his patients, encouraging what might now be discussed in terms of a ‘transference’ relationship.<sup>70</sup> By encouraging the nostalgic to express his

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<sup>69</sup> Cabanis, *Rapports*, p.126. ‘*La physiologie, l’analyse des idées et la morale, ne sont pas que les trois branches d’une seule et même science, qui peut s’appeler à juste titre la science de l’homme.*’

<sup>70</sup> Here I use transference in its broad (post-Freudian) sense, to indicate the emotional connections developed between patient and analyst, and in particular the projection and

desire for home, the doctor could help him to externalise, and finally control, his emotions. Once his affective life was regulated, the physical disorders associated with nostalgia - fevers, anorexia, indigestion and wasting - would then be automatically corrected.

When Pinel redefined madness in terms of the passions and imagination, he opened up the possibility for the diagnosis of purely 'affective' disorders in which only emotional faculties were disturbed.<sup>71</sup> A student of Pinel's, Moreau de la Sarthe, followed his thinking and aimed to make the emotions an object of scientific scrutiny. As such, he bemoaned the inexact range of meanings attached to them, anything from a fleeting feeling to a fundamental disposition. He narrowed the terms of his discussion to passions, profound emotions that formed part of the basic organic make up of humans in their primitive expressions, such as fear, sadness and so forth.<sup>72</sup>

Nostalgia had traditionally been understood in terms of excessive or disordered emotion, leading to its classification amongst diseases such as

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displacement of emotional dependencies. See 'Transference: Freudian and post-Freudian concepts', in *The Encyclopaedia of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1996), pp.584- 589.

<sup>71</sup> See Stanley W. Jackson, 'The Use of the Passions in Psychological Healing', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 45 (1990), 150-175, pp.169-171, and G.E. Berrios, 'The Psychopathology of Affectivity', *Psychological Medicine*, 15 (1985), 745-58. In the next generation, Esquirol was to move away from the dysfunction of the imagination to that of attention as the central key to insanity.

<sup>72</sup> Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Passions', vol.11, *Encyclopédie méthodique : Médecine*, ed. by Victor-d'Azyr and Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe (Paris : Mme veuve Agasse, 1793- 1825), 413-435, pp.432-433, p.414.

lovesickness and nymphomania.<sup>73</sup> The idea that it was the product of unsatisfied desire was central to conceptions of the disorder.<sup>74</sup> Nostalgia and lovesickness both acted as classic examples of the way in which imagination and desire could prove fatal if overly focussed on a single object. In both, the sufferer gained gratification only through fantasies, which were also the symptoms of his disease. As the military surgeon Denis François Noël Guerbois noted in 1803 when discussing the epidemics of nostalgia he had seen in the army of the Alps and the Rhine ‘other patients called more or less impatiently to be cured, while Nostalgics did not wish for it, and did not even consider it; nothing could distract them.’<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> For William Cullen nostalgia’s categorisation as an ‘erroneous’ passion placed it next to conditions like bulimia and nymphomania. *Edinburgh Medical and Physical Dictionary*, ed. by Robert Morris and James Kendrick (Edinburgh: Bell & Brad, 1807). The concept of nymphomania had its conceptual roots in Galenic humoral medicine, but was consolidated and popularised from the late eighteenth century. See Carol Groneman, *Nymphomania: A History* (London: Fusion Press, 2001). For an account of the history of the idea of lovesickness as an illness, which shares some issues with this thesis in its consideration of the impact of desire on health in a different historical period, see Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> Auenbrugger’s percussive work in the late eighteenth century, which was central to the development of the stethoscope, was in part concerned with tracing the course of nostalgia, which he concluded could be detected through organic changes brought about in the lungs. The identification of the lungs as the physical seat of emotions made it plausible that the unfulfilled desire at the base of nostalgia could create pathological changes there. Auenbrugger’s work on the lungs led him to build up a diagnostic picture correlating strongly with the symptomology of tuberculosis. The two diseases remained linked in the nineteenth century, when nostalgia was seen as either a pre-disposing factor or symptom of tuberculosis. See Hermoine de Almeida, *Romantic Medicine and John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.206; John Forbes, *On Percussion of the Chest: Being a Translation of Auenbrugger’s Original Treatise* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1936); George Rosen, ‘Percussion and Nostalgia’, *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 27 (1972), 448-450.

<sup>75</sup> Denis François Noël Guerbois, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie : appelée vulgairement maladie du pays’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1803), 31, no.290, p.18. ‘*Les autres malades appelaient la guérison avec plus ou moins d’impatience, tandis que les Nostalgiques ne la désireraient point, et n’y songeaient même pas ; rien ne pouvait les distraire.*’

Unfortunately, this process of internalisation could never prove satisfying, but rather exacerbated the sufferers' desire by continually evoking the desired object. The self-perpetuating nature of the disorder tended to fuel it, as the sufferer became more and more involved in internal reconstruction of images of home. Such extreme internalisation is one of the main reasons that no iconography exists for nostalgia. Nostalgia was perceived as an intensely visual disease in that it involved the imaginative re-creation of images of home. However, this was considered a purely internal process, and certainly did not involve any of the dramatic acting out seen in hysterics later in the century.

The home for which a nostalgic pined could be understood in terms of family, native climate, or another specific object of desire. While the condition relied on self-perpetuating imagined images, these were not considered fantastical. Rather they were based on imaginative recall of already experienced events or conditions. The stress in early nineteenth-century accounts of nostalgia was always on the concrete, and known, nature of the desired object:

It is sufficient, to diagnose [nostalgia] that there is a positive desire, and above all one is focused upon a particular object... a real and exulted desire and above all one firmly focused on possessing or seeing the desired object once more.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> M. Reynal, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1819) 2, no.35, p.7. '*Pour la caractériser, il suffit ... qu'il existe un désir positif et surtout bien déterminé sur un objet quelconque ... un désir réel, exalté, et surtout bien déterminé de posséder ou de revoir l'objet désiré.*'

This was an object of desire that had been lost not by the passing of time, but by the removal of the subject from the environment in which it could be found. 'Home' was understood as an already experienced, and potentially reclaimable, situation, linked to a physical place. As will be described in more detail, one of the most important consequences of the later de-medicalisation of nostalgia was its temporalisation, leading to the loss of a reclaimable or concrete object of desire.

In Lecomte's case, the homesickness that had left him in a 'melancholic stupor' had both an identifiable object and cause. The accent of a compatriot had been enough to trigger his debilitating nostalgia. Language was important to nostalgia in a number of senses. Linguistic isolation often acted as a trigger to the disease, and encouraged the sufferer's internalisation, as he had no methods of expressing himself, or his distress.<sup>77</sup> This was one of the reasons that Bretons and other speakers of distinct regional languages were so often diagnosed with the condition.<sup>78</sup> Faced with a ward of nostalgic Bretons at the Salpêtrière, Pinel's student Jean-Etienne Esquirol was reputed to have cured them 'as if by enchantment' through the simple expedient of introducing a

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<sup>77</sup> V.M. Besse, 'De la Nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1828), no.221, p.9.

<sup>78</sup> According to the Abbé Gregoire, in An II at least 6 million Frenchmen could not speak French, and as many again could not sustain a conversation in it. For many Jacobins and their nineteenth century heirs, the Breton world was associated with Catholicism, reactionary politics, and resistance to centralisation. These attributes all carried connotation of 'backwardness', and such identifications were sustained throughout the century. See Martyn Lyons, 'Regionalism and linguistic conformity in the French Revolution', *Reshaping France: Town, Country and Region During the French Revolution*, ed. by Alan Forrest and Peter Jones (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.179-192, especially pp.179-180.

doctor who could speak their language.<sup>79</sup> However, this was a therapeutic strategy to be used with care, since letting sufferers with the same dialect spend too much time speaking together could also exacerbate their tendencies towards homesickness.

Military decrees apocryphally issued in eighteenth-century armies against the playing of bag pipes and singing of Swiss folk songs had a persistent presence in the nostalgia literature. These stories of ‘pathological airs’ not only reinforced notions of Scottish and Swiss susceptibility to nostalgia, but more importantly, demonstrated the ability of a linguistic or musical reminder of home to provoke the disease.<sup>80</sup> However, once in the grip of the disease, the relationship of the sufferer to language changed. Nostalgics retreated into a wordless apathy, from which they must be cajoled. When they did speak, it was generally to themselves, engaging in delirious conversations with those they had left behind. Sufferers were perceived to be notoriously reluctant to share their feelings with others, being convinced that theirs was a unique case

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<sup>79</sup> H.-J.-M. H. Musset, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1830) 9, no.292, p.35. ‘*Comme par enchantement à la convalescence.*’ The Salpêtrière hospital, traditionally a public institution for women, was requisitioned during 1814-1815 for military use, but I have been unable to locate records to support this claim.

<sup>80</sup> For instance see, A.F.A., Thérin, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1810), 1, no.2 and Alibert, *Physiologie des passions*, pp.391-2. In his dictionary of music, Jean Jacques Rousseau disputed the existence of ‘pathological airs’ and argued instead that the ability of certain songs to trigger nostalgia demonstrated the power of music to act as a ‘memorative sign’, a symbolic encapsulation of the home. Philosophers were notably more sceptical about the nature of nostalgia. Immanuel Kant argued as early as 1798, in his *Anthropologie*, that the nostalgic desired not so much the return to an actual physical home, but to the conditions of his or her youth. True ‘return’ was an impossibility – since no reality was likely to compare to the imagined home. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de la musique* (Amsterdam : M.M. Rey, 1772) , pp.266-267; Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by Vicot Lyle Dowdell (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p.69.

and that they would be met only with derision and scorn if they expressed themselves.

Moreau de la Sarthe followed his teacher Pinel in his use of moral cures, but in contrast, encouraged the expression – rather than repression – of emotion. As will become clear, however, his ideal outcome was similar to Pinel's, the regulation of emotions by the intellect, or substitution of 'erroneous' or excessive passions with those of a more 'appropriate' nature.<sup>81</sup> For Lecomte, carefully monitored conversations with his fellow countryman were a route to producing the emotional outpouring necessary for his cure. This cure would see him enter into a new, more adult, relationship with the imagination and the expression of emotion.

The idea that individuals could be taught to subdue their instinctive attachments and emotions to a rationally directed greater good was of immense political importance in the post-Revolutionary era. The claim for a cure of nostalgia without the need for a return home was a powerful argument for the efficacy of Idéologue models and therapies. In addition, nostalgia demonstrated the devastating potential of unregulated emotion, which the Idéologues feared could undermine regenerative programmes of the new regime that aimed to produce a 'new man' fit for a 'new society'.<sup>82</sup> The cure

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<sup>81</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Réflexions', p.134.

<sup>82</sup> Mona Ozouf 'La Révolution française et l'idée de l'homme nouveau', *The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, vol. 2, in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, ed. by Keith Michael Baker, Colin Lucas, Maria Ozouf and François Furet, 4 vols (Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1987), pp.213-232.

of nostalgia came about through a re-alignment of the sufferer's emotional life, a process in which he learnt to contain, and consciously shape, his emotional attachments. This had profound political implications, since the Idéologues believed the conscious and rational regulation of emotional life was crucial to individual and social well being. The 'new man' to be created by the Revolution would be endowed with a new physiognomy that was fashioned less by places than by new political institutions and practices, and the desire to form part of the nation.

Unlike later representations of the disease, the sufferer in the early literature of nostalgia was not viewed pejoratively.<sup>83</sup> The majority of doctors, especially military, were fierce in their defence of their patients' characters.<sup>84</sup> Avoiding negative readings of the condition that might associate it with cowardliness or weakness, they insisted that 'to take nostalgics for men without courage would be to make an unpardonable error.'<sup>85</sup> Instead, they emphasised the involuntary nature of nostalgia – 'Can one see this irresistible desire as a

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<sup>83</sup> For instance, Auguste Haspel's *De la Nostalgie* (Paris : G. Masson, Libraire de l'Académie de Médecine, 1874) views the disorder in a far more negative light. The correlation of nostalgia, cowardice and effeminacy is likewise commonplace in North American accounts of the condition. See William H. Hammond, *A Treatise on Insanity in its Medical Relations* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1883).

<sup>84</sup> A common complaint of doctors later in the century fighting a rearguard action to preserve nostalgia as a disease based on laudable sentiment was that medical men (and especially psychiatrists) who saw it as a type of infantile regression were being misled by their own lack of military experience. In turn, military practitioners were often regarded as being theoretically unsophisticated and out of date, and their defence of nostalgia only reinforced this view.

<sup>85</sup> J.P.L. Théodore Paulinier, 'Sur la Nostalgie (vulgairement mal ou maladie du pays)' (medical thesis, Montpellier, 1837), 6, no.157, p.24. '*Se serait commettre une erreur impardonnable de prendre les Nostalgiques pour les hommes sans courage.*' For a repudiation of a relationship between nostalgia and desertion see François-Théophile Collin, 'Considérations sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1832), 9, no.271.



disgraceful weakness? It seems to me that there is no more need to blush for this involuntary feeling than one would for a pleurisy'<sup>86</sup> – and the generally positive nature of the sentiments of which nostalgia was an extreme expression:

To interpret this irresistible desire as a weakness would be to criticise the love of homeland ...it would be in some sense, to transform this sensibility, which is at the root of the noblest social virtues, into a crime against mankind.<sup>87</sup>

The relationship of nostalgia to patriotism was in fact rather more complicated, an issue taken up again in Chapter 3. The willingness of writers to look more critically at the exact nature of the emotional connections making up the nostalgic relationship is one of the markers of change in the literature over the century. Over time, sufferers of nostalgia were increasingly regarded as immature, infantile, uncultured or uncivilised. However, in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods overcoming nostalgia was primarily regarded as a painful rite of passage. These adolescent soldiers, struggling to

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<sup>86</sup> Musset, 'Essai sur la nostalgie', p.9. '*Peut-on regarder comme une faiblesse honteuse cet irrésistible désir, cet impérieux besoin de revoir ses foyers, de rentrer sous son toit? Il me semble qu'on n'a pas plus à rougir de ce sentiment involontaire que d'une pleurésie.*'

<sup>87</sup> J.B.H. Masson, 'De la Nostalgie, considérée comme cause de plusieurs maladies' (medical thesis, Paris, 1825), 3, no.79, p.7. '*Regarder comme une faiblesse cet irrésistible désir, ce serait aussi blâmer l'amour de la patrie... en quelque sorte faire, un crime aux hommes de cette sensibilité qui fait la base des plus belles vertus sociales.*'

adapt to new identities and realities could be viewed with sympathy, as their suffering echoed the birth pangs of the new nation.<sup>88</sup>

## **2.6 Both priest and father: the authority of the doctor**

Moreau de la Sarthe's emphasis on identification with the patient was an expression of one of the neo-Hippocratic precepts embraced so eagerly by French medical practitioners of his time. This was a commitment to a particular function for the doctor, whose role was to aid nature in effecting cures, by taking account of the enormous number of variations in temperament, personality, and habits of individuals in developing their strategies. Nostalgia provided an ideal demonstration of the doctor's role as consoler, friend, father figure or even priest. This sense of identification and empathy was one generated with particular therapeutic intent.

The success of moral cures relied not on the pharmacopoeia at the doctor's command, but on his ability to gain some kind of ascendancy over his patients. In the case of nostalgia, like other passion-based disorders, this was a process in which erroneous emotions and thoughts were to be gradually and gently redirected by the physician into happier channels:

The doctor must possess the art of reading the patient's heart; and, to gain his confidence, should not impede his inclinations, but flatter them ... [He must] cry with him.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> When I use post-1815 sources they are ones which continue to interpret nostalgia in the same terms as earlier papers, with authors who identify earlier military experience as the arena in which they gained their knowledge of nostalgia.

Many writers refused to make any specific recommendations for the treatment of nostalgia at all, stressing instead that each cure must be tailored to the personality of the patient.<sup>90</sup> Only by recognising the individual psyche of the patient, and by entering into his particular concerns, could the doctor cure.

The success of moral treatments was held to demonstrate the superiority of new medical theory and practice. The ability to ‘read’ the body in a nuanced way was crucial to this new medical paradigm, as was the possession of tact and empathy with which to win the confidence of patients:<sup>91</sup>

When the doctor cannot ask him questions about his state and console him, he does what I have heard called *veterinary* medicine; I would say a blind and essentially bad medicine.<sup>92</sup>

The doctor, one early nineteenth century practitioner affirmed, must be distinguished both by his ‘delicate tact’ (*tact délicat*) and his ‘admirable glance’ (*coup d’œil admirable*).<sup>93</sup> Nostalgia was a useful exemplar, since its cure confirmed that a practitioner had developed the nuanced *coup d’œil* so crucial to contemporary practice.

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<sup>89</sup> Musset, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’, p.35. ‘*Il faut que le médecin possède l’art de lire dans le cœur du malade; et, pour s’emparer de sa confiance, il ne doit pas heurter ses penchants, mais les flatter...Il faut pleurer avec lui.*’

<sup>90</sup> For instance, see M. Lachaud, ‘Dissertation sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1809), 2, no.31, p.14.

<sup>91</sup> For discussion of the ideals of observational medical theory and practise, see G. L. Bayle ‘Considérations sur la nosologie, la médecine d’observation, et la médecine-pratique’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1802), no.70.

<sup>92</sup> Thérin, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’, p.13. ‘*Lorsque le médecin ne peut lui faire des questions sur son état et lui donner des consolations, il fait ce que j’ai entendu nommer une médecine vétérinaire ; je dirais une médecine aveugle et essentiellement mauvaise.*’

<sup>93</sup> Bayle ‘Considérations sur la nosologie’, p.63.

Theoretical interest in nostalgia reached its height in the early nineteenth century, a period when patient-practitioner relationships were in flux. Historians like Stanley Jackson are correct in describing the nineteenth century as the period in which ‘seeing rather than hearing... looking rather than listening’ were to become central to medical practice. Yet, the treatment of nostalgia is a reminder of Foucault’s point that, at least in its early conception, clinical medicine relied on a ‘gaze’ which was aural as well as visual in form.<sup>94</sup> Foucault writes of a ‘hearing’ gaze and a ‘speaking’ gaze, both of which were fundamental in a medical paradigm which believed that the ‘visible is expressible, and that it is wholly visible because it is wholly expressible.’<sup>95</sup> This *coup d’œil* of the neo-Hippocratic practitioner is theorised in terms of the ‘gaze’ by Michel Foucault in his examination of the birth of French clinical medicine. The gaze, as Foucault presents it, consists of alternating stages of visual and linguistic interrogation of the patient by the doctor. The examination and the ‘questionnaire’ are integral and interdependent stages of analysis, which allow the doctor to access the reality of the disease underlying the patient’s symptoms.<sup>96</sup>

While in the past, medical authority had relied on institutional and royal support, the profession now attempted to establish its independent authority

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<sup>94</sup> Stanley W. Jackson, ‘The Listening Hearer in the History of Psychological Healing’, *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 149 (1992), 1623-1632, p.1625.

<sup>95</sup> Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*, pp.112-116.

<sup>96</sup> Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*, p.117. ‘Tout le visible est énonçable et qu’il est tout entier visible parce que tout entier énonçable.’

and credibility in a number of intellectual and social arenas. It did so in part by arguing that the sciences of man offered the best principles available for guiding society in periods of political and social change. Medicine alone could comprehend the intricate relationships of physical, mental, and emotional spheres, and was therefore uniquely placed to lead society towards new certainties in a period of revolutionary upheavals. Indeed, as Elizabeth Williams argues, one of the most fundamental and long-term outcomes of the revolution in medicine during the Revolutionary years was the creation of a new species of independent medical authority, able to speak on social and political as well as clinical questions.<sup>97</sup>

The image of the doctor triumphant in his ability to heal the previously incurable through the strength and persuasiveness of his personality was produced in a context in which doctors were self-consciously positioning themselves as enlightened practitioners:

Thus, penetrating the recesses of the heart of a man, to read there the desires, passions, sollicitudes and sorrows that are affecting his organism, you will create the means of curing the disorders from which he suffers, and you will raise your profession to the height of a true priesthood.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Williams, *The Physical and the Moral*, pp.68-69.

<sup>98</sup> Delmaïs-Eugène Pilet, 'De la Nostalgie considérée chez l'homme de guerre' (medical thesis, Paris, 1844), 12, no.43, p.29. '*C'est ainsi que, pénétrant dans les replis de cœur de l'homme pour y lire les désirs, les passions, les sollicitudes, les chagrins qui réagissant son organisme, vous vous créez les moyens de remédier aux désordres produits, et vous élèverez votre profession à la hauteur d'un véritable sacerdoce.*'

The implication that physicians were effectively to replace priests as moral guides in a new, enlightened age is striking, especially when any suggestion that religious belief might be of solace to the victims of nostalgia is conspicuously absent from the literature.<sup>99</sup> The salvationist rhetoric of this narrative reached its heights when a doctor wrote that ‘I reached out to a skeleton, and I made it walk back up the steps from the tomb.’<sup>100</sup>

Thus, it was effectively the doctor who cured the nostalgic, rather than the medicine at his command. This meant that cures depended on the doctor or surgeon maintaining high levels of personal integrity. The use of what some practitioners regarded as ‘innocent lies’ undermined for many others the legitimacy of the doctor’s role as an enlightened and paternal authority figure:<sup>101</sup>

Even to a worthy end, the doctor will never mislead by vain promises. For each rare success with these methods, how many catastrophes could one not record? We have seen more than one nostalgic... die the day when he learnt of the refusal of a promised

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<sup>99</sup> The sole reference I have encountered in the literature that describes the consolation that religion might potentially offer nostalgics can be found in C. Castelnau’s advice that nostalgics be encouraged to contemplate the ‘*la patrie céleste*’ or celestial homeland. C. Castelnau, ‘*Considérations sur la nostalgie*’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1806), 5, no.130, p.19.

<sup>100</sup> Castilho, ‘*Dissertation*’, p.30, and Pilet, ‘*De la Nostalgie*’, p.30. ‘*J’ai tendu la main à un squelette, et je l’ai fait remonter les marches du tombeau.*’

<sup>101</sup> The necessity of honouring therapeutic promises foreshadows the later psychoanalytic question of the need to access the ‘truth’ in order to effect a cure.

leave. It is impossible to calculate the demoralisation produced by such disappointments.<sup>102</sup>

The surgeon Guerbois described using the promise of a leave home as a highly effectively therapeutic strategy for a soldier, Pierre Blandin. However, this was a commitment that Guerbois was unable to honour. Observing the remarkable recovery made by Blandin, a more senior doctor decided that the prospect of leave had already done so much that it was no longer necessary to fulfil the promise. Blandin immediately suffered a relapse, and died within three days. This was proof for Guerbois of the importance of honouring agreements made with patients; both for their health and (perhaps even more importantly) the preservation of the good character of the doctor.<sup>103</sup>

The enlightened, educating doctor is the most vibrant figure to emerge from a literature in which the sufferer himself is effectively speechless.<sup>104</sup> The internalisation and lack of verbal expression makes the nostalgic a largely opaque and passive figure. The rapid development and often-fatal outcome of nostalgia, and the fact that illiteracy was deemed an important factor disposing an individual towards the disease, mean that accounts of the condition are overwhelmingly those of the practitioner rather than patient. In

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<sup>102</sup> Pilet, 'De la Nostalgie', p.29. '*Même dans un louable but, le médecin ne trompera jamais par de vaines promesses. Pour quelque rares succès à ces moyens, combien ne pourrait-on pas enregistrer de catastrophes? On a vu plus d'un nostalgique... mourir le jour où il a connu le refus d'un congé promis. Il est impossible de calculer la démoralisation produite par de telles déceptions.*'

<sup>103</sup> Guerbois, 'Essai sur la nostalgie', pp.34-37.

<sup>104</sup> On medical history from a patient perspective, see Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below', *Theory and Society* 14, no.2 (1985).

addition, a successful therapeutic outcome in the treatment of nostalgia was marked by the affective silencing of the patient. Nostalgia is thus perhaps one of the most emblematic disorders of the shifting power relations between practitioners and patients described by Foucault.

The question of how far medical self-identification reflected actual practice is one that I have reluctantly left aside. At one level medical interest in nostalgia was clearly fuelled by medical practitioners who were also self-consciously engaged in philosophy and literature, projecting their romantic ideals onto their patients. Indeed at the end of the century there were those who made exactly such claims. While the apparent therapeutic success of a return home for suffering patients, and especially their ability to leave their homes again, suggests that there must have been a set of assumptions and beliefs shared by patients and doctors alike as to the causes and remedies of the disease with which they were dealing, it might also be the case that patients identified with a medical discourse of which they were the privileged objects. However, as this dissertation explores, the concerns at the heart of nostalgia, about place, land and identity, continued to be played out in different forms, even after its demise as a clinical category.

## **2.7 The role of the imagination**

I have already noted the importance of imagination in nostalgia's theorisation. Indeed, fundamental shifts in the role granted to imagination and memory in the disorder contributed to its eventual dispersal of meaning. This change also had far broader implications relating to theories of subjectivity. In particular,



changes in the theorisation of nostalgia reflect the gradual displacement of imagination as the most important function in the construction of identity, to be replaced by new concepts of memory. However, these were the product of late nineteenth-century thinking. In describing nostalgia as the product of an ‘ill imagination’, the Idéologues continued to follow established interpretations of the condition.

The role of the imagination in insanity and disease had been well established in European medical thought by the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The imagination was thought to play an especially important role in the genesis of physical disorders, acting through the humours to disturb the functions of the organs. As well as this pathological potential, it could also direct the passions, and so play a role in curing the diseases that they caused.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the role of imagination in health and disease was neither new nor controversial at the end of the eighteenth century, but had been relegated to ‘commonsensical status.’ However, desire, the passions and imagination – all historically related within Western medical thought – took on a new importance for the Idéologues, with Cabanis in particular anchoring its role in a sophisticated medico-

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<sup>105</sup> For a general discussion of the place of imagination and the passions in the Western medical tradition see Stanley W. Jackson, ‘The Imagination and Psychological Healing’, *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences*, 26 (1990), 345-358 and ‘The use of the Passions in Psychological Healing’, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 45 (1990), 150-175. Jackson demonstrates that Cartesian dualism had little effect on medical theory and practice during the eighteenth century, which continued to use models in which reciprocal influences operated between soma and psyche, and viewed the imagination as capable of causing and curing, disease.

philosophical theory and so moving it from the periphery to the centre of medical orthodoxy.<sup>106</sup>

The Idéologue notion of imagination was largely based on the philosophical work of Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714-1780). Condillac understood imagination as the recall of former perceptions, involving a level of emotional engagement in which past perceptions seemed to be re-lived. It operated primarily through the evocation of immediate, visual imagery (recall the ‘pictures’ and ‘scenes’ with which Lecomte’s imagination ‘unceasingly surrounded him’). The individual swept away by imagination had lost any sense of critical distance, to become subjectively immersed in the apparent revival of the absent scene. The imagination acted visually, presenting images of another time in *tableaux* of great verisimilitude. Such imaginative recollections were believed to have an emotional power not granted to memories. They were thought to give life to what memory only accessed through the mediation of language, ‘the imagination show[ing] what the memory is content to recall.’<sup>107</sup>

In imaginative recall, individuals had no control over their revived perceptions, which were prompted by accidental signs (such as, for instance, Lecomte’s images of home triggered by the sound of his native accent). In contrast, Condillac believed that memory involved the more abstract recall of

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<sup>106</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, pp.53-54.

<sup>107</sup> Gaspard Alphonse Dupasquier, ‘De l’Imagination et de son influence sur l’homme dans l’état de santé ou de maladie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1821), 4, no.109, p.14. ‘L’imagination fait voir ce que la mémoire se contente de rappeler.’

the circumstances surrounding such perceptions. This recall operated without the reproduction of the affective overlay which had originally accompanied them. Memory per se was only possible after an experience had been processed into the symbolic register of language. By this process in which signs were attached to ideas in a voluntary manner, an individual could 'gain mastery of his own imagination.' Properly channelled by reason, imagination gave way to memory, which could act as a source of knowledge.<sup>108</sup> The transformation of imagination into memory was critical to the treatment of nostalgia, and clear distinctions in the role of each in the disorder was seen to act as a clinical proof of their differences.

Moreau de la Sarthe contributed articles on the passions, imagination and memory for the *Encyclopédie méthodique*. The faculty of imagination was important to the Idéologues because it was believed to play a special role in the connection of mind and body, both more and less than that of memory, to which it was related. It was the faculty that acted as a gateway through which rational and irrational, mind and body, and organism and environment interacted.<sup>109</sup> The importance of the imagination to health was obvious in a medical system that stressed the interplay of emotional and physical phenomena, so much so that a medical student could declare that 'not one single doctor has not experienced the vagaries of the imagination and seen its

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<sup>108</sup> Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, trans. by Hans Aarsleff (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.27-64 passim.

<sup>109</sup> Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Passions', p.433.

influence in all types of diseases.’<sup>110</sup> Following Condillac, the imagination was understood as a non-verbal function that mediated directly between the moral and physical spheres. It worked overwhelmingly through visual representations experienced as immediate and real.

Memory was a more sophisticated faculty, working through language, and was both rational and voluntary. Without sufficient attention and the intellectual work of associating ideas, memory could not function.<sup>111</sup> Relying on will and rationality, memory was understood as a uniquely human function. In contrast, the imagination was theorised as one of the most active and powerful faculties, influencing all the operations of the soul, its ideas and its passions, and providing the impetus towards their fulfilment.<sup>112</sup> This was a far more basic and potentially powerful function, one that was shared with animals, where it was expressed as instincts. Instincts were nothing but the imaginative revival of perceptions intimately connected with a particular situation.

The aim of physicians treating nostalgia was therefore not to erase thoughts of home, but to strip them of their affective power. In doing so they aimed to restore the sufferer to a sense of temporality that had been ruptured by his

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<sup>110</sup> Remi Joseph Allard, ‘Dissertation sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1820), 5, no.139, p.14. ‘*Il n’est pas de médecin qui ne connaisse les écarts de l’imagination, son influence dans toutes les maladies.*’

<sup>111</sup> Jacques-Louis Moreau de la Sarthe, ‘Mémoire, Souvenir’, *Encyclopédie méthodique : Médecine*, vol.9, pp.631-642.

<sup>112</sup> Brieuve, ‘Imagination’, *Encyclopédie méthodique : Médecine*, vol.7, pp.474-491, pp.474, 488.

deliberate retreat into an imaginative sphere that denied physical dislocation and tried to transcend time. This was the theoretical framework behind Moreau de la Sarthe's decision to find methods by which to make Lecomte express his experiences. Since language was unnecessary to imaginative recall, but central to memory, the verbal expression of distress aided the modification of images into memories. This helped the sufferer distance himself from his desires, since in memory signs were attached to ideas in a voluntary manner. Effectively, Lecomte's cure was achieved by the transformation of imaginative (visual) into memorative (linguistic) recollection.

Both passions and imagination were perceived to have a role in the formation of disease if left unregulated, and were seen as embodied, forming part of one's physical makeup. Memory, however, was a purely intellectual faculty distinguished by its lack of emotional content, in which images were understood as representations of the past and assessed as such. The imagination was also the most potent type of recollection, due to its unique ability to represent past, present and future in the same scene.<sup>113</sup> In other words, memory engaged with the past, but it knew where it was in time, rooted in one point while directing its attention to another. Only imagination

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<sup>113</sup> Recollection could take the form of reminiscence, memory or imagination. Reminiscence was a twofold experience which relied on the actual presence of an impression, and the memory (*souvenir*) of another past impression. In contrast, recollection was the product of memory, relying on the purely internal recall of absent objects without external reminders or triggers. Only when such representations of absent objects were accompanied by the emotions involved in the original experience, evoking a sense that these objects were actually present, was the imagination in operation. Brieu de, 'Imagination', *Encyclopédie méthodique : Médecine*, vol.7, p.488.

gave the subject the impression that they had transcended time, since it restored the totality of the original time or objects to present experience.<sup>114</sup>

Nostalgia is now understood in such overwhelmingly temporal terms that it is tempting to read it in the context of the 'diseases of memory' which became so important to French medicine and psychology later in the century.

Nostalgia has in fact been described as a disorder of memory, but was not understood in these terms until the later part of the nineteenth century.<sup>115</sup> This misreading is based on changes in the way medical and psychological sciences theorised memory. By the end of the nineteenth century memory was understood as a faculty with considerable affective content. However, this was a new conception of the way in which memory worked, and its relation to the body.

Throughout the century, memory was granted a larger and larger role in forming identity. The imagination, which sought to overcome spatial dislocation, was replaced by memory, which seeks to deny the passing of time. This culminated in a Freudian model of subjectivity in which individual

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<sup>114</sup> This distinction was to be re-worked in terms of voluntary and involuntary memory later in the century. Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu* provides perhaps the most detailed literary exploration of the different affective content of types of memory. This question was also the subject of considerable medical and psychological attention, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>115</sup> This tendency inflects Michael Roth's otherwise incisive reading of nineteenth-century French nostalgia. While Roth is correct in identifying memory, and its lack, as a major concern of French medicine, it was a largely late century tendency and nostalgia had a very small place in its theoretical framework. Roth himself notes that early nineteenth-century physicians conceptualised the disease in spatial rather than temporal terms, especially in their insistence that the physical return home could cure. Michael S. Roth, 'Dying of the Past: Medical Studies of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France', *History and Memory*, 3 (1991), 5-29.

pasts and childhood experiences are theorised as the main formative influences of identity – in comparison to the environmental influences discussed earlier. The influence of place in identity has been deflected from medical discourse and is generally seen as operating in the political domain, especially in those nationalist programmes that link inheritance, ethnicity, and land.<sup>116</sup> However, for early nineteenth-century practitioners, memory and imagination were distinct phenomena. It was in its emotive content that the imagination could be differentiated from memory, and in which its pathological potential lay.

## **2.8 The age and sex of nostalgia**

Nostalgia's relationship to imagination was stressed by doctors partly in order to delineate it from memory, but also because it reinforced nostalgia's association with a specific stage of emotional and physical development. As we have seen, military doctors could create redemptive narratives surrounding nostalgia, as its sufferers were adolescents finding their way to manhood:

Nostalgia was seen as a disease of adolescence because puberty brought with it a dominance of the faculty of the imagination over the entire being. To be an adolescent was to be plunged into an undirected and unconfined realm of the imagination. Here, according to Cabanis:

The adolescent seeks what he does not know... he is plunged into deep reveries. His imagination is inflamed by vague pictures, the

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<sup>116</sup> For instance see Michael Ignatieff, *Blood & Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: BBC Books / Chatto & Windus, 1993).

inexhaustible source of his meditations, his heart is lost in the sweetest affections, of whose goal he is still unaware.<sup>117</sup>

This period of the imagination was identified by one doctor as roughly from fourteen until thirty: 'from the age at which the affections are formed... until the age at which ambition imposes silence on them.'<sup>118</sup> The affective life was believed to rule over the individual until such time as responsibility, ambition and reason bound in the emotions, 'having reached the age of thirty years, man feels a kind of moral transformation; his impressions are no longer the same, his thoughts and his desires take another course; the activity of the head replaces that of the heart.'<sup>119</sup>

Nostalgia was a danger during adolescence as it gave the all-encompassing imagination a specific, but absent, object of desire. Although authors disagreed on the extent of their immunity, older men, women, and children, were generally believed to be safe from nostalgia. The particularity of the psychological life belonging to infants and children was believed to be a tendency to live in the present moment, with neither memory nor imagination

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<sup>117</sup> Cabanis, *Rapports*, p.176. '*L'adolescent cherche ce qu'il ne connaît pas ... Il est plongé dans de profondes rêveries. Son imagination se nourrit de peintures indéfinies, source inépuisable de ses contemplations; son cœur se perd dans les affections les plus douces, dont il ignore encore le but.*'

<sup>118</sup> Charles Fraisse, 'De la Nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1833), 2, no.70, p.12. '*Depuis l'âge où les affections se forment... jusqu'à celui où les soins de l'ambitions viennent leur imposer silence.*'

<sup>119</sup> Fraisse, 'De la Nostalgie', p.13. '*Parvenu à trente ans, l'homme éprouve une sorte de transformation morale ; ses impressions ne sont plus les mêmes, ses pensées et ses désirs prennent un autre cours ; l'activité de la tête remplace celle du cœur.*'



having a major impact on an immature consciousness.<sup>120</sup> However, the idea that women were more emotional than men, and so more prone to emotional and nervous diseases, was axiomatic in European medical thought over many centuries. The paradoxical denial of female susceptibility to nostalgia can be explained only through the medical insistence on the superficiality and flexibility of the female psyche. Like children, they were held to be incapable of retaining deep emotional states, being as it were saved by their own superficiality and ‘coquetry’.<sup>121</sup> In contrast, men were prone to be analysed in terms of what the French military historian Odile Roynette aptly describes as the ‘theme of masculine fragility’.<sup>122</sup> Persisting until the end of the nineteenth century, this saw men as capable of deeper emotions than women, and correspondingly less capable of psychological modification.<sup>123</sup>

Apparent female immunity to nostalgia also reflected demographic realities. Until the later decades of the century, when migration towards the cities replaced conscription as the main cause of disruption to rural life, women

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<sup>120</sup> However, exceptions were made when arguing for the benefits of breast feeding, for instance Philippe Pinel, ‘Nostalgie’, *Encyclopédie méthodique : Médecine*, vol.10, pp.661-663. Guerbois, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’, pp.13-14. For the immunity of the aged see Eugène Poisson, ‘Dissertation sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1836), 1, no.10, p.9; Pilet, ‘De la nostalgie’ pp.11-12.

<sup>121</sup> Louis Jean Barnetche, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Montpellier, 1831), 2, no.44, p.18.

<sup>122</sup> Odile Roynette, *“Bons pour le service” : L’expérience de la caserne en France à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris : Belin, 2000), p.32.

<sup>123</sup> Roynette, *“Bons pour le service”*, p.40. Roynette correctly argues that nostalgia acted as an exceptional narrative which acknowledged the suffering involved in the assumption of such an adult masculinity, which demanded physical resistance, moral fibre and impassability in the face of pain. A similar trajectory occurred in both France and Britain whereby early nineteenth-century models of male sensibility that allowed the expression of emotion as a masculine trait were transformed into a masculinity with an emphasis on the control of emotions. See Janet Oppenheimer, *“Shattered Nerves”: Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University press, 1991), pp.145-152.

were less likely than men to travel. If they did leave their native villages, it was generally to marry. In such cases, medical theory held that they would immediately be presented with a new set of attachments sufficient to draw their energy and thoughts away from their former homes. Doctors were especially fond of quoting Madame de Staël's comment that 'love... is merely a single episode in the life of the man. It is the whole story in the life of a woman,' and optimistically asserting that 'for women, a man is more important than a nation.'<sup>124</sup>

Unsurprisingly, it was above all female figures that functioned as representations of the home. Doctors' accounts of homesick soldiers typically noted delirious cries directed to their sisters, lovers, and above all, mothers.<sup>125</sup> As Hofer commented in his original description of the disorder, the nostalgic was one who had not 'forgotten his mother's milk.'<sup>126</sup> Comments such as these have meant that most historiographical attention paid to nostalgia has tended to interpret it in a psychoanalytically informed sense. Here, clinical nostalgia is understood as regression, a fantasised retreat to the conditions of

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<sup>124</sup> François Jacquier, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1821) no.206, pp.9-10. '*L'amour ... n'est qu'un épisode dans la vie de l'homme. C'est l'histoire tout entière de la vie de la femme... pour les femmes un homme est plus qu'une nation.*' There was always a minority opinion that women too would fall prey to nostalgia if forced away from their homes. For instance, for a case study of a woman unable to go home due to pregnancy, see Musset, 'Essai sur la nostalgie', pp.26-27. Another writer noted the examples of Jean of Arc and Charlotte Corday as women who performed heroic actions for their homelands, to argue that female immunity to the disease was perhaps a political construct - when women were as active in the defence of the nation as men they too would be more likely to fall prone to nostalgia. See G.L.V. Pillement, 'Essai sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1831) 1, no.28, p.6.

<sup>125</sup> For two typical examples see Guerbois, 'Essai sur la nostalgie', pp.24-29, 34-37.

<sup>126</sup> Johannes Hofer, 'Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688', trans. Carolyn Kiser Anspach, *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, 11 (1934), 376-391, p.383.

childhood, a return to oneness with the mother.<sup>127</sup> On one level, this is an entirely accurate reading, one that reflects the symbolic importance of the maternal figure in nostalgic desire. However, treating the image of the 'home' as purely a representation of childhood distorts the ways in which nostalgia was understood in the nineteenth century. It ignores the biological and environmental explanations which made sense of nostalgia, and not only makes doctors' therapeutic use of a return home little better than a naïve attempt to indulge the patient's fantasy, but fails to account for the reputed success of these cures.

The curative potential of a return home can be better understood in terms of the re-establishment of connections to the native climate. To understand nostalgia in this form, it would be more accurate to reverse the order of interpretation that historians have generally applied to narratives of nostalgia. Rather than seeing the 'home' as representing the time of childhood and a return to the mother, the female figures of desire (whether mothers, sisters or lovers) who feature in nostalgia need to be seen as acting as symbols of the home in its physical sense, considered in terms of climate, environment and landscape. The private space of the home was associated with the female on a number of discursive levels throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>128</sup> The

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<sup>127</sup> These accounts have tended to be relatively theoretically unsophisticated in their accounts. In a typical example Editha Sterba argues that 'one's home country – the land of one's fathers – represents the mother figure, and that the loss of country is experienced as the loss of the mother, is so generally observed and has been sung by so many poets that it has almost become a platitude'. Editha Sterba, 'Homesickness and the Mother's Breast', *The Psychiatric Quarterly*, 14 (1940), 701-707, p.701.

<sup>128</sup> James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

concentration of desire around feminine objects was another reason that an ability to overcome nostalgia acted as a coming of age, an entry into the public sphere of adult masculinity.

## 2.9 Creating new identities

The framework of environmental thinking within which nostalgia was theorised linked psychic development to specific environmental conditions.

This had important political, nationalistic and even racial implications, since it implied that influence of a specific climate limited the potential of its inhabitants. While national stereotypes were already prominent in medieval literature, and can be traced back to Aristotle, it was Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755) who consolidated the idea that character and environment were intimately related in his *l'Esprit des Lois* or *The Spirit of Laws* (1748).<sup>129</sup> When Montesquieu discussed the 'genius', 'common character', 'universal soul', 'mental disposition' or 'general spirit' of a people, he did so in relation to their 'climate.'<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.143.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, Book 14, 'Des Lois dans le rapport qu'elles ont avec la nature du climat', vol. 3, *De l'Esprit des lois* (Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1995). Montesquieu's physiological theory was based on the idea that the body was composed of two basic materials – solid parts and the fluids they contained. His ideas were based largely on Hermann Boerhaave's work, which emphasised that the state of the fibres and fluids that made up the body directly affected mental life. While the Idéologues critiqued Montesquieu's emphasis on climate to some degree, they retained the idea that human variability was tied to differences in environmental influences. See also 'Introduction', Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, ed. by David Wallace Carrithers (Berkeley: University of California Press), especially p.23, and Williams, *The Physical And The Moral*, pp.94-95.

Montesquieu always insisted that the influence of the climate was not unalterable, since national character was also shaped by 'moral causes'. This was a broad phrase encompassing politics and historical evolution, which determined dominant mœurs, manners, and religion. However, he saw physical influences as fundamental to physical and moral development, believing that both the 'character of the mind' and 'the passions of the heart' were as closely linked to climate as the physique.<sup>131</sup> The primacy of the climate to character became a commonly held belief during the eighteenth century. For instance, the Abbé F.I d'Espiard de la Borde's 1742 argued in his *Essai sur le génie et le caractère des nations* that 'climate is, for a Nation, the fundamental cause ... the principal cause presiding over the genius of people'.<sup>132</sup> Likewise, Louis de Lacaze (1703-1765) a Montpellier graduate serving Louis XV and the Duc d'Orléans insisted in his *Idée de l'homme physique et moral* (1755) that mœurs must be understood as being established not by society, but as part of the animal economy. Changes in the constitution of society would entail changes in this animal economy, based on whether they provided pain or pleasurable sensations.<sup>133</sup>

The importance of this explanatory framework for nostalgia is that doctors were able to extend their discussions of environmental influence into the realm of abstract thinking and feeling. Sentiments could be considered as historical and environmental artefacts, born out of external influences, and so

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<sup>131</sup> Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois*, p.243.

<sup>132</sup> Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, p.144.

<sup>133</sup> Williams, *The Physical and the Moral*, pp.44-45.

able to be shaped through changes in political or institutional life. As such, a group of people could be deemed more susceptible to certain ideas, diseases, or sentiments – including those of national attachment. The emotive force of patriotic attachment could therefore be ascribed to specific connections forged between people and place. While the second half of the eighteenth century had seen a preoccupation with the analysis of French national ‘character’ or ‘spirit’, the Revolution made direct calls for this character to be transformed.<sup>134</sup> For the Idéologue physician, it was necessary that the nostalgic learn to forge new connections – that the new mœurs of post-Revolutionary France enable them to make new emotional attachments and modify the passions rendering them ill.

Addressing the Convention in 1793 on the need for public instruction, the playwright Marie-Joseph Chénier stressed the necessity to ‘form Frenchmen, to endow the nation with its own, unique physiognomy.’<sup>135</sup> Part of the process of regeneration was a medical endeavour to manipulate physiognomies, so as to create the ‘new men’ fit for this new society. The creation of a new, ‘regenerated’, Frenchman, purified of the excesses and decadence of the *ancien regime*, was one of the central dreams of the Revolution. New schools, place names, calendars, fetes, and geographical divisions were dedicated

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<sup>134</sup> Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, p.142.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France*, p.14. The creation of ‘Frenchmen’ from a linguistically and culturally diverse population remained a guiding pre-occupation of successive French governments throughout the nineteenth century.

towards the production of this 'new man.'<sup>136</sup> Medical interest in nostalgia is one demonstration of a broad programme aimed at fundamentally changing the identifications and identities of the French population.

As Mona Ozouf has shown, there were two models of regeneration in Revolutionary writing. In one, regeneration was the spontaneous outcome of the Revolution, a return to a more natural state of being. In the other, it was an aim that demanded considerable work in order to be fulfilled.<sup>137</sup> Much historiographical attention has been paid to the political changes prompted by the Revolution in the pursuit of this 'new man'. However recent work has overwhelmingly tended to regard this concept of regeneration in figurative terms. The literal understandings of this concept, which saw the inauguration of programmes in improvements in public health, education and agriculture have been largely neglected.<sup>138</sup> In fact, the medical aspects of this programme of regeneration were central to Idéologue thinking. They made the human body itself the site of potential physical and moral improvement, emphasising

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<sup>136</sup> See Mona Ozouf, 'La Révolution française et l'idée de l'homme nouveau', pp.213-232, *The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, vol. 2, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, 4 vols, ed. by Keith Michael Baker, Colin Lucas, Maria Ozouf and François Furet (Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1987), especially pp.219-222. Both such rhetoric, and medical discussions of nostalgia, were highly gendered, being directed almost exclusively at men.

<sup>137</sup> See Ozouf, 'La Révolution française et l'idée de l'homme nouveau', especially pp.219-222.

<sup>138</sup> See Sean Quinlan, 'Physical and Moral Regeneration After the Terror: Medical Culture, Sensibility, and Family Politics in France, 1794-1804', *Social History*, 29, no.2 (2004), pp.139-164.

the need for individual self-control and mastery, through the domination of the emotions by intellect.<sup>139</sup>

For the Idéologues, the cataloguing of human types contained an inherent social agenda that attempted to map the range of human types and ultimately aimed to perfect the species. The perfection of human nature relied on the perfection of the social order, since individual and social 'health' were understood to be intimately related.<sup>140</sup> This process demanded the regulation of individual passions, and the re-shaping of national character. The cure of nostalgia offered hope that medical intervention could modify affective life, and ultimately individual and national physiognomy. Doctors believed that the formation of the new French physiognomy was a long and often arduous process, in which they played a vital role. As we shall see in Chapter 3, nostalgia also acted as an arena where medical writers could speculate about the impact of political change on the health and character of the French population. The incidence of the disease acted like a barometer in two ways. It measured the extent to which the nation was engaging the emotions of its citizens, and the success of attempts to bring about the new French character.

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<sup>139</sup> Quinlan links this regenerative narrative to the Idéologue use of sensibility as an organising concept. The vitalism of the Montpellier school which formed another critical inheritance of Idéologue philosophy emphasised the unique nature of living systems characterised by sensibility. Sensibility acted as a dynamic but unstable property that determined moral qualities, and its regulation was critical to the moral regeneration of the French population. Quinlan, 'Physical and Moral Regeneration', p.141.

<sup>140</sup> Jacques-Louis Alibert, 'De l'Influence des causes politiques sur les maladies et la constitution physique de l'homme', *Magasin encyclopédique, ou journal des sciences, des lettres, et des arts*, V (1795), 298-305, p.299.



Nostalgia had previously been primarily understood as an expression of the fact that individuals 'belonged' to a locale or culture, to the extent that the rupture of such connections could be dangerous. However, the success of moral cures in treating nostalgia, diverse objects of desire to which it was directed, and even the ability of the cured nostalgic to leave his home again, complicated the notion of 'home' mourned by nostalgics. The return home that cured nostalgia did not need to be permanent, and had the further effect of seeming to inoculate the former sufferer against further attacks. Physical re-experience of imagined places and objects seemed to be sufficient to permit the development of a new, more flexible, relationship to them. However, no medical authors put forward the idea that the return home might be disappointing, since its reality did not match that of the imagined home, or a remembered home already lost to the past.<sup>141</sup> The resolution of a suffered loss was apparently sufficient to render the sufferer less reliant on the home.

At the same time, nostalgia's transformation over the course of the century was related to a changing emphasis in accounts of the formation of the self, from geographical to historical terms. This was a twofold process, firstly one in which the environment that shaped subjectivity was increasingly understood in terms of cultural and socio-political forms, rather than places and climates. Secondly, internal milieu or landscape was conceptualised in terms that increasingly emphasised memory and the past as central to the

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<sup>141</sup> In contrast, philosophers such as Immanuel Kant made this argument strongly. See Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by Vicot Lyle Dowdell (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p.69.

formation of individual identity.<sup>142</sup> A new sense of nostalgia (explored in Chapter 5) developed, which was related to internal cartography, where memories were seen as being stored in the body, consciously or unconsciously shaping identity through their influence. As Jean Starobinski describes it, 'the village is interiorised'.<sup>143</sup> That is, nostalgic desire once understood as directed towards a literal and localised home was replaced by the notion of regression within the individual's own life history.<sup>144</sup>

As I shall explore in the next chapter, the cured nostalgic was believed to be able to centre his identity around abstract notions of belonging. Curing nostalgia did not mean merely replacing one geographic loyalty with another, but transcending it. Medical writers constructed a narrative through which they not only relieved homesickness, but also redeemed it, by transforming it into a patriotic attachment to an ideal. Such cures suggested that nostalgia revolved around a sense of belonging rather than a physical location, and

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<sup>142</sup> This forms part of a broader story about the changing meanings of *milieu*. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the concept evolved from a mechanical to a biological term, becoming a broad organising concept in the natural history of Buffon and Lamarck. Here it described the external environmental pressures that caused humans to change and adapt. Throughout the nineteenth century the concept of *milieu* migrated further, becoming increasingly conceived in terms of social environment, and the conditions of life that mediated the natural environment. By 1863, when Taine formulated his famous maxim that an individual was formed through '*la race, le milieu et le moment*', the concept of *milieu* had extended far beyond the biological. Taine's *milieu* was defined in terms that encompassed the natural environment, political circumstances and social conditions that influenced national and individual character. See Georges Canguilhem, 'Le Vivant et son milieu', *La Connaissance de la vie* (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1965), pp. 129-154, Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Massachusetts: MIT, 1989), pp.31-32, and Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (Paris : Hachette, 1863), pp.xxii-xxviii.

<sup>143</sup> Jean Starobinski, 'The Idea of Nostalgia', p.103.

<sup>144</sup> This can be seen in relation to a wider nineteenth-century debate about the 'interiorisation' of the self. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

marked the beginning of the process in which doctors turned away from environmental explanations, and began to emphasise the malleability of the psyche while considering what kind of community could provide a satisfactory sense of 'home'.

### ***Chapter 3 - The medicine of patriotism: peasants, war, and national belonging***

This chapter addresses the complicated relationship of clinical nostalgia to patriotism and nationalism. I argue that nostalgia provided an ideal framework within which doctors could discuss specific features of new and contested models of nationalism characterising post-Revolutionary France. The post-Revolutionary nation was represented by Republicans as a fragile construct, liable to attack or fragmentation.<sup>1</sup> It seemed clear to medical practitioners that nostalgia was an important threat to this nation. The disorder was related both to questions of patriotic attachment to the nation, and an issue for political programmes of nationalism aiming to construct new national identities.<sup>2</sup> Medical writing thus forms an important, and largely unconsidered, source in the historiography of French nationalism. Narratives about nostalgia illuminate and complicate accounts of the role of the French army in national life; the place of the peasant as a symbol of national identity; and issues relating to the nature and forms of appropriate government.

In his original description of the disorder, Hofer argued that nostalgia had an intimate relationship with nationalism and national prejudice. Its victims

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<sup>1</sup> See David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.60.

<sup>2</sup> David Bell notes that national sentiment and nationalism are frequently conflated in modern theory. He argues that 'more than a sentiment, nationalism is a political programme which has as its goal not merely to praise, or defend, or strengthen a nation, but actively to construct one, casting its human raw material into a fundamentally new form.' See Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, p.3.

‘scorn[ed] foreign manners’, and made ‘show of the delights of the Fatherland and prefer[ed] them to all foreign (things).’<sup>3</sup> However, the exact nature of this home had become complicated as soon as the purely mechanistic arguments of early Swiss writers were rejected, allowing cultural as well as physical criteria to represent the home.<sup>4</sup> The connection between nostalgia and patriotism continued to be largely assumed within the context of environmental medicine, and the curative return home theorised in terms of a re-enforcement of the bond between people and place. This changed in France with the emergence of new medical paradigms and political imperatives.

In his description of Lecomte, Moreau de la Sarthe concluded by noting with approval his rejection of *congé*, or leave. Embarrassed by his former emotion, and ‘returned in a complete manner to reason, health and life,’ Lecomte no longer wanted to go home. Instead, he now expressed a wish to return to

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688’, trans. by Carolyn Kiser Anspach, *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, 11 (1934), 376-391, p.386.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, the work of the Swiss naturalist J. J. Scheuchzer, in 1705-1706. While accepting the validity of nostalgia as a diagnosis, Scheuchzer rejected Hofer’s explanatory framework and argued that nostalgia was in fact the product of external mechanical causes, rather than the imagination. Seemingly anxious to remove any possible implication of a cowardice, or weakness particular to the Swiss, Scheuchzer argued that an increase in atmospheric pressure was the primary cause for nostalgia. The Swiss, being used to the rarefied air of the mountains, found that on their descent to lower altitudes, the fibres of their skin were compressed, leading the circulation to slow and blood to be forced to the heart and brain. This in turn caused pressure on the parts of the brain dealing with the storage of images of home, and triggered their preoccupation. While Scheuchzer argued for a physiological causation of the disease, in opposition to Hofer’s emphasis on the imagination, the therapeutic tactics were largely the same, including the importance of the return home. George Rosen, ‘Nostalgia: a “forgotten” psychological disorder’, *Psychological Medicine*, 5 (1975), 340-354, p.343. On early Swiss mechanistic explanations of nostalgia, also see Jean Starobinski, ‘La Nostalgie : théories médicales et expression littéraire’, *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 27 (1963), 1505-1518, pp.1510-1511.

battle to risk himself again on behalf of his 'fellow citizens.'<sup>5</sup> Not only had Lecomte overcome his previous place-bound attachments, but had also come to recognise that his well-being was based around the well-being of the state. The soldier who had overcome nostalgia was one whose loyalties had been transformed. The overtly political nature of this cure points to the increasingly fraught relationship which nostalgia was believed to have with patriotic attachment. Clearly, Lecomte had needed to be taught to love his country, not his *petit pays*, that is, to take on a national identity rather than a regional one.

### 3.1 The military setting

Finding the majority of its victims in young people forcibly removed from their homes, nostalgia was a disease whose incidence depended on political events and demographic change. Between 1792 and 1815, France was almost continually at war, and military conscription acted as the main engine for population movement. In total, over four and a half million men were drafted into the French army during this 23 year period.<sup>6</sup> French medical interest in nostalgia was one result of this unprecedented upheaval, since it triggered large-scale outbreaks of the disease in the armies of the Republic and the First Empire.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques L. Moreau de la Sarthe, 'Morale et physiologie', *La Décade philosophique, littéraire et politique*, 11/12 (20/30 Nivôse, An IX), 69-75, 134-167, p.137.

<sup>6</sup> See Dora Weiner, *The Citizen-Patient in Revolutionary and Imperial Paris* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society During the Revolution and the Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Marcel Reinhard, 'Nostalgie et service militaire pendant la Révolution', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 30, no150 (1958), 1-15.

Denis François Noël Guerbois, a military surgeon who served for seven years in the newly created *ambulans* service,<sup>8</sup> linked the emergence of nostalgia as a significant military dilemma to the first programme of mass conscription (the *grande levée*) inaugurated in 1793:

The law of August 23 1793 concerning conscription carried off in one fell swoop all the young people between 18 and 25 years of age. Weak, strong, poor, rich, country dwellers, city dwellers: all were obliged to be soldiers. Some painfully dragged their frail and suffering bodies from region to region. Others, more robust, felt more strongly the losses than they had suffered, and carried with them deeper yearnings. This man wept for his thatched cottage, that man regretted his pleasant way of life, another shed tears at the mere sight of a plough.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The development of the *ambulans* service, mobile units able to access the wounded near the field, was one of Baron Larrey's great achievements. Guerbois served in the revolutionary wars under Larrey and Pierre François Percy, the chief General Inspectors of surgery in the Napoleonic army, part of a triumvirate in charge of the health of the army. The triumvirate was completed by R. Desgenettes, who was responsible for physiology and military hygiene, and held the chair in these fields at the Val-de-Grâce. See Benoit Legris, 'Le Service de santé de la Grande Armée 1804-1815' (medical thesis, Paris, 1981), pp.10-11.

<sup>9</sup> Denis François Noël Guerbois, 'Essai sur la nostalgie : appelée vulgairement maladie du pays' (medical thesis, Paris, 1803), 31, no 290, pp.15-16. '*La loi de 23 août 1793, sur la réquisition, enleva, dans un instant tous les jeunes gens de 18 à 25 ans. Faibles, forts, pauvres, riches, campagnards, citadins, tous furent obligés d'être soldats. Les uns traineraient péniblement un corps frêle et souffrant de pays en pays ; les autres plus robustes sentaient plus fortement les pertes qu'ils avaient faites, et emportaient avec eux des regrets plus profonds. Celui-ci pleurait sa chaumière, celui-là regrettait une douce existence ; un autre versait des larmes au seul aspect d'une charrue.*'

The same groups who were believed to be especially prone to nostalgia, rural men from regions with a strong local identity, were also perceived to be those most likely to desert. Army officials constructed a myth in which desertion was rare and heavily punished, and went to great lengths to keep their soldiers away from the 'contaminating effects' of civilian society.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, soldiers and officers understood desertion very differently. For instance, many from a rural background viewed the needs of the harvest as a legitimate reason to return to their villages. Higher desertion rates were also found among soldiers from areas isolated from central government. The perception that rural areas were disproportionately called upon to provide resources and soldiers was widespread, and conscription became an ongoing point of dissension between the government and the populace.<sup>11</sup>

As nostalgia was one of the few conditions for which the soldier could be granted leave, high levels of simulation led to an extensive literature dedicated to distinguishing the true nostalgic from the simulator.<sup>12</sup> When surgeons successfully used the moral cure to treat nostalgia, they were not only following contemporary understandings of the impact of the passions on health, but also fulfilling a political imperative. The military authorities had an obvious preference for a cure that did not involve releasing soldiers from

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<sup>10</sup> Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters*, p.186.

<sup>11</sup> Hew Strachan puts desertion rates at between 4% and 8% in the years between 1793 and 1796. See his 'The-Nation-In-Arms' in *The Permanent Revolution: The French Revolution and its Legacy 1789-1989*, ed. by Geoffrey Best (London: Fontana, 1988), p.61.

<sup>12</sup> See Percy and Laurent, 'Nostalgie', *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, ed. by Nicolas Philibert Adelon and Léopold Joseph Renaudin (Paris : C.L.F. Panckoucke, 1812-1822) vol.36, pp. 265-281, p.281; Jean-Louis Alibert, *Physiologie des passions : ou nouvelle doctrine des sentiments moraux*, 2 vols (Paris : Béchét Jeune, 1827), p.393.



active service. While the return of an individual to his home might be an almost infallible cure, it was not satisfactory from the point of view of army administrators.

### 3.2 Peasants, soldiers and city dwellers

Nostalgia fed into and perpetuated stereotypes about city and country.<sup>13</sup> Over the course of the century, it was constantly associated with the rural population and military settings, and both of these connections influenced its changing meanings. These identifications of nostalgia make it an ideal way to chart the changing symbolic functions of the peasant and the soldier in French national myths. Both were conceived as important national 'types' in the nineteenth century and were subject to fluctuating levels of valorisation.

In the post-Revolutionary era, there was a persistent double vision in perceptions of the rural population. As James Lebling has shown, a number of conflicting stereotypes existed over the century. In one, country dwellers were repositories of timeless virtues and patriotic spirit, in another they were 'superstitious savages, potentially given up to irrational violence, a dead weight on French development, under the control of priests, politically conservative, and resistant to change.'<sup>14</sup> He notes that while there has been

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<sup>13</sup> Jacques Terrier, *Histoire des maladies de l'armée des Pyrénées Occidentales* (Pau : G. Sisos and J. Tonnet, 1799), p.274.

<sup>14</sup> James R. Lebling, *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.2. Robert Tombs argues that Lebling ultimately relies on the same type of stereotypes in his analysis. See Robert Tombs, 'Peasants, Frenchmen and Cultural Historians', *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 1117 – 1125.

broad historiographical agreement that 'civilisation' was brought to the French peasantry during the century, such conclusions are informed by a constructed narrative of the figure of the 'peasant'. While Lehning resists reading rural history purely as a discourse of peasants 'becoming French', he admits that early nineteenth-century perceptions of the rural laid stress on its differences in economic, demographic and linguistic terms.<sup>15</sup>

The direct identification of nostalgia with young, uneducated, rural men increased the sense that these were individuals whose commitment to the Revolution needed to be fostered through an understanding of their role in the new nation, and a rejection of earlier, 'pre-modern', identities. Nostalgia acted as a medical prism through which the adaptation of the rural population to new realities and identities could be measured; and doctors could assert their unique ability to assess the dangers and possibilities inherent in these changes. The disease was so closely linked to ideas of the land and the landscape that it was largely held to be an agricultural condition, linked to the special connection that those who worked with the soil were believed to possess. Hence, for instance arguments that those from harsh climates were even more attached to their land, on account of their need to work so hard to make it productive.<sup>16</sup> This was a romantic vision, in which the peasant was idealised as a source of regeneration and replenishment for the nation. There were later

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<sup>15</sup> Lehning, *Peasant and French*, pp.2-3, 35.

<sup>16</sup> See José-Feliciano Castilho, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1831), 7, no.235, pp13-14.

writers who valued this vision and mourned its loss: some even becoming nostalgic for the decline of nostalgia as a clinical condition.<sup>17</sup>

The figure of the rural worker-soldier had an important role in government propaganda across the political spectrum over almost two centuries, ending only after the Second World War. The vision of the ideal Frenchman as both warlike and agricultural was introduced by the Enlightenment veneration of Spartan and Roman societies. Diderot's encyclopaedia invoked 'our illustrious farmers (the Romans), always ready to become the defenders of the Patrie.'<sup>18</sup> In the post-Revolutionary context, arguments for the regeneration of the Frenchman emphasised education of soldier-workers, who would then provide a model for the effete and over-cosmopolitan city dweller.

Idealisation of the peasant relied on his attachment to his home, his *petit pays*, making him fit and willing to defend the greater Fatherland. The soldier-labourer could wield both sword and plough in the cause of the nation, fusing the functions of the Second and Third Estates.<sup>19</sup> For instance, Robespierre wrote in praise of the man of the village '*l'homme champêtre*' far from urban corruption.<sup>20</sup> However, nostalgia disturbed this valorising narrative, since it

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<sup>17</sup> Delmaïs-Eugène Pilet, writing in 1844 was the first writer to mourn the apparent passing of nostalgia as a loss, arguing that its decline indicated that materialism was destroying a natural and noble connection to the past and the land. Delmaïs-Eugène Pilet, 'De la Nostalgie considérée chez l'homme de guerre' (medical thesis, Paris, 1844), 12, no.43.

<sup>18</sup> Gérard de Puymège, *Chauvin, le soldat-laboureur : contribution à l'étude des nationalismes* (Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1993), p.100.

<sup>19</sup> David Hopkin, 'La Ramée, the Archetypal soldier, as an indicator of popular attitudes to the army in nineteenth-century France', *French History*, 14 (2000), 115-149, pp.145-146.

<sup>20</sup> Hopkin, 'La Ramée', p.127.

was precisely the attachment of the peasant to his regional home that was held to undermine his ability to defend the nation. This tension between the nostalgic peasant as patriotic, or anti-nationalistic will be returned to in detail later in the chapter.

One of the most celebrated representations of the peasant-soldier in the early decades of the century was Chauvin, a popular character dramatised, painted, and celebrated in song. Balzac estimated that over a million engravings, screens, statuettes etc were produced chronicling and celebrating Chauvin's exploits. These were originally produced for an urban audience, but progressively gained popularity in the rural sphere as well.<sup>21</sup> Chauvin's unforced and martial love of his home, and suspicion of anything foreign, became embedded in the national vocabulary as '*chauvinisme*'.<sup>22</sup> However, both folkloric representations of the soldier and the nostalgia literature make it clear that elite attempts to fuse rural and military identities met resistance. In state propaganda, conscripts returned to the village community as leading figures, acting as standard bearers for the nation, and thus granted status and authority.<sup>23</sup> However, popular attitudes took decades to conform to veterans' new social position or cultural status as promoted by the state.

In his study of popular attitudes towards the army, historian David Hopkin remarks on the persistence of conflicting popular and official views of the

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<sup>21</sup> Puymège, *Chauvin, le soldat-laboureur*, p.245.

<sup>22</sup> *Chauvinisme* first entered the Larousse in 1840.

<sup>23</sup> Hopkin, 'La Ramée', pp.147-148.

returning peasant-soldier. Even in the second half of the century, there was little evidence of a rapprochement between soldiers and the peasant classes, despite considerable efforts from intellectual and political elites:

The sense of disparity between the old soldier and civilian was well preserved in the popular culture of the nineteenth century.

Yet at the same time the peasant-conscript was being extolled by nationalists and Republicans as the personification of the nation.<sup>24</sup>

While official representations saw military service as likely to enhance the status of the soldier on his return home, in popular representations becoming a soldier was seen as being at odds with retaining a peasant identity. Those who drew safe numbers in the conscription ballot were '*bons pour les filles*', good for the girls, while those pressed into the army were only '*bons pour le service*', good for service. If French authors made analogies between military and sexual conquests, in folkloric representations, marriage and military service were often considered as two, mutually exclusive functions of manhood.

In addition, disconnection between a conscript and his home was encouraged by the army. Successive French governments self-consciously sought to ensure that the army was a body which perceived itself as apart from the rest of society. Overall the aim was the creation of a fighting force owing its loyalty to the nation, rather than to any particular political party or regime. The army's reputation as politically neutral, '*la grande muette*', was to be

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<sup>24</sup> Hopkin, 'La Ramée', p.117.

vindicated numerous times throughout the century, as generals and ordinary soldiers alike placed their own professional loyalties above the political concerns of successive regimes or would-be regimes.<sup>25</sup>

Nostalgia offers another complication to the narrative of the 'worker-soldier', demonstrating the inherent conflicts in the two identities. It also illustrates a process by which the archetypal Frenchman was re-shaped in medical representations specifically as an urbanised citizen. For medical writers considering nostalgia, the nation state demanded a new type of patriotism centred on the subjectivity generated in an urban environment. Those celebrated in the nostalgia literature as the most patriotic citizens were in fact *citadins*, a term used since the late eighteenth century to describe city dwellers. They were believed to determine their identities without reference to the physical environment, instead being able to flourish within a constantly changing milieu without experiencing a sense of rupture.

Inhabitants of large cities were believed to have such a tenuous attachment to place that they were largely immune to nostalgia.<sup>26</sup> However, their 'love of the homeland, can, as for other individuals, be taken to great extremes.'<sup>27</sup> The sudden appearance of an emotional connection to the nation, independent of place, was attributed to the special conditions of the city dweller. Unlike rural

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<sup>25</sup> See 'Power and the Sword', Chapter 10, Tombs, *France*, pp.193-199.

<sup>26</sup> J. L. A. Pauquet, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie (medical thesis, Paris, 1815), 2, no.45, p.9. '*Chez les habitants des grandes villes... l'amour du pays existe à peine.*'

<sup>27</sup> Pauquet, 'Dissertation', p.9. '*L'amour de la patrie peut comme, chez les autres individus, être porté fort loin.*'

people, effectively shaped by their surroundings, for the urban population 'localities make little impression... they easily decide to change dwellings, districts, even cities.'<sup>28</sup>

This comparison between the identity formation of peasant and *citadin*, in which the urban dweller is being celebrated as the new and ideal French identity, is an under-explored aspect of French history. The narrative of the healthy and resilient city dweller was in striking contrast to emerging discourses that linked the city with ill health, criminality, and political upheaval.<sup>29</sup> In the later part of the century, such representations expanded to include the spectre of degeneration. Concern grew in medical, criminological and legal thought that the city was imprinting its inhabitants in a negative manner, acting as an unnatural environment in which the degenerate thrived.<sup>30</sup> Here, however, through its constant state of flux, the city imparted immunity to environmental influences. In the context of nostalgia, the urban landscape, rather than possessing any specific environmental influences of its own, protected its inhabitants from any such effects.

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<sup>28</sup> Pauquet, 'Dissertation', p.9. '*Les localités font peu d'impressions... ils se décident facilement à changer d'habitation, de quartier, et même de ville.*'

<sup>29</sup> See Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Frank Jellinek (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

<sup>30</sup> See Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France, The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), especially Chapter 5, 'Metaphors of Pathology in the *belle époque*: The Rise of a Medical Model of Cultural Crisis', pp. 132-170.

### 3.3 New identities, new 'homes'

The question of exactly what 'home' meant for a nostalgic, and what made this home worth dying for, dogged the literature on nostalgia. In the model of human development outlined in the previous chapter, patriotism could be considered as a medical phenomenon. A physical and emotional preference for the home environment was believed to be a biological instinct. However, such place-bound models of identity were challenged by the political ethos of the French Revolution, which demanded a different form of patriotism from its citizens. National identity was henceforth to be defined as a commitment to a set of ideals and political systems. This was a civic nationalism based on a concept of voluntary and rational belonging, in which the nation or homeland was understood in abstract rather than geographical terms.<sup>31</sup> In this context, there were clear conflicts between a nostalgic connection with the home and a duty towards a new nation state.

Doctors understood nostalgia as a reaction to the removal of individuals from the locality, or *pays*, to which they had become habituated. It was above all the needs of the homeland, or *patrie* that caused this removal and set in motion the military system where nostalgia flourished. In this sense, nostalgia was inherently a political condition. However, in another sense it was resolutely apolitical. It acted as a rejection, albeit involuntary, by individuals of the idea that they owed their duty and even their lives to the state. The

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<sup>31</sup> *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, 4 vols, ed. by Keith Michael Baker, Colin Lucas, Maria Ozouf and François Furet (Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1987)



nostalgic simply wanted to go home. According to early nineteenth-century accounts, nostalgia struck men torn from their physical homes without regard to the nature of the home they had left, their political affiliations, or the ideological reasons behind their displacement. As such, doctors became increasingly dubious about the patriotic potential of nostalgia, and it eventually came to have provincial rather than patriotic connotations.

Doctors' positions on the relationship of nostalgia to nationalist feeling varied, depending on their broader beliefs about the basis for shared identity. Some argued that nostalgia was a form of patriotism, the unfortunate extreme of otherwise laudable sentiments 'at the base of the most beautiful social virtues'.<sup>32</sup> A connection to land was central to patriotism, which meant that 'to look at this irresistible desire as a weakness would be to criticise the love of the homeland.'<sup>33</sup> For others, the emphasis was less on patriotism than on the pathological psychology of the nostalgic. Here, nostalgia was deemed to act as a marker of the sufferers' cultural backwardness, and the environmental and social impoverishment of their homes.

Following Enlightenment philosophies that celebrated internationalism, many medical writers commented that the nostalgic needed to be 'made in some

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<sup>32</sup> J.B.H. Masson, 'De la Nostalgie, considérée comme cause de plusieurs maladies' (medical thesis, Paris, 1825), 3, no.79, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> Masson, 'De la Nostalgie', p.7. '*Regarder comme une faiblesse cet irrésistible désir, ce serait aussi blâmer l'amour de la patrie.*'

way cosmopolitan.’<sup>34</sup> However, broadening the cultural horizons of the nostalgic carried risks of its own. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, cosmopolitanism was also considered to have a pathologised dimension of its own when carried to extremes. In the later decades of the century, this found clinical expression in the construction of new categories of insanity relating to displacement. As I will explore, *aliénés voyageurs* or insane travellers became emblematic of a modern society which had lost its traditional relationships. If the love of land and nation existed on a continuum with cosmopolitanism at its other extreme, immunising individuals against nostalgia involved a delicate balance, one which imparted a kind of deracination, but did not go so far as to risk subjects becoming disengaged from the nation.

Wide sweeping political change, combined with developments in army organisation put into place after the Revolution, exacerbated problems of alienation suffered by soldiers. Under the *ancien regime* men were recruited locally, and most commonly served with compatriots under a local noble already known to them. Now their loyalty was being demanded in the defence of an abstract and newly-formed state. Laws passed in 1832 meant that regiments were deliberately made up of conscripts from different regions, often from disparate linguistic and cultural groups. This reinforced the need for French to be used for communication and helped break down local identities.<sup>35</sup> Doctors with an interest in nostalgia claimed that part of the

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<sup>34</sup> Jules Yvonneau, ‘Considérations médico-philosophiques sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1821) 1, no. 345, p.19. ‘*Le rendre en quelque sort cosmopolite.*’

<sup>35</sup> See ‘War’, Chapter 2, Tombs, *France*, pp.34-60.

reasoning behind this mixing of the population was to decrease the possibility of the disorder. Epidemic occurrences of the condition were believed to be triggered by conscripts from one region gathering together to reminisce about their homes.<sup>36</sup>

The French Revolution had brought into being a new sense of what membership in a nation meant. Questions about who could be citizens, and the rights and duties relating to citizenship, were extensively debated and disputed in the years following 1789. Drawing on Rousseau's concept of a social contract, members of the Estates General sought to determine how the nation should be conceived and constituted. The Abbé Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès' assertion that the people themselves were the nation became the basis for a new vision of France.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the basis for French nationality continued to be questioned throughout the century, with language, religion, ethnicity and shared history all deployed as markers in different models of national belonging.

The regional identifications and languages of different groups within France were a persistent political concern for nineteenth-century governments. While the Revolutionary model of citizenship focused on the will to belong, an ongoing emphasis on linguistic conformity reflected the prevalence and impact of philosophical theories that made shared language the key marker of

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<sup>36</sup> V. Vidal, 'Nostalgie', *Dictionnaire encyclopédie des sciences médicales*, vol.13 (Paris : 1879), 357-381, p.358.

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat?* (Paris : 1799) and *What is the Third Estate?*, trans. by M. Blondel (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963).

a nation or people.<sup>38</sup> Unsurprisingly then, nostalgia was most commonly diagnosed in groups such as the Bretons. As one doctor was to note of the Bretons, ‘in the middle of their homeland they are isolated; in the middle of their compatriots they seem like a distinct nation.’<sup>39</sup> Nostalgia demonstrated only too clearly the divisive and disruptive potential of dialects and patois, and the military insistence on French as the *lingua franca* thus stemmed from both medical and political motivations.

Military doctors and surgeons argued that if a soldier truly felt that in defending France he was defending his family, fields, and way of life, he would be immune to homesickness. In 1803 Gaillardot wrote:

We frequently saw nostalgia at the beginning of the Revolution; those who were affected ... knowing no other homeland than the place where they were born, would have perhaps given proofs of courage and heroism, if, in their own region, they had been

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<sup>38</sup> On Rousseau’s model of national belonging see Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism and Exoticism in French Thought*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp.176-184. One of the most influential expressions of the nationalistic theories emphasising language, which quickly found currency in Western Europe, can be found in the work of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803). Herder was one of the foremost theorists of German Romanticism, and argued that language determined thought. Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, trans. by T.O. Churchill (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968). On how these ideas became integrated into different national mythologies, see Léon Poliakov, ‘The Quest for the New Adam’, Chapter 9, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, trans. by Edmund Howard (London: Chatto Heinemann, 1974), pp.183-214.

<sup>39</sup> J.B. Bureau-Robinière, ‘Dissertation sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Strasbourg, 1823), 31, no17, p.16. ‘*Au milieu de leur patrie ils se trouvent isolés; au milieu de leur compatriotes, ils semblent une nation distincte.*’

obliged to defend their own lives, and all that attached them to  
it.<sup>40</sup>

The problem then was not a lack of patriotism *per se*, but that patriotic attachment was understood differently by the troops and the state.<sup>41</sup> I return to this quotation later in the chapter, as it encapsulates the critical confusion at the heart of debates surrounding the relationship of nostalgia, homeland and the state.

While nostalgia could be read as a sign of a soldier's persistence in retaining inappropriate beliefs and emotional attachments, the literature of the period emphasised that it should not be viewed negatively. Influential military figures like the Chief General Inspector of surgery in the Napoleonic army, Pierre François Percy were at pains to advise doctors that nostalgia should not be seen as a 'shameful weakness', even in older men.<sup>42</sup> Other writers denied that links could be drawn between nostalgia and desertion, and argued that nostalgia could even increase a soldier's bravery, 'at times inspiring great courage in one who had been merely ordinary until then; for these nostalgic ideas make these men defy death and seek it in combat.'<sup>43</sup> Why the defence of

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<sup>40</sup> C. A. Gaillardot, 'Considérations sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1804), 9, no.287, p.13. '*Dans les commencements de la révolution, on a observé plus fréquemment la nostalgie; ceux qui en ont été atteints... ne connaissaient d'autre patrie que le lieu même qui les avait vu naître, auraient peut-être donnés les preuves de courage et d'héroïsme, si, dans leur pays, ils eussent été obligés de défendre leur propre vie, et tout ce qui les y attachait.*'

<sup>41</sup> See Jean-Paul Bertaud, 'The Volunteers of 1792', Chapter 10, *Reshaping France: Town, Country and Region During the French Revolution*, ed. by Alan Forrest and Peter Jones (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.168-178.

<sup>42</sup> Percy and Laurent, 'Nostalgie', pp. 271-2.

<sup>43</sup> J.P.L. Théodore Paulinier, 'Sur la Nostalgie (vulgairement mal ou maladie du pays)' (medical thesis, Montpellier, 1837), 6, no.157, p.24. '*Les idées nostalgiques font peut-être*

the nostalgic, 'unpatriotic', soldier? As we have seen, military doctors and surgeons found in the nostalgic soldier's journey from adolescence to adulthood a symbol of the transition being demanded of the French population. The consciousness of a nation that was in its earliest stages of development encouraged the view of the nostalgic as undergoing a painful but necessary readjustment in his loyalties and allegiances.

In this context, the cure for nostalgia was no longer to be found in a return home, but rather in the circumscription of the passions within the governing control of reason, and the instillation in the nostalgic of a new sense of 'home.' To this extent, the increasing focus on nostalgia as a mental, rather than physiological, disorder can be seen as linked to its new political meanings. For the French military, avoiding or curing nostalgia became a question of inculcating in the young soldier an attachment to his new environment, effectively making the army itself feel like 'home'. A number of factors contributed to the need for a soldier to identify the army as 'home'. After the Napoleonic era, the army was organised in a system that brought together limited conscription, reserves, and long periods of service. These principles were codified in the Saint-Cyr Law of 1818 and Soult Law of 1832. The system depended on a blind lottery, those drawing the unlucky numbers assigned to a contingent, only part of which would eventually be called to

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*plus encore; elles donnent parfois un grand courage à celui qui n'en a eu jusque-là qu'un ordinaire; elles font braver et rechercher la mort dans les combats.*' Unusually, Paulinier drew a link between nostalgia and suicide.

serve. Exemptions could be bought for around 2000 francs, at that time about twice a labourer's annual wages.

Long term service was seen as a key to ensuring a professional, disciplined, army. Once called, conscripts would serve for a six-year term, and be liable for a further six years of service in their departmental reserve.<sup>44</sup> With few means of communication with family and community, and the deliberate movement of regiments on a regular basis, the soldier's integration into the army was seen as marking a decisive break with his previous life. His old emotional ties would be weakened, and he would have little opportunity to make new ones outside the military arena.

With the entry into military service constituting such an abrupt and semi-permanent break, doctors believed that the army could prevent, or at least decrease, nostalgia's presence by treating young soldiers with mildness, offering them 'a new family in compensation of that which they left.'<sup>45</sup> The *Dictionnaire de Médecine et de Chirurgie Pratique* noted:

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<sup>44</sup> See Azar Gat, *The Development of Military Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.24; Paddy Griffiths, *Military Thought in the French Army, 1815-51* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.6-7.

<sup>45</sup> Bégin, 'Nostalgie', *Dictionnaire de médecine et chirurgie pratiques* (Paris : Gabon, Méquignon-Marvis, 1829 - 1836), vol.12, pp.76-84, p.82. 'Une famille nouvelle en compensation de celle qu'ils ont quittée.'

In the army one often observes very significant differences between the numbers of nostalgics found in various regiments, although these men are recruited in the same places.<sup>46</sup>

The reasons for the differential rates of nostalgia were directly linked to the behaviour of the officer class:

In some regiments, leaders who are gentle, kindly, and mindful of the need to gain the trust of young soldiers, habituate them gradually to their new profession with a gentleness suitable to its fatigues and constraint; in others a severe commander, an openly and constantly expressed contempt for family affections, rejects trust [and] shrivels souls.<sup>47</sup>

These new 'families' were of course to have their fathers, and unsurprisingly these were to be found in doctors and surgeons as well as officers.<sup>48</sup> For the Chief Surgeon, Baron Larrey, the major defence against nostalgia in army troops was 'the paternal solicitude of the chiefs of the corps, informed by the

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<sup>46</sup> Bégin, 'Nostalgie', p.77. '*A l'armée, on observe souvent des différences très sensibles entre le nombre des nostalgiques fournis par divers régiments, bien que recrutés dans les mêmes localités.*'

<sup>47</sup> Bégin, 'Nostalgie', p.77. '*Dans les uns, des chefs doux, bienveillants, attentifs à s'emparer de l'esprit des jeunes soldats, les habituent graduellement et avec les ménagements convenables aux fatigues et à la contrainte de leur profession nouvelle; dans d'autres, au contraire, une rigueur inflexible, un commandement rude, un mépris hautement et constamment exprimé des affections de la famille, repoussant la confiance, [et] flétrissent les âmes.*'

<sup>48</sup> The model of a family was becoming a common one in the treatment of insanity. William Tuke's influential Retreat in York, opened in 1796, was often used as a guide. This Quaker establishment was run as a large private house, along domestic lines. The use of paternal kindness as well as firmness was a common theme in the moral treatments developed there, and elsewhere. See Roy Porter, *Mind-forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp.222-225.



lights of the surgeon-majors.’<sup>49</sup> His fellow General Inspector Percy agreed that ‘it is especially in the surgeon-major that the young soldiers must find a comforter and a father’.<sup>50</sup>

The implications of their ability to cure nostalgia were not lost on military surgeons and doctors. In treating their patients they were negotiating different models of the home that had been drawn into conflict. These revolved around the distinction between the home, as understood by the nostalgic in a personal and localised sense, and the larger homeland to which the soldier owed his duty. Therefore, in helping the soldier to find his ‘home’ in the army, doctors believed they were doing more than curing a medical complaint. Instead, these highly politicised, and generally republican, practitioners believed that they were helping their patients to realise their place as citizens in the French nation. The soldier cured of nostalgia demonstrated that biological determinism could be escaped through the triumph of will over instinct. In addition, it demonstrated the potential of civic models of nationalism based on voluntary and reasoned membership to engage the emotions of its citizens.

The ability of the soldier to accept a setting, rather than a locale, as ‘home’ was seen to allow for the development of a less fragile identity. The strength

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<sup>49</sup> Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey, *Recueil de mémoires de chirurgie* (Paris : Compère Jeune, 1821), p.191. ‘*La sollicitude paternelle des chefs de corps éclairés par les lumières des chirurgiens-majors.*’ Larrey demonstrated his commitment to this notion of paternal care when he defied Napoleon’s ordered execution of over 2,000 soldiers suspected of mutilating themselves in order to avoid further service. See André Soubiran, *Le Baron Larrey : chirurgien de Napoléon* (Paris : Fayard, 1966), pp.306-311.

<sup>50</sup> Percy et Laurent, ‘Nostalgie’, pp.278-9. ‘*C’est dans le chirurgien-major surtout que les jeunes soldats doivent trouver un consolateur et un père.*’

and flexibility of such a subjectivity was expressed through an ability to adapt to new environments. The search for a 'new family' within which soldiers could find a new sense of home required the induction or encouragement of new passions and desires to replace the old. Like the man cured of his nostalgia for his sweetheart by finding a more complaisant mistress, a new object of desire could replace an old.<sup>51</sup> As such, doctors treating nostalgia actively sought to engender new emotional attachments among their patients. This might mean 'turning a blind eye to certain liaisons of the soldiers, to move them away from other ideas which could make them fall nostalgic', as the doctors and surgeons of Napoleon's Egyptian expedition chose to do.<sup>52</sup> More commonly, the desired outcome was the sublimation of unfettered desire to an emotional attachment to the nation constrained by rationality.

Despite assertions that nostalgia was not to be regarded as a sign of weakness or lack of manliness, the objects of desire who represented 'home' for the nostalgic were overwhelmingly female, whether mothers, sisters or lovers. Thus, to overcome nostalgia was not only to transform the love of home, but also to find a substitute for this feminine (and potentially feminising) love in the, ostensibly platonic, amity of other men. However sympathetic doctors may have been to the plight of the nostalgic soldier, and unwilling to impute

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<sup>51</sup> José-Feliciano Castilho, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1831) 7, no. 235, p.29.

<sup>52</sup> Auguste Lachaume, 'Essai sur la nostalgie, ou mal du pays' (medical thesis, Montpellier, 1833), 1, no.9, p.21. '*Les chefs fermaient les yeux sur certains liaisons des soldats, pour éloigner d'autres idées qui auraient pu les faire tomber dans la nostalgie.*'

his emotion to cowardliness, nostalgia remained a disease which acted against the needs of the state, a reality of which its sufferers were also aware:

Some, ashamed of their momentary oblivion to the voice of the homeland, and eager to make up for their weakness, returned to take their place in the ranks after having received permission to return to their homes.<sup>53</sup>

The cured nostalgic was believed to have overcome his adolescent attachments, in order to become truly adult. In the post-Revolutionary setting this journey towards maturity inevitably took on political overtones. To struggle to overcome nostalgia was to search for a place as an adult Frenchman. The relationship between nationalism and sexuality became explicit in Revolutionary representations of *La Patrie* (the motherland or nation). In her account of the gendered representations of Revolutionary propaganda, historian Joan Landes describes a print where the figure of the republic instructs Cupid to serve the nation rather than Venus. To quote Landes, 'he is called upon to leash passion to the nation: to sublimate his love for his mother within a patriotic bond that will bind him to the fatherland, and to break the chains of frivolous, unbridled love.'<sup>54</sup> Such a transformation of desire was analogous to that demanded of the nostalgic soldier.

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<sup>53</sup> B. Calmel, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1836), 5, no. 73, p.19. 'Dont quelques-uns, honteux d'avoir méconnu un instant la voix de la patrie, et jaloux de réparer leur faiblesse, revenaient prendre place dans les rangs après avoir reçu la permission de rentrer dans leurs foyers.'

<sup>54</sup> Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.154.

Sufferers of nostalgia were therefore to be both seduced and educated into a new understanding of where they belonged. Desire for an individual was to be transformed to that of patriotic attachment.<sup>55</sup> The treatment of the homesick soldier demonstrated that generating a sense of a new 'home' was possible, and that this home could be found among the army, and more abstractly, in the sense of belonging to a larger community. 'Certain liaisons' notwithstanding, the army was represented as a de-sexualised space of fraternal and filial devotion, in which soldiers joined together in their desire to serve, not a particular regime, but the overarching homeland reified in the national flag.

### **3.4 Between home and homeland, *pays* and *patrie***

In common with many early nineteenth-century accounts, Moreau de la Sarthe used the terms *pays*, *patrie* and *département* almost interchangeably in his account, effectively collapsing geographic, political and cultural categories. However, these categories emerged as competing loci for emotional attachment at the heart of nostalgia. The tension between sites of potential belonging can be best understood through a close reading of the language of the nostalgia literature. In particular, two concepts of 'home', *pays* and *patrie*, were placed in opposition by medical writers, and correlated with local and national identifications.

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<sup>55</sup> As Landes comments, 'By yoking man's repressed love for his mother to the abstraction of the nation, men are bound together as citizen-subjects.' Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*, p.165.

Like nostalgia, *pays* and *patrie* have their own histories, encompassing multiple meanings deployed in different ways over time.<sup>56</sup> The Revolution prompted fierce negotiation over how terms relating to national identity, such as *la nation*, *le peuple*, and *la patrie* should be understood. For instance, by the autumn of 1789 the watchword for National Guard patrols was simply ‘Are you of the Nation?’ (*Etes-vous de la Nation?*) – a simple question loaded with a huge ideological content.<sup>57</sup> However, in the medical explorations of nostalgia the concept of nation was absent.<sup>58</sup> The fundamental conflict believed to be expressed through the condition was always represented as that between *pays* and *patrie*, the only question being how these should, or could, be defined.

The *Trésor de la langue française* defines *pays* as a territorial division whose inhabitants form a geographic or human collective. The term can refer to a

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<sup>56</sup> For an etymological analysis of terms *patrie* and *nation* see Jean-Claude Caron, ‘La Nation, la patrie, le peuple : le sens des mots’, Chapter 1, *La Nation, l’État et la démocratie en France de 1789 à 1914* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1995), especially pp.26-27. As the homeland, *patrie* is close to an idea of a nation state, but cannot be conflated with the *nation*. Historically in France, *nation* had meanings that ranged from a group identity based on professional affiliation, to geographic, racial, linguistic, cultural and political criteria.

<sup>57</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p.20.

<sup>58</sup> The term *nation* is rarely found in the literature discussing nostalgia. This reflects in part a broad linguistic shift identified by the French historian Jean-Claude Caron, in which the concept of the *patrie* came to largely replace that of the *nation*. He attributes this shift to the (practically ongoing) warfare from 1792 until the First Empire. The *patrie*, he argues, acted for the army as an easily assimilable unifying point on which to focus, rather than the increasingly abstract *nation*. Etienne Brunet’s statistical analysis of the core French vocabulary of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrates that throughout the nineteenth century *pays* was consistently deployed far more than *patrie*, occurring with between two and six times the frequency of *patrie*. Etienne Brunet, *Le Vocabulaire français de 1789 à nos jours : d’après les données du Trésor de la langue française* (Paris : Librairie Champion, 1981); Caron, *La Nation*, Chapter 1.

nation or state, but is used here in its most usual sense of the *petit pays*, that is, a local province, region or canton. As will become clear in the following discussion, the *pays* was generally related to a specific geographical region, or a discreet regional identity based on linguistic or cultural markers and idiosyncrasies of dress, tradition and custom. Definitions of the *patrie* encompass the ancestral land; the land belonging to the political community to which one belongs by birth or attachment; or the political community to which one belongs in its geographic, economic, historical, linguistic and cultural unity.<sup>59</sup>

The concept of *patrie* or homeland was a complex and contested one. The term was not frequently used by eighteenth-century thinkers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau, whose work heavily influenced Revolutionary theories of national community. In addition, it was used differently by those of different political bents. It could be taken to mean the country as a community, rather than a geographical area. This drew a distinction between *patrie* as the physical territory of France, or as a particular vision of what France should be.<sup>60</sup> In the post-Revolutionary setting, the *patrie* became more than a birthplace. It was also used as an overarching concept that described a social order whose laws protected its citizens and promoted their happiness. In the medical literature, there was always an added connotation of a

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<sup>59</sup> See entries for *pays* and *patrie*, *Trésor de la langue française : dictionnaire de la langue du XIX<sup>e</sup> et du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1789-1960)*, ed. by B. Quemener (Paris : Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1986)

<sup>60</sup> Norman Hampson, 'La Patrie', in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, pp.125-132.

relationship between *pays* and the natural world, and *patrie* and culture.

Emotional attachment to one's *pays* was couched in terms of the instinctual, biologically-based, bonds discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast, love of *patrie* was understood in socio-political terms and so potentially a far more delicate and malleable tendency.

Close analysis of the medical texts describing nostalgia reveals a constant negotiation around the terms of *pays* and *patrie*, one which is increasingly self-conscious and explicit in its political motives as it searches to resolve the tensions between the two. Early readings of nostalgia that interpreted the condition as a form of excessive patriotism had depended on *pays* and *patrie* being understood as synonymous. However, in late-eighteenth century France it became clear that the two categories were now in conflict as focal points of identity. A love of *patrie* that depended on an innate preference for the *pays* could not be depended on as a reliable source of patriotism in a new nation. For while the communality of those from the same *pays* was uncontroversial, the boundaries of the communality on which *patrie* or *nation* relied were radically re-imagined and contested. The attempt to cure nostalgia thus became a highly political project whose aim was to transform homesickness (*mal du pays*) into patriotism (*l'amour de la patrie*), aiming to transform minds and bodies by replacing local affinities with a new attachment to the nation.

Writing in 1815, ex surgeon-major, and surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, J.L.A.

Pauquet, began the analytical trend that became increasingly pronounced in

the literature surrounding nostalgia. Unlike earlier writers, he explicitly scrutinised in great detail the ways the two distinct forms of love for home/land could be delineated, and explored the exact implications of differences between the two:

These two penchants have many analogies between them; however one cannot say that they are absolutely the same; one is due to places, and the other to the form and prosperity of the government; one depends on nature, and the other on civilisation.<sup>61</sup>

This distinction, operating along the nature/culture divide was to become commonly accepted in the following years. The language relating to *pays* was overwhelmingly that of emotion and instinct, 'nature' referencing the natural world and the perceived influence of topography on the development of an individual. In contrast, love of *patrie* was due to 'moral' causes, encompassing psychological and mental dimensions. The first was somatically expressed, the other a moral sentiment; one was bestowed by nature, the other based to a certain extent on self interest, a two-way relationship between citizen and state, in which citizens loved their *patrie* to the extent that it served them well. One was personal, private and passively

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<sup>61</sup> Pauquet, 'Dissertation', pp.8-9. '*Ces deux penchants ont entre eux beaucoup d'analogie; cependant on ne peut pas dire qu'ils soient absolument les mêmes ; l'un tient aux localités, et l'autre à la forme et à la prospérité du gouvernement; l'un dépend de la nature, et l'autre de la civilisation.*'



turned towards subjective experience, while the other was communal and acted as a potential spur to action.

Pauquet argued that the two inclinations towards *pays* and *patrie* could work in tandem, but were not necessarily co-existent. Importantly, love of *patrie* was subordinate to the primary and biologically based love of *pays*. Acting as an attenuated form of a love for *pays*, patriotism therefore only retained its strength when it reinforced this pre-existing emotion:

Often the love of *pays* is joined with the love of *patrie*, and the expatriate regrets the one and the other. But, if the state becomes vast, one sees that the love of *patrie* must weaken, for then it is no longer sustained by the love of *pays*.<sup>62</sup>

The land here was central, both to individual subjectivity and to the political state. Having originally distinguished the love of *pays* as being due to localities, Pauquet now imposed on patriotism its own natural limits. It may be born of civilisation, but could exist only to the extent that culture remained rooted in a defined and delimited region.

Other writers made similar arguments. For them there was ‘a sentiment from where this love of the *patrie* derives among the majority of men,’ and unsurprisingly this ‘innate and deeply engraved’ sentiment was for ‘the *pays*

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<sup>62</sup> Pauquet, ‘Dissertation’, p.9. Characteristically, Pauquet did not advance any of these historical examples, but left the statement as a self evident truth. ‘*Souvent l’amour du pays se joint à l’amour de la patrie, et la personne expatriée regrette l’un et l’autre... Mais, si l’état devient très-vaste, on conçoit que l’amour de la patrie doit s’affaiblir, car alors il n’est plus soutenu de l’amour du pays.*’

where we passed our childhood.’<sup>63</sup> In other words, the strength of patriotic feeling depended on its ‘fit’ with pre-existing emotional attachments. Loyalty or affection for the *patrie* grew out of, and depended on, love of *pays* and would be subdued should the two come into conflict. Effectively, a deracinated love for one’s home was a debilitated one, linking true patriotism to a state of connection to the soil itself. This was an anti-cosmopolitan ethos that was to be far more strongly articulated at the *fin de siècle* by writers such as conservative politician Maurice Barrès. His formulation of the ‘soil and the dead’ was the ideological successor to visions of patriotism which decree its natural limits to be bound by place and the past.<sup>64</sup>

The love of *patrie*, which, it was hoped, would inoculate against *mal du pays* demanded a kind of abstraction. This was a love that needed to be learnt, but one which was not thought to have the pathological dimension which attachment to *pays* might develop. It acted to replace a love of ‘home’ directly, individually and somatically experienced, with one abstracted to the moral realm. If attachment to the *pays* was an instinctive biological imperative, attempts to replace it with an abstracted love of *patrie* were tests of the physical adaptability of the human organism. This was another reason for nostalgia’s importance to the Idéologues, who were concerned with human adaptability and perfectibility. The ability to adapt to a new climate came

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<sup>63</sup> Jules Yvonneau, ‘Considérations’, p.5. ‘*Un sentiment d’où dérive, chez la plupart des hommes, cet amour de la patrie; c’est ce sentiment inné et profondément gravé dans notre cœur, qui nous fait préférer le pays où nous avons passé notre enfance.*’

<sup>64</sup> On Barrès and his programme, see Robert Soucy, *Fascism in France: The Case of Maurice Barrès* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1972).

about through the power of the mind to affect the body. It was considered 'more by the force of his reason than by the state of his body, that [an individual] manages to be acclimatised.'<sup>65</sup> That is, it was through mental efforts that the necessary physical acclimatisation was able to take place.

An anecdote concerning the explorer René-Auguste Caillié (1799-1838) aptly demonstrates the tensions between a love of *pays* and of *patrie*. Prompted by the 'love of glory and the *patrie*', which encouraged him in his Africa explorations between 1824 and 1827, Caillié was purportedly able to withstand the 'thousand dangers, and thousand fatigues' which accompanied his journey to Timbuktu. From here he planned to advance further into Africa. However, 'all at once, Mr. Caillié was overcome by such a violent desire to see France again that he soon became nostalgic and it was necessary to think of return.'<sup>66</sup> Thus in his case, as in that of many less celebrated victims, the love of his *pays* acted directly against his own stated desires and the needs of the state.

Returning to Gaillardot's earlier quoted remarks, they can be re-read as:

Those who have been affected, knowing no other *patrie* than the place where they were born, would perhaps have given proofs of

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<sup>65</sup> Gaillardot, 'Considérations', p.5.

<sup>66</sup> H.-J.-M. H. Musset, 'Essai sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1830) 9, no. 292, p.9 'Après mille dangers, mille fatigues... L'amour de la gloire et de la patrie...mais tout à coup, M. Caillié fut pris d'un désir si violent de revoir la France, qu'il devint bientôt nostalgique et qu'il fallut songer au retour.'

courage and heroism, if, in their own *pays*, they had been obliged to defend their own lives, and all that attached them to it.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, for Gaillardot, these conscripts may well have been capable of bravery in the defence of their homes, but they did not recognise the *patrie* they were fighting for as their own. Still bound to a primary identification with their *pays*, they suffered from a psychic and physical sense of displacement. For medical writers, the distinction between the love of *pays* and the love of *patrie* became a critical point of demarcation between older forms of – place-bound – emotional attachment, and the ability to find one's place within the new national community.

### 3.5 Questioning the object of nostalgic desire

While the association of *pays*, biology, place and childhood, contrasted by Pauquet with the abstract and cultural *patrie*, was broadly retained in the post-1815 literature, a number of writers notably drew very different conclusions. They attempted to isolate nostalgia by restricting its terms of reference to the *pays*. For example, writing in Paris in 1821, Julien-Vincent Huet-Bienville described nostalgia purely in terms of the indelible influence of the natural world on the body.<sup>68</sup> A doctor with a military background, Huet-Bienville argued that nostalgia was the product of nature, and should be vigorously

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<sup>67</sup> Gaillardot, 'Considérations', p.13. '*Ceux qui eu ont été atteints, ne connaissaient d'autre patrie que le lieu même qui les avait vu naître, auraient peut-être donnés les preuves de courage et d'héroïsme, si, dans leur pays, ils eussent été obligés de défendre leur propre vie, et tout ce qui les y attachait.*'

<sup>68</sup> Julien-Vincent Huet-Bienville, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1821) 6, no. 190.

delineated from the love of *patrie*, which was in his view a 'political virtue.' By clearly delineating the love of *pays* and *patrie* from each other and subsequently insisting on nostalgia belonging only to the first category, he attempted to remove the diagnosis, and the land, from questions of patriotism.

Denial of the relevance of nostalgic desire to political life had specific goals. It was an attempt to de-legitimise those models of national belonging that saw patriotism as a secondary phenomenon that fed off an *a priori* nostalgic connection to the home. Instead, patriotism was to be considered in purely rational terms. For Huet-Bienville patriotism was 'the attachment to laws, which should themselves be nothing other than the unanimous expression of the general will.'<sup>69</sup> Love of *patrie* was 'a feeling which both the last and the first citizen of the republic can and must have...a virtue which is always the inseparable partner of liberty, and which is only found among free people.'<sup>70</sup> In other words, he ascribed to the Revolutionary model of national belonging, in which national identity was a freely made choice reflecting individual desires and freedoms.<sup>71</sup> Huet-Bienville's political vision led him to restrict

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<sup>69</sup> Huet-Bienville, 'Dissertation', p.7. '*L'attachement aux lois, qui ne doivent être elles-mêmes que l'expression unanime de la volonté générale.*'

<sup>70</sup> Huet-Bienville, 'Dissertation', p.7. '*Un sentiment que le dernier citoyen peut et doit avoir, comme le premier de la république...une vertu qui est toujours compagne inséparable de la liberté, et qui ne se trouve que chez les peuples libres.*'

<sup>71</sup> These overt statements were being written in an atmosphere of increasing political tension. The Restoration government increasingly imposed restrictions on the Paris medical school, culminating in the suppression of the faculty during 1822-1823 in which 11 liberal professors were dismissed and all private medical courses required to obtain special authorisation. Françoise Huguet, *Les Professeurs de la faculté de médecine de Paris: dictionnaire biographique 1794-1939* (Paris : Insitut national de recherche pédagogique, 1991), p.ix. Erwin Ackerknecht has argued that the attachment of most young doctors to the ideals of romanticism was based in part on a hatred of the Bourbons, the 'caste society which would not accept them as equals' and the Jesuits, 'who again ran the universities' during the

nostalgia's terms of reference so that it excluded everything but the relationship of individuals to the topography of their childhood landscape. Such a conception of nostalgia explained the affection someone may have for their country, while being in disagreement with its political structures.

Within medical discussions of nostalgia, there was another extreme, which reassessed the idea of *pays* itself. Here, *pays* was extended in meaning to embrace any factors of the environment in which the individual wished to live. In this model, 'home' as an emotional place of belonging could be found anywhere from the vessel of a sailor, to the cell of a monk or nun, or the barrack environment; 'an old soldier regards his regiment as his *pays*, as his family; for him, to live under the flag is to be at the same time by the domestic hearth and in the field of honour.'<sup>72</sup> This meant that a sufferer of *mal du pays* may 'have a passion for the place of his birth, for his *patrie*, for his entire nation, as for any residence or any dwelling in which he finds happiness.'<sup>73</sup> Another Parisian thesis submitted in 1821 argued along similar grounds:

See the generous warrior betrayed by the fortunes of war...condemned to see his arm shackled on foreign ground; it is

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Restoration. Erwin, H. Ackerknecht, *Medicine at the Paris Hospital 1794-1848* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967), p.76.

<sup>72</sup> Hippolyte Mitre, 'Essai sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Montpellier, 1840), no.149, p.6. 'Un vieux soldat considère son régiment comme son pays, comme sa famille; pour lui, vivre sous le drapeau c'est être à la fois au foyer domestique et au champ d'honneur.'

<sup>73</sup> Mitre, 'Essai', p.6. 'Se passionner pour le lieu de sa naissance, pour sa patrie, pour sa nation toute entière comme pour toute demeure ou toute habitation dans laquelle il trouve du bonheur.'

not so much the residence of his ancestors which he ardently wishes to see again, as the national flag at the foot of which his domestic Gods reside; it is his comrades-in-arms whom he would like to tighten in his arms.<sup>74</sup>

In his *Médecine des passions* of 1841 J.-B. Descuret noted that if nostalgia was produced by difference climates, it would not act as it did, disappearing 'by the awarding and even by the hope, of leave,' thereby removing it at once from the realm of instincts, and into the abstract.<sup>75</sup> This kind of analysis ensured that attempts by writers to detach the *pays* and nostalgia from questions of the *patrie*, and hence effectively deny its political nature, failed. Instead, the confusion of *pays* and *patrie* was increasingly resolved not by insisting on their concrete separation, but through a closer analysis of what each term might signify to the sufferer. Nostalgia thus not only gave medical men an opportunity to expand a variety of political opinions, its analysis allowed them to claim special knowledge about the true state of the nation and to assert their own central role as conduits between the state and the people.

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<sup>74</sup> François M.D. Jacquier, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1821), no.206, pp.6-7. 'Voyez le généreux guerrier trahi par le sort des armes... condamné à voir son bras enchaîné sur une terre étrangère; ce n'est pas la demeure de ses ancêtres qu'il désire le plus ardemment revoir, c'est le drapeau national au pied duquel reposent ses dieux pénates ; ce sont ses frères d'armes qu'il voudrait serrer dans ses bras.'

<sup>75</sup> Descuret was not claiming that nostalgic desire had no object, but rather that the imagined reclamation of this desired object was sufficient for its cure. J.-B.F. Descuret, *La Médecine des passions ou les passions considérées dans leurs rapports avec les maladies, les lois et la religion* (Paris : Béchét & Labé, 1841), pp.710-711.

This material adds a new dimension to the historiography of two developments in French society, the ‘pathologisation’ of French social and political discourse and the construction of a French national identity from a culturally and linguistically diverse population. In historiographical terms, both tendencies have been primarily associated with the Third Republic.<sup>76</sup> The literature surrounding nostalgia demonstrates the emergence of a much earlier medical discourse laying claim to a unique ability to assess and shape the nation. It took the form of a narrative claiming both to gauge the ‘health’ of the nation, and to contribute to its well-being – for doctors, curing nostalgia was a sign of their ability to assess the viability of a model of community and encourage the commitment of citizens.

### **3.6 The relation of home and nation**

A close analysis of the nostalgia literature offers an opportunity to explore some of the ways in which political and medical discourses infiltrated and informed each other, from the Revolution to the Second Empire. Debates about the nature of nostalgic desire were, as shown, the setting for fundamental arguments about the nature of nationality. Historiographically, the development of France as a nation state in the post-Revolutionary era has been largely explored in terms of modernist theories of nationalism. These argue that nationalist ideologies and nation states are historically recent, and

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<sup>76</sup> Most notably in Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France 1870 - 1914* (Stanford: California, Stanford University Press, 1976) and Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics*.



rely on industrialised institutions and structures.<sup>77</sup> Such accounts regard the nation primarily as a rational territorial association of citizens, in which members are bound together by laws based on a contract freely entered into, and forming a political community in which individual liberty is linked to national identity. This was certainly the context in which pro-Revolutionary practitioners presented their accounts of nostalgia.

However, during the Restoration and July Monarchy, nostalgia began to be re-imagined, in ways that mirrored increasing contestation over forms of nationalism in France. Medical writers considering nostalgia began to insist on its political nature. As I will demonstrate, this was manifested both in an increased willingness to engage in explicit consideration of nostalgia's political nature, and the application of retrospective diagnoses that re-interpreted the meaning of earlier cases. Through such speculation, nostalgia began to take on a number of distinct forms, each defined by its relationship to the *pays* or *patrie*, attached to competing models of national belonging, and the determining factors believed to shape patriotic loyalty.

The medical theses and articles that make up much of the literature on nostalgia are as important for political as for medical history. These accounts lean heavily on each other, often slipping into plagiarism and ahistoricism. Nonetheless, this only serves to make the attempts by medical writers to re-

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<sup>77</sup> For a summary of these positions see Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp.2-7; 27-28.

work similar clinical accounts to serve vastly different ideological ends more striking. For example, in their 1819 article in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* Percy and Laurent noted that ‘no time has been more fertile in examples of nostalgia than the French Revolution and the wars to which it gave birth.’ They argued that it ‘spared neither the French who were obliged to seek asylum in foreign parts, nor the French called to the defence of the *patrie*.’<sup>78</sup> Émigrés during the Revolution, ‘returned to their *pays*, exposing themselves to the greatest dangers, and even to death. Many preferred to live in underground passages to avoid persecution, rather than to lead a wandering life far from that which attached them to life.’<sup>79</sup> In this model, which reflects the tone of the majority of Revolutionary era accounts, both the émigré and the soldier suffered from the same tendency towards their physical home, without regard to ideological considerations. Whether banished or conscripted, removal from the home was the causal factor in nostalgia, which

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<sup>78</sup> Percy and Laurent, ‘Nostalgie’, p.268. ‘Nulle époque n’a peut-être été plus féconde en exemples de nostalgie que la révolution française et les guerres qu’elle a enfantées... [Elle] n’épargna ni les Français qui furent obligés de chercher un asile chez l’étranger, ni les Français appelés à la défense de la patrie.’ Exactly sixty years after Percy and Laurent described nostalgia, the second edition of the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales* carried an updated entry for nostalgia referring to the ‘patriotic Alsace, so French in heart, so imbued with military spirit.’ Despite their patriotism, the *Dictionnaire* stated, Alsaciens were able to offer to the army and thus *la revanche* ‘only a weak contingent of nostalgics.’ The fact that they were occupied in a project of redeeming their *pays* which they had given up for their *patrie* weakened their ability to do so. With its tension-filled relationship to patriotism, nostalgia seemed to offer proof that political ideals and passions could not complete their subjugation of more primary desires. See V. Vidal, ‘Nostalgie’, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. by Jacques Raige-Delorme and Amédée Dechambre (Paris : P. Asselin, G. Masson, 1864-1885), vol. 13 (1879), 357-381, p361.

<sup>79</sup> Gaillardot, ‘Considérations’, p.15fn. ‘Les émigrés, au commencement de notre révolution, rentraient dans leur pays, s’exposant aux plus grands dangers, à la mort même. Beaucoup préféraient vivre dans ses souterrains, pour se soustraire aux persécutions, plutôt que de mener une vie errante loin de ce qui les attachait à la vie.’

was considered the expression of a universal tendency with no class or ethnic distinctions.

Two decades later, with the diagnosis viewed in far more politicised terms, its earlier occurrences were viewed very differently. For instance, writing in 1837, Paulinier argued that soldiers were made immune to nostalgia to the degree to which they were committed to the political cause for which they fought:

No matter what Percy and Laurent, who wrote in 1819, appear to say in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, the time which provided the fewest examples is that of the wars of the Republic, because then the Nation was, as it were, galvanised ... they could show themselves to be so liberally *Philpatridomanes* only by bravely pushing back the enemies of France, and by expiring more bravely still for their adored country - on the battle fields of Germany, modern Italy and ancient Egypt; they knew only one sole manner of dying of love for the *patrie*.<sup>80</sup>

Here, the love of *patrie* no longer operated only in so much as it reinforced the love of *pays*, education overlaying and taking second place to instinct.

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<sup>80</sup> Paulinier, 'Sur la Nostalgie', pp.39-40. 'Quoi que paraissent en dire dans le *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* MM Percy et Laurent, qui écrivaient en 1819, l'époque qui en a le moins offert est celle des guerres de la République, parce qu'alors la Nation était, pour ainsi dire, galvanisée...ils ne se montraient généreusement *Philpatridomanes*, qu'en repoussant bravement les ennemis de la France, et en expirant plus bravement encore pour leur pays adoré – sur les champs de bataille de la Germanie, de la modern Italie et de l'antique Egypte; ils ne connaissaient que cette seule manière de mourir d'amour pour la patrie.'

Rather, soldiers were rendered immune to nostalgia through their commitment to a cause.

Following this theory, Paulinier argued that the period with the highest incidence of nostalgia was the end of the First Empire:

The glorious tyrant who reigned over our France bore off every day its young population ... Young Frenchmen who, when it was formerly a question of going to push back the foreign invasion towards the Alps, in the Pyrenees, to the army of the Rhine, or to that of Sambre-and-Meuse, would come without hesitation or regret, would no longer leave, except reluctantly, to go to triumph in unjust wars (1812, the wars of the Peninsula). Each man, then more than ever, did his utmost to find means and reasons true or false, honest or otherwise, to escape the Hydra of conscription.<sup>81</sup>

This retrospective endowment of a strong sense of political consciousness to soldiers implied that nostalgia could be read as a somatic rejection of a certain ideological state. It is clear that by this time, nostalgia was being analysed as a political category as much as a medical one.

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<sup>81</sup> Paulinier, 'Sur la Nostalgie', p.25. '*Le glorieux tyran qui régnait sur notre France enlevait chaque jour sa jeune population ... Les jeunes Français, eux qui naguère encore accourait tous sans hésitation ni regret, lorsqu'il s'agissait d'aller repousser l'invasion étrangère vers les Alpes, dans les Pyrénées, à l'armée du Rhin, à celle de Sambre-et-Meuse, ne partaient plus qu'à contrecœur pour aller triompher dans les guerres injustes (1812, guerres de la Péninsule). Chacun, alors plus que jamais, s'ingéniait à trouver des moyens et des motifs vrais ou faux, honnêtes ou non, pour échapper à l'hydre de la conscription.*'

Nostalgia's association with the military sphere combined with its relationship to patriotism to make it an ideal arena for exploring the emotional appeal of different forms of national community. The challenge for doctors was not only to teach their patients to recognise 'home' in a new political environment, but determining for themselves how this home should be recognised and defined and which political forms it might take. It was a question of feeling, as much as of reason. Political commitment to forming part of a community was apparently not enough. An emotional sense of belonging must be *felt* in order for the French nation to provide a satisfactory substitute for the local home. In this way, nostalgia acted as a barometer for measuring attitudes and emotional commitment towards different forms of government. Accounts of the condition provided a powerful narrative through which the ability of the French to feel 'at home' within new political and cultural practices could be measured. Discussion of what 'home' meant for the nostalgic allowed questions to be raised about forms of government and social organisation most likely to provide a satisfactory affective framework for its citizens, issues at the heart of different ways the French nation could understand itself.

Medicine was inevitably political in France given the large percentage of doctors directly involved in political life, the professionalisation of medicine and the emergence of new specialisations such as psychiatry. Medical men were present in significant number throughout the century in the parliaments

of all the systems of government.<sup>82</sup> However, their politicisation was particularly acute in Paris during the 1820s. The medical profession was engaged in what the medical historian Erwin Ackerknecht has described as a period of ‘intensive internal warfare’.<sup>83</sup> This was not a period of ‘practice as usual’, but of emerging, and hence competing paradigms, especially in the fields touching on issues of mental health and insanity. As already discussed, the influence of Idéologue thinking led to an identification of medicine with an educative and authoritative role, one that persisted beyond the rejection of many of their strictly medical tenets.<sup>84</sup> Ultimately, medical speculation over mechanisms through which nostalgia operated led to new ways of understanding *pays* and *patrie*. Such speculations gave nostalgia new meanings in political and cultural spheres.

### 3.7 Nostalgia and the *patrie*

Nostalgia became increasingly understood as the desire to live within a certain set of political and social structures. This allowed it to be conceptualised both as individual psychology and as a basis for collective identity. Environment, whether that of *patrie* or *pays*, was now understood in cultural terms, ‘composed not only of the soil and the atmosphere, but above all of the affections of any kind that one experiences there. Family, friendship,

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<sup>82</sup> See Jacques Léonard, *La Vie quotidienne du médecin de province au XIXe siècle* (Paris : Hachette, 1977), especially pp.43-49.

<sup>83</sup> Ackerknecht, *Medicine at the Paris Hospital*, p.64

<sup>84</sup> See Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, pp.132-133.

profession, habits, and institutions, together constitute a kind of network which more or less closely binds men to such or such a place.’<sup>85</sup>

Nostalgia and patriotism were to be linked over and over again. Confusion between desire for one’s *pays* and that for one’s *patrie* was the subject of ongoing analysis. In some accounts, nostalgia became the desire for a sense of belonging per se. Crucially, this was not considered pre-ordained, but could be generated. While the communality of those from the same *pays* was uncontroversial, boundaries of the communality on which the *patrie* relied were radically re-imagined and contested throughout the century. In this context, doctors began to suggest that nostalgia should be understood in terms of the ability of an individual to feel that he had found a place within this larger community.

Several socio-political aspects of nostalgia can be traced to such clinical discussions. As nostalgia began to be understood as the desire for a particular emotional or even ideological state, rather than being situated purely in the physical landscape or determined by the emotional ties of childhood, the *patrie* became more central to its conception. Initially this was not a rejection of the neo-Hippocratic paradigm that identified the influence of topography and climate on the individual. The *pays* did not lose its importance as a

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<sup>85</sup> François-Joseph Lacordaire, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Montpellier, 1837), 1, no.26, pp.5-6. ‘*La patrie, le pays, ne se composent pas seulement du sol et de l’atmosphère, mais surtout des affections de tout genre qu’on y éprouve. Famille, amitié, profession, habitudes, institutions, constituent ensemble un sorte de réseau qui lie plus ou moins étroitement les hommes à telle ou telle localité.*’

concept. Rather, with more emphasis being placed on cultural criteria, such as the lack of social networks and affective ties in generating nostalgia, the physical environment was no longer seen as the sole determining criterion for nostalgia. Instead, the order of influence was reversed, with nostalgia understood as relating to the possibility of a sense of belonging that an individual could generate in a certain place, rather than as a direct product of the landscape itself. The assumption that a particular topography inevitably produced inhabitants who felt an *a priori* preference for it was gradually losing its currency.

More importantly however, nostalgia began to be given another level of meaning as a condition whose symptoms were related to the personal freedoms and opportunities allowed to an individual, effectively giving it a political life of its own. By the 1830s and 1840s there were commentators asserting that they were ‘far from admitting moreover, that the love of *pays* is instinctive in man.’<sup>86</sup> Instead, such writers stressed that an individual:

Is allowed to say that the *patrie* is everywhere where one is well, provided that while following this maxim he remains faithful to his mother-*patrie*, and that he does not sacrifice his nationality to a foreign land.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Mitre, ‘Essai’, p.8. ‘*Nous sommes loin d’admettre au surplus, c’est que chez l’homme l’amour du pays soit instinctif.*’

<sup>87</sup> Mitre, ‘Essai’, p.6. ‘*Est permis de dire que la patrie est partout où l’on se trouve bien, pourvu qu’en suivant cette maxime on reste fidèle à la mère-patrie, et l’on ne sacrifie pas sa nationalité à une terre étrangère.*’



Following Paulinier's analysis, such formulas effectively reversed the traditional axis of nostalgia. The physical home could be chosen. The important and underlying loyalty on which identity was based was a political one, a quality that could be carried with one.

If it was the *patrie* which acted as the primary focus of affection for an individual, this was a *patrie* which each could find for themselves in the place they found convivial. Such analyses questioned whether 'the native ground [could] inspire the least affection in the individual who came into the world there only in an accidental manner?'<sup>88</sup> Romantic ideals of a natural connection to the land were replaced with a sense of belonging that depended on the generation of affective ties, and in particular education:

A Frenchman born on foreign land is certainly no less prone to patriotism than he who was born in France itself. But would he ever have the least spark of French patriotism if he was unaware that he was French? Due to this lack of awareness, would not his natural and preferred *patrie* be the foreign land where he came in the world and was raised?<sup>89</sup>

Thus, notwithstanding a persisting minority opinion that 'the *patrie* without the soil is a true fiction,' nostalgia was increasingly represented as a condition

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<sup>88</sup> Mitre, 'Essai', p.9. '*Le sol natal peut-il inspirer la moindre affection à l'individu qui n'y a reçu le jour que une manière accidentelle?*'

<sup>89</sup> Mitre, 'Essai', p.9. '*Un Français né sur une terre étrangère n'est certainement pas moins susceptible de patriotisme que celui qui est né en France même; mais aurait-il jamais la moindre étincelle de patriotisme français s'il ignorait qu'il fut Français? Dans cette ignorance, sa patrie naturelle et de prédilection ne serait-elle pas la terre étrangère où il est venu au monde et où il a été élevé?*'

that operated in an abstract realm, and related the place in which one could construct a satisfactory web of social and affective ties.<sup>90</sup> While few authors rejected outright the idea that physical environment acted to attach its native population, affection for the land came to be seen as being subordinate to the advantages that it offered the individual.

In the context of this literature, *patrie* began to figure not only as the place where one found this sense of 'home', but the actual state of belonging and empowerment itself:

What then is the *patrie*? When those who like me, possess fields and houses, are assembled to further their common interests, I have my voice in this assembly, I am part of it all, part of the community, part of the sovereignty: this is my *patrie*.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, a Frenchman was made, not born, his nationality was a heritage about which he must be taught. This was the Frenchman of the First and Third Republic – one whose nationality was born of political commitment.

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<sup>90</sup> Jules-M.-É.-B. Moreau, 'Considérations sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1848), 10, no.138, p.9. '*La patrie sans le sol est une véritable fiction.*'

<sup>91</sup> Lacordaire, 'Essai', p.6 fn. '*Qu'est-ce donc la patrie? ...Quand ceux qui possèdent, comme moi, des champs et des maisons, s'assemblent pour leurs intérêts communs, j'ai ma voix dans cette assemblée, je suis une partie de tout, une partie de la communauté, une partie de la souveraineté : voilà ma patrie.*'

### 3.8 The birth of ‘political’ nostalgia

Nostalgia was mobilised to support different models of national organisation.

Locating nostalgic desire in terms of *pays* or *patrie* had important implications for the types of national community envisaged as possible or desirable. As we have seen, a nostalgia relying on biological preference for *pays* found its reflection in later ‘blood and soil’ models of national belonging. Similarly, nostalgia relying on a sense of empowered membership in a community was reflected in models emphasising the importance of the general will.<sup>92</sup>

Given nostalgia’s later mobilisation as the basis for conservative and reductive models of nationality, it is striking that early politicised accounts emphasised its liberatory potential. The sense of nostalgia as a politically motivated and motivating stems from a particular work. Writing in Paris in 1832, political exile Pierre Urbain Briet’s vision of nostalgia was a radical one. Unlike authors who continued to make some concessions towards the idea that nostalgia had at its base some connection with the physical landscape, Briet dismissed the idea outright, stating that ‘it would be absurd to think it, even more to affirm it.’<sup>93</sup> For Briet it was not the soldier who wanted to go home who risked nostalgia, but he who was held back from battle:

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<sup>92</sup> Nostalgia in a more temporal sense was likewise central to Ernst Renan’s influential model of nationality. Renan’s concept of a national soul positioned ‘race’ as historically formulated, not biologically or geographically as Montesquieu would have argued. Ernest Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*, Conférence fait en Sorbonne le 11 Mars 1882 (Paris : C Lévy, 1882)

<sup>93</sup> Pierre-Urbain Briet, ‘Essai sur la nostalgie’ (medical thesis, Paris, 1832), 7, no. 162, p.6. ‘il serait absurde de le penser, encore plus de le soutenir.’

Thus ask the warrior what makes him run to combat with so much ardour and what kind of ennui consumes him when he is restrained, by some pressing disciplinary duty, far from the battlefield where glory is harvested! Ask this unfortunate lover, who groans and dies far from his mistress, if some place of the ground is more dear to him than another! Ah! A kiss from the one whom he loves, that is his *patrie*! Ask this man who has tyranny established on the soil of his *pays*, ask him where he bears his ashen tinge; he will answer; in the *pays* of freedom!<sup>94</sup>

Nostalgia had always had close ties to lovesickness and desire of any kind, and Briet was not alone in suggesting that it was such desire that invested a place, person, or situation with the emotional power to trigger the disease. It was in his development of this last rhetorical demand that Briet shifted nostalgia's terms of reference. It was represented here as a desire specific to neither *pays* nor *patrie* but rather to a state of political liberty. Just as he had freed the idea of the *pays* from its geographical moorings, Briet insisted that 'the *patrie* is not attached to a patch of ground.'<sup>95</sup> The *patrie* was a set of conditions to be sought, or fought for:

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<sup>94</sup> Briet, 'Essai', p.6. '*Demandez donc au guerrier ce qui le fait courir au combat avec tant d'ardeur, et quelle espèce d'ennui le dévore quand il est retenu, par quelque devoir impérieux de la discipline, loin du champ de bataille où l'on moissonne la gloire! Demandez à cet amant infortuné, qui gémit et meurt loin de sa maîtresse, si quelque lieu de la terre lui est plus cher qu'un autre! Ah! Un baiser de celle qu'il aime, voilà sa patrie! Demandez à cet homme qui fait la tyrannie implantée sur le sol de son pays, demandez-lui où il porte son teinte blême; il vous répondra; dans le pays de la liberté!*'

<sup>95</sup> Briet, 'Essai', p.6. '*La patrie n'est pas attachée à un coin de terre.*'

Everywhere where he finds principles in conformity with his own, and less crude prejudices, and a means of living suitable for a man, he will say: this is my *patrie*!<sup>96</sup>

Briet was unique in explicitness with which he linked nostalgia directly to political life:

But another type of nostalgia on which I will not be silent, because all noble and ardent hearts are affected by it, and because one can count in their millions the victims amassed under the hideous hands of tyranny, it is this burning passion which I will call *political nostalgia*, a passion simultaneously noble and delirious, whose convulsions upset thrones. The human race felt the first symptoms of this passion as soon as the hand of one man dared to dwell too long on the head of another. So, therefore, the first who pronounced the word *tyrant*, that one became nostalgic for freedom.<sup>97</sup>

In this statement Briet articulated a radically new sense of the word, so that *political nostalgia* was the desire for a remembered, or imagined freedom, for

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<sup>96</sup> Briet, 'Essai', p.6. '*Partout où il trouvera des principes plus conformes aux siens, et des préjugés moins grossiers, et de quoi vivre en homme, il dira : voilà ma patrie!*'

<sup>97</sup> Briet, 'Essai', p.8. '*Mais une autre espèce de nostalgie que je ne tairai point, parce que toutes les âmes ardentes et généreuses en sont atteintes, et que l'on peut compter par millions les victimes amoncelées sous les hideuses mains de la tyrannie, c'est cette passion brûlante que j'appellerai nostalgie politique, passion noble et délirante tout à la fois, dont les convulsions bouleversent les trônes, et dont la race humaine a ressenti les premiers symptômes dès que le main de l'homme a osé s'appesantir sur la tête d'un autre homme. Ainsi, donc, le premier qui a prononcé le mot tyran, celui-là est devenu nostalgique de la liberté.*'

the possibility of choosing, or creating, the forms of one's *patrie*. It was just this sense of nostalgia that Max Nordau employed in his Zionist writings, explored in Chapter 6.

Briet believed that the roots of psychological problems should be sought in social structures as much as in the psyche of the individual. Development brought its own problems, 'in the measure that civilisation progresses, Man's needs increase with his passions, and, if he manages to increase his pleasures, it is not given to him to push aside the troubles which trail after them.'<sup>98</sup>

Brutalising forms of government and social organisation could be expected to contribute to the type and frequency of mental illness:

Because of this, Man is always at the mercy of an innumerable variety of psychological affections, and he often falls victim to them in the current afflicted state of society and government, where all remain standing only through the successive struggles of these grand machines in which each cog is a human individual who brutally pushes back his neighbour onto another in order to escape the fall which threatens him.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Briet, 'Essai', p.5. '*A mesure que la civilisation marche, les besoins de l'homme s'agrandissent avec ses passions, et, s'il parvient à multiplier ses jouissances, il ne lui est pas donné d'écarter l'ennui qu'elles entraînent après elles.*'

<sup>99</sup> Briet, 'Essai', p.5. '*De là, la variété innombrable d'affections morales dont l'homme marche toujours le jouet, et tombe souvent la victime dans cet état souffrant de la société et des gouvernements, où tout ne reste debout que par des luttes successives de des grandes machines dont chaque rouage est un individu humain qui repousse brutalement son voisin sur un autre pour échapper à la chute qui le menaçait.*'

Briet's mechanised imagery of a society in which individuals are alienated from their neighbours, with whom they are forced to be in conflict, foreshadows Durkheim's later development of the concept of *anomie* to describe social disengagement and disenchantment.<sup>100</sup>

This was a nostalgia both productive of change and anti-authoritarian. Above all, it was a desire for the liberty which permitted an individual to construct a sense of belonging, a generative vision, in which 'home' was created by the individual and the community. Briet's conception of nostalgia self-consciously looked to the imaginary as the spur to action against present injustices. He displaced the object of nostalgic desire into the realm of the imaginary, but it lacked the same fantastical connotations that nostalgia now holds, where its ability to produce desire is based specifically on the inability of this desire to be fulfilled. With Briet, nostalgia ceased to be a retreat to the familiar, and became instead a sign of the desire for that which one wishes to become familiar. However, he insisted on the possibility that these desires could be made reality, in the form of a political system that allowed self-determination.

The political nostalgia proposed by Briet did not gain widespread cultural currency but remains an important marker in the abstraction of nostalgia, representing a point of rupture in the literature surrounding nostalgia. Three years later, nostalgia was to be entered into the official *Dictionnaire de*

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<sup>100</sup> See Émile Durkheim, 'Le Suicide anémique,' Chapter 5, *Le Suicide* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1897), pp.264-311.

*l'Académie* in a non-medical sense.<sup>101</sup> Nostalgia subsequently took on a variety of new forms; literary, psychological and political, the most important of which are explored in my latter chapters. In many guises, nostalgia has continued to be perceived as having a pathological relationship with patriotism. Twentieth-century understandings of nostalgia have overwhelmingly lent themselves to sentimentalised and often exclusionary visions of national belonging. While Briet's theorisation of nostalgia was ultimately unsuccessful, it remains a useful reminder that nostalgia's own prehistory has fallen prey to the amnesia now identified as 'nostalgic'. Nostalgia's putatively reactionary connotations are part of a much longer historical story.

### 3.9 Coda: The end of nostalgia

April 1871: the Franco-Prussian conflict had just ended in French defeat. Having survived a Prussian siege throughout the winter, Paris had refused to accept the peace agreements and was now under the control of radical Communards resisting the troops of the newly formed French government. In the midst of this, the *Société médico-psychologique* resumed its meetings on the 24th of April. With some understatement, the convenor, M. Loiseau, expressed his hope that the members of the *Société* were happy to do so, despite the 'difficult circumstances that we are going through'.<sup>102</sup> Founded in

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<sup>101</sup> The *Trésor de la langue française* notes 1769 for nostalgia's first medical usage in French (Latin being the primary language of medicine before that time), and 1834 for its first literary use, in Balzac's *La Recherche de l'absolu*.

<sup>102</sup> *Bulletin de Société médico-psychologique*, 5 (1871) pp.410-415, p.411.



the middle of the century as professional association of alienists, the *Société* aimed to consider psychiatry's social and political implications, its establishment also an attempt at professional consolidation and legitimation. It reflected a growing belief amongst psychiatric practitioners that they should be recognised as equipped to diagnosis of the ills of the social body, as well as those of their patients.<sup>103</sup>

Loiseau regretted that, due to the delayed publication of the relevant papers, the scheduled discussion on the therapeutic action of bromides was unfeasible. Instead, discussion turned to the members' experiences during the recent siege and its major medical events. For instance, the recent smallpox epidemic of 1870, which had killed over 8,000 people between January and November, was considered in terms of what it had revealed about the frequency, impact and meaning of delirium in acute illness. It was noted that the number of deaths was exacerbated by the presence of unvaccinated volunteers and conscripts in Paris, especially the Bretons *mobiles*.<sup>104</sup> The influence of anxieties relating to the state of siege itself, life in the trenches, bombing, and constant fear of the enemy, was considered. In addition, the discussion focused on the problem of alcohol, foreshadowing one of the

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<sup>103</sup> The *Société* began its active life in 1852. See Ian R. Dowbiggin, 'The Société médico-psychologique', Chapter 4, *Inheriting Madness: Professionalisation and Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Jean-Christophe Coffin, 'Is Modern Civilization Sick? The Response of Alienists in Mid-Nineteenth Century France', *Proceedings of the First European Congress on the History of Psychiatry and Mental Health Care*, ed. by Leonie De Goei & Joost Vjjselaar (Rotterdam: Erasmus Publishing, 1993) pp. 266-275, especially p.268.

<sup>104</sup> The army had been consistently vaccinated since the end of 1857. See Bertrand Taithe, *Defeated Flesh: Welfare, Warfare and the Making of Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1999, pp.54-56.

ongoing socio-medical concerns of the new Republic. Yet, four of the seven speakers also discussed nostalgia.<sup>105</sup>

According to M. Linas ‘ all the doctors noticed [nostalgia’s] frequency’ among the Breton *mobiles*.<sup>106</sup> M. Legrand du Salle likewise noticed that a considerable number of Breton patients recovering from smallpox were struck with the condition.<sup>107</sup> For all the speakers, nostalgia was considered a significant psychological symptom associated with fever and delirium. It was found mostly, but not exclusively, in the condition’s traditional victims, the conscripted regional soldier.

Some eight months later, on the 7th of December 1871, Alfred-Auguste Cuivillier-Fleury, Director of the *Académie Française*, formally welcomed a new member, Xavier Marmier. Marmier, renowned as a writer, poet, translator and traveller, had been elected to the *Académie* the previous year, and was especially celebrated for his accounts of voyages in the far reaches of Northern Europe. Cuivillier-Fleury quoted Marmier’s thoughts on foreign cultures and spaces: ‘these societies enchant me, and the salons suffocate me

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<sup>105</sup> *Bulletin de Société médico-psychologique*, p.411. Alcohol was to become a major preoccupation of public health and a perceived social threat. See William H. Schneider, *Quantity and Quality: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 20-22; Robert A. Nye, ‘Metaphors of Pathology in the *belle époque*: The Rise of a Medical Model of Cultural Crisis’, Chapter 5, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.132-170.

<sup>106</sup> *Bulletin de Société médico-psychologique*, p.412. ‘Tous les médecins en ont constaté la fréquence.’

<sup>107</sup> *Bulletin de Société médico-psychologique*, p.411.

... I have to leave – I have nostalgia for space.’<sup>108</sup> In effect, nostalgia constituted the motivating force behind his desire for escape; for the possibility of experience apparently unmediated by the trappings of modern culture. In this sense, the term was now being understood as a prompt towards the experience of unknown landscapes made attractive by their exotic difference and apparent purity. The use of nostalgia in this way by *Académiciens*, traditional custodians of French linguistic purity, indicates the extent to which nostalgia’s new meanings had gained cultural acceptance while continuing to co-exist with its clinical sense.

These two uses of nostalgia mark the point at which nostalgia’s clinical nature was disintegrating and its meanings multiplying. The siege of Paris was the last time there was a large-scale use of the diagnosis in France. Subsequently, nostalgia was rapidly adopted into a number of new disciplinary and ideological frameworks. The concept was invested with new meanings linking it to the archetypal diseases and dissatisfactions of the period. Concerns once associated with nostalgia became refracted into discussions of other conditions, such as anomie, insane travelling, spleen and neurasthenia. In addition, as Cuivillier-Fleury’s words indicated, nostalgia could now be associated with Arcadian, primitive, or imaginary landscapes.

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<sup>108</sup> *Discours de M. Cuivillier-Fleury, Directeur de l’Académie, en réponse au discours prononcé par M. Marmier, pour sa réception à l’Académie Française, le 7 décembre 1871 (Paris : Librairie Académique, Didier et Cie, 1871).*

In my first two chapters, I explored the clinical construction of nostalgia, and the way in which the vagueness inherent in the diagnosis allowed the disease to become progressively more politicised. The process of politicisation allowed new visions of nostalgia to emerge. In these, nostalgic desire was no longer considered as focused on a single and known place or object. This shift is the most critical point of disconnection between nostalgia in its original and transferred senses. In nostalgia's transferred meanings, imagination played a new role. Not only was the function of the faculty itself being radically redefined (as explored in Chapter 5), but its usage in relation to nostalgia was reversed. Where once imagination was thought to recreate the experience of a real situation, it was now understood to refer to the imaginary. No longer merely a form of homesickness, one could now be nostalgic for any object of desire; whether foreign, strange or fantastical.

As Jan Goldstein has explored in her work on the development of psychiatry in France, particular diagnoses have historically 'spoken' to broader cultural anxieties and rapidly became integrated into popular culture.<sup>109</sup> It was only when nostalgia was considered largely defunct as a disease that it became culturally resonant and, having been removed from its clinical quarantine, was able to become fully incorporated into broader linguistic and cultural terms. The *fin-de-siècle* adaptation of nostalgia as a useful way of describing a fractured relationship with the past reflected a variety of cultural phenomena. These related to the perception that political, social and technological change

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<sup>109</sup> See Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.153.

had produced an irredeemable chasm between older practices and ways of being, with those of a modern, industrialised state.

In the following chapters, I trace some of the forms in which nostalgia appeared in late nineteenth-century France – whether as literary trope, universal human sentiment, or highly charged political category. Some of the demographic, psychological, and political factors influencing the reworking of nostalgia in these arenas will be considered. However, before turning to these uses, this coda traces the fate of nostalgia as a discrete medical and psychiatric category, in an attempt to discover what lay behind its final disappearance, and why its clinical sense has been so dramatically overshadowed by new expressions of the concept.

### **i. Defending the diagnosis**

Its apparent re-emergence during the siege of Paris prompted the *Académie de Médecine* to take nostalgia as the topic for its annual *Prix Lefèvre* in 1872.

The competition attracted three entries, a low, but not unusual, response. The prize was shared by two entries, both from military writers, Auguste Haspel and Auguste Benoist de la Grandière.<sup>110</sup> The third entry came from a

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<sup>110</sup> See *Bulletin de l'Académie de médecine*, 2nd series, vol.1, 1871, p.220, vol. 2, 1873, pp. 700-701. This was an annual prize, and in 1872 was worth 2,000 francs. 1,500 francs were granted to Auguste Haspel, and 500 to Auguste Benoist de la Grandière. In previous years, the essay competition had attracted between 2 and 13 entries.

provincial doctor, Artance de Clermont-Ferrand, whose only other publications focussed on the therapeutic potential of hydrotherapy and spas.<sup>111</sup>

Haspel was the retired head of the Strasbourg military hospital, and his entry reflected the concerns and approaches of an earlier generation of practitioners. Haspel complained that while the 'the medical world does not fail to speak about nostalgia', it was mentioned only 'rarely in books.'<sup>112</sup> He argued that the scientific significance of nostalgia was still not fully realised, since it took so many forms and its accurate diagnosis was so difficult. Haspel bemoaned the poverty of the current literature dealing with nostalgia, and its 'vague and banal' generalities.<sup>113</sup> He claimed that a lack of serious analysis, impossible in the wartime conditions where nostalgia was most frequently encountered, wrongly led people to dismiss the condition or to regard it purely as a symptom. In turn, medical students were now too concerned with autopsy and physical alteration as indicators of disease to consider carefully those diseases that did not leave such markers.

In essence, Haspel's vision of nostalgia chimed with descriptions from the early nineteenth century. He understood it as a desire to return to a familiar milieu, which if not satisfied could lead to despair and functional disorder. He identified two forms of nostalgia, the first being generally found in new

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<sup>111</sup> Doctor Artance de Clermont-Ferrand, 'Nostalgie', essay for the *Prix Lefèvre*, 30 Juillet 1872. Held at the *Académie de médecine*, Paris.

<sup>112</sup> Auguste Haspel, *De la Nostalgie* (Paris : G. Masson, Libraire de l'Académie de médecine, 1874).

<sup>113</sup> Haspel, *De la Nostalgie*, p.7.

recruits and usually transient, receding once the soldier formed new bonds within his current environment. The second, more serious, organic form was based on a 'secret bond' between individuals and their habitual surroundings. An individual's susceptibility was determined by temperament, heredity or physiological conditions.<sup>114</sup> In clinical terms, Haspel's clear distinction of two discrete forms of nostalgia, emotional and organic, and complaints about the emphasis on localised tissue change as disease markers are the only indications that this was an essay written in the 1870s, not the early 1800s.<sup>115</sup>

Haspel concluded that the division between *pays* and *patrie* that had informed so much of the earlier literature did not provide a satisfactory explanatory framework. He defined nostalgia as the 'exaggerated regret caused by distance from the milieux in which we lived for a certain time'.<sup>116</sup> He considered these milieux to encompass all the particular conditions that influenced an individual's emotional, mental and physical well-being. Haspel's broad definition of the meanings carried by the concept of 'home' for the nostalgic underlined the category's transformation over the century, so that it was now considered as a longing for 'home' in a social or political sense as much as a biological or geographical one. Haspel considered that nostalgia was in decline, however, he believed that its resurgence in 1871 acted as a warning. The conditions of the siege, in which Paris, city of light,

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<sup>114</sup> Haspel, *De la Nostalgie*, pp.45-49.

<sup>115</sup> On the rise of anatomical pathology, see Russell Maulitz, *Morbid Appearances: The Anatomy of Pathology in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), especially Chapter 3, 'Pathology in the middle', pp.16-82.

<sup>116</sup> Haspel, *De la Nostalgie*, p.13. 'Le regret exagéré que cause l'éloignement des milieux dans lesquels nous avons vécu un certain temps.'

seemed to have been plunged backwards to a darker, colder, and more squalid existence, provided an environment in which this otherwise disappearing disorder could apparently flourish.<sup>117</sup>

The other competition winner Auguste Benoist de la Grandière, a naval doctor, was similarly focused on the decline of nostalgia. He argued that ‘in general, *le mal du pays* exists in inverse relationship to civilisation.’<sup>118</sup> While he had encountered nostalgia during the siege of Paris as a complicating symptom of typhoid, he believed it was decreasing in general, and would continue to do so while army continued to be developed as a national institution where the population was forced to mix.<sup>119</sup> Again, following arguments made earlier in the century by military practitioners, he argued that education, especially political education which attached citizens to their country, could transform a tendency towards nostalgia into a ‘much more fruitful and much more elevated’ love of homeland.<sup>120</sup> He warned that this education must be actively undertaken in order to stem the potential of other forms of community to provide alternate identifications. Movements such as

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<sup>117</sup> On the psychological impact of the siege see Taithe, *Defeated Flesh*, p.101.

<sup>118</sup> Auguste Benoist de la Grandière, *De la Nostalgie ou mal du pays* (Paris : Adrien Delahaye pour l’Académie de médecine, 1875), p.75. ‘*En général, le mal du pays est en raison inverse de la civilisation.*’

<sup>119</sup> See Benoist de la Grandière, *De la Nostalgie*, pp.43-45 and Benoist de la Grandière, *L’Ambulance des sœurs de Saint-Joseph de Cluny (Succursale du Val-de-Grâce), compte rendu médico-chirurgical* (Paris : Baillière et Fils, 1871), pp.20-21.

<sup>120</sup> Benoist de la Grandière, *De la Nostalgie*, p.187. ‘*Un sentiment beaucoup plus fécond et beaucoup plus élevé.*’



communism could, he believed, easily attract rural women coming into the cities and undermine their loyalty to the homeland.<sup>121</sup>

Haspel and Benoist de la Grandière aimed to defend the integrity of the diagnosis, and rescue it from the other meanings to which it had become attached. However, the third competition entry provided a perfect demonstration of problems attached to the continued use of nostalgia as a clinical category. In his paper, Artance de Clermont-Ferrand presented a highly idealised vision of rural purity and a simplistic correlation between nostalgia and patriotism. Yet, he argued that nostalgia could be triggered by factors as diverse as: the desire for liberty (in political prisoners and civil service functionaries alike); the reading of romantic fiction by young girls disappointed in their married lives; the necessity of work for those familiar with a life of 'laziness and libertinage'; and 'egoists, dupers, and vagabonds' forced to live amongst 'decent people'.<sup>122</sup> Such varied and vague definitions made the term as diffuse as it had become in many of its literary uses.

## **ii. Nostalgia and civilisation**

Haspel's analysis of nostalgia in clinical terms was, by this stage, old-fashioned, reflecting views from earlier decades of the century. In contrast, his position on the socio-political aspects of nostalgia was much more of his time. Celebrations of nostalgia's decline, in combination with arguments for

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<sup>121</sup> Benoist de la Grandière, *De la Nostalgie*, pp.86-7.

<sup>122</sup> Artance de Clermont-Ferrand, 'Nostalgie', pp.20-23 passim.

the need for vigilance against its return, formed the basis of the handful of works continuing to treat the disorder as a serious and coherent clinical category in the Third Republic. For instance, Haspel argued that nostalgia was disappearing in the French population in response to technological and social change. The development of new transport and communication systems combined with increased literacy and sophistication to make the French citizens less susceptible to the condition. In keeping with Haspel's analysis, the inference of almost all late-nineteenth century writers was that nostalgia persisted as a valid diagnosis, but one to which the French population were increasingly resistant. This was attributed either to their new conditions of life, or a fundamental psychic shift.

If nostalgia was disappearing it was due to the ease and rapidity of communications, and a host of other causes. It was deemed to have been largely defeated by new communication and transportation technologies that profoundly changed individual experience of time and space, broadening psychological horizons while making the physical 'home' more accessible. At the same time, state education reinforced the notion that French identity was tied to the nation without reference to smaller local identities.<sup>123</sup> As Raoul Chenu wrote in 1877, 'today, thanks to the ever unceasing progress of civilisation, nostalgia is far less frequent; the ease of communications, the brevity of journeys, thanks to the ever greater spread of steam and education,

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<sup>123</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 -1918* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

all provide the explanation for this rarity.’<sup>124</sup> Likewise, in one of the last specifically medical (as opposed to psychiatric or psychoanalytic) theses written on nostalgia, Victor Le Goïc in 1890 collected army statistics to demonstrate that the disease had almost disappeared.<sup>125</sup> He believed that these figures proved not only the amelioration of army conditions, and improvements in diagnostic skills and medical knowledge, but most importantly, the extent of social progress.

The 1879 edition of the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales* took a similar position, stating that ‘*le mal du pays*, already rare in our time, is destined to disappear before the progress of hygiene and civilisation.’<sup>126</sup> In this article V. Vidal reassessed the symptoms and aetiology of nostalgia and severely criticised former explanatory frameworks as unscientific. He retrospectively attributed many cases of nostalgia to other causes, such as meningitis, without questioning the underlying reality of the condition. He argued that education and the extension of social relations acted as the prophylactics that ensured that nostalgia would continue to decline.

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<sup>124</sup> Raoul Chenu, *De la Nostalgie* (Paris : A. Parent, Imprimeur de la faculté de médecine, 1877), p.95. ‘*Aujourd’hui, grâce aux progrès toujours incessants de la civilisation, la nostalgie est beaucoup moins fréquente ; la facilité des communications, la brièveté des voyages, grâce à la vapeur, l’instruction, qui tend à se répandre de plus en plus, donne l’explication de cette rareté.*’

<sup>125</sup> Victor Le Goïc, ‘La Nostalgie et son diagnostic’ (medical thesis, Lyon, 1890), 54, no.569. See Appendix 2 for figures.

<sup>126</sup> V. Vidal, ‘Nostalgie’, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. by Jacques Raige-Delorme and Amédée Dechambre (Paris : P. Asselin, G. Masson, 1864-1885), vol 13 (1879), 357-381, p.380. ‘*Le mal du pays, déjà rare de nos jours, est appelé à disparaître devant les progrès de l’hygiène et de la civilisation.*’

If nostalgia operated on an opposing trajectory to civilisation, its decline acted as an indication of the successful modernisation and industrialisation of French society. In arguing this, Le Goïc used anthropological examples, attempting to demonstrate that nostalgia was the product of a primitive association of individuals and their homes.<sup>127</sup> Raoul Chenu disagreed with this view, arguing that ‘all peoples pay their tribute to nostalgia; the love of one’s country is a feeling which is as long-lived in the savage as in the civilised man’.<sup>128</sup> However, his was a minority position, and the correlation between nostalgia and a primitive outlook became increasingly widespread. Nostalgia became a marker of the childlike, the semi-civilised, the peasant (or in colonial cases, the indigenous person), whose construction of identity relied on connection to the known landscape.<sup>129</sup> Here, nostalgics were seen as those ‘left behind’ by modernity, unable to find their place in new social structures and so clinging to outdated ideas about the criteria on which identity was to be based.

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<sup>127</sup> Victor Le Goïc, ‘La Nostalgie et son diagnostic’, p.12. Le Goïc identified nostalgia with the brachycephales, Celts, Bas-bretons and Savoyards. This indicates that attempts were being made to update nostalgia’s traditional ethnic associations within new theories of racial thought that spoke the language of anatomical difference, dividing the human population into long-headed dolichocephalics and round-headed brachycephalics. On these categorisations, see Francis Schiller, ‘The Human Group’, Chapter 9, *Paul Broca: Founder of French Anthropology, Explorer of the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp.136-164.

<sup>128</sup> Chenu, *De la Nostalgie*, p.30. ‘Tous les peuples paient leur tribut à la nostalgie. L’amour du pays est un sentiment qui aussi vivace chez le sauvage que chez l’homme civilisé.’ Like Alibert in his 1827 *Physiologie des passions*, Chenu argued that nostalgia acted as a natural prophylactic against migration.

<sup>129</sup> For a twentieth-century use of nostalgia as a signifier of a ‘primitive’ connection to the landscape, see William I. Thomas, *Primitive Behavior: An Introduction to the Social Sciences* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1937), pp.24-26.

Despite Chenu's dissension, a medical consensus developed in which nostalgia's decline was understood as a product of changes in the broader social environment and the French psyche. The decline of nostalgia was read as an indication of the French population's increasing cosmopolitanism, even if, in contrast to other European nations, they were less expansionist in outlook.<sup>130</sup> Yet, the spectre of international movements such as communism indicated that this cosmopolitanism had the potential to go too far. The tensions inherent in this view of nostalgia, between love of the nation and imperial projects undertaken in its name, patriotism and cosmopolitanism, continued to be scrutinised by medical writers in different terms, as will be explored in the following chapters.

### iii. The military conclusion

In the French setting, nostalgia had been regarded primarily as a military problem. Unsurprisingly, then, military practitioners were some of the last to continue to defend the reality of the condition. This attitude did not improve the credibility of the diagnosis. Medical practitioners within the military, often *officiers de santé* or poorer students looking for a way to fund their studies, were generally looked down upon as somewhat backward, and theoretically out of touch. Their status within the French military and the medical discipline was low.<sup>131</sup> The defenders of nostalgia were often as

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<sup>130</sup> Haspel, *De la Nostalgie*, p.5.

<sup>131</sup> Taithe, *Defeated Flesh*, p.29.

marginalised within the profession as the diagnosis was becoming within the lexicon.

The attitude of more prominent military figures was frequently closer to that of civilian practitioners. For instance, the historical shift in the way nostalgia was regarded most is clearly indicated in two works by one of military medicine's more prominent practitioners, Michel Lévy (1809-1872). Lévy was the editor of the *Annales d'hygiène publique*, Director of the Val-de-Grâce military teaching hospital, an inspector of army health, and one of the leading proponents of public health schemes.<sup>132</sup> In his influential 1844 treatise on public and private hygiene, Lévy treated nostalgia as a legitimate, often fatal disorder. He regarded the condition primarily as a habit, that is, the adaptation of individuals to the external impressions they received. He argued that it could exist in a non-harmful form but if it became persistent or extreme, could lead to functional disorder and morbidity. Where, he asked rhetorically, was the army medical officer who had never witnessed the devastation which nostalgia could wreck on a soldier?<sup>133</sup>

In contrast, Lévy's 1867 report on military hygiene for the Ministry of Public Instruction gave nostalgia a very different status. A section of the report was dedicated to the disorder; however, this was now a celebratory account of its

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<sup>132</sup> J. Bergeron, 'Éloge de M. Michel Lévy', *Mémoires de l'Académie de médecine*, 37, no.2 (1895), 1-30; Alphonse Guérard, 'Michel Lévy, Notice biographique', *Annales d'hygiène publique, industrielle et sociale*, 37 (1872), 473-478.

<sup>133</sup> Michel Lévy, *Traité d'hygiène publique et privée*, 2 vols (Paris : Baillière, 1844) , pp.222-223.

almost complete disappearance. Lévy attributed the decline of nostalgia in the military sphere to better communications, improved conditions and education. In particular, he stressed that through the development of regimental schools, military institutions had been made 'auxiliaries of civilisation' which acted to 'transform the illiterate statistics of recruitment into enlightened citizens, friends of order and work,' a process which he described as a 'happy exchange between the State and rural populations!'<sup>134</sup> He noted that statistically, there was now less than one death per 100,000 men from nostalgia, compared to the 0.86 per thousand (or 86 per 100,000) documented in the 1820s by Louis-François Benoiston de Châteauneuf.<sup>135</sup> The limited statistical studies of nostalgia in the armed forces, from Benoiston de Châteauneuf to Le Goïc are included in *Appendix 2*.

The new soldier described by Lévy was the object of 'gentle care', treated with 'nuances of indulgence' and 'vigilant solicitude' by his commanders, entertained and distracted by 'music, song, and dance.'<sup>136</sup> With so much time and effort devoted to his welfare, this tenderly-treated soldier was, perhaps unsurprisingly, no longer prey to nostalgia. He also had a pronouncedly

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<sup>134</sup> Michel Lévy, 'Rapport sur les progrès de l'hygiène militaire' (Paris : Hachette, 1867), printed under the auspices of Ministry of Public Instruction, series *Recueil de rapports sur le progrès des lettres et des sciences en France*, pp.50-51. 'Faire des institutions militaires les auxiliaires de la civilisation, quel plus noble but! Et transformer les illettrés des statistiques de recrutement en citoyens éclairés, amis de l'ordre et du travail, quel heureux échange entre l'État et les populations rurales!'

<sup>135</sup> Lévy, 'Rapport', pp.52-53. On the emergence of public health in France, and the importance of statistics to public health programmes, see Ann F. La Berge, *Mission and Method: The Early Nineteenth-Century French Public Health Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), especially Chapter 2, 'The Methodology of Public Hygiene', pp.49-81.

<sup>136</sup> Lévy, 'Rapport', pp.51-52.

different character from the soldiers of earlier generations. Lévy himself expressed a 'reminiscent predilection for certain types of past soldiers.' He believed that adaptation into the army was no longer such a traumatic event. But, at the same time, soldiers were no longer as overtly masculine, the brittle masculinity of the earlier decades being replaced by a far more malleable subjectivity.<sup>137</sup> Yet despite his preference for the 'heroic and legendary figures of our old armies of the Republic and the Empire', Lévy insisted that the 'softening of character' in the modern soldier was not a sign of diminishing courage, but only that courage had become 'less noisy, excluding neither modesty nor simplicity.'<sup>138</sup>

The apparent resistance to nostalgia of these new soldiers, whose loyalty to the *patrie* was inculcated through their army education, foreshadowed the final decline of the condition. While there continued to be references to clinical nostalgia in literary works, no new medical or firsthand accounts appeared.<sup>139</sup> Of course, this neglect does not necessarily indicate that a particular subjective experience had disappeared, rather, that it was no longer

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<sup>137</sup> This complicates Odile Roynette's account, since it implies that the transition she spoke of had already been accomplished by the end of the century Odile Roynette, "*Bons pour le service*" : *L'expérience de la caserne en France à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Belin, 2000), p.32.

<sup>138</sup> Lévy, 'Rapport', pp.51-52. '*Quelle que soit notre prédilection réminiscente [sic] pour certains types militaires d'autrefois, pour les figures héroïques et légendaires de nos vieilles armées de la République et de l'Empire, nous ne pouvons que nous féliciter de l'adoucissement des caractères, sans détriment pour leur énergie intrinsèque... le courage n'a point fléchi, au contraire, mais il est devenu moins tapageur, il n'exclut ni la modestie ni la simplicité.*'

<sup>139</sup> For instance, Zola in *La Terre* (1887) continued to use nostalgia in a modified clinical sense, when he described an abbot becoming depressed and unwell due to his forced separation from his original home in the Auvergne. Emile Zola, *La Terre* (Paris : Charpentier & Co, 1887), p.456. For another similar usage see George Sand, *Laura : voyages et impressions* (Paris : Michel Lévy Frères, 1865), p.136.



deemed worthy of medical attention. For Lévy and his colleagues, it was the ability of the condition to affect the French soldier, rather than its integrity as a diagnosis, that was in question. The soldiers of the later part of the century were regarded as successfully acclimatised subjects of the army's attempts to make itself 'homelike', educated Frenchmen whose patriotism removed the conflict of desire which had tormented earlier generations of less emotionally adept soldiers.

#### **iv. Diseases of civilisation**

If 'civilisation' apparently cured nostalgia, it brought with it other disorders, whose pre-eminence also contributed to the declining medical interest in nostalgia. By the end of the century the connection between social change and mental illness was a generally accepted truism. The demands of industrial society were believed to be such that even the well-equipped had difficulty adapting. Those understood as being already weakened by heredity stood little chance. By the end of the century, there was increasing pessimism about the ability of individuals to overcome their biological inheritance if it did not equip them for the demands of modern life.

The idea of civilisation as 'risky', bringing with it new dangers and diseases has, as medical historian Charles Rosenberg demonstrates, a long history. He argues that the perception of progress as bringing with it potential new pathologies is in one sense only a variation on the theme of lost utopia. However, it also reveals the ways in which diseases act as 'both indicator and

product' of perceived social dysfunction. Hence, in the late nineteenth century, the development of new communication mediums, combined with perceptions of a newly disorientating and mobile society, produced a sense of the psychic dangers of sensory overload expressed in new disease categories.<sup>140</sup>

In late-nineteenth century France the two diseases that seemed to best exemplify the stressful and damaging effects of modern urban living were hysteria and neurasthenia. Both related to the apparent ability, or inability, of humans to deal with the mental and physical demands placed on them by industrialised society. Those like Charles Féré (1852-1907), who documented the apparent rise of criminality and insanity among the French population, linked both to the degenerating impact of city life. Féré was a central figure in Charcot's circle at the Salpêtrière, eventually becoming chief physician at the Bicêtre hospital. He wrote extensively on neurological issues, as well as sexuality, criminality, and degeneration - all of which were seen as interrelated areas.

Féré was particularly interested in the increasing numbers of peasants moving into the cities who suffered from nervous exhaustion. They did not, he argued, have the mental preparation to cope with the psychic flexibility demanded by

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<sup>140</sup> Charles Rosenberg, 'Pathologies of Progress: The Idea of Civilisation as Risk', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 72 (1998), 714-733, pp.720-723.

modern civilisation's rapidly changing milieu.<sup>141</sup> The category that Féré used to explain the increase of degeneration was that of 'nervous exhaustion', or neurasthenia. This was a new diagnosis popularised by the American physician, George Beard (1839-1883). Beard first described his concept of neurasthenia in 1869 as a distinctly American disease. He believed it was the product of a lifestyle of rapid change with which the nervous system was unable to keep up. Translated into French in 1872, Beard's work was quickly incorporated into French psychiatry and became a widely used diagnosis.

The categorisation of neurasthenia was the product of a medical profession determined to localise and objectify illness, a process that continued until Freud re-asserted the independence of psychic illness from the nervous system. With its vast number of possible symptoms, ranging from headaches, impotence, fatigue, depression to insomnia and tooth decay, neurasthenia (like degeneration) offered an umbrella concept which effectively reversed earlier professional tendencies towards the classification of ever more specific conditions, seen most explicitly in the proliferation of monomanias.

Beard's insistence that neurasthenia constituted an entirely new disease relied on the uniqueness of modern civilisation, which demanded that individuals constantly drew on their limited store of 'nerve force.' He argued that the telegraph, railroads and steam power had made it possible for businessmen to make 'a hundred times' more transactions in a given period than a century

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<sup>141</sup> See Charles Féré, 'Épuisement et criminalité', Chapter 8, *Dégénérescence et criminalité, essai physiologique* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1888).

before. This intensified competition and tempo, and since humans were only capable of a certain number of sensory impressions in a given period, the result was nervous fatigue and exhaustion. It was not merely 'civilisation' in itself, but the unique combination of nineteenth-century cultural conditions that produced such a negative impact on nervous force:

The modern differ from the ancient civilisations mainly in these five elements - steam power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women. When civilisation, plus these five factors, invades any nation, it must carry nervousness and nervous diseases along with it.<sup>142</sup>

Neurasthenia became a useful category to lump together 'nervous' complaints, and was often associated with mental fatigue and disorders of the will. Since European doctors and psychiatrists tended to depend more heavily on the role of heredity on health than their North American counterparts, their vision of neurasthenia became a more pessimistic one. Despite its association with the cultural demands and shocks of modernity, neurasthenia was seen in France, at least originally, as hereditary, a conclusion that combined Lamarckian evolution with degeneration theory. By the end of the century, a full 25% of the patients at the Salpêtrière hospital were classified as

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<sup>142</sup> George M. Beard, *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences* (New York, 1881), pp. 96-129, p.96. The most influential French work on the subject was Adrien Proust and Gilbert Ballet's *L'Hygiène du neurasthénique* (Paris : Masson, 1897).

neurasthenic.<sup>143</sup> Both degeneration and neurasthenia successively incorporated more and more individual disorders within their explanatory frameworks, a process that meant these diagnoses ultimately became unworkable, but in the short term, subsumed many disorders previously regarded as discrete conditions.

Nostalgia was never explicitly incorporated into the lexicon of degeneration theory. However, the rise of that theoretical framework shifted attention away from the impact of the physical landscape to inherited weaknesses and the effects of the social environment, such as alcohol, pollution and overcrowding as causal factors in disease. Nostalgia's decline was more closely linked to the rise of neurasthenia. An article in the *Journal de médecine de Paris* in 1900 argued that while education and new transport and communication technologies had played a role in its reduction, nostalgia had not truly disappeared. Rather, it had merely been recognised as a form of neurasthenia, sharing with it an absence of organic signs, depressive passion, diminished resistance to sensations and impressions and a tendency towards hypochondria, melancholy and even suicide.<sup>144</sup> Other commentators similarly suggested that nostalgia was a diagnosis whose symptomology would have suggested hysteria if found in female patients. However, while nostalgia may have once been useful as a diagnosis which avoided a feminising stigma,

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<sup>143</sup> Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p.156.

<sup>144</sup> Lubestski, 'La Nostalgie et la neurasthénie', *Journal de médecine de Paris*, 11 (1900), 290-293.

neurasthenia now offered a new model through which to understand male suffering without pejorative labelling.

In the time that it had been in use as a diagnosis, nostalgia had accumulated a vast array of symptoms, including anorexia, withdrawal, fevers and hallucinations. Now, nostalgia's apparent concurrence with other conditions raised questions as to which was the predisposing disease. Advances in bacteriology and the identification of causal agents for conditions such as tuberculosis and meningitis meant that a significant percentage of cases of nostalgia could now be attributed to other causes. One of the consequences was a re-emphasis on nostalgia as a purely mental disorder. However the trend towards science in medicine created new demands for empirical data and rigorous observation in all realms of practice, and redefining nostalgia as a purely mental disorder did not protect it from these. Reviewing Haspel's *De la Nostalgie* in the *Archives générales de médecine* in 1875 the journal's editor, Charles Lasègue, declared that nostalgia had never constituted a pathological entity. He argued that a disease without a clear aetiology or physical signs was a 'danger to science', and that nostalgia had never been anything more than a medical fantasy.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Charles Lasègue, review, *De la Nostalgie* by Auguste Haspel, *Archives générales de médecine*, 25 (1875), 760-763

## v. Diseases and their disappearance

The decline of nostalgia as a diagnosis within the profession followed a similar path to that of hysteria. Hysteria is the subject of a vast secondary literature, generally read as the ultimate *fin-de-siècle* disease, one of the primary concerns of the great psychiatrists of the time, and a cornerstone in the development of the profession. In fact, as Mark Micale argues in his account of hysteria's disappearance, the late-nineteenth century operates in the contemporary historical imagination as the age of hysteria, its study personified by Charcot and Freud.<sup>146</sup> To explain its dramatic decline after the turn of the century, Micale focuses on internal changes within the medical profession, specifically in terms of nomenclature, nosology and nosography. He argues that that the period saw a rapid process of change, both in the way physicians understood the clinical content of the diagnosis, and how they considered it should be classified.

Charcot's theory of hysteria defined it as a functional lesion, the result of a physical injury or inherited defect of the central nervous system. However, since such physical origins could often not be found in cases of hysteria, doctors were forced to rely on its clinical manifestations, rather than any discrete and observable physiological factors. At the same time, the symptoms observable in hysterics were increasingly varied, forcing doctors to expand the scope of the diagnosis.<sup>147</sup> Hysteria eventually became so overly inclusive that

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<sup>146</sup> Mark S. Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria A Study in the Clinical Deconstruction of a Diagnosis', *Isis*, vol. 84, 1993: 496-526, p.497.

<sup>147</sup> Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria', pp.499-501.

almost any symptoms could indicate that the condition was incipient. This made it almost impossible to define or position hysteria accurately within new classificatory systems.

By the 1890s, the expansion of the clinical boundaries of hysteria was already leading to scepticism about the diagnosis. Lasègue made similar criticisms about hysteria to those he had directed towards nostalgia, declaring it ‘the wastepaper basket of medicine where one throws otherwise unemployed symptoms.’<sup>148</sup> In addition, with the rise of germ theory, specific pathogens were identified for numerous diseases, establishing their physiological origin. Clinical signs that would have once been understood as being hysteria were increasingly redefined as belonging to other diseases, most notably epilepsy and syphilis.<sup>149</sup> These discoveries affected both aetiological theories and diagnostic techniques, leading to a radical re-conceptualisation of unwieldy categories such as hysteria, whose symptoms were ultimately broken up and attributed to other conditions.

On another level, the same period saw the term hysteria being deployed in new arenas and with a new connotation. Rather than constituting a disease category in its own right, hysteria was becoming understood as a transient state, or as a set of symptoms implicated in other diseases. With the majority of hysteria’s symptoms being displaced onto other conditions, and its

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<sup>148</sup> Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, p.324.

<sup>149</sup> Micale, ‘On the “Disappearance” of Hysteria’, pp.504-510.



demotion from an entity in its own right, the disorder was effectively dismantled. According to Micale, the 'bits and pieces' which were not subsumed into other categories have remained, forming the greatly reduced sense in which hysteria is used in contemporary psychiatry.<sup>150</sup>

Nostalgia followed a similar trajectory to hysteria, being increasingly understood as a symptom or stage of other conditions, notably melancholia. Distinctions began to be made between 'normal' and 'pathological' forms of nostalgia, suggesting that the displacement that could trigger the condition was becoming seen as an inevitable part of normal life. Gradually, the pathological nature of nostalgia became a question of degree. It was perceived as insanity only when it took the nature of an obsession.<sup>151</sup> While nosologies and encyclopaedias continued to list nostalgia into the twentieth century, it generally became classified as a subset or stage of melancholia, rather than a disease in its own right.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Micale, 'On the "Disappearance" of Hysteria', p.525. Other recent scholarship has argued for a re-evaluation of hysteria as a category that has not disappeared, but taken on new medical and cultural forms. See Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effect of Sibling Relationships on the Human Condition* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), and Christopher Bollas, *Hysteria* (London: Routledge, 2000)

<sup>151</sup> Wilhelm Griesinger, 1867, quoted in Stanley W Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp.378-379.

<sup>152</sup> For instance, see *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1911, where nostalgia is described as 'homesickness, the desire when away to return home, amounting sometimes to a form of melancholia.'

As Micalé argues persuasively in his examination of hysteria, the disappearance of well-established disease categories can only be explained by looking at professional, political and cultural factors, as well as changes in medical theory or practice. This is especially true for those diseases, like hysteria or nostalgia, which to our view, still largely shaped by germ theory, have no obvious physical aetiology. In the case of nostalgia, a wide range of factors made the diagnosis untenable to the French profession. These included new interpretative models and empirical demands within medicine and psychiatry, changes in social structures and practices, and a belief in the progressive development of a sophisticated modern subjectivity. However, as we shall see in the following chapters, despite the dissipation of nostalgia's clinical meanings, the concept retained, even increased, its political and cultural resonance.

## Section 2

### *Chapter 4 - Fragmentation and dislocation: modernity and the French character*

The fragmentation undergone by nostalgia in the second half of the nineteenth century was analogous to that which many believed threatened French society as a whole. Just as commentators had speculated about the Revolution's impact on the French 'character', now the impact of modernisation – industrialisation, urbanisation, changing economic and social structures – appeared to be producing new subjects with new pathologies.<sup>1</sup> This chapter looks at changes in conceptualisations of nostalgia, and the construction of new categories in which individuals appeared to act out modernity's discontents literally. Demographic and socio-political factors combined to make fears about dislocation and disassociation acute in the Third Republic. I focus on theorisation of the urban environment as the source of new disorders, and the embodiment of concerns with rural decline, industrialisation and fragmentation in the figure of the *aliéné voyageur*, or insane traveller.

*Aliénés voyageurs* acted as symbolic successors to the nostalgic. Just as the figure of the nostalgic had acted as a shorthand for those unable to bridge the gap between local and national identity, the *aliéné voyageur* represented those individuals unable to adapt to the demands of modern society. Wanderers in a

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<sup>1</sup> See the discussion regarding definitions of modernism in the Introduction.

state of *fugue*, or altered consciousness, became emblematic of the apparent disintegration of traditional social organisation, their internal fragmentation reflecting that of the nation. Unlike nostalgics, *aliénés voyageurs* were active in their attempts to find a place of belonging. However, the question of where this place was to be located now appeared unanswerable.

If nostalgia had made each aware of their 'place' then its demise was not without its own threats. In so much as detachment from 'home' potentially carried with it a loss of other emotional ties and responsibilities - whether to family, tradition or country - it was of political and social as well as medical concern. This was reflected in the overlapping language employed in medical and political discourses of the period. Writing in the 1840s, the physician Pilet had already predicted that without a degree of nostalgia, society would be spiritually impoverished:

The consequence of the general cosmopolitanism which is now emerging is that by dint of becoming attached to everything, we are no longer attached to anything ... everywhere the selfish desire for material goods is usurping the heart's noble instincts, and everywhere positive facts kill the imagination and its divine creations ... the more we distance ourselves from a state of primitive simplicity, the less we care for the tombs of our ancestors, and the soil on which we were born.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Delmaïs-Eugène Pilet, 'De la Nostalgie considérée chez l'homme de guerre' (medical thesis, Paris, 1844), 12, no.43, pp.18-19. '*Du cosmopolitisme général qui se manifeste, il résulte qu'à force de s'attacher à tout on ne s'attache plus à rien... partout l'égoïsme de la*

The emergence of the threatening spectre of ‘cosmopolitanism’ allowed the expression of more positive views of nostalgia, while producing new pathologies of insane wandering, which reflected cultural anxiety about dislocation and displacement. These new conditions were seen with a double vision. They could be understood as products of atavism, a reversion to the primitive as a sign of the degeneration brought about by aspects of modern life, or alternatively, as new forms of subjectivity produced by social change and economic imperatives. As such, they were seen to embody a new, alienating and mechanised, industrial society.

#### 4.1 Urban disorders

The ‘dangers’ posed by insane or vagabond wanderers were set against a threat of general urban degeneration. While earlier literature exploring nostalgia had portrayed the urban environment in a positive light, generating new and mobile, yet patriotic, individuals, now the city was increasingly represented as a site of degeneration and decline. Changing views of the cityscape affected understandings of older categories such as nostalgia, as well as generating new diagnoses.

The case of a nostalgic Parisian featured in J.-B. Descuret’s 1841 *La*

*Médecine des passions* demonstrates some of the emerging concerns with the

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*matière se substitue aux nobles instincts du cœur, partout le positif tue l’imagination et ses créations divines... plus nous nous éloignons [d’un] état de simplicité, moins nous tenons aux tombeaux de nos aïeux, et au sol sur lequel nous sommes nés.’*

impact of urban life. Descuret described a tenant holding a room in a building on the *rue de la Harpe*, a small road in the 5<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. Upon news of the building's imminent demolition, the tenant became intensely nostalgic. Although assured of a place in a new building, his identity was apparently so bound up to his home that he was unable to consider a change in his situation. Descuret describes the tenant refusing to return his keys on the evening before destruction of the building was due. Instead, he declared that he would only leave the building 'feet first'. Two days later, on forcing the door of the apartment open, the *commissaire* found that the tenant had, as he predicted, died.<sup>3</sup>

The case of the tenant of the *rue de la Harpe* provides a singular example of the realities of modern France, and especially of its cities; it was no longer necessary to move to have one's environment become alien, strange and disorientating. In the second half of the century, the urban, industrial landscape became central to medical, legal and sociological discussions of the state of the French nation. The cityscape was seen as an environment of both threat and possibilities: whether in terms of population movement; the effects on health and psychological of industrial work and city living; or the city, especially Paris, as the symbol of the modern nation. Already atypical in ascribing the disease to a city dweller, Descuret pre-figured the ongoing dispersal of meaning nostalgia was to continue undergoing in the following

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<sup>3</sup> J.-B.F. Descuret, *La Médecine des passions ou les passions considérées dans leurs rapports avec les maladies, les lois et la religion* (Paris : Béchét & Labé, 1841), pp.395-396.

four decades. This process was in large part a reaction to urbanisation and its perceived impact on the French character.

After the Revolution, the growth of Paris increased dramatically and rapidly. Between 1801 and 1851, the population doubled to over one million and by the end of the century had doubled again to over two million. Population density followed a similar pattern, and the city's basic infrastructure and facilities failed to meet the demands of this increased population.<sup>4</sup> Large-scale migration from the provinces changed the populace's composition, especially as seasonal migration declined after 1840, with far more people becoming integrated into the Parisian working classes.<sup>5</sup>

The presence of new migrants in Paris was believed to be contributing to perceived increases in mental illness and suicide, due in large part to a failure of the incomers to adjust to the urban environment.<sup>6</sup> As Louis Chevalier has shown, by the mid-century, crime and misery had become central themes in descriptions of the city. Crime appeared to sum up all of the major problems of social development in Paris. The city's inability to adapt to population increases caused large sections of the working classes to live in conditions at the extremes of existence. Statistics of birth and death rates, crime and

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<sup>4</sup> See Françoise Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Marguerite Hugo and George R. Collins (London: Studio Vista, 1969), p.8; Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Frank Jellinek (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp.183, 193.

<sup>5</sup> Chevalier, *Labouring Classes*, pp.427-428. Despite better communications, travel became more expensive. This meant that many workers, who had previously made seasonal journeys into the cities for work, now became permanent urban incomers.

<sup>6</sup> Chevalier, *Labouring Classes*, p.280.

insanity all appeared to point towards the development of a permanent underclass, often described in racial terms as backward, savage, and criminal.<sup>7</sup>

The construction of a Paris that obliterated in swathes all but traces of the old city also had an immediate and dramatic impact on the population. During the Second Empire, Napoleon III's ambitious city planning programme saw Baron Haussmann (1809-1891) empowered to change the city's physical infrastructure radically. Old quarters were demolished, with broad boulevards cutting across the city.<sup>8</sup> There was enforced movement of large sections of the working classes from the centre to the periphery, transformation of heterogeneous areas into distinct, but internally homogeneous entities; and the decline of civic life at a local level. The result was said to be an increasing sense of exile and estrangement for the citizen, now occupying a city 'which he inhabits and observes but in whose essential life he no longer participates.'<sup>9</sup> The Haussmannisation of Paris was a tangible and concrete expression of a more general truth - the physical environment no longer offered a stable backdrop against which to construct identity.

Even as medical interest in nostalgia declined, the processes of modernisation attributed with its demise were apparently creating a raft of new disorders, many of them explicitly linked to urban life. Numerous new nervous

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<sup>7</sup> Chevalier, *Labouring Classes*, pp.258, 275, 362-365.

<sup>8</sup> On Haussmann and the 'Haussmannisation' of Paris, see David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958); Jeanne Gaillard, *Paris, la ville (1852-1870)* (Paris : Librairie Honoré Champion, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Richard Burton, *The Context of Baudelaire's Le Cygne*, Durham Modern Language Series (University of Durham, 1980), p.36; also see Françoise Choay, *The Modern City*, pp.8-9.



conditions and phobias were defined within French psychiatric thought, a discipline that was itself a product of the century. Agoraphobia - literally 'fear of the market place' - and claustrophobia were both described for the first time in the late-nineteenth century and related to a distorted sense of spatial relations configured in terms of the urban landscape.<sup>10</sup> Nostalgia's fragmentation as a category and the appearance of such new diseases were linked to the emergence of the city as a cultural reference point for French identity. While many diseases first defined during this period were seen as owing their birth to advances in diagnostic practice and medical knowledge, there was also a sense that new disorders were produced as a response to the unique stresses of modern, by implication urban, life.

Degeneration theories, like neurasthenia, provided strong support for the narratives of a pathologising urban landscape that developed after the industrial revolution. The emphasis on the city as productive of disease was marked by a change in the way in which the concept of 'environment' was being conceived within medicine. Public health or hygiene concerned itself with issues such as sanitation, work conditions, overcrowding and pollution, and their impact on health.<sup>11</sup> Literary texts such as Emile Zola's *L'Assommoir* (1877), and *Nana* (1880), consolidated the vision of the urban landscape as a corrupting force, sapping the vitality and morality of its inhabitants. The

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<sup>10</sup> See Charles Féré, *La Pathologie des émotions* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1892), pp.409-410; Felicity Jane Callard, 'Forms of Agoraphobia: Accounts of Anxiety, Space, and the Urban Dweller from the 1870s to the 1990s' (doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> On the development of the public health movement in France, see Ann F. La Berge, *Mission and Method: The Early Nineteenth-Century French Public Health Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

environment which shaped health and character was no longer necessarily considered in terms of physical milieu. Rather, it was now overwhelmingly conceived in terms of social, technological and industrial factors, the man-made rather than natural landscape.

Experience of the modern city was seen to produce new forms of pathology. These were associated with disconnection and dislocation, towards which medical and psychiatric concern once linked to nostalgia became largely redirected. A tendency towards physical dislocation, an unrelenting desire for difference and the new, was understood as a sign that modern society and its unprecedented opportunities for mobility (primarily physical, but by implication social) was producing dissatisfied and dislocated individuals, disconnected from social and familial ties. The largely urbanised, lower-middle class men who became *fugueurs*, or insane wanderers, lived out this sense of disconnection.

## **4.2 Modernity, depopulation and rural decline**

Medical construction of the *aliéné voyageur* in the final decades of the century was informed by, and informed, broader fears that wandering, vagabondage and itinerancy constituted a 'crisis' for France of the 1880s and '90s. For many doctors, insane wanderers or travellers were sick individuals, but they also operated as symbols of a broader sociological trend towards displacement, movement and the new. Medical concern with potential dangers of modern society was framed by a broad cultural perception in Europe that

the nineteenth century was one in which history accelerated.<sup>12</sup> There was a general sense that life was speeding up, that the modern era was one of a ‘frenzy of locomotion.’<sup>13</sup> As a speaker addressing the Geographical Society stated in 1877, ‘until recently no one left his native town...today no one stays put.’<sup>14</sup> New technologies, from railways, bicycles, to the telegraph and telephone, aided this process, and fundamentally changed the way Europeans experienced distance and communication.

The intrusion of the railway into rural France brought dramatic and deep seated change to economic and agricultural practices and the horizons of its inhabitants. In turn the telegraph and telephone appeared to transcend distance itself.<sup>15</sup> The adventure novels of Jules Verne, in which his heroes could affirm that ‘distance is but an empty name; distance does not really exist!’ reminded people of the possibilities of travel that seemed almost limitless.<sup>16</sup> This was also the period in which mass tourism became firmly entrenched as a leisure

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et histoire : la problématique des lieux’, in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris : Gallimard, 1997), pp.xvii-xlii.

<sup>13</sup> Guérin Raoul-Robert-Marie de la Grasserie, ‘De la Nostalgie et des instincts contraires comme facteurs psychologiques & sociaux’, *extrait de la Revue internationale de sociologie* (Paris : 1911), p.47.

<sup>14</sup> Laboulaye addressing the Geographical Society, 10 April 1877. Quoted in Eugen Weber, *France: fin de siècle* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Belknap Press, University of Harvard, 1986), p.177.

<sup>15</sup> See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 -1918* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France 1870 - 1914* (Stanford: California, Stanford University Press, 1976). Bicycles became a mass phenomena in the 1890s, when they triggered a craze of ‘excursionism’ into the countryside, and became a major spectator sport. For an extended discussion on the impact of the bicycle see Weber, ‘La Petite Reine.’ Chapter 10, *France: fin de siècle* , pp.195-212.

<sup>16</sup> President Barbicane, in Jules Verne, *De la Terre à la Lune*, (Paris : J. Hetzel, 1872), p.94.

time activity.<sup>17</sup> No longer simply a synonym for a traveller, the 1876 edition of the Larousse dictionary defined tourism as the ‘perambulations and other activities of persons travelling out of idleness, curiosity, for the pleasure of travel.’<sup>18</sup>

Simultaneously, the rise of theories of degeneration in medical and legal spheres, emphasised that not all individuals could thrive in the modern world, whether due to hereditary weakness or pathogenic environmental agents.<sup>19</sup> For instance, in his influential work on degeneration, Max Nordau, physician and social critic whose work will be examined in detail in Chapter 6, wrote of the problems of modern society in terms of hyper-stimulation of the nervous system. Nordau argued that ‘even the little shocks of railway travelling, not perceived by consciousness, the perpetual noises and the various sights in the streets of a large town, our suspense pending the sequel of progressive events, the constant expectation of the newspaper, of the postman, of visitors, cost our brains wear and tear.’<sup>20</sup> In this vision of modern existence, everyday life was affecting the self on multiple, and often unperceived, levels. The external

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<sup>17</sup> For an examination of the tourist industry in Europe see James Buzard, *The Beaten Track : European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to ‘Culture’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Buzard notes that by the mid nineteenth century ‘tourist’, a late eighteenth-century neologism, had already acquired pejorative overtones.

<sup>18</sup> Larousse, quoted in Weber, *France: fin de siècle*, p.177. Ian Hacking has suggested that the figure of the vagabond and the mad traveller acted as negative symbols to that of the tourist. Ian Hacking, *Mad Travellers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illness* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1998), pp.27-30.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c1848-c1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p.39.

environment was full of diverting, demanding and potentially damaging stimuli, to which an individual was forced to react and adapt.

The growth of Paris and other urban centres was contemporaneous with loudly expressed fears of a 'flight from the land.' The threat of rural depopulation in France had been a complaint from as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>21</sup> However, in nineteenth-century France, these fears appeared to be becoming a reality. During the Second Empire, almost all of rural France was experiencing out-migration. This, in combination with France's low birth-rates (which themselves fuelled fears of national decline), meant a loss of absolute numbers in country areas.<sup>22</sup> The Third Republic saw concern over rural decline, large-scale movement away from the country and slow population growth became acute, reflecting the economic and symbolic importance of rural health to the nation.

Massive depopulation of rural France between 1840 and 1860 was largely triggered by agriculture's declining economic role. French agriculture was being transformed by industrialisation, and depleted by competition from the new world. This situation was exacerbated in the final decades of the century by a series of crises that triggered an agricultural depression, making life on the land untenable for many. First detected in 1863, plagues of the phylloxera

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<sup>21</sup> Alfred Legoyt, *Du Progrès des agglomérations urbaines et de l'émigration rurale en Europe et particulièrement en France* (Marseille : Cayer, 1867).

<sup>22</sup> On responses to the perceived population crisis, especially the establishment of natalist groups, see William H. Schneider, 'Degeneration and Regeneration', Chapter 2, *Quantity and Quality: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.11-54.

insect devastated the wine industry for over two decades, while the silk industry was threatened by increased Asian imports. A long-term global drop in agricultural markets also had a dramatic impact on French agriculture, and in addition, the failure of specialised crops and low investment in new technology combined to severely depress land prices.<sup>23</sup>

Despite clear economic imperatives for urban migration, movement of peasants into the cities was seen as injurious both to the health of the migrants, and the nation as a whole.<sup>24</sup> It was a reminder of the apparent non-viability of traditional lifestyles in the modern world, and read as a threat to social cohesion in the agricultural heart of France. As the government statistician Alfred Legoyt (1815-1888) commented in an 1867 study on urban growth and rural emigration, some of the perceived depopulation of the countryside was simply the result of rural communes being newly categorised as urban due to increases in population size. However, he acknowledged that statistically the absolute rural population was also in decline, which he attributed to agricultural crises, industrialisation, better communications and the impact of railways.<sup>25</sup>

Legoyt's conclusions were supported by the demographer Arsène Dumont (1849-1902) who agreed that the realities of rural life were the main criteria

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<sup>23</sup> *Apogée et crise de la civilisation paysanne, 1789-1914*, ed. by Étienne Juillard, vol.3, *Histoire de la France rurale*, ed. by Georges Duby (Paris : Seuil, 1976), pp.387-398.

<sup>24</sup> *Migrants in Modern France*, pp.7, 28, 35-36.

<sup>25</sup> This trend of depopulation continued over the next decades. Between 1876 and 1911, an estimated three million French peasants and country dwellers quit the land for good. Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics* p.55.

driving the population towards cities. For Dumont, people were positively expelled from the country by the need to find work and the absolute impossibility of survival there. However, Dumont argued that while rapid urbanisation was being seen all over Europe, it was only in France that the rural population was being exhausted.<sup>26</sup> This 'exhaustion' referred not only to a drop in numbers, but a sense that the health of the entire nation depended in some ways on the health of its peasant classes. Dumont believed that while cities had an essential role in the development of civilisation, it was in the country that the physiological strength and valour of the race was maintained.<sup>27</sup>

Legoyt likewise argued that, despite a lack of free health services and resources in the country, the rural population was fitter and more 'vital' than the urban, which he attributed to a particular, innate force. In becoming adapted to city life, Legoyt argued, the peasant lost his morality and simplicity:

In a word, he has become too civilised, in the negative sense of the term. He represents a thoroughgoing case of degeneration, and this decline not only affects his moral faculties, but also weakens his physical strength.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Arsène Dumont, *Dépopulation et civilisation, étude démographique*, vol.13, *Bibliothèque Anthropologique* (Paris : Lacrosmier et Babé, 1890), pp.177-178.

<sup>27</sup> Dumont, *Dépopulation et civilisation*, p.178.

<sup>28</sup> Legoyt, *Du Progrès des agglomérations urbaines*, p.117. 'En un mot, il s'est trop civilisé, dans les mauvaises acceptions du terme. Il y a là une dégénérescence notoire, et cet affaïssissement ne retentit pas seulement sur ses facultés morales, il dégrade ses forces physiques.'

In most accounts, it was exposure to an urban environment that undermined the health of the rural classes. Charcot's student Charles Féré (1852 – 1907), who wrote extensively on mental pathology, degeneration and criminality, argued that urban migration exacerbated the process of decline. Country dwellers were less prepared for the stresses of city life and more prey to nervous exhaustion, which in turn left them vulnerable to criminal impulses.<sup>29</sup>

In his work on neurasthenia, Beard stressed that professionals were more prone than manual workers to neurasthenia, as intellectual demands were more taxing than physical. He argued that the harshness of rural existence, domestic service, factory work, even the life of 'savage' tribes were nowhere near as mentally exhausting as the pressures brought to bear on upper class individuals.<sup>30</sup>

With the urban environment increasingly theorised in negative terms, other aspects of modernisation were also scrutinised more critically. Military service and education, long perceived as central to the construction of French citizens, were now implicated in turning young people away from their traditional roles. Compulsory education and military service was believed to

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<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 8, 'Epuisement et criminalité', Charles Féré, *Dégénérescence et criminalité, essai physiologique* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1888). For the history of degeneration theory in Europe see Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*.

<sup>30</sup> George M. Beard, *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences* (New York, 1881), pp. 96-129. However, by 1911 there were doctors arguing that modern conditions such as neurasthenia were beginning to be seen in the country, due to the mal-adaptation of the peasant class to social change, which had left them in an ongoing state of 'moral trauma.' See Raymond Belbèze, *La Neurasthénie rurale, fréquence, causes sociales et individuelles, étude psychologique et clinique de la neurasthénie chez le paysan contemporain* (Paris : Vigot Frères, 1911), p.46



be creating a *classe déclassé*, rural people without agricultural or artisan skills. While the concept never became as established as that of nostalgia, commentators now spoke of '*mal de la ville*', or 'nostalgia for the city', homesickness for the urban environment.<sup>31</sup> It was feared that perceived attractions of city life would lead individuals to abandon their traditional homes.

Historically, military service had been the main prompt to nostalgia, while education was regarded as one of the major prophylactics against the disease. Now, both were apparently acting to invert the direction of desire. If leaving home was traumatic, the return was proving no less so. In some regions over half the young men who had finished their military service were believed to be desperate to move into an urban centre, rather than return to their homes.<sup>32</sup> The horizons that bound an individual's sense of identity and expectations had apparently been overthrown.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Émile Fourquet, 'Les Vagabonds criminels', *Revue des deux mondes*, 152, 15 March 1899, 399-437, p.401; Belbèze, *La Neurasthénie rurale*, p.33.

<sup>32</sup> Fourquet, 'Les Vagabonds criminels', pp.401-402.

<sup>33</sup> The same questions of the role of social institutions in bounding the desires of individuals were addressed in depth by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in his 1897 study of suicide. One of the central founders of French sociology, Durkheim was concerned with the tripling of the suicide rate in France over the course of the century, which he insisted should be read sociologically as well as psychiatrically. Durkheim linked the rate of suicide to the dissolution of social bonds. He believed that 'anomie' was endemic in modern life, caused by society's failure to regulate the expectations of its members. Like the compulsions of the *fugueur*, anomic desire was towards the unknown and imagined, but bound to be disappointed. See Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1897), p.256.

### 4.3 Pathologising population movement

The 1880s saw dramatic economic change in France forcing small landholders off their land, and leading to mass rural emigration and vagabondage. Despite the clear economic factors driving rural migration, the last three decades of the century saw a series of cultural crises centred on excessive population movement. Identification of the *aliéné voyageur* occurred against a backdrop where migration, vagabondage, degeneration and mental illness were seen as related. While economic and social upheaval was clearly implicated in the increased numbers of displaced people, the vagabond became a medicalised figure posing a threat to individuals and society in general. While the issues and anxieties surrounding vagabondage and mendacity were not new, the phenomena were perceived to have reached epidemic levels.<sup>34</sup>

By 1885, tramps were considered a serious enough social problem for a draconian set of laws to be passed against vagrancy.<sup>35</sup> These meant that repeat offenders faced not only imprisonment, but also deportation to penal colonies. Article 270 of the penal code made the very situation of vagrancy a crime in itself, a vagabond being any persons: 'without means ... who have neither a certain domicile nor means of subsistence, and exercise neither a habitual

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<sup>34</sup> See Timothy Smith, 'Assistance and Repression: Rural Exodus, Vagabondage and Social Crisis in France, 1880-1914,' *Journal of Social History*, 32 (1999), 821-846; Chevalier, *Labouring Classes*, pp.427-428.

<sup>35</sup> Alexandre Bérard, 'Le Vagabondage en France', in *Vacher l'éventreur et les crimes sadiques*, ed. by A. Lacassagne, vol. 19, *Bibliothèque de criminologie* (Lyon : A.A. Storck, 1899), pp.153-163, p.160.

craft or profession.’<sup>36</sup> Statistical figures supported the idea that vagabondage was actually on the increase. From around 3,000 people condemned annually for vagabondage in the 1830s, the figures had steadily risen over the decades, to almost 20,000 in 1894 (from a calculated total of 100,000 actual vagabonds).<sup>37</sup> By 1904 there were as many as 400,000 people on the road.<sup>38</sup>

Fears surrounding the seemingly inexorable rise of vagabondage were focussed on the problem of recidivism, which implied that there was an incurable sub-stratum of society who would not (rather than could not) work. Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), Director of the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, and regarded as the pre-eminent neurologist of the period, recognised external pressures fuelling the apparent epidemic of vagabondage. This led him to question whether the epidemic was best understood in socio-economic or medical terms.<sup>39</sup> However, it did not prevent him from defining a condition of pathological wandering, *automatisme ambulatoire*, discussed in more detail later.<sup>40</sup>

Literature describing population movement slipped easily between images of the vagabond as economic victim, pathological, or intrinsically criminal.

Despite the admission by government and medical officials that most peasants

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<sup>36</sup> Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics*, p.56.

<sup>37</sup> Fourquet, ‘Les Vagabonds criminels’, pp.401, 416.

<sup>38</sup> Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics*, p.56.

<sup>39</sup> For a review of theories of causality of vagabondage, including Charcot’s, see Maurice Benedikt, ‘Le Vagabondage et son traitement’, *Annales d’hygiène et médecine légale*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 24 (1890).

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Martin Charcot, *Leçons du mardi*, vol.1 (Paris : Progrès médicale, 1888), pp.155-169.

quit their homes merely in the search for work, there was a pervading sense that the rural population had a growing distaste for agricultural work, and was loosening its essential bonds to the land. A consensus emerged within the medical and psychiatric profession that while many vagabonds were forced onto the road, individuals existed for whom vagabondage was congenital, with tendencies and weaknesses that made it difficult, if not impossible, to earn a living through regular work.<sup>41</sup> As a ‘deterritorialised’ figure, the vagabond’s apparent indifference to social ties meant that they were particularly threatening. Vagabondage and the depopulation of France thus became linked as jointly threatening phenomena.

Émile Fourquet, a magistrate whose reputation was based on his successful prosecution of a vagabond serial killer, expanded his discussion of the case to become a meditation on the price of progress.<sup>42</sup> While Fourquet estimated that 64% of crimes of assassination and murder were by vagabonds, he argued that it was economic hardship and the threat of starvation that triggered rural migration. Vagabondage could be understood as a side product of new realities where rail and steam systems served big business and industry to the detriment of small artisans. However, for Fourquet, vagabondage was not just the product of economic need, it also marked the creation of new class of people who no longer knew their ‘place’, whether spatially or socially. Their

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<sup>41</sup> Benedikt, ‘Le Vagabondage et son traitement’, p.496.

<sup>42</sup> See Émile Fourquet, *Vacher* (Paris : NRF, Libraire Gallimard, 1932). Fourquet prosecuted Vacher, who was put to death in 1897 for 10 murders.

'need of excitation', the lures of capitalism, the desire to seek luxuries and excitement all contributed to their movement.

At the same time, the Inspector of Prisons argued that 57% of vagabonds were also insane.<sup>43</sup> These figures reflected a widespread belief in the social sciences that, despite the role of economic factors and changing patterns of work, the increase of vagabondage was a sign of a still deeper cultural malaise. For example, in an 1899 examination of vagabondage, the criminologist Alexandre Bérard maintained that, clear economic factors notwithstanding, there was a species of 'true' vagabonds that constituted a danger against public security and the rural population. These were solitary and egotistical individuals without family ties, in 'rebellion against society.' They were atavistic degenerates rather than products of the modern age; useless, if not dangerous, parasites, 'wild animals' in a civilised country.<sup>44</sup> Even if vagabonds were insane, this did not necessarily remove their culpability, as the physicians Benon and Froissart declared in 1908, 'fugue is an antisocial act... every individual has obligations in which he lives. From the moment that he breaks the social contract, be it instinctively or voluntarily, he puts himself outside legality.'<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Figures from Michelle Perrot, 'La Fin des vagabonds', *L'Histoire*, no.3 (1978), 23-33.

<sup>44</sup> Bérard, 'Le Vagabondage en France', pp.156-157.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Hacking, *Mad Travellers*, p.71.

#### 4.4 Insane wanderers: incoherent personality, automatism, and the will

The emergence of *aliénés voyageurs* in the medical literature must be understood in the context of French concern about vagabonds as symbols of a new, disassociated, subjectivity. These individuals were disassociated both from their social obligations and ties, and from themselves. *Aliénés voyageurs* were the extreme example of the pathologisation of wandering. They typically felt compelled to travel, often doing so in states of altered consciousness, or fugue. Contemporary physicians were divided in their arguments about the motivation and volition of their patients. In turn, recent historical attention has focussed on developing notions of double personalities and the unconscious, or their role as reflections of the psychological impact of the mechanisation of labour.<sup>46</sup> However, these case studies are equally relevant to the present study in terms of their relationship to nostalgia. While the compulsion towards travel was not generally described as being in opposition to nostalgic tendencies, the two phenomena were theorised in closely related terms.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For an extended discussion of mad travelling, mostly considered from the perspective of 'ecological niches', configurations of cultural and medical settings which allow the proliferation of particular psychiatric diagnoses, see Hacking, *Mad Travellers*. The historian Jean-Claude Beaune argues the automatic, machine-like nature of the vagabond was central to its symbolic power. Vagabonds operated as a demonstration of the limitations of education and social reformers, subverting these modern regimes through their assertion of an irremediable, biological destiny. As the contradiction to the idea of the rational industrialised man, they operated as the negative image of industrial society at work – *en marche* (at work, or on the march). Just as workers had their labour increasingly automated and mechanised, the vagabond was machine-like, akin to a train off the rails, acting without will or deliberation, driven by faulty reflexes until dead. See Jean-Claude Beaune, *Le Vagabond et la machine : essai sur l'automatisme ambulatoire : médecine, technique et société en France 1880-1910* (Seyssel : Champ Vallon, 1983).

<sup>47</sup> An exception to this is the work of the sociologist Guérin Raoul-Robert-Marie de la Grasserie, explored in more detail in Chapter 6. He developed a schema describing human development in which nostalgia and 'odalgism' operated as the two extremes along a continuum of attachment to the home and the past. Guérin Raoul-Robert-Marie de la

Nostalgia had been the pathological expression of an overly close relationship to one's roots, and indicated an inability to acclimatise to different environments that was seemingly incompatible with the demands of modern society. In contrast, these new disease entities described individuals who had rejected their place, rather than suffering from its loss. Both disorders of wandering and nostalgia saw an individual rejecting the identity demanded of them by their milieu. In both, concerns about movement and attachment to land, and issues seen as emblematic of modern society (such as cosmopolitanism, and deracination, or uprootedness) were in operation. Wanderers were no longer 'kept in their place', and indeed, did not seem to know where their place was, if anywhere.

The first medical paper that identified the 'travelling mad' as a distinct set of the insane was published in 1875 by Achille Foville (1831-1887), the Director of the insane asylum of Le Harve. In an article entitled '*Les aliénés voyageurs ou migrants*' in the *Annales médico-psychologiques*, Foville described a set of patients who had arrived at the busy Le Havre port either in the course of, or due to, their condition.<sup>48</sup> He categorised these as: 'imbeciles' who lived in a form of instinctive vagabondage; dipsomaniacs who travelled in the course of their periodic debauches; epileptics who wandered in a state of unconscious fugue; and those who sought to travel, without goal or conscious idea of why

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Grasserie, 'De la nostalgie et des instincts contraires comme facteurs psychologiques & sociaux', *extrait de la Revue internationale de sociologie* (Paris : 1911).

<sup>48</sup> Achille Foville, 'Les Aliénés voyageurs ou migrants', *Annales médico-psychologiques* (Paris : 1875), 5-45.

they were travelling. The final group, who interested him most, were insane individuals who travelled consciously and with a particular aim in mind, undertaking long voyages, which they needed to be able to systematically plan and carry out. Foville categorised this group as *lypémaniques*, sufferers from a type of melancholy with delusions. Such individuals were to be more commonly labelled in the later literature as the ‘Captives’; captive to, and captivated by, the need to travel and the lure of the new.

Foville rejected the doctrine of monomanias, and in his analysis travelling was a symptom of a systematic insanity, not an expression of a specific madness in its own right. Foville’s work was cited extensively in the later literature, but his caveat was largely ignored. Instead, the next three decades saw the construction of multiple diseases, whose common factor and focus was that of excessive movement. This movement could be both contained within the body of the individual, in tics, jerks and expansive physical movement and gestures, or, most importantly, in the act of dislocation, travel and obsessional wandering. Thus, sufferers might ‘shift from side to side’, while their arms ‘toss[ed] and oscillate[d] constantly like two long pendulums.’ Constrained to stop for an instant in order to speak, they would fidget, hop up and down, with their arms always active and gesturing.<sup>49</sup> While this urge towards movement might be indicated by excess movements of the

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<sup>49</sup> Philippe Tissié, *Les Aliénés voyageurs : essai médico-psychologique* (Paris : Octave Doin, 1887), p.16. ‘Il marche en se dandinant d’un côté et d’autre, tandis que ses deux bras ballottent et oscillent constamment comme deux longs pendules.’



body, its expression was primarily spatial, from individuals who wandered the streets of Paris, to those impelled to traverse all of Europe.

The new diseases of wandering carried multiple levels of significance for the doctors and psychologists who explored them. They raised not only the spectre of increasing rates of insanity and detachment from social ties, but also broader questions about personality and the self. With its loss of connection to the external world, and the apparent ability of sufferers to operate as if they were another person, fugue raised unsettling questions about the possibility of double or split personalities, and the actions of the unconscious and automatic processes of the self.<sup>50</sup> The emergence of new medical or psychiatric disorders can be attributed to the new conditions affecting the population, or improved methods of diagnosis. In the case of wandering disorders, both were believed the case, and they became a fertile ground for professional competition as factions in the emerging psychiatric community incorporated them into their explanatory systems.

When Charcot coined the term *automatisme ambulatoire* in 1888, it was to describe the case of Mén, a Parisian deliveryman who had experienced a number of fugue episodes. As Charcot described, Mén would suddenly find himself somewhere unexpected. He would find that he was left with an unexplained gap of time, of which he had little memory. Mén would

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<sup>50</sup> For a history of multiple personalities see Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

subsequently discover that he had interacted with numerous people during his 'absences', and even carried out some of his deliveries. Charcot believed that such absences were automatic states triggered by epilepsy, and effectively involved the imposition of another self onto the conscious mind.<sup>51</sup> The term *automatisme ambulatoire* was widely taken up and quoted by the profession, reflecting the influence of the Salpêtrière, and Charcot as its Director, in the last decades of the century.

Yet the exact nature and causes of wandering in a second state of consciousness become increasingly controversial within the psychiatric profession. This controversy focused on the origin of the condition (whether epileptic or hysterical) and reflected broader institutional rivalries.<sup>52</sup> The picture developed by the Bordeaux Faculty of Medicine, led by Professors Pitres and Régis, shifted the understanding of the obsessive wanderers considerably.<sup>53</sup> Henri-Barthélemy Géhin, Philippe Tissié and Victor-Charles Dubourdieu, all students at Bordeaux, developed their own sub-categories of

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<sup>51</sup> Jean-Martin Charcot, *Leçons du mardi*, pp.155-169.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Hacking has suggested that the main difference between the schools was Bordeaux's definition of the condition as having a hysterical basis, while for Charcot it was primarily of epileptic origin. This distinction, which, as he notes, now makes little sense, was at the time highly controversial. See Hacking, *Mad Travellers*, pp.32-37. Similar issues dogged the study of hysteria, with a provincial school, in this case Nancy, setting up models of hysteria in conflict to those of Paris. On the Nancy School, and the importance of institutional rivalries in the construction of clinical categories, see Ruth Harris, *Murders and Madness: Medicine, Law, and Society in the fin de siècle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.177-181.

<sup>53</sup> Jean-Claude Beaune presents a less polarised model of the relation between the Schools. He suggests that the forms of wandering conditions defined in Bordeaux were not necessarily new categories. Rather, they formed part of the progressive solidification of a scientific notion of heredity at the basis of such conditions, the extension of the intermediate concept found in Charcot's *automatisme ambulatoire*. See Beaune, *Le Vagabond et la machine* pp.148-149.

wandering disorders, which were adopted and further developed by their professors.

In his 1892 thesis, Géhin argued that epileptics, with their loss of consciousness of the external world, were the ‘true sufferers’ of *automatisme ambulatoire*.<sup>54</sup> He understood the condition as amounting to a loss of self, a loss which extended to the victims’ control over their bodies as well as their memories, so that the ‘human machine is realised’. He argued that this state indicated that an *autre moi*, or other self, had effectively imposed its will on the sufferer who became like an automaton.<sup>55</sup> Yet, while ostensibly acknowledging Charcot’s terminology, Géhin also criticised it as being too vague, and argued that there were also insane travellers who suffered from neurasthenia.

In contrast to epileptic wanderers, neurasthenic travellers voyaged due to a state of *aboulie* [abulia], or lack of will power.<sup>56</sup> The idea of voyaging imposed itself on their minds and they were powerless to resist it:

With the neurasthenic, there is no longer the desire or instinct to  
be underway... rather there is a need to go, to see the country, it is

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<sup>54</sup> Henri-Barthélemy Géhin, ‘Contribution á l’étude de l’automatisme ambulatoire ou vagabondage impulsif’ (medical thesis, Bordeaux, 1892), 48, no.28, p.11.

<sup>55</sup> Géhin, ‘Contribution á l’étude de l’automatisme ambulatoire’, p.100. Nostalgic soldiers were also portrayed as automata, since, with their affective life almost entirely focussed inwardly, they were left passively respondent to external manipulation. In both cases, sufferers operated in accordance to an internal subjectivity which had a distorted or incongruent relationship to external realities.

<sup>56</sup> On the importance of abulia as a late nineteenth-century category see G.E. Berrios and M., Gili, ‘Abulia and implusiveness revisited: a conceptual history’, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 92 (1995), 161-167.

necessary for the neurasthenic to walk and change places, because he imagines that this will 'make him well', not because it is necessary to walk.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, desire slides into instinct, which in turn is conflated with imperative need.

For Géhin, the wanderer had no goal in particular and relief was found in the process of moving, in the journey itself. Like nostalgics, who were notoriously difficult to cure, since reveries of home afforded them their only relief, but also constituted their disease, the victims of this compulsion towards wandering were unwilling to give up their condition. The root of the illness was also where they found their release.

The main claim of the Bordeaux School was that there existed a purely neurasthenic form of insane travelling, dubbed *dromomania* by Dubourdieu in his doctoral thesis of 1894.<sup>58</sup> His professors adopted this term and emphasised that it was an obsessive compulsion towards movement with its basis in *dégénérescence*. They further suggested that it could be extended to describe not just a conscious urge towards movement but also to certain fugue states. This meant that fugue did not necessarily have to be connected to ideas of

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<sup>57</sup> Géhin, 'Contribution á l'étude de l'automatisme ambulatoire', p.97. 'Chez le neurasthénique il n'y a plus le désir, l'instinct de se mettre en route ... il y a le besoin de marcher, de voir du pays, il faut que le neurasthénique marche et change d'endroit, parce qu'ils s'imaginent que 'cela lui fera du bien' et non pas parce qu'il marche nécessairement.'

<sup>58</sup> Victor-Charles Dubourdieu, 'Contribution á l'étude de automatisme ambulatoire de la dromomanie des dégénérés' (medical thesis, Bordeaux, 1894), no.66.

amnesia or automatism.<sup>59</sup> Removing wandering from the lineage of amnesia and automatism placed these theories firmly within the structures of degeneration theory. Neurasthenic wanderers were held to suffer from a purely psychic condition, in which a feebleness of will made them potentially open to being overwhelmed by their desires. These wanderers had not lost their personalities to another 'self', but were simply driven by an irresistible impulse. In this model, wandering was the product of the unravelling of the self, rather than its doubling.

The lack of, or suppression of, will was an important aspect of these conditions. In his influential work of 1883, the psychologist Théodule Ribot (whose work is examined in detail in Chapter 5) argued that volition was the highest form of activity, and hence the last to have evolved. Since the dissolution of the personality followed the opposite order to that of evolution, a weakness or abolition of will returned the individual to the 'reign of instincts', ruled by the less sophisticated automatic functions, which demanded immediate satisfaction of their needs and desires.<sup>60</sup> Wandering could therefore be understood as a state of atavism, or regression. Bordeaux Professor Emmanuel Régis applied the concept of *dromomania* to vagabonds whom he believed became almost absorbed into the non-human world. His approach was extended in 1908 by two Parisian psychologists, Marie and

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<sup>59</sup> Albert Pitres and Emmanuel Régis, *Les Obsessions et les impulsions* (Paris : Octave Doin, 1902).

<sup>60</sup> Théodule Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté* (Paris : Libraire Germer Baillière, 1883), pp.148-161.

Raymond Meunier, who concluded that vagabonds were in effect following a migratory impulse in which they acted out the memories of their ancestors.<sup>61</sup>

As a sign of degeneracy this psychic feebleness also threatened the nation, explicitly so in Pitres and Régis' analysis, since they were concerned with the rates of army desertion. Fugue replaced nostalgia's role in military medicine as a strategy of psychic retreat. It was subject to the same kind of close analysis that attempted to detect simulation, made more complicated in this case as the psychic retreat was now also a physical one:

Impulsive escapades are relatively frequent amongst soldiers. This can be explained by the unfortunate fact that a great number of them are degenerate to varying degrees, in the absence of selection on the grounds of psychic as well as physical fitness, and by the fact that the impulses of these individuals, who are continually subjected to rigorous discipline, quite naturally tend to take the form of escapades.<sup>62</sup>

This represented not only a plea for psychiatric screening of recruits and a warning of degeneracy within the ranks. It also indicated that such a

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<sup>61</sup> Marie and R. Meunier, *Les Vagabonds* (Paris : V. Girard & E. Brière, 1908), p.25. For a detailed North American analysis along similar lines see Linus W. Kline, 'The Migratory Impulse vs Love of Home', *The American Journal of Psychology*, vol. X No 1, Oct, 1898: 1-81.

<sup>62</sup> A. Pitres, and E. Régis, *Les Obsessions et les impulsions*, p.338. '*La fugue impulsive est relativement fréquente chez les soldats, ce qui s'explique et par le nombre malheureusement trop grand chez eux des dégénérés à tous les degrés, faute d'une sélection psychique aussi bien que physique à la révision, et par la tournure naturelle à l'escapade que tend à prendre l'impulsivité chez des individus rigoureusement tenus par la discipline.*'

medicalisation of desertion could theoretically operate to mitigate the severe penalties and potential court martial that a deserter might otherwise face.

#### 4.5 The 'captives' of modernity

Despite the Bordeaux School's interest in neurasthenic forms of wandering, the most important case study to emerge from the School had much in common with Charcot's theorisation. Philippe Tissié (1852 - 1925) was a Bordeaux doctor who became fascinated by the case presented by Albert Dadas, which was to form the basis for his influential *Les Aliénés voyageurs* (*Insane Travellers*) of 1887. Tissié first encountered Dadas in 1886 when, while still working to complete his medical degree at Bordeaux, he found Dadas in a hospital ward, weeping on a bed. According to Tissié, he wept because he could not prevent himself from departing on a trip when the need took him. He deserted family, work and daily life to walk as fast as he could, straight ahead. Sometimes Dadas travelled 70 kilometres a day on foot, until in the end he would be arrested for vagrancy and thrown into prison.<sup>63</sup>

Tissié confirmed that while in his state of fugue, or 'captivation', Dadas was able to walk over 60 kilometres a day, apparently without fatigue. In a normal state, he became exhausted after 30 or 40. This led Tissié to conclude that the nervous system played the principal role in physical work and exertion.

Following up this hypothesis by observing cyclists and highly trained athletes, he concluded that extreme fatigue could produce the same phenomena of

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<sup>63</sup> Philippe Tissié, *Les Aliénés voyageurs*, p.3.

second personality as were seen in Dadas during his periods of altered consciousness.<sup>64</sup> Tissié's determination that physical strength was a necessary corollary to mental health was based on these observations, as was the conviction that strength and endurance must be built without excessive exhaustion. This conviction led to his ongoing involvement in the role of rational programmes of gymnastics in schools and the army.

Numerous historical works have demonstrated the extent to which the medical language of decline, fatigue, and degeneration pervaded French social and political commentary throughout the Third Republic. Defeat in the Franco-Prussian conflict led to fundamental questions about the health and strength of the population and the ability of the French to thrive in the modern environment.<sup>65</sup> The health of the nation was believed to be threatened by depopulation, alcoholism, crime, rising suicide rates and degeneration. Strategies to overcome the nation's 'exhaustion' were pervasive. Across Europe, sporting clubs became identified with the development of patriotic feeling, and in France, sports clubs, including cycling, alpinism, skiing, trekking, and especially gymnastics, were founded from the 1870s. They related physical and mental well-being, and so sought the restoration of physical energy and moral vigour to the nation. Sport became the means by which the nation could be regenerated, physically and morally.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Tissié, *L'Éducation physique et la Race* (Paris : Ernest Flammarion, 1919), pp.286-288.

<sup>65</sup> Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics*; Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> Weber, *France: fin de siècle* p.214; Nye, 'Sport, Regeneration, and National Revival', Chapter 9, *Crime, Madness and Politics*, pp.310-329. See Pierre Arnaud, 'Dividing and



Tissié was the ‘founding father’ of the gymnastics movement in France. His interest in the regenerating effects of sport was in part due to his work with insane wanderers. Tissié became the founder and president of the French (originally Bordeaux) League of Physical Education and gave the League its motto: *pour la patrie; par le foyer; par l’école; par la caserne* (for the Motherland; through the Home, the School, and the Barracks). He argued that physical education must be considered in terms of the energetic gains it would generate to the profit of the nation. In the final chapter of *L’Éducation physique et la Race*, (*Physical Education and the Race*) Tissié traced the evolution of physical culture in France from 1888 to 1918. Here, he referred extensively to the case of Dadas and its influence on his thinking on energy and exhaustion.<sup>67</sup>

Tissié’s interest in Dadas stemmed from the insights he believed the case provided into the promotion of mental and physical health. He regarded Dadas, whose story was largely recounted under hypnosis, as a representative of the type of wanderers he found the most interesting. These he termed, after Charcot, the *captives*. Unlike those who wandered under the influence of delirium or hallucinations, instinctively or without reflection, the ‘captives’ appeared to have normal judgement and powers of deliberation, which had

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Uniting: Sports Societies and Nationalism, 1870 –1914’, in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France: From Boulangism to the Great War, 1889-1918*, ed. by Robert Tombs (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), pp.182-194.

<sup>67</sup> Philippe Tissié, *L’Éducation physique*, p.295.

been displaced by the imposition of an *idée fixe*.<sup>68</sup> Tissié recorded and analysed Dadas' dreams as well as hypnotising him, in order to try and penetrate into the second state of consciousness in which Dadas travelled. He concluded that these cases seemed to involve the subordination of the self to another:

There is an inhibition and the penetration of one will by another, rather like a violation of a residence, with the masters tied up and confined, while the intruder gives orders to the servants.<sup>69</sup>

Dadas travelled obsessively, and without identity, not knowing who he was or why he travelled. When he 'came to' he would have little memory of how he got there, and would do odd jobs, and scrounge money, in order to work his way home. Doctors interested in the case meticulously traced his story and verified it through such events as his arrest in Moscow as a nihilist in 1881; arrests for vagrancy or desertion within France; and cases where the local French consul had provided him with money.<sup>70</sup> The feats of insane travellers

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<sup>68</sup> The *idée fixe* at the base of Tissié's classification relied on the theory of monomanias rejected by Foville. Foville's *voyageurs*' journeys were the internally logical result of their systematic madness, which they could remember and provide accounts for. At the same time, Foville's group of *aliénés voyageurs* could be seen as falling into broadly the category which Tissié dubs *les hallucinés*, or the 'hallucinators', who suffered visions of persecution, sensory delirium, and who he compares to religious ecstasies. My purpose here is not to try and unravel all the threads of contradiction which mark the literature, but to demonstrate that the history of medico-psychiatric theories must be read within a context of competing theoretical systems and languages.

<sup>69</sup> Tissié, *Les Aliénés voyageurs*, p.110. '*Il y a inhibition et pénétration d'une volonté dans une autre, quelque chose comme un viol de domicile avec ligature et séquestration de maîtres de la maison pendant que l'intrus commande en chef aux domestiques.*'

<sup>70</sup> For a more extensive analysis of Dadas' adventures see Hacking, 'The First Fugueur', Chapter 1, *Mad Travellers*, pp.7-30. Hacking also includes a number of primary documents relating to Dadas' case, pp.135-192.

like Dadas, who became notorious for managing trips as far as Algeria, Moscow and Constantinople, were not only impressive from the point of physical endurance. Obviously, to travel successfully, Dadas must have appeared to act normally. However, he would also have had to manage the business of proving who he was. While after 1871, passports were no longer required for travel within the country, it was still necessary to carry identity papers. To travel without these was to risk being impounded as a vagabond, as Dadas experienced on a number of occasions.<sup>71</sup>

Dadas, like many fellow sufferers, was conscious of early signs of an imminent need to travel. Overhearing a conversation, he would feel compelled to set out, but this journey would not be completely unplanned; he always managed to get some money and identity papers together, even if he almost invariably lost these en-route. He was an example of an individual captivated by, and captive to, dreams of novelty and driven by the need to experience it directly:

Before his escape, he thinks of a city whose name has struck him. He imagines himself seeing superb monuments there. Little by little the desire to visit them takes over his mind, and one fine day, he leaves, abandoning parents, family and interests; captivated by an imperious desire, he visits the country represented to him by his over-excited imagination. When after many worries and fatigues, he reaches the end of his journey, he always experiences

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<sup>71</sup> For an early history of the passport in France, see Adrien Sée, *Le Passeport en France* (Châtres : Edmond Garnier, 1907)

a cruel disappointment. The reality does not correspond to the dreamed-of splendours which charmed him, but this experience does not do him any good. Sometime later, captivated anew by the desire to visit a new place, he will set out again without any other reason than to satisfy his need.<sup>72</sup>

Tissié documented a phenomenon with some striking resonances, as well as crucial differences, to nostalgia. Like the nostalgic, the captive wanderer operated in relation to thoughts that provided a more satisfactory reality than the external world. In contrast to the nostalgic, however, whose desires for home led to a passive retreat into the internal world, for wanderers like Dadas, the obsession operated as the trigger to physical displacement in order to fulfil the imagined vision. Such constant, yet futile, pursuit of the new was in stark contrast to the nostalgic, who pined for the old and familiar, and found his cure in returning to them. Unlike the nostalgic whose dreams were apparently satisfied by reaching home again, such wanderers were forever doomed to have their desires frustrated.

Nostalgia itself was a disease of the imagination, but an imagination that reproduced reality (or something close enough to it) so that return to the

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<sup>72</sup> Tissié, *Les Aliénés voyageurs*, p.6. 'Avant de s'échapper, il songe à ville dont le nom a frappé ses oreilles. Il se figure y rencontrer des monuments superbes. Le désir de la visiter s'empare peu à peu de son esprit, et un beau jour il part abandonnant parents, famille, intérêts ; captivé par le désir impérieux, il visite le pays que lui représente son imagination surexcitée. Toujours il éprouve une cruelle déception quand après bien des soucis et des fatigues il arrive au terme de son voyage. La réalité ne correspond pas aux splendeurs de rêve qui l'avait charmé, mais cette expérience ne lui servira à rien. Quelque temps après, captivé de nouveau, par le désir de visiter une nouvelle localité, il repart sans autre raison que celle de satisfaire son besoin.'

imagined state was satisfactory. While the nostalgic sought return and repetition, the captive wanderers craved the new; thus the completion of one journey only acted as impetus to another. This reflected a sense of dissatisfaction with one's original home as the only location with the potential to act as a place of 'belonging', a reaction to the broadening horizons offered either in proxy or actuality through education, travel and literature. Disputes among doctors as to the true nature of 'home' were now being acted out in the internal conflicts of individuals who constantly sought a physical place on which to ground their psychological well-being.

Tissié's account points to an unspoken sub-narrative as to the changing nature of pathologies of dislocation. From the mid-century, development of photographic technologies made visual images, whether of the home, or exotic and hitherto inaccessible places, increasingly available to a mass audience. Walter Benjamin's discussion of the 'aura' attached to an original artwork or artefact in an era when mechanical reproduction allowed the production of numerous copies reflects the relationship of wanderers to their diverse objects of desire:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place for it happens to be.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973), p.214.

For Benjamin, the 'aura' of an original object related to its uniqueness in time and place. As reproductions of the original became more readily accessible, so too did the desire to bring things 'closer' spatially, to experience directly the reality of the object.<sup>74</sup> The captive wanderers could be said to be acting out this impulse; 'struck' by the aural or visual representations of the unknown, they reacted with a desire to access the original. Photography arguably contributed to the decline of nostalgia while encouraging travel, visual images allowing the imaginative connection with the home to be retained, while acting as potential triggers of interest in new landscapes.<sup>75</sup>

#### 4.6 The role and nature of 'home'

One characteristic of the fugue states suffered by patients like Dadas was a consciousness of the early signs of an imminent need to travel. Yet, when he finally 'came to', his immediate and overwhelming desire was to return home. Tissié stated that Dadas was torn between a fascination with faraway places, and despair that the need to travel meant he could not have a normal life.<sup>76</sup> This ambivalence points to the persistent importance of the role played by

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<sup>74</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art, p.217.

<sup>75</sup> Photography was regarded as a powerful new tool in criminology and psychiatry, reflecting the persistence of the belief that personality could be inferred by appearance. Important texts include Désiré Magloire Bourneville and Paul-Marie-Léon Regnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (service de M. Charcot) (Paris : Progrès médical, 1876-1880) and Alphonse Bertillon, *La Photographie judiciaire, avec un appendice sur la classification et l'identification anthropométriques* (Paris : Gauthier-Villars et fils, 1890).

<sup>76</sup> In his later fugues Dadas appeared to be delighted when recognised as Tissié's special patient, and the 'home' he returned to was his physician's care. Without labouring the psychoanalytic possibilities, it seems enough to note that Dadas once commenced a fugue journey on the day he was to celebrate his engagement to point to the obvious ambiguities surrounding ideas of home and stability inherent in the condition. Questions of secondary gain are discussed extensively in Ian Hacking's *Mad Travellers*, see pp. 49-50.

'home', in different manifestations, as a point of desire or repulsion, at the heart of all such wandering disorders.

In his 1907 lectures to the Harvard Medical School, Pierre Janet (1859-1947) emphasised this tension in a number of cases of fugue. Charcot's student and collaborator, Janet took over Ribot's Chair at the College de France in 1902. He introduced the terms dissociation and subconscious into psychological terminology, and was influential in creating connections between academic psychology and clinical treatment of mental illnesses in both France and the United States. In his treatment of fugue Janet pointed out that not only did recollections of the period spent in a state of altered consciousness disappear but so did the feelings and thoughts associated with it. For example, he described the case of 'Rou', a grocer's boy. When in a fugue state, Rou was obsessed with finding a way to Africa, leaving Paris on foot to seek a sea town from where he could depart. However, in his normal state, he was content with his position and had no wish for adventure:

He does not continually feel this longing for travels, and even grieves very much when you speak to him about his fugue. He is afraid they may begin again, since he comes of himself to hospital in order to get advice and be rid of them. I insist on that point.<sup>77</sup>

For Janet, the tragedy of the condition was that people did not really want to leave home, but were driven to do so through a weakness of will.

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<sup>77</sup> Pierre Janet, *The Major Symptoms of Hysteria* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p.56.

A case study from Dubourdieu, another student of the Bordeaux school, reinforces the point that such pathologised wandering was not random, but operated between highly specific points. Dubourdieu described at length the case of Auguste L.<sup>78</sup> In late adolescence Auguste, from the town of Vaison, developed an unmotivated desire for change, from which he could not be dissuaded. This led him to plan obsessively, and eventually embark on, voyages. These journeys reoccurred sporadically, generally some months apart, and at first were short lived. Typically, massive headaches heralded the desire to leave, and Auguste could do nothing but talk about and plan his travels. The subsequent journey relieved his symptoms and he had a period of tranquillity, followed by another cycle. In 1891, upon his family moving to Bordeaux, Auguste joined the army, where he was reportedly happy in service. It was not until his regiment moved away and he was refused leave to return to Bordeaux, that the desire reasserted itself, and he set out.

Quitting the army, Auguste's goals were Bordeaux, and then Vaison, journeys involving a return home in two senses - first to his family, and then to his birthplace, both traditional sites of nostalgic desire. On Auguste's eventual return to the army he was punished and continued to serve until 1893 when the pattern repeated itself, with another attempt to return to Bordeaux without leave. This time he was tried for desertion and despite the intervention of a medical witness, sentenced to prison.<sup>79</sup> Here the crises resumed in full force,

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<sup>78</sup> Dubourdieu, 'Contribution á l'étude de automatisme ambulatoire', pp.66-72.

<sup>79</sup> Régis, Professor at the Bordeaux Faculty of Medicine, and one of Dubourdieu's teachers, acted as this expert witness.



but being unable to act on them, Auguste fell back on the traditional escape route of the nostalgic, in the creation of internal fantasies which substituted for his unsatisfactory surroundings, and in which he fulfilled his desires, in this case to travel far more extensively, and in particular to Africa.

Dubourdieu's interest in Auguste was based around his need to travel, and so in his analysis, the actual destinations to which he travelled were of lesser interest. However, these locations were highly significant in terms of the home. Before his army service forced him away from it, Auguste's fugues had been away from home, but during his service, and on regaining his freedom, he did not act on his prison fantasies, but instead chose to return to his birthplace. Whether this was his final journey is impossible to ascertain, since the case study ends there.<sup>80</sup> The case can be read as that of an individual endlessly trapped between oscillating desires away from and towards the home. When his separation from home was enforced while allowing him no other sources of movement, these tensions were apparently resolved.

The question of where 'home' could be found continued to have nationalistic overtones in late nineteenth-century France. These were perhaps most acute for those from Alsace-Lorraine, who were forced to choose their nationality after the Prussian conquest. French defeat in the Franco-Prussian conflict left scars that operated on many levels in the last decades of the century, prompting fears of national decline, a spur to nationalist politics and the *la*

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<sup>80</sup> Dubourdieu, 'Contribution á l'étude de automatisme ambulatoire', pp.66-72.

*revanche* (revenge) movement dedicated to the reclamation of the Alsace-Lorraine region. An example is the case of 'Joseph', a 28 year old, described by Foville. Born in Metz, Joseph's troubles began after the 1871 Prussian conquest of the city. Joseph chose French nationality and his subsequent anxiety over his future caused him to become mentally troubled.

By the beginning of 1873 Joseph was obsessed by hallucinations and ideas of persecution. Everything around him seemed to be menacing, and when procuring a sword, revolver and iron armour failed to make him feel any more secure, he departed for France. Travelling the country incessantly, Joseph believed Prussian spies were pursuing him, and soon, the voices of his mother and sister joined his other persecutors. His increasingly strange behaviour brought him to the notice of the police, and in March 1873 he was admitted to Foville's asylum in Le Harve. Like many authors, Foville was surprisingly silent on the exact methods by which he was cured. However, Joseph began to recognise his family as his again (rather than as enemies substituted by the Prussians for his true relations). Eventually, he was released into their care, returning with them to Metz. For Joseph the notion of 'home' had been complicated by political change. Ultimately, however, to regain his health, he needed to maintain a relationship to his home and family.<sup>81</sup>

The sociologist Raoul de la Grasserie argued that the take-over of a region by a foreign power, such as that experienced by Alsace-Lorraine, could cause

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<sup>81</sup> Foville, 'Les Aliénés voyageurs ou migrants', pp.13-17.

mass nostalgia within the ethnic group. Preferring 'exile to the renunciation of their nationality' these were people whose national identity was centred on cultural, linguistic and political criteria. They could renounce their original home, but not prevent the development of a severe nostalgia for this 'home', one still tied up with the physical landscape.<sup>82</sup> Ironically, it was those most wedded to a sense of national identity who were forced to give up their home in its cause. The dilemmas for identity prompted by the loss of Alsace-Lorraine were influentially demonstrated in the children's book *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants*.<sup>83</sup> First published in 1877, the book sold over 3 million copies in the next decade. By 1900, it had doubled that number, running into 300 editions and becoming a compulsory text in the now standardised and compulsory state schooling system. Its ideological power was immediate, and persistent, acting, suggest Jacques and Mona Ozouf as 'The Little Red Book' of the nascent Third Republic.<sup>84</sup>

*Le Tour de la France* describes the adventures of Adrien and Julien Valden. After the death of their father (while he was preparing for their emigration to

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<sup>82</sup> Grasserie, 'De la Nostalgie et des instincts contraires', p.12.

<sup>83</sup> The book was subtitled *Devoir et patrie*, or *Duty and Motherland*. Extracts were also published under the title of *Le Deux petites patriotes*, or *The Two Little Patriots*. G. Bruno [pseud Madame Alfred J. E. Fouillée], *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants*, 13<sup>th</sup> edition (Paris, 1878); G. Bruno (ed. by H Attwell), *Le Deux petites patriotes* (London: Librairie Hachette, 1891).

<sup>84</sup> Jacques and Mona Ozouf, 'Le Tour de la France par deux enfants', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, vol.1 *La République* (Paris : Gallimard, 1984), pp.291-321. As Eugen Weber notes, the *Tour de France* bicycle race was not only 'highly reminiscent' of *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants*, but partly reproduced its route. The *Tour* was established in 1901 by the *l'Auto* magazine as a publicity venture, and in 1903-1904 for the first time, traversed the entire country. See Weber, *France: fin de siècle*, p.210; *The Tour de France 1903-2003: A Century of Sporting Structures, Meanings and Values*, ed. by Hugh Dauncey and Jeff Hare (London and Portland : Frank Cass, 2003).

France following Prussian annexation of their home town), they decide to travel to France in order to avoid being made into German citizens. Their journeys in search of their uncle take them all over France, which they learn to love and appreciate in all its regions. Adrien and Juliens' wandering is celebrated by the text; their knowledge of the country allows them to embrace all of it as 'home'. *Le Tour de la France* carried an explicitly patriotic message, about the unity of the French nation. It suggested that this sense of connection could be fostered through following the progress of the 'little patriots'. It also suggests that to love one's country is to know it in its entirety, a process that the book itself imaginatively fulfils.

The adventures of the orphans Adrien and Julien reflect similar processes to those of the *aliénés voyageurs* in deciding how and where 'home' could best be found. Adrien and Julien suffered pangs of homesickness when they returned to Phalsbourg to complete the paperwork that would allow them to become French citizens. But their overall desire to be French soon displaced this more local affection. They had to decide between the attraction to the more specific location, local affections and a broader affiliation. As the Ozoufs observe, having lost their father, they are now in search of a mother, and that mother is *la patrie*.<sup>85</sup> Medical and literary accounts drew the same conclusion - that knowing one's home was no longer straightforward, but had become a process to be learnt, negotiating the numerous places that could act as potential points of identification.

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<sup>85</sup> Ozouf, 'Le Tour de la France par deux enfants', p.313.

The vagabond, the automatic wanderer, and the *fugueur* all acted as figures that condensed a number of, often contradictory, concerns articulated through the phenomena of pathological wandering and travelling within medical, legal, criminological and sociological discourses. These conditions became symbolic of the sense of dislocation and dissolution within the individual psyche and French society, which became the subject of extensive psychological investigation at the *fin de siècle*.

## ***Chapter 5 - Evolution and dissolution: the transformation of nostalgia***

Given his central role in the development of scientific and experimental psychology in France, Théodule Ribot (1839-1916) has been the subject of surprisingly little academic attention. Born in Brittany in 1839, Ribot was a key figure, institutionally and intellectually, in the development of psychological science in France.<sup>1</sup> Ribot was primarily a theorist rather than a practitioner, whose strengths lay in his ability to synthesise and elucidate ideas in an accessible manner. His voluminous works were not necessarily ground breaking but reached far beyond a narrow professional field. Taken as a whole his work charts the central concerns of French psychology during the period. His enormously popular monographs covered the psychology and pathologies of heredity, attention, the will, emotions, personality, and memory.<sup>2</sup> They acted as a departure point for mapping out a new theoretical paradigm of experimental psychology and its dissemination and

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<sup>1</sup> Ribot gained doctorates in both philosophy and psychology at the Sorbonne in 1873, and published prolifically over four decades. In 1876, with Pierre Janet and Hippolyte Taine, he established the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*. The journal was dedicated to new trends in psychology and philosophy and disseminated much of the early works of Charcot and the Salpêtrière school. From 1888, Ribot held a chair in experimental and comparative psychology, created for him at the *Collège de France*. For accounts of Ribot's life and work see Serge Nicolas and David J. Murray, 'Le Fondateur de la psychologie "scientifique" française: Théodule Ribot (1839-1916)', *Psychologie et histoire*, 1 (2000), 1-42, and 'Théodule Ribot (1839-1916), Founder of French Psychology: a biographical introduction', *History of Psychology*, 2 (1999), 277-301.

<sup>2</sup> Some of Ribot's most influential works included: *Les Maladies de la mémoire* (Paris : Baillière, 1881); *Les Maladies de la volonté* (Paris : Baillière, 1883); *Les Maladies de la personnalité* (Paris : Alcan, 1885); *Psychologie de l'attention* (Paris : Alcan, 1889); *La Psychologie des sentiments* (Paris : Alcan, 1896). For example, Ribot's *Les Maladies de la mémoire* went through 29 editions in the next half century, and his *Maladies de la volonté*, 37.

institutionalisation. In Ribot's theoretical framework, the automatism seen in passive nostalgics and impulsive wanderers could both be considered as having the same origin; a regression to the reign of instincts and desires outside conscious volition.

Ribot was the sole late nineteenth-century theorist to develop a new theory of nostalgia, one which integrated its clinical symptoms with the expanded sense now found in its literary forms. Ribot's concern with nostalgia was located within a broader theoretical trend, which saw memory become invested with emotional content. This shift meant that memory was no longer a rational, linguistic-based function, allowing it to subsume many of the characteristics previously associated with imagination. Memory was simultaneously made central to the formation of subjectivity, while its ability to reflect reality accurately became questionable. Ribot's version of memory allowed for the production of a version of nostalgia equally suited to appropriation by primitivist accounts, and to reconceptualisation as the illusory and unstable recall of individual and national pasts. His analysis of nostalgia in terms of emotional memory framed it in such a way as to project its older, place-bound, aspects onto the 'primitive', while allowing it to become reconceptualised in non-pathological terms as a specific type of engagement with the past, constituting a universal human inheritance.

While British psychologists had created a naturalistic psychology based almost entirely on the 'association of ideas', and German theorists were trying to introduce quantification and measurement into the study of mental

experience, Victor Cousin's 'eclecticism' became the dominant school in French psychology in the mid-nineteenth century. Cousin (1792–1867) and his followers took a 'spiritualist' or 'psychological' approach to questions about consciousness, treating the mind and body dualistically, with the mind having its own mode of working that could be investigated only through thought.<sup>3</sup> A reaction to earlier sensationalist thought associated with Cabanis, which linked mental and physical processes, it held that the mind was not subject to physical laws.

Having rejected his Cousinian training, Ribot promoted a physiologically-based scientific psychology. His early writings introduced the work of English and German positivist psychology to France in translation, and his commitment to British associationist psychology remained strong throughout his life. Equally important was Ribot's debt to Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), whose *Principles of Psychology* he translated. Spencer influenced Ribot's work both in terms of a commitment to thinking in evolutionary terms and in an impulse towards large explanatory syntheses. In these, complex and even apparently disparate systems could be understood as manifestations of underlying fundamental laws.

The dominance of the Cousinian School had meant that questions about the unity of consciousness, and its relation to the body, were relatively sidelined.

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<sup>3</sup> Jan Goldstein, 'The Advent of Psychological Modernism in France: An Alternative Narrative', in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930*, ed. by Dorothy Ross (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.200.



However, a growing literature, of which the analysis of wandering disorders formed a part, saw such issues re-emerging as important disciplinary concerns. The rise of hypnosis, promising a point of entry to unknown aspects of the personality, is one of the better documented demonstrations of a far broader late-nineteenth century interest in questions about the unitary nature of self and the role of the unconscious in determining personality.<sup>4</sup> This burgeoning interest saw a new emphasis on heredity and race as influences in the formation of identity, and the unconscious increasingly analysed as analogous to a 'primitive' stratum of self. Within these new models of subjectivity, memory became important on numerous levels, and became the object of intense scientific scrutiny.

## 5.1 Memory, language, and the brain

Ribot argued that the study of memory should be integrated into biology, physiology and psychology. While he was himself a philosopher, his main concern was to promote an anti-metaphysical psychology in which science was a legitimate arena for investigations relating to the nature of memory. His approach was consistent with the central place accorded by late nineteenth-century French thinkers to memory as an object of scientific study, in

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<sup>4</sup> Eugène Azam's (1822-1891) work with 'Félida', a woman with an apparent double personality, tapped into and propelled this growing wave of interest. Azam first encountered Félida in 1858 and followed her case until 1893. See Eugène Azam, *Hypnotisme et double conscience* (Paris : Ballière, 1893). For a description of Felida's case and its impact on French psychology, psychiatry and philosophy in the 1870s and 1880s see Ian Hacking, 'Doubling of the Personality', Chapter 11, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.159-170. On the connections between fictional and scientific accounts of doubled personalities, see Jacqueline Carroy, *Les Personnalités doubles et multiples : entre science et fiction* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1993).

medical, psychological and neurological sciences. Such 'sciences of memory' offered a method through which secular scientists were able to assert their ability to address questions of consciousness, an area hitherto the domain of philosophy and theology.<sup>5</sup>

The forms of memory under analysis at this time varied dramatically from the discrete mental faculty described at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Now, memory's stability as a purely intellectual faculty, and as a discrete object of study, was increasingly being undermined. The sensationalist or 'physiological' approach taken by Ribot placed the seat of intellect in the body. Here, it could not help but be subject to the same kind of physiological influences as all other functions. Ribot's interest in memory reflected an important shift of focus within French psychology. His theorisation was informed by new neurologically based accounts of brain function, which owed much to the work of physician and anthropologist Paul Broca (1824-1880).<sup>6</sup>

Broca combined an interest in anthropology with medical research and practice, especially neurology.<sup>7</sup> He was founder and driving force of the *Société d'anthropologie de Paris* (formed in 1859). One of its aims was to ground French philosophy in a material base, and until 1864 the society was

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<sup>5</sup> Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, p.198.

<sup>6</sup> See Anne Harrington, 'Beyond Phrenology: Localisation Theory in the Modern Era', *The Enchanted Loom: Chapters in the History of Neuroscience*, ed. by Pietro Corsi (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.207-239.

<sup>7</sup> On Broca's life and work, see Francis Schiller, *Paul Broca: Founder of French Anthropology, Explorer of the Brain*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

under police surveillance, suspected for its materialism and left-wing anti-clerical politics.<sup>8</sup> From the 1850s Broca made detailed studies of aphasia, conditions in which the expression and understanding of language is affected. Broca demonstrated that a patient's loss of a particular linguistic function could be linked to a lesion in a specific region of the brain, as revealed at autopsy.<sup>9</sup> These experiments revealed memory's reliance on the brain's structural integrity and the complexity of relationships between intellectual functions.

Broca's original aim had been to establish the ways in which the function of language was localised in the brain. His work was understood to demonstrate that specific memory images, like linguistic functions, were stored in discrete parts of the brain. However, rather than physical location of memory in the brain leading to a more reductive model of its processes, the materialist approach emphasised its dynamic nature. Like Broca, Ribot argued that memory existed as a set of processes, contained in the linkage of brain tissues. Conscious memory and language operated on the same principles of dynamic association, in which stable and established elements could be combined in new, and more complex structures.<sup>10</sup> Memory was not a static collation of images, but relied on the linkage of elements that were subject to processes of

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<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Michael Hecht, *The End of the Soul: Scientific Modernity, Atheism, and Anthropology in France* (New York: Columbia University, 2003), pp.56-57; Yvette Conry, *L'Introduction du darwinisme en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1974), pp.51-107; Schiller, *Paul Broca*, pp.134-136.

<sup>9</sup> See Anne Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp.40-45.

<sup>10</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, pp.30-32.

change, and potentially dissociation.<sup>11</sup> Ribot argued for an organically based memory in which each image was subject to: ‘An unending process of change, of suppression and addition, dissociation and corrosion... not at all like a photographic plate with which one may reproduce copies indefinitely.’<sup>12</sup> Since all memory was reliant on living tissue it, like all processes of a living system, underwent change, and was ‘subject to gains and losses, especially losses.’<sup>13</sup>

For both Broca and Ribot, memory effectively became the mechanism through which all living systems maintained themselves. It was best understood as a language through which stable identity was formed, a series of largely unconscious organic processes on which physiological, and only secondarily psychological, continuity was based. One of Ribot’s most important claims was his insistence that memory should be better understood in the plural, with emotional as well as intellectual, unconscious as well as conscious, forms. Ribot argued that memory, as it was commonly understood in psychology, was only one aspect of a far broader phenomenon. Thus, conscious memory, usually treated as if it were memory in its entirety, was

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<sup>11</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, p.20.

<sup>12</sup> Théodule Ribot, *Essai sur l’imagination créatrice* (Paris : Baillière, 1900), p.16. ‘Un travail incessant de métamorphose, de suppressions et d’additions, de dissociation et de corrosion ... elle ne ressemble pas à un cliché photographique dont on peut indéfiniment reproduire des copies.’

<sup>13</sup> Ribot, *Essai sur l’imagination créatrice*, p.16. ‘Elle est sujette à des gains et à des pertes, - surtout à des pertes.’

nothing but the most 'highly developed and complex phase' of a development with its roots in the organisation of organic life.<sup>14</sup>

New models of memory had far reaching consequences. Intermeshed processes of memory and language were seen as crucial to individual functioning, but also had significance on a longer time scale. For many late nineteenth-century scientists, the ability to use language acted as an evolutionary demarcation point between apes and humans. They shared similar muscular structures but only one had been able to utilise these for the formation of language. Historically, language also played a central role in the demarcation of national and ethnic identities within Europe, being viewed as an important means by which a culture absorbed and passed on new characteristics.<sup>15</sup> Scientific interest in speech as a function of the brain was thus also related to growing interest in the use of linguistics to determine racial and national markers.

## 5.2 Forms of memory

The linking memory to language and identity relied on it being understood on multiple levels. In Ribot's model, all automatic physiological processes should be considered in terms of memories that had become embodied. He

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<sup>14</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), pp.93-96. The role of language in creating a sense of national identity was particularly important in France. The institutionalisation of the French language and its dissemination to all French citizens was an important part of post-revolutionary nation-building. This was particularly so in the context of the Third Republic with its attempts to provide standardised and universal education, where the spread of standardised French acted as a marker of the progress possible within society.

argued that memory had three functions, conservation, reproduction and localisation in the past. Only the last of these, localisation in the past, relied on consciousness. It was at once the most complicated and most unstable form of memory, the self-recognition of memory *as* memory, and the basis of recollection. However, localisation was not the fundamental property of memory; conservation and reproduction were far more important. These manifested themselves in secondary automatic actions, that is, learnt movements. Effectively, learnt skills became habitual, fixed in the body and so part of its organic memory.

The 'organic' nature of memory had a number of meanings at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In one sense, organic memory merely referred to the embodied nature of memory, in which it was a property of living matter, manifested in permanent and physical alterations in the brain, and acting as an organising principle of physiological function. However, the term often had far more extended meanings, with important biological, psychological and political implications. Ribot's insistence on the role of memory, and especially organic or somatic memory, in shaping and maintaining group

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<sup>16</sup> For other theorists memory was non-material, and while being expressed in the structure and development of living being, could not be reduced to a property or a function of this matter. Most writers maintained that following a stimulation of cerebral cells (which determined a sensation or perception), a permanent modification persisted, allowing the reproduction of that perception at a given moment, without the reproduction of the stimulation. Two points of theoretical contention were under what form imprints remained, and where in the brain they were located. Ribot defended the idea, also put forward by Maudsley and Delbœuf, that an initial stimulation did not persist as such, but produced definitive molecular modifications in certain brain cells. These were mnemonic traces, also called 'residues' or 'imprints.' The existence of a mnemonic trace was at the centre of numerous late nineteenth-century debates about memory. See J. Gasser, 'La Notion de mémoire organique dans l'œuvre de T. Ribot', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 10 (1988), 293-213, pp.303, 307.

characteristics was one shared by an important, if minority, group of late century thinkers, who believed that understanding how an individual acquired characteristics and passed them on offered a way of understanding how nations and cultures developed, associating culture, race and biology.<sup>17</sup>

In Ribot's model, memory was essentially a biological fact, and only 'by accident' a psychological phenomenon.<sup>18</sup> Ribot denied that there was any difference in kind between conscious, (or psychological), and unconscious, (or organic), memory, arguing that they differed only in degree. He believed every perception or mental act left an impression or residue, which tended to reproduce itself, so that repetition eventually caused a process to become a habit. This meant that in general, memories had the tendency to pass from conscious to unconscious, as they became more automatic, eventually manifesting themselves as reflexes and habits.<sup>19</sup> The more unconscious and automatic the memory, the more stable its functioning. As he was to do with other functions, Ribot considered memory in terms of a hierarchy of stable and unstable elements.

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<sup>17</sup> Otis, *Organic Memory*, p.92.

<sup>18</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, p.1.

<sup>19</sup> Théodule Ribot, *L'Hérédité : étude psychologique* (Paris : Ladrance, 1873), pp. 71-76. Ribot avoided the issue of the relationship between memory as a fundamental principle of nervous tissue and as a set of actions, a question that caused Freud and Bergson to differentiate types of memory. Freud described memory as a principal property of nervous tissues, then as an action, depending on the repetition of a received impression. Freud overcame the contradiction by talking of neurones of perception and those of memory (*souvenir*), and Bergson similarly theorised two types of memory, that of the body, which is material, and that which is formed little by little through 'souvenir', being purely mental. See Gasser, 'La Notion de mémoire organique dans l'œuvre de T. Ribot', p.301.

The embodied nature of memories meant that they could lie dormant within the body, to become active or conscious again when triggered by a particular set of circumstances. Since, for Ribot, memory in all its forms was based on the expression of nervous impulses or discharges, its intrusion into consciousness relied on nervous impulses enduring in intensity and duration.<sup>20</sup> While some memories could be called forth voluntarily, others, especially of an emotional nature, were outside conscious control. The differences between voluntary and involuntary memory were to become an important demarcation point amongst theorists, who considered that they had different potentials to become pathological.<sup>21</sup>

### **5.3 Emotions and the reliability of memory**

What is important for this analysis is the distinct relationship each type of memory was believed to have to emotion, and in turn, the nature and authenticity of its emotional content. While memories were commonly thought to have the capacity to produce affective reactions, the mainstream model of memory as a discrete faculty (against which Ribot was reacting) regarded such emotional content as a strictly secondary phenomenon. It meant that emotions associated with a memory were not revivals of an original affective state, but a newly produced reaction overlaid on a purely intellectual

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<sup>20</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, pp.21-25.

<sup>21</sup> In his discussion of memory in *fin-de-siècle* French literature and psychology, Terdiman argues that involuntary memory is normally read as intrinsically unhealthy. He notes the links between Proust's descriptions of involuntary memory and those of psychologists, and suggests that the former's faith in its salvationist potential should be read against the grain. Richard Terdiman, *Past / Present: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.200.



recollection. In other words, affect was seen as being produced, rather than having been already present in an unconscious form, waiting only to be renewed. This meant that emotional life had no history, only a present.

Affective memory was important to Ribot as he believed that the preservation of particular emotional states in the body on which it relied demonstrated that conscious life was merely the final level of a complex hierarchy of physiologically-dependant associations. For Ribot, the critical criterion for a memory to be regarded as affective was that it was experienced as real and present. It was felt again (*ressentie*), rather than merely recognised as a state already localised in the past. He stated that ‘the image is neither localised in the past, nor is recognised as a repetition of a former experience; it does not seem to be an act of remembering.’<sup>22</sup>

As imagination was progressively sidelined from psychological discussions, emotional memory assumed the role it had once played as a non-intellectualised faculty. Emotional memories might involve the co-existence or rapid succession of two emotional states, or cases in which a past emotion reappeared, before having its vague contours filled in by intellectual elements.<sup>23</sup> Crucially, such memories not only revived, but appeared actually to *recreate* a recognised emotional state, and were accompanied by associated sensory or physical phenomena, whether sweating, crying, blushing or

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<sup>22</sup> Théodule Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1910), p.61. ‘L’image n’est ni localisée dans le passé, ni reconnue comme répétition d’une expérience antérieure; elle n’apparaît pas comme souvenir.’

<sup>23</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.41.

internal sensations. Some kind of organic sensation was a defining characteristic of emotional memories. So, for instance, the memory of a love affair would gradually cease to be accompanied by emotional and physical reactions, as it became progressively intellectualised.<sup>24</sup>

Ribot acknowledged that the majority of memories operated intellectually with only the faintest of emotional overlays. Remembered images of the past could act so much like reality as to trigger an emotional state whose intensity appeared to be equivalent to the original experience. For this reason, Ribot based his arguments for emotional memory primarily on a group of phenomena in which an emotional experience preceded the intellectual images that made sense of it and localised it in the past. He argued that in order to compare present emotions with those of the past, traces of memory with an emotional content must exist. Without such emotional content, the comparison between past and present (in which the present was found lacking) was meaningless. For Ribot, the contrast between the affective content of two distinct states brought to consciousness at the same time, provided evidence of the reality of emotional memory. The 'law of contrast which is sovereign in emotional life, supposes emotional memory.'<sup>25</sup>

Ribot described passing a certain place or following a particular street, and finding himself suddenly re-experiencing a superficial and fugitive

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<sup>24</sup> Ribot, *La Psychologie des sentiments*, pp.161-162.

<sup>25</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.43. 'La loi de contraste qui, dans la vie des sentiments, est souveraine, suppose la mémoire affective.'

impression, more a sensation than a perception, which reawakened the emotional memories of a particular period or episode of his life. This was nothing but a confused state of consciousness, which carried a specific sentimental quality, onto which associated images subsequently became added. These secondary images were intellectual in nature, and in determining the context of the emotional state, allowed the experience to be identified as recollection of the past.<sup>26</sup> So, rather than the imagination being transformed into memory, emotional memory was changed into rational memory. One of the effects of this approach was, of course, to allow nostalgia to be discussed in terms of memory without reference to the imagination, strengthening its perceived links with the past.

Another phenomenon used to support arguments for the reality of emotional memory was *déjà vu*. First described in the 1840s, *déjà vu* became the subject of sustained academic interest only from the 1880s, another reflection of the new importance given to memory and its potential impact on psychological health. *Déjà vu* offered a useful example of the apparent ability of the past to intrude into the present in such vivid terms as to seem to involve the literal re-experience of old states of being.<sup>27</sup> Both emotional memory and *déjà vu* acted as proofs of the preservation of experiences within the unconscious. At the *fin*

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<sup>26</sup> Ribot's articulation of a personal experience of emotional memory demonstrates again the affinity between Proust's expression of the operation of memory with contemporary scientific models. Terdiman has likewise noted the convergence of language in Proust's madeleine episode and Paulhan's use of drinking linden tea to describe hypermanesia. Terdiman, *Past / Present*, p.189.

<sup>27</sup> See Pierre Janet, *L'Évolution de la mémoire et de la notion du temps* (Paris : Chahine, 1928) pp.321-322.

*de siècle*, these phenomena were overshadowed by studies on hysteria, but all relied on the same theoretical model, which saw memories as able to lie dormant in the unconscious. For instance, Pierre Janet's model of hysteria argued that hysterics suffered from the emergence of memories from an unconscious state to reconstitute themselves as 'full fledged memories'.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, Freud and Breuer commented in 1895 that hysterics suffered from reminiscences.<sup>29</sup> All of these models of pathology relied on a sense of subjectivity in which new forms of memory were central and the past considered to be playing an active role in present emotional life.

For Ribot, submerged emotional memories able to return to consciousness firmly established the role of emotion in the formation and persistence of character. He insisted that, like memory and the habits it produced, personality was dynamic; 'not a phenomenon but an evolution; a momentary event, but also a history; not merely a present or a past but both.'<sup>30</sup> Ribot believed that emotions, appetites, tendencies, and passions were more closely linked to physiology than intellectual states. Since he considered physiological inheritance as more stable than psychological inheritance, it followed that emotional dispositions were highly reliant on heredity. The

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Finn, *Proust, the Body and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.47-48.

<sup>29</sup> *Studies on Hysteria*, Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud (1893-1895), vol. 2, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p.7. For Freud on *déjà raconté* see *Totem and Taboo and Other Works*, vol.13, *Standard Edition*, p.201

<sup>30</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la personnalité*, p.125. 'La personnalité, en effet, n'est pas un phénomène, mais une évolution, un événement momentané, mais une histoire, un présent ou un passé, mais l'un et l'autre.'

stability of certain personality or character traits could only be explained by emotional memories that had become habits. It potentially expanded the role of emotional memory from the individual, to the group level. In many ways, this was a return to the question of national character so prominent in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century discussions. Now, however, there was a new emphasis on shared past as a basis for community, while simultaneously, new types of (potentially misleading) memory brought this past to life.

A model in which memory depended on the preservation of dynamic associations that were subject to change implicitly called into question memory's ability to reproduce past experiences faithfully. For Ribot, complete and accurate recall relied on having only the intellect involved. The very intensity of emotional memories made their veracity questionable. This occurred since a true emotional memory meant that an event or sensation was being re-experienced as if it was actually occurring in the present. There was therefore no possibility of its being objectified through comparison with the original subjective state, as would occur in an intellectual memory, which was clearly recognised as belonging to the past. The revived impression involved in emotional memory would generally be unreliable, involving additions and deductions in its selection of those affective states belonging to the original situation.<sup>31</sup> Thus, even as Ribot expanded the importance of memory to subjectivity, he undermined its ability to reflect past realities accurately.

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<sup>31</sup> Ribot, *La Psychologie des sentiments*, p.163. Ribot's construction of memory as potentially unreliable can also be seen as part of the *fin de siècle* concern with the reliability and

## 5.4 Memory and nostalgia

Concepts of memory which were the focus of such intense interest at the *fin de siècle* were newly conceived. This was a historically specific way of understanding memory, carrying a profound sense of dislocation and alienation from previous historical periods. Cultural historian Matt Matsuda traces a number of political, cultural and social expressions of a specifically *modern* sense of memory born in nineteenth-century France. Such a mobile and fragmented sense of memory - as concerned with loss as it was with preservation - was central to the literary production of the Second Empire and Third Republic. Most clearly articulated by Baudelaire in his exploration of the transitory and fugitive, this was a memory expressed in 'a language of disappearance and change, moments, movements and multiplicities.'<sup>32</sup>

New understandings of memory were also being articulated within scientific discourses across many disciplinary boundaries, including medical clinicians, neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists and anthropologists. Through the study of its disturbances and pathologies the 'sciences of memory' attempted

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authenticity of individual testimony and memory. This is most clearly expressed in judicial concern with assessing the credibility of testimony within the legal system. See Matt K. Matsuda, 'Testimonies: Deserving of Faith', Chapter 5, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.101-119.

<sup>32</sup> Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern*, p.84. The work of Baudelaire as symbolic of a new modern sensibility has been the subject of extensive literary analysis. The important aspect of Baudelaire's (and his contemporaries') work in this context is their concern with temporality and the role of the past in the preservation or loss of a sense of self. See Richard Burton, *The Context of Baudelaire's Le Cygne* (Durham: University of Durham, 1980); Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973).

to determine the normal and healthy role memory should play in the formation of identity.<sup>33</sup> In so doing, they both formed, and responded to, late century concerns about the relationship of past and present, in which their continuity seemed inevitably threatened, if not ruptured. Scientific concern with memory can be seen as an expression of broader cultural anxieties about the relationship which Third Republic France had to its turbulent past, where the issue of how much *should* be remembered was as important as what *could* be.<sup>34</sup> In this discourse of pathology, diseases relating to memory, and especially its loss, had significant political and cultural resonance, forming part of a continuing inquiry into what it meant to be French in the post-revolutionary period.<sup>35</sup>

Within this web of analogies and metaphoric associations, nostalgia became associated with the past on two levels - at once a disease of the past, and one referencing it. Crucially, it began to be treated as a largely remembered disease. That is, nostalgia was perceived as an historical phenomenon whose disappearance was proof of the maturity of the French psyche, no longer tied to archaic identities. In addition, its decline acted as a reminder of the victories of civilisation and scientific medicine, whose diagnostic tools

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<sup>33</sup> See Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*; Michael S. Roth, 'Remembering Forgetting: Maladies de la Mémoire in Nineteenth-Century France', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 49-68.

<sup>34</sup> Michael S. Roth, 'The Time of Nostalgia: Medicine, History and Normality in Nineteenth-Century France', *Time and Society*, 1 (1992), 271-286, p.272.

<sup>35</sup> See Pierre Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et histoire : la problématique des lieux', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris : Gallimard, 1997), pp.xvii-xlii. Terdiman, *Past / Present*, pp.3-4.

assured the exclusion of such vague and imprecise categories from a place in their new nosologies.

Ribot's re-interpretation of nostalgia within the realm of memory likewise indicated a sense that past situations had been made fundamentally inaccessible, due to the changes wrought by modern civilisation and its attendant urbanisation and industrialisation. At the same time, remembered visions of this past were now considered to be potentially subject to mis-interpretation, distortion and disruption. His synthesis of the major concerns of contemporary French psychology laid out the theoretical framework within which many of the symptoms previously associated with nostalgia could be re-interpreted. As we have already seen, nostalgia was now redirected into accounts of other conditions, for example abulia, or neurasthenia. Yet, in *Problemes de psychologie affective* (1911), his return to questions which had long concerned him about the role played by the emotions in normal and pathological psychology, Ribot not only chose to revive the category of nostalgia, but made it the subject of a detailed study, in which it became re-formulated as a form of memory mal-function. Nostalgia acted as a key exemplar for Ribot. He continued to situate his discussion of nostalgia within a framework of pathology but increasingly entertained the possibility that it might be a universal type of engagement with the past. In so doing, he laid the foundations for nostalgia's twentieth-century, temporal, form.

The organic nature of memory and the ability of memories to slide between conscious and unconscious states were central to Ribot's re-conceptualisation



of nostalgia. He explained the sudden onset of intense longing associated with nostalgia as the preservation of an affective state within the body, triggered in response to particular stimuli. Nostalgia thus acted as an important proof of the reality of emotional memory. However, Ribot's analysis of nostalgia was contradictory. While he employed the traditional signs of the disease, he simultaneously complicated its meaning. Thus, he described nostalgia as the 'most solid proof of emotional memory', yet continued to argue that the 'causes and conditions' of nostalgia remained primarily a medical, rather than psychological, problem.<sup>36</sup> This argument suggests that it still belonged to the arena of environmental medicine, relating to physical reactions to difficulties with acclimatisation. Likewise, while Ribot presented nostalgia as a potential threat for all whether 'the savage, the peasant, [or] the poet', he also associated nostalgia with a lack of mental plasticity and intellectual capacity, linking it to a primitive, or regressive mentality.<sup>37</sup>

Ribot suggested that, despite the confused nature of the medical work on nostalgia, the basic (*brut*) psychological factor remained the same; a 'melancholy of a precise form, which has its single cause: the recall of the past.'<sup>38</sup> In fact, this categorisation was in direct contrast to earlier definitions, which demarcated nostalgia from melancholia in terms of its relationship to a specific object of desire. It suggests that Ribot accepted nostalgia as primarily

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<sup>36</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.65.

<sup>37</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, pp.64, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.64. 'Une mélancolie de forme précise qui a sa cause unique dans le rappel du passé.'

a mental illness, but one that could be directed towards multiple objects, a reading more in line with its literary uses. However, he also continued to treat nostalgia as synonymous with *mal du pays*, regret generated by displacement, and described the memories that 'nourished' nostalgics in terms of the same uncomplicated desires of earlier medical accounts, such as family, old habits and physical landscapes. In this sense, nostalgia consisted of desires whose actual satisfaction seemed impossible, but which '*over there* would become a reality.'<sup>39</sup>

Nostalgics were for Ribot the ideal example of the minority of people whose memories were overwhelmingly affective rather than intellectual, for whom 'memory of the heart was all'. Without emotional memory, nostalgia was 'inexplicable and incomprehensible,' since its sufferers were calmed by the certainty of a prompt return, and cured by return itself.<sup>40</sup> If nostalgia was a form of emotional memory it was by definition involuntary. As a clinical condition, nostalgia was therefore not something to be indulged in, but an overwhelming affective state which its sufferers unsuccessfully fought against. As such, Ribot's reading fitted into earlier accounts of the condition. However, Ribot also spoke of the 'recollection' of past times and scenes. Recollection was the one form of memory that he recognised as conscious and voluntary, implying that nostalgia could also be engaged in deliberately. This

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<sup>39</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, pp.64-65. '*Il surgit des désirs dont la satisfaction actuelle est impossible, mais qui là-bas deviendraient une réalité.*'

<sup>40</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.65.

meant that a non-pathological and controlled form of nostalgic remembering potentially existed alongside its pathological counterpart.<sup>41</sup>

Ribot's exploration of nostalgia was modern both in its ambivalence and its psychological models. Ribot was operating with a concept of memory in which it had become an unreliable guide to accurate recall of the past. So, in incorporating nostalgia into memory, Ribot not only made it reference the past, but suggested that it did so in a potentially misleading and inaccurate manner. This was evident in the nature of his suggested cure. Surprisingly, given his insistence on the temporal nature of nostalgic desire, Ribot continued to argue for a return home as the best treatment for the disorder. However, he broke with the medical tradition by arguing for the curative effects of the return home in terms of lack.

In the earlier literature, the issue of what there was in the home environment which had effected the cure was rarely addressed. When articulated, the usual explanations were exposure to the native environment, and the re-establishment of old ties and connections. In contrast, Ribot believed that it was precisely the differences between what the nostalgic imagined, and what

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<sup>41</sup> The basic premise on which much of Ribot's work on mental illness relied was that the pathological could be used to illuminate the normal realms of behaviour. This belief had been common to French psychiatry since Pinel, who established madness as existing on a continuum with sanity, rather than as an incurable condition, and argued that the behaviour of the insane revealed the extreme possibilities of the human psyche. In all his analyses of psychological illnesses, Ribot argued that normality was always situated within extremes of expression or depression of psychological drives and impulses. The emphasis on transition and gradation between normal and pathological allowed Ribot to use morbid states to illuminate the former. In the case of nostalgia, it also offered the possibility of non-pathological forms of the phenomenon. See Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté*, p.80.

he found, that cured. Ribot insisted that reality would always pale in comparison to the augmented attractiveness produced by memory. The sensations produced by the actual place and people were 'distinct and independent' from the work of the emotional memory which created the condition.<sup>42</sup> In effect, Ribot was postulating that nostalgics operated through the same nexus of desire and lack as captive wanderers. That is, their desire was self-perpetuating, not necessarily related, or subject to, fulfilment.

In assuming nostalgic desire was illusory, Ribot made explicit the tension between time and place that had always existed in the diagnosis. In this, he was an heir to philosophers whose more critical analyses of nostalgia had long been ignored within mainstream medicine. When he had included nostalgia in his 1768 dictionary of music, Jacques Rousseau related it to a traditional folk song, the *ranz des vaches*. However he insisted that the music itself was irrelevant, except as a memorative sign, thereby treating nostalgia not as a disorder of imagination, but a condensation of memories.<sup>43</sup> In a similar manner, Immanuel Kant argued in his late eighteenth-century lectures on anthropology that the return the nostalgic desired was really to the conditions, and therefore time, of childhood.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.65.

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de la musique* (Amsterdam : M.M. Rey, 1772) , pp.266-267.

<sup>44</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. by Vicot Lyle Dowdell (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p.69.

Having conceded that the medical literature was clear in its assertion that nostalgia's main effect was the impulse towards home, Ribot located this home in the past. He suggested that nostalgia acted as a prompt towards travel, and repetition:

Many travellers begin a voyage all over again in order to try to relive the past, to rediscover the places they travelled through during their youth. Can this embryo of nostalgia be explained without emotional memory? <sup>45</sup>

In using nostalgia to explain the urge of the elderly to return to the remembered landscapes of their childhood, Ribot reversed nostalgia's traditional associations, marking the point at which it emerged as the preserve of old age, rather than adolescence. The correlation with age reinforced nostalgia's re-orientation as a temporal category, whether referencing individual past, or, as we shall see, older modes of being. Ribot's re-evaluation of nostalgia is important on two levels. On the one hand, he freed the category to become a marker of regret for the past, and as such, a natural by-product of ageing. At the same time, he reinforced its links to theories about differential human potential, so that it retained its place as a marker of non-adaptability, now couched in terms of racial development rather than environmental influence.

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<sup>45</sup> Ribot, *Problèmes de psychologie affective*, p.65. '*Beaucoup de voyageurs recommencent un voyage pour essayer de revivre le passé, pour retourner les lieux parcourus dans leurs années de jeunesse. Cet embryon de nostalgie serait-il explicable sans le mémoire du sentiment?*'

## 5.6 Memory and evolution

Ribot's work on nostalgia took place in the context of much larger debates about evolutionary theories, which had an enormous impact on biological sciences, psychology and medicine. The association of memory, instinct and habit was critical to late-century interest in memory. If memory was no longer confined to the life span of one individual, it became a mechanism through which deeper understandings of evolutionary and cultural development could be found. This focused scientific attention on questions about the extent to which identity was shaped by the past, and the potential capacity of an individual to develop beyond their biological and psychological inheritance. It was the impetus for the development of theories of 'organic memory', which located individual and group history in the body, and so made heredity the primary influence in determining identity.<sup>46</sup> However, belief in the persistence of the past, and its embodiment in present organisms, was also expressed through medical concerns with degeneration, Lombrosian criminology and its concepts of atavism, and crowd psychology.<sup>47</sup>

Late-century theories of organic memory were largely based on the work of the German physician and physiologist, Ewald Hering. Hering proposed a concept of organic memory that acted as a unifying force in the construction

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<sup>46</sup> Otis, *Organic Memory*, p.216.

<sup>47</sup> These were linked concerns sharing a sense that 'primitive' elements existed to varying degrees in different parts of the population, and could be brought to the surface in extreme situations. See Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man: According to The Classification of Cesare Lombroso* (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911); Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules* (Paris : Bibliothèque de Philosophie contemporaine, 1895) ; Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

of the self, affecting development, habit and heredity.<sup>48</sup> He described memory in physiological terms, as a general biological function, rather than simply a property of the nervous system or its higher functions. Giving memory a biological nature meant that it could take both conscious and unconscious forms, a distinction that became fundamental to the development of Ribot's theories. In making memory a property of all organised manner, Hering gave it a privileged place, with evolutionary implications. In his model, memory connected past and present in the life of an individual and across generations, so that memory acquisition was the same process as the development of instinct over a larger time scale.<sup>49</sup>

Like Hering, Ribot argued that organic memory was crucial to the maintenance of a coherent self over time. He saw memory acting on a continuum, in an 'incessant transition from the unstable to the stable' from the conscious to the organic.<sup>50</sup> The ego or self [*moi*] was 'perpetually renewed' and 'nourished' by conscious memory, while the ongoing physiological processes of the body depended on organic memory.<sup>51</sup> However, the role of memory in maintaining the organism and the psyche did not end with the individual. In *L'Hérédité* (1873) Ribot argued that the habits of organic

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<sup>48</sup> Ewald Hering, 'On Memory as a Universal Function of Organized Matter', *Unconscious Memory*, ed. by Samuel Butler (London: A.C. Fitfield, 1910), pp.63-86.

<sup>49</sup> For more on the origins of theories of organic memory see Otis, *Organic Memory*, pp.10-13, and Gasser, 'La Notion de mémoire organique', p.310.

<sup>50</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, p.49. 'Il y a un passage incessant de l'instable au stable.'

<sup>51</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, p.83.

memory were not only fixed in the organism, but could be subsequently passed down through generations in the form of instincts.<sup>52</sup>

Ribot's hereditarian beliefs were also heavily influenced by Herbert Spencer's evolutionary ideas in which accumulated changes contributed to progressive evolution. Spencer became one of the most highly respected philosophers of the second half of the century, and created a synthetic explanatory system for human development in which evolution played a key role. Where Darwin's evolutionary theories were largely descriptive, Spencer's were predictive. Like Lamarck, he assumed that evolution was essentially progressive, a process through which more complex systems, whether biological or social, were developed through differentiation and integration. This depended both on the specialisation of function, and co-ordination of these functions. As Ribot was to do, Spencer argued that the psychology of an individual was shaped by evolutionary forces, and must be constantly reshaped to conform to the ever-changing social environment.<sup>53</sup>

While Ribot followed Spencer's thinking in general terms, he questioned the extensiveness of inheritance of acquired characteristics and so distanced himself from a purely Lamarckian outlook. However, his theory of heredity still depended on the ability of new characteristics to become heritable. For Ribot this acquisition of traits occurred through the same mechanisms as that

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<sup>52</sup> Ribot, *L'Hérédité*, pp.29-33.

<sup>53</sup> For an introduction to Spencer's evolutionary thought, see David Wiltshire, 'Spencer's Theory of Social Evolution', Chapter 8, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.192-224.



by which memories became habits within individuals - repetition - which led to traits becoming habitual and eventually fixed within a species. Therefore 'heredity, is a *specific memory*, it is to the species what memory is to the individual.'<sup>54</sup> One of the main aims of Ribot's *L'Hérédité* was to argue for the heritability of psychological as well as physiological traits. He believed that since emotions and intellectual traits, like memories, were organically based, a permanent physical state or phenomenon would imply a correspondingly constant psychological state.<sup>55</sup>

The significance of organic memory was that it allowed linkages to be made between evolutionary past and individual psyche. The mind had substrata that reflected longer-term evolution. Thus for Ribot, the transmission of 'psychic peculiarities', especially pathological, was probable. Since it relied on an underlying physiological state, a habitual mental state must also be subject to hereditary influences, like the physical body. Such states could, like memories, become fixed in the organism and so transmitted, eventually becoming instincts. These were best understood as 'hereditary habits', mental activities operating at an unconscious and automatic level.<sup>56</sup> Ribot considered that this was evidenced by the 'sudden return of so-called civilised individuals to savage or nomad life, for want of a hereditary tendency fixed by the habit of several generations.'<sup>57</sup> It was this double understanding of the role of the

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<sup>54</sup> Ribot, *L'Hérédité*, p.77. '*L'hérédité est une mémoire spécifique, qu'elle est pour l'espèce ce que la mémoire proprement dite est pour l'individu.*'

<sup>55</sup> Ribot, *L'Hérédité*, p.384.

<sup>56</sup> Ribot, *L'Hérédité*, p.49.

<sup>57</sup> Ribot, *La Psychologie des sentiments*, pp.198-199.

past in individual subjectivity that allowed Ribot to develop his vision of nostalgia as both individual regression and fixed group characteristic.

## 5.7 Nostalgia and the 'primitive' body

Biological arguments for innate racial differences had increased dramatically with the acceptance of evolutionary theory. Following Haekealian theories of recapitulation, the analogy of a European child as equivalent to the so-called 'primitive' adult was pervasive in European scientific thinking.<sup>58</sup> As historian of anthropology George Stocking demonstrates, social evolution was also integrated into biological evolution. 'Primitive' people were seen as present day examples of an evolutionary stage through which Europeans had already passed. In a similar manner, the differentiation of 'primitive' and 'civilised' mentalities became a commonplace assumption within late nineteenth-century social sciences.<sup>59</sup> But primitive traits were also believed to be threateningly present in the unconscious of the 'civilised.'

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<sup>58</sup> Another influential proponent of theories of organic memory and a populariser and defender of evolution, Ernest Haeckel (1834-1919), the German zoologist and comparative anatomist, maintained that internal hierarchies reflected external. The layers of an individual's psyche and physiology could therefore be read as a micro-rendering of the physical and social evolution of humans. In 1876 Haeckel, summarised this theory in the phrase 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny'. That is, that the developmental history of an individual organism reflected the evolutionary stages of the species. This 'recapitulation' was believed to demonstrate the ways in which an individual carried their biological past within them, and so linked them to their racial development. See Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp.78-85.

<sup>59</sup> See George Stocking, 'The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays In The History of Anthropology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp.110-132.

As we have seen, Ribot and his contemporaries used this image of the primitive within, in which the levels of individual development reflected larger evolutionary change, as a broad organising concept informing their analysis of subjectivity. Evolutionary-based theories of heredity shifted the locus of identity formation towards the past and made identity a far less malleable category. Increasing conceptualisation of the milieu in socio-political terms from mid-century was concurrent with hardening attitudes towards race and its deterministic value in predicting the possibilities for development.<sup>60</sup> Evolutionary theories promoted the idea that the ‘primitive’ body displayed its past within it and as such, had a limited capacity to develop culturally. Individual development was increasingly understood as determined by hereditary, rather than environmental, factors.

Assumptions about the distinct potential of different populations do much to explain the disappearance of nostalgia in French medical texts. While nostalgia had previously been seen in largely environmental terms, it became associated with a primitive self, incapable of dealing not with a new physical environment, but the conditions of a modern nation. Thus, the nostalgic body could be theorised as having effectively disappeared from the French landscape, while continuing to exist in non-European populations. The largely non-medical explanations for nostalgia’s decline in France allowed it to be

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<sup>60</sup> Léon Poliakov, ‘Gobineau and his Contemporaries’, Chapter 10, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, trans. by Edmund Howard (London: Chatto Heinemann, 1974), pp.215-254. Nancy Stepan, ‘Race after Darwin: The World of the Physical Anthropologists’, Chapter 4, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan in association with St Antony’s College, Oxford, 1982), pp.83-110.

retained as a diagnosis that could be projected onto primitive 'Others'. In this context, nostalgia became associated with a 'primitive' body, one which could not adjust to modernity and its demands for mobility. Following Enlightenment ideas about the Noble Savage, the closer relationship of 'primitives' to their land was a pervasive theme in nineteenth-century literature, whether this 'primitive' was non-European, of low intelligence, or a backward peasant. However, while the backward peasant was seen as potentially 'civilisable', those from non-Europeans cultures were understood as intrinsically lacking in psychic flexibility.

Nostalgia became a convenient diagnosis that explained the rejection of French culture and civilisation by 'savages' brought from the colonies to witness it firsthand. The story of a foreign native, by turns a Tahitian brought back by Bougainville, or a Chinese man named Assam, is frequently quoted in the literature.<sup>61</sup> Having initially demonstrated their 'primitive' state through their indifference towards France's 'industrial richness and beauty', they confirmed this by abandoning this unconcern and 'crying with joy and embracing with tenderness' a tree of their native country in the *Jardin des Plantes*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For example, see Claudius Caire, 'Essai sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1852), 3, no.303, p.9; Jean-Louis Alibert, *Physiologie des passions : ou nouvelle doctrine des sentiments moraux*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Paris : Béchét Jeune, 1827), p.390 ; Julien-Vincent Huet-Bienville, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1821), 6, no.190 , pp.14-15; V.M Besse, 'De la Nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1828), 7, no.221, pp.12-13.

<sup>62</sup> An example can be found in Louis-Alexandre-Hippolyte Leroy-Dupré, 'De la Nostalgie' (medical thesis, Paris, 1846), 9, no.134, p.8.

The image of the non-educable 'native' was frequently deployed to describe the psychic limits imposed by an overly close, and hence primitive, relationship to the physical landscape. In his *Physiologie des passions*, Alibert used a non-European woman as his case study for nostalgia. 'Couramé or the love of the native soil', described a young woman from Cayenne adopted by a French widow and taken to France. Regardless of her 'brilliant education' and the new experiences of civilisation, she did not 'for a single moment' cease regretting her native soil and eventually fled France for her native country.<sup>63</sup> Even more directly reproachful was a Canadian chief who questioned the intention of his hosts in bringing him to Europe:

"Why", he said to them, "do you separate us from the earth which holds our ancestors? Will we ask their bones 'to get up and to follow us'?"<sup>64</sup>

'Primitive' attachment to the ancestral soil offered a happy explanation for French commentators of otherwise inexplicable indifference displayed by such foreigners towards the trappings of modern civilisation. That they could witness the wonders of modern Europe and persist in a nostalgic attachment to their homes could only be attributed to a state of savagery, confirmed by their reaction to the imported trees in the *Jardin des Plantes*, similarly struggling to acclimatise in the European environment. They were permanently operating in the 'age of imagination' through which the French

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<sup>63</sup> Alibert, *Physiologie des passions*, p.405.

<sup>64</sup> Pilet, 'De la Nostalgie', p.19. 'Comment, leur dit-il, nous séparer de la terre qui garde nos ancêtres? Disons-nous à leurs ossements de "se lever et de nous suivre"?"

adolescent passed, dominated by their passions without the overarching regulation of the intellect.

That nostalgia might be a reaction to a new cultural milieu rather than a physical landscape had long been an admitted view. Now, this milieu was explicitly identified as a state of modernity. What had traditionally been a disease of adolescence was now cast as the sign of an immature nation. The decline of the disease signified that France was no longer in the throes of a turbulent youth but was maturing into a modern state. The environment to which nostalgics needed to acclimatise themselves was an abstract one which could only be described in abstract cultural terms as that of 'civilisation'. Nostalgics, if they existed were those unable to make this leap. They represented the 'primitive' France which artistic movements now sought outside the urban centres.<sup>65</sup> Having been a sign of the French adolescent's journey to manhood, nostalgia could now be viewed as a symbol of an unredeemable inability to make the shift from traditional or 'primitive' cultures to modern civilisation.

In his account of evolution Spencer argued that human nature was not a fixed entity, since individual psychology was shaped by development of the race,

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<sup>65</sup> From the 1870s, pictures featuring peasants become a major part of the French fine art tradition, in which they represented a point of contact with the primeval past. Robert Herbert, 'City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin', *Artforum*, 8 (February 1970), 44-55, especially pp.49-50.

and constantly re-shaped to conform to ever changing social situations.<sup>66</sup> He believed that human adaptation was no longer a case of struggle for survival within a particular set of physical conditions, but rather a set of cultural institutions and structures. Spencer saw older cultures as inherently incapable of meeting the psychic demands of civilisation, and their demise the logical outcome of the 'shock' of an encounter with more 'advanced' cultures. This justified a belief that the disappearance of primitive groups could be understood as a biological inevitability, rather than a process of cultural destruction.

Ribot shared Spencer's thinking, arguing that civilisation itself constituted a moral environment to which individuals must become acclimatised. Again following Spencer, Ribot argued that psychological traits became fixed not only within families, but eventually in peoples. This allowed Ribot to make a scientific argument in support of the idea of national character. He presented an organicist vision of the State, the sum of whose psychic characteristics formed its national character.<sup>67</sup> 'There must be a correspondence between man's morals and his moral environment... Whoever cannot adapt himself to new conditions of social life must die out - gradually, perhaps, yet surely.' So,

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<sup>66</sup> This recalls Taine's description of 'la race, le milieu et le moment' as the formative factors in subjectivity. Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (Paris : Hachette, 1863), pp.xxii-xxviii.

<sup>67</sup> Ribot, *L'Hérédité*, p.151.

for instance, he argued, Gypsies constituted in a moral and social sense the equivalent of dodos in the natural world, 'the survivors of a past age.'<sup>68</sup>

Earlier medical texts dealing with nostalgia assumed a level of biological affinity between all individuals and their native landscapes. These connections were not described in terms of organic memory, but in terms of a physiological and psychological dependence developed by inhabitants for the local peculiarities of the environment to which they were exposed.

Susceptibility to the organic form of nostalgia therefore relied on the physiological flexibility of the body, developed in relation to changes in climate, rather than any inherited propensity. By insisting on the biological nature of all memory, Ribot increased its potential association with the 'primitive.' However, Ribot linked nostalgia to inheritance as well as individual experience.

Ribot's analysis of nostalgia as a form of emotional memory established it as an internal process. Nostalgia became associated with the past both in terms of individual childhood, and with a pre-modern 'primitive' sensibility. In the latter case, nostalgia became a sign of an inability to differentiate memories and the spaces in which these were played out. Nostalgia related both to internal time (memories of childhood) and historical time, where it symbolised a fantasised agrarian 'connection' with the land. These two

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<sup>68</sup> Ribot, *L'Hérédité*, p.163. 'If faut qu'il y ait une correspondance entre l'homme morale et son milieu moral, comme entre l'homme physique et son milieu physique. Celui qui ne peut s'adapter aux nouvelles conditions de la vie sociale doit périr, lentement peut-être, mais sûrement.'



spheres shared a promise of apparently direct experiences unmediated by the constraints of adulthood, or modern urban existence. They could be potentially evoked as utopian states, promising a lost unity of self, or oneness with the natural world, but could not avoid more pejorative implications, carrying as they did undertones of immaturity, cultural backwardness and primitiveness.

## 5.8 Structure and the self

While Phillipe Pinel had defined insanity in terms of emotional dysfunction, in the next generation of theoreticians, his student Jean-Etienne Esquirol (1772-1840) argued that attention was the central key to insanity. As art historian Jonathan Crary has demonstrated, the second half of the nineteenth century saw an historical discontinuity in the theorisation of attention and its earlier place in European thought. Attention began to be addressed as a specifically modern problem in a wide range of disciplines, emerging as a major problem in accounts of subjectivity.<sup>69</sup> The ability to control the attention became a marker of healthy mental life, necessary in the maintenance of mental unity and synthesis. Ribot's *Psychologie de l'attention* (1889) provided a broad exploration of attention, in which deficient attentiveness was associated with children, the degenerate, and the primitive.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 1999), pp.17-19.

<sup>70</sup> Ribot, *Psychologie de l'attention* (Paris : F. Alcan 1889). Ribot made a distinction between spontaneous and voluntarily will. However attention had to become a habit in order for learning to take place.

Sustaining attention involved the application of will power. The will was an especially important category for Ribot since he considered it the evolutionary pinnacle of consciousness. The psychological law for which Ribot has remained best known is his 'law of regression.' This law, first formulated in respect to dysfunction of memory, described the steps by which the ordering structures of the psyche broke down. The progressive destruction of memory in mental disease was seen to follow a logical order, from unstable to stable functions.<sup>71</sup> In Ribot's model of the multi-layered self, each function had an inverse relationship between its level of organisation and consciousness. The organisation of a function would see it become increasingly automatic as it was incorporated into bodily memory. Therefore, the most highly evolved, and thus complex and conscious, functions were also those that were most unstable and disorganised. The law of regression argued that the progress of a mental illness left individuals increasingly at the mercy of their involuntary and unconscious drives and impulses. These were the less evolutionary sophisticated functions, which the ill person was no longer able to regulate consciously.

The law of regression was equally applicable to the will. The conscious will, Ribot believed, was the last stage of a process, which 'plunges its roots into the profoundest depths of the individual and, beyond the individual, into the

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<sup>71</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire*, pp.94-95.

species, and into all species.’<sup>72</sup> The voluntary carrying out of rationally decided actions depended on the will being able to prevent the action of less evolved impulses and drives. The will dominated these thanks to the same causes that ‘in man elevate and maintain the intellect above sensations and instincts.’<sup>73</sup> Ribot described the will in terms of an architectural keystone deriving its power from other functions, which sustained it, just as it kept them in place. Yet, the will was not a given, but an ‘edifice’ whose control over the self consisted of an ongoing ‘conquest’ of the lower functions. The supremacy of the will was a ‘happy accident’, constantly unstable and open to destabilisation or decomposition.<sup>74</sup>

A major concern of late nineteenth-century French psychology, the will was an important category that described the ability of the mind to control and contain its functions voluntarily. The loss of wilful control of the mind could be considered a form of insanity. Abulia, or lack of will, was not a symptom in itself, but a loss of power over the conscious self.<sup>75</sup> Abulia could be expressed through a diverse variety of manifestations. Impairment of the will could produce either a deficit in, or excessive expression of, impulses and drives. The focus on willpower as the organising frame of subjectivity, whose fragility left the way open for the expression of more primitive and basic

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<sup>72</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté*, p.150. ‘Plonge ses racines au plus profond de l’individu et, au delà de l’individu, dans l’espèce et les espèces.’

<sup>73</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté*, p.84. ‘Chez l’homme élevant et maintiennent l’intelligence au-dessus des sensations et des instincts.’

<sup>74</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté*, p.150.

<sup>75</sup> For the importance of the category to *fin-de-siècle* psychology, see G.E. Berrios, and M. Gili, ‘Abulia and implusiveness revisited: a conceptual history’, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 92 (1995), 161-167.

functions, acted within theories of degeneration, which allowed the collapse of distinct morbid forms, such as dipsomania, kleptomania, pyromania, erotomania, and suicidal monomanias into manifestations of a single cause, the collapse of the will and subsequent psychological instability.<sup>76</sup>

The historian Christopher Forth has described French *fin-de-siècle* anxiety over the loss of will in terms of a 'veritable liquidation of selfhood' in which the will was bypassed and external influences acted directly on the unconscious. The collapse of the will became implicated in terms of an accompanying 'crisis' of masculinity, in which, due to the 'hyperstimulus of urban modernity', men were becoming more like the women and children, who were already understood as being susceptible to such external influences.<sup>77</sup> The inability of individuals to resist such 'contagion' from the outside was most clearly expressed in theories of crowd psychology. Psychologists such as Ribot's close professional friend Gustav Le Bon saw evidence in the behaviour of crowds that groups of people could share something approaching a collective (albeit degraded) will.<sup>78</sup> In such

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<sup>76</sup> Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté*, p.79.

<sup>77</sup> See Christopher E. Forth, 'Moral Contagion and the Will: The Crisis of Masculinity in *fin de siècle* France', in *Contagion: Historical and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 61-75, 61-62. One of the most disturbing aspects of neurasthenia in men was the vulnerability or porousness which it gave them. They were susceptible to both external physical stimuli and internal weaknesses, all indicating an inability to exercise will power and the collapse of personal boundaries.

<sup>78</sup> From 1892, Ribot and Le Bon co-chaired a monthly dinner and debating club and became close personal friends. See Japp van Ginneken, *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics 1871-1899* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.141.

circumstances, higher mental functions could dissolve and be taken over by lower emotional and unconscious impulses.<sup>79</sup>

Since the dissolution of psychic functions was regarded as a process of devolution, such pathologies revealed more primitive physiological mechanisms. In his work on the education of the will, Ribot's student Jules Payot, identified 'sensuality' as the most significant obstacle to rational autonomy. Here, passions were 'animality victorious', deep hereditary impulses which, if not contained by the will, made individuals the slaves of their inner primitive natures, 'when it growls, we assume a different rung in the zoological hierarchy'<sup>80</sup> Here again, such internal states acted as signifiers of past mental states for the individuals and in terms of heredity.

The incorporation of evolutionary theory into psychology fed into the highly hierarchical model of human subjectivity being developed within French psychiatry and medicine. For Ribot, healthy psychological functioning depended on the higher organisational functions acting in concert to control and limit the expression of impulses and emotions. This model operated in a similar manner to the other current psychological theories. In all of these, rational consciousness was increasingly understood not as the totality of a unified self, but merely the most advanced and organised expression of a personality driven by numerous unconscious drives and desires. Ribot's work

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<sup>79</sup> On Le Bon's theories, see Jean-Marc Bernardini, *Le Darwinisme social en France (1859-1918) : fascination et rejet d'une idéologie* (Paris : CNRS Editions, 1997), pp.165-169.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Forth, 'Moral Contagion and the Will', p.71.

opened up the possibility that nostalgia could operate as a universal, and non-pathological, experience. However, at the same time, he incorporated the concept into new theoretical models of subjectivity emphasising the hierarchical nature of social organisation and mental functioning. Nostalgia thus became enmeshed in a language of racial determinism, hereditary limits to potential development, and, as we shall see in the following chapter, gained new ideological power as a tool in the establishment of national myths.

## ***Chapter 6 - Finding home: nostalgia and French***

### ***Zionism***

There is a further figure that encapsulates the concerns explored in this thesis: the Wandering Jew. An enduring image in European folklore, in late nineteenth-century French thought and culture, the Wandering Jew became a shorthand to describe disconnection and deracination.<sup>1</sup> Notoriously, the ‘Wandering Jew’, came to be considered as a literal pathological figure in *fin-de-siècle* psychiatry.

Jews were depicted in psychiatric and medical discourse as trapped in a permanent state of transience. They were unable to make themselves properly at home anywhere; either because they had no aptitude for this process of putting down roots, or because they resisted doing so in memory of their former homeland. The validity and inevitability of these characteristics became a vital question for anti- and philo-Semitic writers alike, with profound implications for the role of the Jewish community in France. This chapter considers the broader political and nationalistic implications of the Wandering Jew as constructed within French psychiatry. It then explores the role of the Zionist writing of Max Nordau produced over a period of 15 years,

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<sup>1</sup> Generally known either as Cartophilus or Avaherus, the Wandering Jew was said to have rejected Christ, when the great changes promised in his teachings did not come to pass. He then abused Christ during his walk to Calvary, on which Christ condemned him to walk unceasingly until his return. For a selection of the vast range of stories associated with the Wandering Jew in Europe, see *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, ed. by Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

during which he acted as a figurehead and advocate for the political Zionist movement.<sup>2</sup> For Nordau, the possibility of Jewish regeneration and the putative necessity of its accomplishment through a re-connection to the physical land of Israel was an ongoing concern. I argue that French Zionism cannot be properly understood without taking into account the role of late-nineteenth century medically informed ideas about connection to the land. These ideas made a 'return to the land' appear redemptive in multiple senses and utilised aspects of nostalgia in its medical and political senses.

## 6.1 The wandering Jew at the Salpêtrière

In 1892 'Moser C', a 38 year old Polish Jew, came to the Salpêtrière seeking treatment. Arriving with a voluminous dossier of carefully preserved diagnoses and prescriptions from medical men all over Europe, he complained of a myriad of symptoms. Moser claimed he had been in ongoing pain since he was 25, and had been forced to consult 'all the specialists of the world.'<sup>3</sup> As his physician recounted, with more than a hint of exasperation, Moser was notable for his attention to the details of his medical problems, describing

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<sup>2</sup> I use the phrase 'political Zionism' to refer to the late-nineteenth century nationalist movement whose aim was the establishment of an independent Jewish state. This movement, spearheaded by Theodor Herzl, situated itself in competition, even opposition, to older religious Zionist organisations and contemporary philanthropic attempts to establish Jewish agricultural communities. Unlike many practical schemes for the creation of self-sufficient Jewish settlements, political Zionism had as its stated goal the foundation of a Jewish state. As such, it focused on social, economic, ideological and ethnic issues. See Alain Diekhoff, 'Le sionisme comme invention politique d'une nation', Introduction, *L'Invention d'une nation : Israël et la modernité politique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1993), pp. 15-28, and Vittorio Dan Serge, 'La Révolution française et le sionisme', in *L'Héritage de la Révolution française*, ed. by François Furet (Paris : Hachette, 1988), pp.261-284, p.261.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes voyageurs : Le Juif Errant à la Salpêtrière' (medical thesis, Paris, 1893), 17, no.315, p.24. 'Tous les spécialistes du monde.'



them with ‘singularly expressive mimicry and loquacity.’<sup>4</sup> He was also resistant to medical authority, listening with an attentive air to new treatment options, only to become increasingly and openly sceptical about the chances of their success. Novel therapies with electricity, for instance, engrossed him for a while, only to become progressively less effective and finally useless against new symptoms. Henri Meige, a prominent student of Jean-Martin Charcot, who documented Moser’s case, argued that his eventual departure from the Salpêtrière was not prompted by any alleviation of his symptoms, but rather the discovery that his stories no longer found an audience.

Moser’s enthusiastic collection of diagnoses and exhaustive detailing of his condition did not merely represent symptoms of neurasthenia for the Salpêtrière clinicians, as they may have for a patient of a different background. Rather, his thirst for novel treatments, lack of concentration, and inability to see beyond his immediate needs were understood as placing him in a direct lineage to the original Wandering Jew. For Meige, this was the true key to Moser’s condition. Happily conflating Christ and the new psychiatry, he argued that Jewish patients at the Salpêtrière had the same ambivalent relationship to authority as Cartophilus, the original Wandering Jew, whose initial enthusiasm for Christ’s teaching had then become rejection. Meige saw his patients commencing their voyages full of hope, seeking a doctor in whose theories they had faith, only to become disenchanted and mistrustful,

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<sup>4</sup> Meige, ‘Étude sur certains névropathes’, p.27. ‘*Il les décrit avec une loquacité et une mimique singulièrement expressives.*’

eventually abandoning them to search for another, more powerful, cure. Their rejection of one authority prompted another journey to another expert.

For Meige, the true pathology of patients like Moser was their belief in their illnesses, and that these justified scouring Europe for clinics and specialists. Their symptoms were secondary, acting only as justification for the perpetual travel that was the patient's true goal. The search for a cure was merely a convenient reference point that justified their ongoing movement:

They are constantly obsessed by the need to travel, to go from city to city, from clinic to clinic, in search of a new treatment, an unobtainable remedy. They try all the remedies that one offers them, thirsty for novelties, but they soon reject them, inventing a futile pretext to no longer continue, when the impulsion reappears they flee one fine day, carried away by the mirage of a remote cure.<sup>5</sup>

Here, a cure was all the more valuable the more distant it was. Sufferers justified their journeying as reasonable, but clinicians saw this as disguising an obsessional desire for movement and novelty. Unlike the legendary Wandering Jew, whose travelling was a punishment, which he regretted and from which he longed to be released, Meige believed that 'his' Wandering Jews were actively predisposed towards and enjoyed their journeys.

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<sup>5</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.6. *'Ils sont obsédés constamment par le besoin de voyager, d'aller de ville en ville, de clinique en clinique, à la recherche d'un traitement nouveau, d'un remède introuvable. Ils essayent toutes les médications qu'on leur propose, avides de nouveauté ; mais bientôt ils les repoussent, inventant un prétexte futile pour ne plus continuer, et l'impulsion reparaisant, ils s'enfuient un beau jour, entraînés par un nouveau mirage de lointaine guérison.'*

Meige's analysis of the Wandering Jew was an example of the 'retrospective medicine' popular with the Charcot school, which embraced the concept that past phenomena could be reinterpreted in the light of contemporary medical understanding.<sup>6</sup> In addition to portraits of a number of Jewish patients from all over Europe and North Africa who had presented at the Salpêtrière for treatment, Meige also provided an extensive exploration of the origins and variants of the Wandering Jew legend. All of these examples contributed to his diagnostic picture. Meige explained the legend of the Wandering Jew as having a basis in naïve observations of vagabond Jews by superstitious individuals, unable to recognise the medical, rather than spiritual, origin of such behaviour. He argued that the Wandering Jew appeared ever-present not because he was an eternal figure, but because he was just one more example of an illness to which Jews of every generation might fall prone: 'Thus the Wandering Jew still exists today, and exists in the form which he had taken on over the centuries.'<sup>7</sup> Meige argued that the figure of the Wandering Jew, which had become an increasingly popular subject (or in Meige's terms, 'seduced' so many poets and writers in the past) was the literal 'prototype' for the patients like Moser who presented themselves at the hospital.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more on 'retrospective medicine' see Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.369-370.

<sup>7</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.62. '*Le Juif Errant existe donc encore aujourd'hui ; il existe sous la forme qu'il avait prise aux siècles passés.*'

<sup>8</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.14. Artists and political activists used the Wandering Jew in diverse ways, not all of them necessarily negative. The Wandering Jew was at times used to represent all of humanity, rather than a segment of it. Nineteenth-century French depictions saw him as acting variously as a tragic Romantic hero, a symbol of the fight for justice and social progress, a metaphor for Anti-Jesuitism and utopian socialism, a

The 1893 thesis in which Meige detailed Moser's story, *Étude sur certains névropathes voyageurs : Le Juif Errant à la Salpêtrière* ('A study of certain neuropathic travellers - The Wandering Jew at the Salpêtrière'), attracted substantial non-medical attention upon publication. It was perceived as an important contribution to debates about the Jewish people and the question of their racial inheritance. Its somewhat baroque nature, extensive use of literary and artistic representations and the sensationalist nature of its conclusions has also ensured that Meige's work became a much-cited case in late twentieth century historical accounts of the ubiquity and complexity of anti-Semitism in late *fin de siècle* French medicine and culture.<sup>9</sup>

Jan Goldstein argues, for instance, that late-nineteenth century French psychiatry, and its undoubtedly most influential figure, Charcot, was neither 'quite' guilty, nor completely innocent, of anti-Semitism. The Wandering Jew himself, she noted, was formerly a figure with potentially universal and redeeming characteristics, read in largely metaphorical terms. The figure became literalised, racialised and pathologised in response to Jewish migration to France in the wake of the 1881 pogroms in Eastern Europe, when

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witness, observer and fighter for contemporary causes, and an advertising icon symbolising longevity and endurance. See *Le Juif Errant : un témoin du temps*, exhibition guide, ed. by Juliette Braillon-Philippe and Laurence Golstenne, *Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme*, Paris, 26 October 2001- 24 February 2002.

<sup>9</sup> For contemporary reactions to the publication of the thesis in the general and anti-Semitic press, see Jan Goldstein in her nuanced account of the ambivalent relationship between the newly emergent discipline of French psychiatry and contemporaneous currents of anti-Semitic thought. Jan Goldstein, 'The Wandering Jew and the Problem of Psychiatric Anti-Semitism in *fin de siècle* France', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20 (1985), 521-553, pp.543-545.

Eastern Jews became far more visible in France.<sup>10</sup> The French historian Jean - Claude Beaune has made a similar suggestion, arguing that Meige's work acted as an attempt to rationalise the myth of the Wandering Jew, both through its medicalisation, and by dating its origins not in antiquity, but in sixteenth century Europe.<sup>11</sup> Sander Gilman is far less hesitant in his conclusions in *The Jew's Body*, insisting that 'these Jews "wandered" only in the sense that they were driven West and that some sought the solace of the clinic where they would at least be treated as individuals, even if sick individuals.'<sup>12</sup> The apparent resistance to cure and perpetuation of symptoms by these individuals lead him to place patients like Moser in the prehistory of Munchausen's syndrome.<sup>13</sup>

My aim here is not to expand on this literature by exploring the anti-Semitic potential of Meige's work nor to question how, and to what extent, the body and psyche of the Jew were pathologised within late nineteenth-century European bio-medical disciplines. It is undoubtedly the case that the figure of the Jew was being deployed as a quasi-pathologised emblem of degeneration across multiple disciplinary boundaries during this time. However, as I will

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<sup>10</sup> Goldstein, 'The Wandering Jew', p.546.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Claude Beaune, *Le Vagabond et la machine : essai sur l'automatisme ambulatoire : médecine, technique et société en France 1880-1910* (Seyssel : Champ Vallon, 1983), p.140.

<sup>12</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p.76. Gilman's conclusion is based on the stress he believes Meige places on the 'pathognomonic physiognomy of the Jew - especially his eyes.'

<sup>13</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, pp.75- 76. Sufferers of Munchausen syndrome seek attention through the production of symptoms, whose cure they ostensibly seek, yet secretly reject. However, by locating his discussion in terms of Munchausen syndrome, hysteria and ideas about the special quality of the Jewish gaze, Gilman underplays the importance of their wandering, which was for Meige, the key to their illness.

demonstrate, describing and defining the special or unique attributes of the Jews was a project undertaken by anti- and philo-Semites alike, and the conclusions reached were far from uniformly negative. Proto-Zionist groups also encouraged some such research, even if the political conclusions consequently drawn from it were not in their favour. My focus here is on ways in which the relationship of Jews to their environments was theorised, implications of their status as a group with apparently unique attributes, and, most importantly, the centrality of concepts of displacement, wandering, and nostalgia to early French Zionist thought.

## 6.2 Moser and his homes

Meige's account of Wandering Jews assumed a racially-based propensity to reject the situation of 'home'. He viewed his clinical case studies against a background belief that to be Jewish was to operate without reference to the home, loyalty to any particular national identity, or connection to a physical place. He documented Moser's travels, for instance, as if his destinations were almost irrelevant. As he reached a new place, Moser apparently was only concerned by the presence of a new medical specialist.

However, closer scrutiny of the detailed case study presented by Meige reveals that Moser, like the *aliénés voyageurs* discussed in Chapter 4, was demonstrably wandering in reference to a number of potential 'homes'. Like them, he appeared caught in a cognitive bind, unable to determine which place or situation could more satisfactorily constitute his home. The fixed points of desire that Moser first sought, then fled, were the hospitals and

clinics of Europe, whether in Poland, Belgium or England. These acted as, at best, transitory goals. In this he was not very different from non-Jewish wanderers who found that to arrive somewhere was no longer to want to be there. Underlying these peregrinations were more fundamental and complex negotiations about what constituted home.

Moser's voyaging began with a flight from a school in which he had been placed by Russian authorities, where it was demanded that he gave up his religion. Having eventually settled in Budapest, he remained long enough to marry and have three children. Despite these family ties, he was still 'tormented by the need to keep moving.'<sup>14</sup> According to his own account, this prompted him to take his family to Jerusalem, before returning alone to Europe to continue his search for a cure for his need to travel. Moser went back to his family in Jerusalem every five years or so, and claimed that he still wished that he could return to his native Russia. That is, he displayed the classic nostalgic connection to the native region or childhood home (whatever its political conditions).

Moser had also placed another traditional locus of nostalgic desire, his family (about whom we learn nothing more), at the centre of the Jewish spiritual world, to which he returned with regularity, only to flee again. Whereas the majority of *aliénés voyageurs* travelled in reference to a personal sense of home, Moser appears to have been engaging with a variety of differently

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<sup>14</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.24. '*Le besoin de voyager le tourmentait sans cesse.*'

constituted 'homes' on individual and national levels. In Meige's account, Moser was trapped within a web of contradictory ideas about what might constitute the 'home' for a European Jew, a question that was becoming particularly politically charged in the century's final decade.

### 6.3 Jews as special case

If the Salpêtrière's 'Wandering Jews' were understood in terms of their Jewishness, it was because as a distinct group (whether social, racial, religious, or more commonly, a unique mixture of all of these) they had been subject to intensive sociological and medical research. The idea that Jews as a group presented a 'special case' with unique physiological and mental attributes had widespread currency in late-nineteenth century medical thought, as did the belief that Jews were more prone to nervous disorders than the rest of the population.

Both Jewish and non-Jewish doctors argued that the number of Jews suffering nervous disorders was disproportionably large, a claim sometimes mitigated with an assertion that this tendency towards nervousness was an expression of a broader intersection between intellectual prowess and mental illness.<sup>15</sup> Such thinking extended beyond medicine and psychiatry. For instance, Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu (1842-1912), historian and *Academicien*, who was to become

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<sup>15</sup> This meant that the inheritance of the Jews also carried with it the tendency towards superior intelligence, balanced minds, artistic and scientific aptitude. For instance, Meige suggested that Jews were more prone than other groups to 'alternation', in which tendencies towards great intellectual powers and cerebral weaknesses were interrelated. Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.48.



a leading figure in Jewish nationalism in France, followed conventional thinking to argue that Jews were the most nervous and therefore, the most modern of men. He argued that this was not due to ethnic differences, but the result of the particularities of Jewish existence in Europe, especially their concentration in 'cerebral' professions. In other words, he situated this trait as the product of environmental, rather than racial, influences.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in his 1865 study of Jewish 'vitality', Alfred Legoyt (Chief of General Statistics for the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, and Secretary of the Statistical Society of Paris), noted that a study of mental illness by the Statistical Society two years before had 'unanimously proclaimed the remarkable tendency of the Jews to illnesses of the intelligence.'<sup>17</sup>

The conclusions of such studies tended to be confused, caught between an assumption of *a priori* Jewish difference, and an attempt to explain their 'defects' in the same explanatory framework as other groups. Broadly, it became a question of inherited racial traits, opposed to 'environmental' factors. However, the environment was now considered largely in socio-political terms and particularities ascribed to Jews sometimes argued to have become inherited over time due to environmental pressures. The extent of confusion about the origins of Jewish particularity is exemplified by another project of retrospective medicine. In his 1907 work M. Wulfing took Biblical stories as the basis for establishing Jewish medical predispositions. He aimed

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<sup>16</sup> Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *Les Juifs et l'antisémitisme : Israël chez les nations* (Paris : Calmann-Lévy, 1893), p.198.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Legoyt, 'De la Vitalité de la race juive en Europe', *extrait du Journal de la société de statistique de Paris*, 1865, p.22.

to explain mental and nervous disease among the Jewish 'race' in reference accounts of the ancient Hebrews. He argued that the Bible contained numerous stories featuring behaviour strongly analogous to the phenomena observed in hysteria. This led him to the conclusion that the Hebrews, and hence the Jews, were an 'essentially nervous people.'<sup>18</sup> Yet, he also argued that that Jews suffered more neuroses than others as a direct legacy of their history of persecution - in other words, that it was an environmentally produced tendency.<sup>19</sup>

Medical practitioners showed a remarkable willingness to assume a psychic and physical specificity in their Jewish patients. Consider, for example the case of another wanderer, a young Hungarian, 'Klein', described both by Meige and Charcot. Charcot struggled to fit Klein into his clinical categorisations, originally trying to identify his disorder as hysterical. However, Charcot's model of hysteria emphasised that in men, it could only be the result of a physical trauma, combined with familial antecedents with a tendency to nervous diseases. As Klein lacked such antecedents, Charcot fell back on a more general one of race, noting that his Jewishness might well have predisposed Klein towards all manner of nervous conditions.<sup>20</sup> Charcot explained his inability to fit Klein into his diagnostic categories by arguing that his symptoms were better understood in terms of a completely different

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<sup>18</sup> M. Wulfing, 'Contributions á l'étude de la pathologie nerveuse et mentale chez les anciens hébreux et dans la race juive' (medical thesis, Paris, 1907), p.12. '*Un peuple essentiellement nerveux.*'

<sup>19</sup> Wulfing, 'Contributions á l'étude de la pathologie nerveuse', pp.61-62.

<sup>20</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.23. Jean-Martin Charcot, *Leçons du mardi*, vol.2 (Paris : Progrès médicale, 1889), p.352.

set of concerns to do with the specific, and special, inheritance of the Jews.

This inheritance made them inherently more susceptible to nervous conditions and mental illness.

Contemporary conceptions of insanity laid considerable emphasis on heredity and familial predisposition. Yet, such diagnoses were strangely lacking for most of Meige's Wandering Jews. Meige insisted that it 'is not necessary... to find similar nervous problems in ancestors or relatives.'<sup>21</sup> He followed Charcot in arguing that Jews had a particular tendency towards mental disease:

Being Israelites, they are particularly exposed to all the manifestations of neurosis. The great frequency of the nervous diseases in the Jewish race is a remarkable thing. The proportion in which it suffers from epilepsy, hysteria, depression, or mental illnesses is always considerable.<sup>22</sup>

In effect, it meant that when examining their Jewish patients, a lack of expected familial tendencies to explain their conditions could be resolved by appealing to a larger racial inheritance.

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<sup>21</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.48. *'Il n'est pas besoin d'ailleurs... de retrouver dans les ancêtres ou les collatéraux des accidents nerveux similaires.'*

<sup>22</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.6. *'Étant israélites, ils sont particulièrement exposés à toutes les manifestations de la névrose. C'est chose remarquable que la grande fréquence des maladies nerveuses dans la race juive, chez elle, qu'il s'agisse d'épilepsie, d'hystérie, de neurasthénie, ou de maladies mentales, la proportion est toujours considérable.'*

The particularising of Jews on a biological basis was not confined to anti-Semites. In 1868 the *Archives Israélites* reprinted Alfred Legoyt's study, the sole entry for a competition announced by the *Alliance Israélite* to investigate statistics relating to the Jewish population.<sup>23</sup> Here Legoyt strengthened the racial tone of his work, emphasising a 'privilege of race' over sociological factors in accounting for Jewish differences.<sup>24</sup> In his introduction, the editor of the *Archives Israélites* applauded Legoyt's conclusions that Jews were the best adapted, most cosmopolitan, and longest-lived of races. He then went on to quote approvingly work which argued for the superiority of Jewish brains, an indication of their higher intelligence. He concluded that these advantages had been given to Jews in order that they should act as missionaries for the fraternity of humanity and the unity of God.<sup>25</sup> Rather than challenging this framework of analysis, some Jewish writers shared its thinking, and argued that their place in any biological or racial system of classification must be seen as a superior one.<sup>26</sup>

The idea that Jews possessed intrinsic biological features as part of their inheritance remained dominant in both political and medical commentaries of

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<sup>23</sup> The *Archives Israélites* was a reform-orientated monthly review established in 1840. The *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, founded in 1860 by Adolphe Cremieux, and numbering 24,000 members by 1881, aimed to defend and ameliorate the conditions of Jews in the in East, and was especially concerned with education. See Annie Perchenet, *Histoire des Juifs de France* (Paris : Cerf, 1988) pp.150-152.

<sup>24</sup> Unlike his work of 1865 when he pointed to sociological reasons for this vitality, Legoyt now spoke of it as a 'privilege of race.' See Alfred Legoyt, 'De la Vitalité de la race juive', p.23; *De Certaines immunités biostatiques de la race juive* (Paris : Bureau des Archives Israélites, 1868), p.78.

<sup>25</sup> M. J. Carvallo in introduction to Legoyt, *De Certaines immunités biostatiques*, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> See Sander Gilman, *Smart Jews: The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), especially pp.61-82.

the late century. It often served as shorthand to describe a commonality between Jews, independent of religious or cultural grounds. It was significant because the French Jewish population was extremely diverse, ranging from well established communities in Paris and the south of France to a growing, largely recent, immigrant population from Eastern Europe. Consideration of Jewishness in racial terms was not the invention of late-nineteenth century anti-Semites. Jewish commentators had used racial categories to describe themselves from the 1820s, deploying romantic theorists of race to assert their difference.<sup>27</sup>

Ernest Renan's influential linguistic studies of the 1830s examining the history of Semitic languages, which distinguished Jews from Indo-European populations on philological grounds, had also fed into this tendency. Yet, his definitions of race ranged from the cultural to physiological and linguistic aspects, making the term useful only in a very general sense.<sup>28</sup> From the 1860s, anthropologists made a serious effort to clarify their racial terminology and to express human differences in physical terms. However, the position of the Jewish race was never settled. Some anthropologists viewed them as a race, others not. On a popular level, earlier linguistic ideas were simply

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<sup>27</sup> Lisa Moses Leff, 'Self-Definition and Self-Defense: Jewish Racial Identity in Nineteenth Century France', *Jewish History*, 19 (2005), 7-28

<sup>28</sup> See Ernest Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (Paris : Chez Benjamin Duprat, 1855) and *De l'Origine du langage* (Paris : Michel Lévy, 1858), especially Chapter 9, pp.187-198.

combined with new biological theories, resulting in a nebulous, but profoundly felt, belief in Jewish 'difference.'<sup>29</sup>

#### 6.4 Jewish particularities of detachment

In his insistent desire for movement and travel, his superficial attraction to novelty and the new, Moser seemed to embody perfectly the pathological tendencies of the over-modern, cosmopolitan Jew fashioned by anti-Semitic discourse. Meige considered that Moser's propensity to travel was closely linked to that of the Jewish people who were, 'at home nowhere and everywhere.'<sup>30</sup>

For Meige, Moser and his fellow patients acted as a group whose condition was not only an expression of mental illness, but the pathological extreme of a racial tendency. They substantiated the view that particular pathological behaviours were intrinsic to the Jews as ancient and inherited racial traits. Meige urged his readers 'not to forget that they are Jews, and that it is in the character of their race to travel with extreme ease.'<sup>31</sup> The curse placed upon the Wandering Jew as a divine punishment was reformulated as a predisposing factor towards movement in an inherently rootless people. Thus, Moser's attributes were extended to the Jewish people as a whole, couched in

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<sup>29</sup> For an extended discussion see Michael R. Marrus, *The Politics Of Assimilation: The French Jewish Community at The Time of The Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1971), pp.2-3, 10-13.

<sup>30</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.6. '*Chez eux nulle part, et chez eux partout.*'

<sup>31</sup> Meige, 'Étude sur certains névropathes', p.6. '*N'oublions pas qu'ils sont Juifs, et qu'il est dans le caractère de leur race de se déplacer avec une facilité extrême.*'

a language of biological inheritance and degeneration, which questioned their ability to put down roots and become integrated into a nation state.

Some of the difficulties medical writers encountered in trying to construct an explanatory framework for the condition of wandering, pathologised during this period in a variety of diagnostic guises, were detailed in Chapter 4. I argued that beyond their diagnostic arguments doctors framed their discussion of the significance of wandering within a commonly accepted set of broader cultural, economic and social factors. These diseases acted as the clinical manifestations of 'pathological' tendencies associated with modernity, such as emotional detachment, spleen, cosmopolitanism and deracination. Within this literature, the Wandering Jew was frequently used as shorthand for the subjectivity associated with these disorders. For example, Philippe Tissié described his most famous case, Albert Dadas, as 'like a Wandering Jew', while Raoul Chenu declared that the sufferer of spleen was 'a new Wandering Jew'.<sup>32</sup> Metaphorically, the over-modern individual who had lost his proper links to a social structure became 'Jewish'. The Wandering Jew could also represent a potential subjectivity produced in non-Jewish subjects by modernity and the disintegration of traditional social bonds.

If the conditions of modernity were encouraging behaviour of dis-attachment and deracination, this did not detract from an identification of these phenomena as the ancient property of the Jews. As noted above, Jews were

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<sup>32</sup> Philippe Tissié, *Les Aliénés voyageurs* (Paris : 1887), p.67; Raoul Chenu, *De la Nostalgie* (Paris : A. Parent, 1877), pp.75-76.

considered with a double vision, either atavistic, and clinging to pre-modern identities, or the most cosmopolitan and modern of people. In his discussion of wandering illnesses, for example, Victor-Charles Dubourdieu argued that Jews were the 'prototype' of the wanderer:

They are the true vagabonds, always on the move... without ever settling anywhere, driven virtually constantly by a need for perpetual displacement, and having, so to speak, neither homeland, family, language nor trade.<sup>33</sup>

For Dubourdieu, Jews were perpetually propelled towards movement at a biological level, nomadic by 'essence.' Questions of socio-economic imperatives, anti-Semitism and expulsion were collapsed into a 'fatality of race' which Jews shared with Gypsies. This phenomenon was distinguished from that observed in the wanderers on whom Dubourdieu focussed his study. For the most part, these insane wanderers were capable of leading a normal existence, punctuated by periods of temporary degeneration in which they felt compelled to travel. Theirs was a temporary aberration rather than an intrinsic state.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the wandering of Jews and Gypsies was nothing more than an expression of an already existing flaw of being.

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<sup>33</sup> Victor-Charles Dubourdieu, 'Contribution á l'étude de automatisme ambulatoire de la dromomanie des dégénérés' (medical thesis, Bordeaux, 1894), p.58. '*Ce sont de véritables vagabonds, toujours en marche... sans jamais se fixer nulle part, à peu près constamment poussés par un besoin de déplacement perpétuel, n'ayant pour ainsi dire, ni patrie, ni famille, ni langue, ni métier.*'

<sup>34</sup> Dubourdieu, 'Contribution á l'étude de automatisme ambulatoire', p.59.



The supposed Jewish propensity for travel, continual movement, and change, was represented as inherited trait. However, since this was considered a trait inculcated by external forces, a shift in these should potentially be able to lead to further change. The idea that Jewish characteristics had been shaped by an environment of ongoing persecution was prominent. Jewish character could therefore, like that of other groups, be considered in terms of adaptation to a particular environment, but one marked by lack. In this Lamarckian argument, Jews did not differ in their potential from other groups, being ruled by the same type of influences as all populations. However, instead of being influenced by climate and topography, Jews were understood to have been substantially moulded by their precarious social and political situation, to the extent that their characteristics had become inherited.

One of the most explicit expressions of this tendency, and its implications, can be found in sociologist Raoul de la Grasserie's detailed study of the relationship between nostalgia, wandering (or in his terms *odalgism*) and modernism. For Grasserie, Jews served as examples of both extremes of modern society, on the one hand nostalgics clinging to an outdated idea of a lost homeland; on the other, and in the main, of *odalgistic* tendencies towards the new, different and foreign which characterised the modern age. He quoted the situation of the Jews in exile as the perfect example of collective, or ethnic, nostalgia. But, like Wulfing, he asserted that the majority of Jews, had been forced by external forces to undergo a revolution in their characters, and

had 'under a yoke of iron, finished by adopting the opposite character, represented by the Wandering Jew.'<sup>35</sup>

For Grasserie, much as other groups had their individual and collective identities formed by their surroundings, Jews had historically had theirs shaped by their condition of homelessness. This was specifically an enforced homelessness:

Since the dispersion, the Jew has become, at on time or another, well fixed in some country, taken up residence there, and acquired full rights; but he is suddenly driven out by the government or the people, and then takes up again his path through the world. What is curious is that this special destiny has also given him a special character. That is to say, he has acquired a taste for this destiny, in the sense that he has acquired the qualities that it gives.<sup>36</sup>

Political forces out of their control dictated the continued movement of the Jewish people. At the same time, these forces had become internalised, to form an integral part of their character. It was the adaptation to this condition

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<sup>35</sup> Guérin Raoul-Robert-Marie de la Grasserie, 'De la Nostalgie et des instincts contraires comme facteurs psychologiques & sociaux', *extrait de la Revue internationale de sociologie* (Paris : 1911), p.12. 'Sous un joug de fer, elle a fini par adopter le caractère contraire représente par le type du Juif errant.'

<sup>36</sup> Grasserie, 'De la Nostalgie et des instincts contraires', p.16. 'Depuis la dispersion, le juif se fixe bien de temps à autre dans tel pays, il s'y domicilie, il y acquiert tout les droits, mais tout à coup il en chassé par les gouvernements ou les peuples, et alors reprend sa course á travers le monde. Ce qui est curieux, c'est que ce destin spécial lui a fait un caractère spécial aussi. Il y a, pour ainsi dire, pris le goût de cette destinée, en ce sens qu'il a acquis les qualités qu'elle donne.'

of statelessness which in Grasserie's eyes had engendered in the Jews 'the political and social ideas which seem to be these of the future.'<sup>37</sup>

Wulfing's and Grasserie's speculations, expressed in medical and sociological terms respectively, had an important aspect in common. Both effectively concluded that conditions of persecution, urban life and commercial careers had become the 'environment', which shaped the Jewish people in the way that a physical landscape imprinted other more stationary groups. Acquired nervousness had thus become a heredity trait. However, the argument that environmental influences could shape, and eventually change, those of inheritance, left the door open for these to be reversed. In conclusion, Wulfing stated that nervous traits were disappearing among Jews in the new world, where populations mixed more freely, and recommended contact with the natural world as a corrective to such nervous tendencies. Thus, despite the 'nervousness' of the ancient Hebrews these were not irreversible characteristics, and Jews could potentially regenerate themselves.<sup>38</sup>

## **6.5 The biology of cosmopolitanism**

The crucial question at the heart of any debate over the apparent inclination of Jews towards perpetual displacement was whether they were by nature nomadic (and by inference cosmopolitan) or if this was a product of historical events. It was a debate that crossed medical, social and political boundaries.

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<sup>37</sup> Grasserie, 'De la Nostalgie et des instincts contraires', p.16. *'Les Idées politiques et sociales qui lui semblaient celles de l'avenir.'*

<sup>38</sup> Wulfing, 'Contributions á l'étude de la pathologie nerveuse,' pp.106-108.

The possibility and process of the reversibility of such a tendency had obvious relevance for determining if Jews were to be considered as possessing the capacity for integration, or the 'putting down' of roots. As such, it was a major preoccupation for French Zionists and anti-Semites alike, and as will be explored later in the chapter, a key question in Max Nordau's Zionist writing.

As argued above, nostalgia and insane wandering could be seen as pathological extremes on a spectrum whose ideal middle ground was the city dweller inculcated with love for the homeland, but without an over-attachment to its physical landscape. In this context, Jews were increasingly depicted as the ultimate city dwellers, whose ability to move at will and to thrive in an industrial setting were now potentially useful traits. There was a suggestion that as the most modern of peoples, the Jews were more biologically suited to deal with the conditions of modernity and to thrive in its otherwise degenerating urban landscape. This apparent ability to acclimatise to any environment was generally portrayed as a threat; if Jews had managed to equip themselves to survive and even thrive in any conditions, this gave them a superior adaptive ability. However, this belief in a superior Jewish ability to assimilate was maintained alongside contradictory ideas about the persistence of inherent Jewish characteristics; characteristics which could make complete integration impossible.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For more on this question of Jewish integration see Christopher Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), p.38.

Late-century debates over the origin and adaptability of human populations saw the re-emergence of biological and racial arguments in questions of national identity. Cosmopolitanism became a quasi-biological as well as a political category. The nature and origin of racial difference, and potential change and adaptation of human populations, was a subject of intense interest to scientists, social scientists and politicians. In part this debate was a reaction to the introduction of Darwinism in France.<sup>40</sup> It can also be understood as a response to an increase in the number of French colonial projects during the Second Empire. In 1854 the *Société zoologique d'acclimatation* was established in Paris. It won immediate popularity and support from Napoleon III. This support reflected his wish to colonise Algeria with French peasants, to act as an agricultural base producing crops for France.<sup>41</sup>

The emphasis of the *Société zoologique d'acclimatation* was on the practical science of acclimatisation, and its leaders, long term president zoologist Isidore Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire (1805-1861), and vice-president, zoologist Armand de Quatrefages (1810-1892), both argued for a single origin of races. Broadly speaking, a monogenist belief in the single origin of humanity was more likely to allow for the ability of a particular group to adapt to a new environment and the possibility of human cosmopolitanism. In contrast, polygenist theories, which argued that human races had sprung from different origins, and effectively, constituted different species, tended to rely on the

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<sup>40</sup> See Yvette Conry, *L'Introduction du darwinisme en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1974).

<sup>41</sup> Michael A. Osborne, *Nature, the Exotic and the Science of French Colonialism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. xiv-xv, 91.

concept of a 'geographical heritage' belonging to each group.<sup>42</sup> Such a heritage implied that each group had been created with the ability to flourish within a particular set of climatic conditions, and would have a strictly limited ability to adapt to a dissimilar environment.<sup>43</sup> Monogenism was thus identified with environmentalist theories, while polygenists tended to emphasise the importance of heredity.

The ability of humans to adapt was challenged by, among others, Paul Broca, and Jean Boudin (1806-1867), military physician, medical geographer and president of the *Société d'anthropologie*.<sup>44</sup> Boudin was one of the first to use a statistical analysis of birth and death rates to oppose colonisation of Algeria. He argued that humans were neither completely adaptable, nor as fragile as most contemporary theories would have them. Rather, different human races were cosmopolitan to different degrees, and the ability to acclimatise to other circumstances depended on numerous variables. The European peoples, for example, were constitutionally unable successfully to acclimatise to tropical climates, without losing not only their 'force and energy' but also their 'aptitude for work.'<sup>45</sup> This conclusion allowed for the presence of Europeans in such climates, but they would be only fit to act as colonial overseers, not as physical workers.

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<sup>42</sup> Léon Poliakov, 'The Anthropology of the Enlightenment', Chapter 8, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, trans. by Edmund Howard (London: Chatto Heinemann, 1974), pp.155-182.

<sup>43</sup> Osborne, *Nature, the Exotic*, pp.75-78.

<sup>44</sup> The Paris *Société d'anthropologie* was founded by Broca in 1859.

<sup>45</sup> M. Boudin, 'Du Non-cosmopolitisme des races humaines', *Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, 1 (Paris : Vicot Masson et fils, 1860-1863), 93-123, p.100.

For Boudin, there was only one race that was demonstrably adaptively superior, able to thrive in any climate or country:

Up to now, only one race seems to have solved the problem of ubiquity; only one race shows itself to be truly cosmopolitan, and this race is the Jewish race. “Without apparent principle of life”, says Lamennais, “the Jew is everywhere, nothing will be able to destroy him.”<sup>46</sup>

Not only had Jews successfully adapted themselves throughout the world but, Boudin argued, compared to the other populations in the same area, had pronounced differences in birth and death rates. Thus, for example, he provided statistics to demonstrate that the Jewish population in Prussia had lower death rates, infant mortality and stillbirths than the rest of the population, and that the same phenomenon could be witnessed in Algeria.<sup>47</sup> For Boudin, these figures showed that not only could Jews adapt and perpetuate themselves in all countries, but ‘the Jewish race obeys statistical laws of birth, diseases and mortality completely differently from those to which the other populations in the environment in which they live are subjected.’<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Boudin, ‘Du Non-cosmopolitisme,’ p.117. *‘Une seule race semble avoir résolu jusqu’ici le problème de l’ubiquité ; une seule race se montre véritablement cosmopolite, et cette race est la race juive. “Sans principe de vie apparente, dit Lamennais, le Juif est partout, rien ne pourra le détruire.”’*

<sup>47</sup> Boudin, ‘Du Non-cosmopolitisme,’ pp.118-119.

<sup>48</sup> Boudin, ‘Du Non-cosmopolitisme,’ p.122. *‘La race juive obéit à des lois statistiques de naissance, de maladies et de mortalité complètement différentes de celles auxquelles sont soumises les autres populations au milieu desquelles elle vit.’*

Jewish pathology was thus not only constructed in terms of degeneracy, but also in terms of a potential inherent biological superiority, based on an ability to acclimatise to any condition. As with other purportedly Jewish characteristics, the acquired or innate nature of this apparent biological superiority was disputed. Statistician Alfred Legoyt made similar points to Boudin in his analysis of the 'vitality' of the Jewish people. Here, he concluded that Jews throughout Europe generally had lower rates of infant mortality and a higher degree of longevity than the rest of the population. He attributed these figures largely to socio-economic factors, such as a concentration of population in professional rather than physical labour, dietary and other hygienic practices, as well as a highly developed social network of mutual aid. Notwithstanding the positive impact of the grand 'serenity' of spirit which Legoyt believed to be imparted by their faith, this appeared to be an argument with little recourse to biological considerations. Yet, noting Boudin's work, he concluded that the apparent superiority had its underlying cause in:

A certain energetic vitality, higher than that of these [European] races and which modern anthropological research attributes to a kind of hereditary force, which guarantees, above all, the privilege of acclimatisation all over the globe.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Legoyt, 'De la Vitalité de la race juive', p.3. *'Enfin une certaine vitalité énergétique, supérieure à celle des ces races et que les recherches anthropologiques modernes attribuent à une sorte de force congénitale, qui leur assurerait notamment le privilège de l'acclimatation sur tous les points du globe.'*



Legoyt's conclusion that Jews possessed some special 'vitality' of race drew an angry response from Michel Lévy (1809-1872).<sup>50</sup> The Director of the Val-de-Grâce had both methodological and theoretical objections to the idea that the Jewish population had special racial characteristics. For Lévy, Jews offered an obvious case study for statisticians, providing a homogenous and well-defined population group. As such, he believed they would continue to be objects of scientific and ethnological enquiry. However, he argued that if these studies were to be meaningful, the results must be interpreted without recourse to existing prejudices, or belief in special, mysterious attributes of race.<sup>51</sup> This was based on his belief that, all too often, when points of interest were raised about Jews, the part of the 'marvellous' was over-emphasised, substituting 'mystery for the simple statement of the facts.'<sup>52</sup>

In the case of Legoyt's study, Lévy believed that broader social and political factors could easily be used to explain the figures. For instance, marriage rates could be explained by the legal restrictions placed upon Jewish marriages in many countries, while lower child mortality was the result of higher levels of pre- and post-natal care within the community. Lévy saw the historical dissemination of the Jews as a straightforward consequence of the destruction

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<sup>50</sup> Michel Lévy, *De la Vitalité de la race juive en Europe* (Paris : Ballières et Fils, 1866).

<sup>51</sup> As a highly placed, non-converted Jew, Lévy may have also had a personal repugnance for the type of research which indulged in a recourse to such romanticised notions as 'vital energy' to explain Jewish 'difference', effectively setting them apart as a group who operated outside the normal laws of biology. For details of Lévy's life and career see J. Bergeron, 'Éloge de M. Michel Lévy', *Mémoires de l'Académie de médecine*, 37, 2 (Paris : G. Masson, 1895), 1-30.

<sup>52</sup> Lévy, *De la Vitalité de la race juive*, p.23. 'Le mystère à la simple énonciation des faits.'

of their political nationality. He argued that the fact that Jews now appeared to 'thrive under very various and even opposite climates' was no reason to suspect that they possessed an 'innate faculty of cosmopolitanism.'<sup>53</sup> Given that there was no way to trace the entire history of waves of Jewish migration and the processes of their acclimatisation, it was impossible, he argued, to determine what price the original colonists to any region may have had paid during their adaptation to a new climate.

At stake in these arguments was the question of whether Jews could be understood as conforming to the same laws of hereditary influence as other populations. When Lévy argued that there was no reason to suspect that other branches of the Caucasian or Semitic races would not have reacted similarly to the Jews under the same historic pressures, he was questioning the imputation of an inherent cosmopolitanism in their adaptive capabilities. He argued that any biological differences found among Jews must be explained through the same theoretical framework as other groups. In other words, if contemporary Jewish populations thrived in a variety of very different climates, this indicated only that each group had acclimatised to the particular settings in which they found themselves.

## **6.6 Patriotism and biology**

Notwithstanding work such as Lévy's, which questioned the origins of apparent Jewish difference, Jews operated as a, if not the, premier,

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<sup>53</sup> Lévy, *De la Vitalité de la race juive*, pp.22-23. '*Prosperer sous des climats très-divers et même opposés... lui attribuer une faculté innée de cosmopolitisme.*'

deracinated and cosmopolitan people in Europe. Applied to French Jews, the term cosmopolitan acted in a pejorative, sometimes quasi-medical manner, to indicate not just a broad worldview, but also a lack of patriotic, social or emotional ties. Increasingly overlapping understandings of nationalism and race compounded the problem, as did the rise of nationalist ideologies which saw peoples discovering (or as Hobsbawm would put it ‘inventing’) shared histories and traditions on which to base a national identity.<sup>54</sup> If nationality was believed to stem from a shared past and common ethnicity, it made the potential assimilation of the Jews into their host populations even more problematic.

For the French Jewish community, citizenship, emancipation and assimilation were all linked. In 1794, France was the first state in Europe to offer emancipation to its Jewish inhabitants. It meant that many French Jews felt a sense of loyalty to the nation that had allowed them an opportunity to become full citizens of a political state.<sup>55</sup> The Paris Sanhedrin, a council of religious leaders, first convened by Napoleon 1 in 1806, emphasised patriotism, compliance with civil law, and implicitly disavowed the idea of a literal return

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<sup>54</sup> See *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>55</sup> Before the Revolution, the Jewish community were subject to specific bodies of law, which limited their rights of residence and ownership, and ability to pursue certain professions. Emancipation decrees in 1790 and 1791 granted Jews equal rights as citizens, but these rights needed to be defended well into the century, particularly in response to the influence of the Catholic Church. This was in contrast, for instance, to the English situation, where Jewish rights were circumscribed in line with all other groups not belonging to the Church of England. See Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840–1914* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

to Palestine.<sup>56</sup> Yet, ongoing controversies both inside and outside of the Jewish community over the preferable (or possible) relationship of French Jews to the nation, their political loyalty and place as citizens, occurred at varying levels of intensity throughout the nineteenth century. French Jews were caught between depictions of themselves as being without any loyalties, except for their own material interests, or with having a loyalty to their community that predated any national patriotism.

Although there was ongoing tension in the Jewish community itself around questions of assimilation and integration, the trend towards some kind of cohesion with the broader French population continued until the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>57</sup> Then, prompted in part by the appearance of anti-Semitic tracts such as Edouard Drumont's book of 1886, *La France Juive*, the 'Jewish question' became a broad cultural concern, leading, in Catherine Nicault's words, to a 'veritable infiltration' of anti-Semitic stereotypes and modes of thought in French thinking.<sup>58</sup> However, ongoing scandals associated with the 'Affair' surrounding Captain Alfred Dreyfus, from his 1894 trial for treason to his 1899 pardon, were the most direct prompt to a radical reassessment of the

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<sup>56</sup> The Sanherin added religious authority to responses made by the Assembly of Jewish Notables to Napoleon's request for answers to the position the Jewish community believed they should have in France. See Perchenet, *Histoire des Juifs*, pp.142-144, Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.77

<sup>57</sup> The integrationist position argued for an acquisition of citizenship, without a renunciation of Jewish identity, while assimilation involved an explicit refusal to identify Jews as a group. See Perchenet, *Histoire des Juifs*, p.138.

<sup>58</sup> Catherine Nicault, *La France et le sionisme 1897-1948 : une rencontre manquée?* (Paris : Calmann-Levy, 1992), p.18.

Jewish community's place in France (and a rationale for proponents of political Zionism).

The Affair began with the trial, ritual expulsion from the armed forces, and imprisonment of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer from the Alsace, on the grounds of spying for the Imperial Prussian empire.<sup>59</sup> The Affair gained notoriety in 1898, with Emile Zola's 'J'accuse', a public letter questioning the evidence on which Dreyfus had been imprisoned. It then became a national scandal, going far beyond the question of Dreyfus's innocence or guilt. The Affair marked a decisive turn towards biological and racial definitions of national belonging, and provided a forum where the viability of the Republican model, with its reliance on civic nationalism, was questioned. Differences between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards reflected underlying tensions in models of French identity. Central to these were the question of choice and the Affair was a test that gave anti-Semitism a particular ideological and political character, representing a conservative form of nationalism.<sup>60</sup>

The Dreyfus Affair demonstrated, among the many things, that French identity could no longer be discussed in purely civic terms. Instead, ideas

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<sup>59</sup> For detailed historical account of the Affair see Jean-Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987); Roderick Kedward, *The Dreyfus Affair (Problems And Perspectives In History)*, (London: Longmans, 1965). For the Affair's broader social and political implications and legacy, see Michel Winock, 'The Dreyfus Affair', Chapter 9, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Fascism in France*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 111-130; Hannah Arendt, 'The Dreyfus Affair', Chapter 4, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London and New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1973), pp.89-120, and Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair*.

<sup>60</sup> Kedward, *The Dreyfus Affair*, pp.55-57.

about the role of shared ethnicity became explicit in discussions of Dreyfus' motives and actions. For many, like the nationalist writer and politician Maurice Barrès, Dreyfus's Jewish origins were enough to make his allegiance to France open to question:

[Dreyfus is] the deracinated individual who feels ill at ease in one of the plots of your old French garden... I don't need to be told why Dreyfus betrayed. Psychologically speaking it is enough for me to know that he is capable of betrayal to know that he betrayed. The gap is filled in. That Dreyfus is capable of betrayal, I conclude from his race.<sup>61</sup>

Ironically, it was his Alsacien background which Dreyfus held to be the strongest proof of his innocence, while for those like Barrès it indicated his possible links to Germany. Dreyfus' commitment to the *revanche* (revenge for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War) had been the original impetus towards his military career. His origins and family ties explained the clandestine journeys to the now Prussian-held territory in which the military courts saw evidence of treason. In other words, it was exactly those ties to soil and the dead which Barrès exulted as the basis for nationality, and charged that Jews lacked, which attached Dreyfus to Alsace.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Maurice Barrès, *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme* (Paris, F. Juven, 1902), p.152. 'Ce déraciné qui se sent mal à l'aise dans un des carreaux de notre vieux jardin français. Je n'ai pas besoin qu'on me dise pourquoi Dreyfus a trahi. En psychologie, il me suffit de savoir qu'il est capable de trahir et me suffit de savoir qu'il a trahi. L'intervalle est rempli. Que Dreyfus est capable de trahir, je le conclus de sa race.'

<sup>62</sup> For an exploration of the significance of Dreyfus' Alsacien background see Michael Burns, 'Families and Fatherlands' in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France: From Boulangism to the Great War, 1889-1918*, ed. by Robert Tombs (London: HarperCollins Academic, 1991), pp.50-62.

The fallout from the Affair not only fissured the nation politically and socially, it also played a pivotal role in the Zionist movement created in the 1890s. Zionist leader, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), identified the events of the Dreyfus case as the basis for his belief that assimilation was not a solution for anti-Semitism. Visiting Paris to report on Captain Dreyfus' degradation ceremony for his Viennese newspaper, it was the anti-Jewish hysteria Herzl witnessed there that provoked his vision for a Jewish state and prompted the publication of his *The Jewish State*, a publication that mobilised the political Zionist movement.<sup>63</sup>

In the climate of crisis precipitated by the Dreyfus affair, Zionism emerged as the principal alternative to the politics of assimilation. However, it generally remained a peripheral and minority view within the Jewish community, where strongly anti-Zionist currents of thought existed. These were not just among the ultra-orthodox, to whom a physical return to the promised Land was anathema, but also among republican groups, whose anti-Zionism was based on the ideological inheritance of revolution and French nationalism. Thus, the Grand Rabbi, Zadoc Kahn, remained uninterested in Zionism, while Baron Rothschild supported colonisation projects financially, but shunned publicity and was suspicious of Herzl.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Nelly Wilson, *Bernard Lazare: Antisemitism and the Problem of Jewish Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.222.

<sup>64</sup> Nicault argues that Herzlian Zionism only sparked slight curiosity in France except among leading Jews and anti-Semites, and that the Dreyfus affair paradoxically contributed to this failure in that its events tended to monopolise the attentions of politicians and journalists. She argues that for a republican nation determined to inculcate patriotism and stressing a re-

At the *fin de siècle*, boundaries of nationality were re-contested and questions of what it meant to be French increasingly framed in terms, which if not purely biological, were highly reliant on hereditary ideas about race. These were important both in terms of the place of the Jewish population in France and for the emergence of a political Zionist movement. Determining who was French was never just a question of citizenship, race or ethnicity, even for reactionary writers.<sup>65</sup> Instead, to be truly French one must have not only the material attributes, but belong to the ‘national family’, a spiritual identity forged by French culture and tradition. This spiritual unity depended on a pre-modern national culture, formed in direct relation to the land and ancestors, in opposition to perceived incursions from outsiders.<sup>66</sup>

Such formulations implicitly or explicitly excluded Jews from the spiritual family of the nation. Arguments being made by medical theorists of the 1820s and 1830s, in which the *patrie* was formed through intellectual choice, or on collective will alone, were anathema to such nationalist ideologies. In the case of Barrès they were derided as ‘Jewish’ ideas of nationhood:

The Jews do not have a country in the sense that we understand it.

For us the homeland is our soil and our ancestors, the land of our

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engagement with the physical land, it was difficult for the French to accept the idea of a national sentiment amongst a people without territory for 2,000 years. In contrast, since the re-establishment of restrictive legislation was impossible under a republican regime, the idea of a voluntary exodus of Jews to Palestine accorded well with certain anti-Semitic preoccupations. Nicault, *La France et le sionisme*, pp.18-34 passim.

<sup>65</sup> David Carroll, *French Literary Fascism: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and the Ideology of Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>66</sup> Carroll, *French Literary Fascism*, pp.19-22.



dead. For them, it is the place where their self-interest may be best pursued. Their “intellectuals” thus arrive at their famous definition: ‘The homeland is an idea’ ... you will not deny that the Jew is a different kind of being.<sup>67</sup>

The belief that the nation was an idea to which one consented had been championed by medical writers who sought to develop an understanding of the relationship of nostalgia to the *patrie*. Barrès’ conceptualisation of patriotism a generation later as ‘an unreasoned, quasi-animal element’ effectively marked a return to the ideologies, if not language, of patriotism based on an attachment to the physical land.<sup>68</sup> The reattachment of ideas of nationhood to those of the soil shifted patriotism away from citizenship and culture, and made inheritance an important factor in national identity. If nostalgia was no longer considered a disease, there was a definite longing for the attachments and desires that it had mobilised in the past.

Culturally, late century anti-Semitic diatribes questioned the political loyalty of Jewish citizens to the state in language that evoked biological and racial theories. While in this guise Jews were held to represent the cosmopolitan and rootless, they also became associated with the, now largely defunct, definition

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<sup>67</sup> Barrès, *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme*, pp.63-64. ‘*Les Juifs n’ont pas de patrie au sens où nous l’entendons. Pour nous, la patrie, c’est le sol et les ancêtres, c’est la terre de nos morts. Pour eux, c’est l’endroit où ils trouvent leur plus grand intérêt. Leurs “intellectuels” arrivent ainsi à leur fameuse définition : “La patrie, c’est une idée” ... vous ne nier point que le juif ne soit un être différent.*’

<sup>68</sup> Maurice Barrès, *Les Diverses Familles spirituelles de la France* (Paris : Emile-Paul Frères, 1917) p.77. ‘*La part irraisonnée, quasi-animale.*’

of nostalgia. Here they were betrayed as a group whose loyalty to their ancient homeland was strong enough to survive centuries of exile. Most Jews were considered firstly as a racial group, and secondly given a double identity: as simultaneously an ancient, yet forward looking, race. Effectively, Jews were depicted as being trapped in a permanent state of transience, unable to make themselves properly at home anywhere; either because they had no aptitude for the process of putting down roots, or because they resisted doing so in memory of Israel.

In both guises, whether inherently cosmopolitan or clinging to a lost homeland, Jewish loyalty to France was made questionable. This demonstrates again the political content always implicit in nostalgia. Unlike the treatment of cases in the immediate post-Revolutionary era, which preserved sufferers from pejorative labelling, the association of Jews with this now-marginalised category emphasised their difference and lack of developmental potential. Like the 'primitives' described in Chapter 5, they were portrayed as unable to adjust to a specific environment - in this case, successful integration into modern France.

## **6.7 Nordau's Zionism**

Max Nordau was a medical doctor, but gained notoriety as the author of fictional and philosophical polemics against the failings of the modern age. He was born in Vienna (as Simon Maximilian Suedfeld) but spent much of his life in Paris where he was, after Theodor Herzl, one of the figureheads of the

newly emerging Zionist movement.<sup>69</sup> My concentration on Nordau is particularly relevant to the present discussion because his work incorporated medical and Zionist thought. As I will suggest, these were not separate concerns for Nordau, and both became imbued with the language of Jewish pathology. Nostalgia was an important category for Nordau, which he deployed in its transferred sense, while simultaneously having recourse to environmental arguments that recalled its clinical definition. The time frame, different target audiences and rhetorical nature of his project meant that Nordau's position was not always consistent. I am less concerned with resolving these contradictions than to see how they might illuminate the ambivalent position taken by Nordau towards the role of the physical land in the Zionist programme. These relate especially to the exact nature of Israel, as political nation or re-generating physical homeland, a contentious issue of debate amongst Zionists.

Nordau used the language of Jewish degeneracy in a manner not dissimilar to that of anti-Semitic writers. However, he evoked it specifically in order to stress the urgency of the Zionist project. In his vision Jewish degeneration was not due to a fatality of race, but to a refusal to embrace the destiny of the race, by attempting to assimilate to another culture. For Nordau, the Dreyfus Affair indicated that the Jew would never be considered as fully part of the national body, a sign of the broken promise of emancipation and integration.

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<sup>69</sup> Nordau refused a request to become the head of the World Zionist Organisation after Herzl's death in 1904. After 1911 he distanced himself from the movement, arguing that its focus on practical Zionism was detracting from Herzl's political aims.

He viewed the lack of Dreyfusard activism among French Jews as a sign of their weakness and degeneration, a direct result of their attempt to assimilate.<sup>70</sup>

Whether discussing modern artists, city dwellers or Jews, Nordau utilised a language of pathology, physical and mental weakness and disease, and offered practical suggestions for their amelioration. For Nordau the degenerating potential of urbanisation and industrialisation were seen as having a special impact on the highly urbanised Jewish population, concentrated in particular professions. Nordau explained this Jewish degeneration as the product of enforced deracination from their appropriate environment, and from full membership of a political and cultural community. In other words, Jews lacked both their own *pays* and *patrie*, an anomalous condition that could only be redeemed in the land of Israel, proof of the validity and necessity of the Zionist project.

Nordau's Zionist vision, he insisted, 'repudiates any mysticism', replacing older Messianic Zionism with a practical programme for a return to the ancestral homeland.<sup>71</sup> The modern Zionist programme mobilised by Theodor Herzl's *The Jewish State* of 1896 relied on political rather than religious arguments, and as such was rejected by many more orthodox Jews. Nordau opened his 'Introduction to Zionism' with an assertion that 'the word Zionism

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<sup>70</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, 'Max Nordau and the Dreyfus Affair', *Journal of Israeli History*, 16 (1995), 1-17, pp.8-9.

<sup>71</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.23. 'Il désavoue tout mysticisme.'

is a new designation for something very ancient.’<sup>72</sup> This evocation of the dual nature of the Jewish people linked his project to the traditional religious desire for a return to Palestine. At the same time, it asserted a rupture with this tradition, in his insistence on the fundamental newness of a specifically political project. For Nordau both political and biological concerns lay behind the creation of a Zionism that aimed to enact physically the homecoming that for many centuries had existed as a religious and metaphysical metaphor.<sup>73</sup> His argument was biological. For while Nordau believed in the self-determination of peoples, he also followed contemporary scientific thinking about issues of fitness, acclimatisation and degeneration. As we shall see, this allowed him to argue that Jewish degeneracy was the outcome of the unnatural life of the diaspora.<sup>74</sup>

Scholars have differed in their perceptions of the connections, or ruptures, between Nordau’s work as a cultural critic and as a Zionist. For instance, George Mosse sees no true break between Nordau’s Zionist and non-Zionist writing, arguing that the political role he assumed corresponded with his fears of degeneration. In contrast, Derek Penslar finds significant ‘discordances’ between his different works. He argues, for example, that in his general works

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<sup>72</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.19. ‘*Le mot sionisme est la désignation nouvelle d’une chose très ancienne.*’

<sup>73</sup> On other Jewish projects of return to the land and immigration, see Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (London: William Heinemann, 1899).

<sup>74</sup> Nordau did not explicitly engage with the expansive medical and anthropological literature in which the figure of the Jew, or Jews, appeared as a special, even unique case. Indeed, he claimed that the anthropology and ethnography of the Jewish people were almost entirely unexplored domains, a statement that ignored numerous multi-disciplinary studies and controversies. However, he used its language while situating his writing in the broader assumptions of contemporary biological theory. See Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.114.

Nordau was a positivist and rationalist social reformer, manifestly hostile to state and politics, opposing inheritance and suggesting communal ownership of land. At the same time, he was devoted to the national cause of one of the smallest groups of people, and to a Zionism that was extremely politicised.<sup>75</sup>

What is beyond doubt, however, is Nordau's continued reliance on contemporary medical theory as part of his argument.

Nordau's Zionism depended on an argument about difference, but a difference within shared parameters. He asserted Jewish difference in terms common to all national groups, rather than their being a special case. However, a perception of the tension between the Jews as the most modern, yet the most ancient, of peoples continued to run throughout Nordau's work. While the homelessness of the Jews was naturalised as an inherent pathological state by anti-Semites, Nordau reformed this in the language of redeemable exile. He explicitly linked the Jewish call for a homeland to similar claims being made by other groups, and presented Zionism as a cure for Jewish degeneracy and the natural expression of national consciousness:

The feeling of nationality given to all peoples which are conscious of themselves, has taught them to consider their particularities as qualities and given them a passionate desire for independence.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See George L. Mosse, 'Max Nordau, le libéralisme et le "Nouveau Juif"' and Derek Jonathan Penslar, 'Les deux visages de Max Nordau, philosophe et sioniste' in *Max Nordau (1849-1923) : Critique de la dégénérescence, médiateur franco-allemand, père du sionisme*, ed. by Delphine Bechtel, et.al. (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1996).

<sup>76</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.24. '*Le sentiment de nationalité a donné à tous les peuples conscience d'eux mêmes, leur a enseigné à considérer comme des qualités leurs particularités, leur a donné le désir passionné de l'indépendance.*'

He noted that in Western Europe at least, Jews were legally recognised as citizens of their nations, and that adaptation or assimilation was an easier path 'than the assertion of a particular national genius.'<sup>77</sup> Zionism was thus not a rejection of other national groups but a desire to join their ranks as a fellow nation.

For Nordau there was a 'natural type' of Jew just as there was a 'type' for all nations. However, in the case of the Jews this type had not had the chance to be developed. This is why any arguments about innate Jewish qualities made no sense, since they were not being assessed in a milieu where these qualities could be fully expressed or developed. This process would depend on Jews having their own political state, and their own land 'living on their own soil, filling all the economic, intellectual, moral and political functions of a civilised nation.'<sup>78</sup> The development of national character would 'make again of the Jewish people a normal people', free of the distorting influences of anti-Semitism and their historical past of persecution.<sup>79</sup>

The Zionist project in Nordau's eyes was not one which sought to remove Jews from the rest of society, but to put them on equal footing with other national groups: 'it borders on the ridiculous to term "nostalgia of the ghetto"

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<sup>77</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.133. 'Que l'affirmation d'un génie national particulier, que la séparation, que l'organisation nationale.'

<sup>78</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.23. 'Vivant sur son sol à lui, remplissant toutes les fonctions économiques, intellectuelles, morales et politiques d'une nation civilisée.'

<sup>79</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.23. 'Faire à nouveau du peuple juif un peuple normal.'

the desire which we have to build by our own means our home.'<sup>80</sup> Rather, he argued, the 'most modern theories of psychology and sociology' all led to the conclusion that:

Each people, like each individual, must live its life in conformity with its own nature, this being the result of its organic constitution or of its historical development; consequently it must avoid letting itself go into decline under the influence of the pressure, the contempt or the hostility of others. Never we will be able to better accept our progressive character, our modern tendencies, than by attempting to be ourselves, rather than a counterfeit of other people however perfect, other than by being a harmonious original, rather than a burden on others.<sup>81</sup>

For Nordau, the Jews were a distinct people whose traits could be usefully harnessed and developed only when they were in their proper place, where their 'modern tendencies' would be usefully productive.

Nordau saw Jewish degeneracy specifically in terms of assimilated or ghetto Jews. For him, the only possibility for Jewish regeneration was through the establishment of their own homeland. For Nordau this homeland was

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<sup>80</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.188. 'C'est friser le ridicule que d'appeler "nostalgie du ghetto" le désir que nous avons d'édifier de nos propres moyens nos pénates.'

<sup>81</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.188. 'Chaque peuple, comme chaque individu doit vivre une existence conforme à sa nature propre, celle-ci étant la résultante de sa complexion organique ou de son développement historique; en conséquence il doit éviter de laisser aller à la décadence sous l'influence de la pression, du mépris ou de l'hostilité des autres. Jamais nous ne saurons mieux accepter notre caractère progressif, nos tendances modernes, qu'en tâchant d'être nous-mêmes, plutôt qu'une contrefaçon aussi parfaite soit-elle d'autrui, d'être un original harmonieux plutôt qu'une charge des autres.'



important both in sense of *pays* and *patrie*. It involved both a return to physical strength through some kind of re-connection to the land, and political self-government. Thus, although the majority of constructions of the figure of the Jew as degenerate were anti-Semitic in intent or in implication, they also proved useful tools for Nordau to argue the case for Zionism. In this case, the argument that Jews were degenerate was aimed not at removing them from the usual parameters of analysis as a 'special case,' but to argue that it was exactly this aspect that proved that they should be understood as a group who were lacking their necessary national rights.

Reflecting his involvement with medico-scientific discourses, for Max Nordau, the granting of citizenship to the French Jews after the revolution had seemed to promise an end to exile through integration into a new homeland:

By the door of the legislation of the French Revolution, the Jew entered the European community. He became a citizen of his country [*pays*] of birth: for the first time he obtained a place in the sun, a solid ground beneath his feet. He ceased to be a wandering being, a vagrant without fixed abode.<sup>82</sup>

The political emancipation had seemingly created a situation in which French Jews no longer needed to look elsewhere for a homeland. They had, through their acquisition of political rights, joined the broader community. For

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<sup>82</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.48. 'Par la porte de la législation de la Révolution française, le Juif entrant dans la communauté européenne. Il devenait citoyen de son pays de naissance : pour la première fois il obtenait une place au soleil, un sol certain sous ses pieds. Il cessait d'être un être errant, un vagabond sans feu ni lieu.'

Nordau, this was a process by which the Jews of France at last found a home and became '*enracinée*'. However, this was to prove illusory in several ways.

The Dreyfus Affair prompted Nordau to reconsider the true success of this attempted *enracinement*, and he questioned the appropriateness of the attempt to become integrated into the wider French community. Using botanical metaphors, Nordau now described *enracinement* as a type of false consciousness of an almost biological nature:

He found in this a delirious joy, he was delighted to thus find himself grafted to a people, to a national body, and he judged that it was a marvellous change for him to be thus radically separated from his roots which plunged in the depths of centuries, and to live henceforth, like a newly added branch, on the trunk of another nation.<sup>83</sup>

By implication, in becoming French the Jewish population had necessarily severed its own history, and lost its connections to its proper, life giving, roots. The image he offered, of a newly grafted branch, was at odds with the commonplace imagery to be found in the anti-Semitic writings – for instance, the Jews as an alien people feeding off their host population. But, it nonetheless echoes with Barrès description of Dreyfus as 'this rootless man [*déraciné*], who feels ill at ease in one of the plots of our old French

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<sup>83</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, pp.48-49. '*Il en concevait une joie délirante, il était ravi de se trouver ainsi greffé à un peuple, à un organisme national, et il jugeait que c'était un changement merveilleux pour lui que d'être ainsi radicalement séparé de sa racine qui plongeait dans les profondeurs des siècles, et de vivre désormais, branche nouvellement ajoutée, sur le tronc d'une autre nation.*'

garden.’<sup>84</sup> For Nordau the attempted process of ‘grafting’ had locked French Jews into their forward-looking identity without reference to their past.

## 6.8 Regeneration

Regeneration had, in various forms, been a central concern in the project of Jewish emancipation throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup> Introduced into discussions of the place of the Jewish population in France several years before the Revolution, *régénération* was a key concept in ongoing debates about French - Jewish identity. In 1785, the *Société des arts et science de Metz*, home of the oldest and most important Jewish community in France, called for a concourse on the ‘means of making Jews more useful and happy in France.’ The Abbé Henri Grégoire responded with his *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs*. Grégoire had grown up in a village mixing with its Jewish families, had long preached that the Jewish community should be regarded fraternally, and fought for Jewish emancipation in the early Republic. He proposed the idea of morally deficient Jewry, but relying on theories of environmental influence, maintained that this was due to circumstances beyond the control of the Jews. While his ultimate aim was the assimilation of the Jewish community into French society through progressive conversion and mixed marriage, Grégoire insisted that

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<sup>84</sup> Barrès, *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme*, p.152. Barrès made the concept of ‘rootedness’ central to his ideological arguments. The necessity of a sense of local, regional and national connectedness was his personal credo and a response to broader political and intellectual questions. Engaging with one’s roots was both a spur to political action and to revitalising the self. See Robert Soucy, *Fascism in France: The Case of Maurice Barrès* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1972), p.113.

<sup>85</sup> Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), p.14.

perceived Jewish failings were not innate, and that they merited the full rights of citizenship even if maintaining their religion.<sup>86</sup>

The idea of *régénération* quickly gained currency among a Jewish elite who proposed a programme of socio-economic and cultural modernisation in the community. In this context, emancipation was understood in terms of duties of citizenship, with the aim of assimilation into the broader community through the purging of Jewish life of those attributes deemed to make them unfit for citizenship within a modern state. In a short-lived journal, *La Régénération* published 1836-1837 in Strasbourg, the term took on a new sense, as the rebirth of Jewish people viewed in terms of restoring loss, rather than transformation. This form of *régénération* rejected assimilation, aiming for civil but not social fusion, and the preservation of a distinct Jewish identity.<sup>87</sup>

In both these forms, the concept of regeneration was focussed on ideas of the civic and cultural life of the Jewish population. The concept of regeneration was central to Nordau's Zionism, by which he meant not only of Jewish identity, but also that of the body. Nordau admitted the anti-Semitic contention that Jews were a physically degenerate people, since it allowed him to argue for the urgency of his programme of physical regeneration:

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<sup>86</sup> See Abbé Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs* (Paris : Stock, 1988), especially the Introduction, pp.7-20.

<sup>87</sup> Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity*, pp.30-31, 128-130 passim.

Thus, even for a number of very proud Jews, it is an obvious fact that the Jew is clumsy and physically awkward to a lamentable degree, is pitifully weak; that he has two left hands, that he stumbles constantly, walks askew and bowed rather than straight. The anti-Semites maintain this and we repeat it. At most, we will dare to plead extenuating circumstances. Is it astonishing, we will say, that we lack muscular strength and dexterity? During the thousands of years spent in the ghetto, due to lack of exercise, we lost our physical capacities, and we will have to struggle hard in order to regain them.<sup>88</sup>

Here, Nordau deployed the same ideas as other writers who had argued that environmental lack led Jews to become degenerate. However, he added an important element of analysis when he qualified this as pertaining only to ‘the artificial life of the Jews of the Diaspora.’<sup>89</sup> For Nordau this artificiality was above all caused by living in an urban environment which encouraged and produced nervousness, but also by implication, living in an environment which was not only unsuitable but alien, that of the Diaspora.

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<sup>88</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.112. ‘Ainsi, pour nombre de Juifs même très fiers, c’est un fait patent que le Juif est malhabile et lamentablement maladroit physiquement ; qu’il est d’une faiblesse pitoyable ; qu’il a deux mains gauches, qu’il trébuche constamment sur ses jambes, marche plutôt de travers et baissé que droit. Cela les antisémites le soutiennent, et nous le répétons. Tout au plus, oserons-nous plaider les circonstances atténuantes. Est-il étonnant, dirons-nous, que nous manquions de forces musculaire et d’adresse. Durant les milliers d’années passées dans le ghetto, par manque d’exercice, dû perde nos capacités physiques, et il nous faudra durement peiner pour arriver à les recouvrer.’

<sup>89</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.295. ‘La vie artificielle des Juifs de la Diaspora.’

Nordau's answer to this ghetto-produced weakness was the instigation of a programme of physical education for Jewish youth. Nordau's concept of the muscular Jew published in the *Echo Sioniste* (*Zionist Echo*) mirrored that of muscular Christianity; just as his championing of Jewish gymnastics clubs paralleled the prevalent nationalist aims of other similar endeavours in Europe.<sup>90</sup> His commitment to the development of the 'muscular Jew' was consistent with other movements that saw physical and moral regeneration of the individual linked to, and productive of, broader nationalistic outcomes.<sup>91</sup>

For Nordau, gymnastics not only improved muscular strength but developed the nervous system and harmonised the mind and body. In his 1902 discussion of the *relèvement* of the Jews in the *Echo Sioniste*, Nordau linked this physical regeneration to an economic *relèvement* that would allow Jews to regain their physical strength. He asked his readers to compare Jewish families who had been affluent for a number of generations and consider:

These beautiful riders, these splendid combatants, these supple dancers, these champions of fighting and swimming, compare these solid, developed, bodies with the miserable, clumsy, exhausted dwarves of the Oriental ghetto.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> See Philippe Tissié, *L'Éducation physique et la Race* (Paris : Ernest Flammarion, 1919), p.295.

<sup>91</sup> See Todd Samuel Presner, "'Clear Heads, Solid Stomachs, and Hard Muscles": Max Nordau and the Aesthetics of Jewish Regeneration', *Modernism / modernity*, 10 (2003), 269-296.

<sup>92</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, pp.119-120. 'Ces beaux cavaliers, ces magnifiques combattants, ces danseurs souples, ces champions de la lutte et de la natation, comparez ces corps solides, développés, avec les nains misérables, maladroits, épuisés du ghetto oriental.'

These athletic Jews were still in Europe, yet had escaped the degeneracy of their eastern brethren. This raises an important incongruity in Nordau's Zionist vision. Nordau had re-figured the degeneracy that he perceived in the Jewish population as the product of their exile. It implied that while a physical *relèvement* was necessary, it needed to take place on the soil of a Jewish nation. Yet these new muscular Jews had regained their physical vigour without this. Such statements have led historians to assert that Nordau, while making rhetorical flourishes towards the need to return to the rejuvenating land, did not in fact view it as a necessity. For instance, George Mosse argues that Nordau's 'new Jew' depended on development of Jewish muscles and will, not on a renaissance of Jewish culture in *eretz* Israel, 'in spite of the importance attached to the curative function of working the soil, one has the impression that Palestine constituted above all a place of refuge.'<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, in his comparison of Nordau's generalist and Zionist texts, Derek Penslar also argues that Nordau described Jewish involvement in agriculture as a means to an end:

Since Nordau wrote so much about returning Jews to the soil, it might appear that the agrarian streak so prominent in his general writings was transplanted intact into his Zionist ones.

Significantly, however, Nordau described Jewish involvement in

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<sup>93</sup> Mosse, 'Max Nordau, le libéralisme et le "Nouveau Juif"', p.20. '*Malgré l'importance attachée à la fonction curative du travail de la terre, on a l'impression que la Palestine constituait surtout un lieu de refuge.*'

agriculture as a means to an end, the end being ‘physical amelioration’ and the prevention of the ‘physical decay of our race.’ For Nordau, racial fitness could be maintained just as well by sport as by farming.<sup>94</sup>

I suggest that the land is absolutely fundamental to Nordau, less in agrarian terms than as a physical *pays*. Penslar describes Nordau as proposing a ‘Zionism laced with Darwinism’. It is the Lamarckian and neo-Hippocratic ideas, however, which I have discussed earlier in terms of their role in constructing a vision of subjectivity and health tied to a particular landscape, which strike me as most important here.<sup>95</sup> One of Nordau’s main concerns was to re-incorporate Jews into the same frame of analysis as other national groups. As such, they became a population who shared with all other national groups an indissoluble tie to the soil of their *pays*, even if this was one preserved through centuries of exile.

For Nordau, notwithstanding the success of physical *relèvement*, the problem of Jewish *dégénérescence* could only be fully solved in their proper physical environment:

The only solution is to find for him a ground that belongs to him.

Until then, all that we do can only be a partial piece of work: we

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<sup>94</sup> Derek Jonathan Penslar, ‘From “Conventional Lies” to Conventional Myths: Max Nordau’s Approach to Zionism’, *History of European Ideas*, 22, 3 (1996), 217-226, p.222.

<sup>95</sup> Penslar, ‘From “Conventional Lies” to Conventional Myths’, p.224.



will not be able to tackle the evil at its roots but only to improve or perhaps mask some clinical symptoms.<sup>96</sup>

For Nordau Jews were in need of an appropriate natural environment, which only Israel could provide.<sup>97</sup> Nordau presented the Jews as one more specific national group in Europe, but one which was suffering as it did not have access to its *pays*. By drawing on and expanding the negative stereotype of the European Jew as degenerate, he acted against claims of superior acclimatisation while simultaneously reinforcing both their non-particularity and their differences.

Ultimately, Israel was for Nordau both *pays* and *patrie* in the sense I have been using them throughout this thesis. It needed to act not only as an organising national state, but also to provide an environment around which individuals could develop their sense of identity and belonging. The physicality of Israel was critical to Nordau not just in terms of a territory belonging to a Jewish state, but as a landscape from which its inhabitants would draw strength:

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<sup>96</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.123. '*La seule solution est de trouver pour lui un sol qui lui appartienne. Ce que nous pourrons faire jusque là ne sera qu'une œuvre partielle : nous ne pourrons attaquer le mal à la racine mais seulement améliorer ou peut-être masquer quelques symptômes cliniques.*'

<sup>97</sup> Nordau was not as committed as many other Zionists to the location of Israel in Palestine, but seems to have regarded this as the ideal. He supported the 1903 British offer of land in British East Africa, although he described it in terms of a temporary *nachtasyl* (night shelter).

We want a Jewish people regenerated by contact with the earth.

We want to subject it to the experience of Antaeus who regained his strength as soon as he touched his motherland.<sup>98</sup>

## 6.9 Zionist nostalgia

Addressing the ‘eternal argument’ of the incompatibility of Zionism and patriotism in the *Écho Sioniste* in 1903, Nordau developed his thinking on the question of the direction and focus of Jewish patriotism in strikingly similar language to the doctors discussing nostalgia in the 1820s and ’30s, while also following later medical thinking explored in this chapter in presenting Jews as both the most ancient and the most modern of peoples. Yet, in stressing the need for a return to the land that was also a political nation, Nordau emphasised Jewish non-cosmopolitanism, effectively a process of de-modernisation, one that allowed them back into the same parameters of analysis as other European populations.

While Nordau broadly adopted the language of attachment to the physical environment used by earlier writers, he reversed the order of influence. Thus, he argued, like an earlier generation of medical writers, that affection for one’s native land was the natural outcome of spending one’s early days there. He defined patriotism as the ‘deeply affectionate feeling for one’s native land [*pays*] ... the tenderness which any normal human being feels for his own

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<sup>98</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.295. ‘*Nous voulons un peuple Juif régénéré au contact de la terre. Nous voulons le soumettre à l’expérience d’Antée qui regagnait ses forces aussitôt qu’il touchait la terre mère.*’

childhood, his youth, and for all the impressions associated with their memory.’<sup>99</sup> This attachment he called ‘a kind of selfishness’ since ‘in them we love ourselves,’ it was a love based in the individual’s tendency to see their native surroundings as reflections of themselves.<sup>100</sup>

Yet, reflecting Ribot’s reformulation of nostalgia, Nordau argued that places did not shape the individual, but were dear to them in terms of the projections of self they allowed. However, this identification still operated on an emotional level, overriding other considerations:

Even in such barbarous and unjust countries [*pays*], the Jew does not however disavow his invincible tenderness for the places of his youth and astonishes sometimes by the intensity of the nostalgia that he experiences for his maternal homeland [*patrie*] when he succeeds in tearing himself away and finds an otherwise hospitable asylum abroad.<sup>101</sup>

The description recalls the ‘organic’ form of clinical nostalgia namely, a biological longing for the original home. However, it is considered in terms of patriotism rather than pathology, as homesickness but not disease. Importantly

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<sup>99</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.171. ‘Un sentiment profondément affectueux pour le pays natal... la tendresse que toute être humain normal ressent pour sa propre enfance, sa jeunesse, et pour toutes les impressions associées à leur souvenir.’

<sup>100</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, pp.171-172. ‘Une manière d’égotisme, car en eux nous nous aimons nous-mêmes.’

<sup>101</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, pp.174-175. ‘Même dans ces pays, si barbares et si injustes, le Juif ne renie cependant pas sa tendresse invincible pour les lieux de sa jeunesse et il étonne parfois par l’intensité de la nostalgie qu’il éprouve pour sa patrie marâtre quand il a réussi à s’en arracher et à trouver à l’étranger un asile pourtant autrement hospitalier.’

this was what might be termed a personal patriotism, or in fact, not so much patriotism but emotional attachment to place and familiarity.

Nordau went on to discuss a second type of patriotism constructed in reference to the culture and shared past of a nation:

It is gratitude for the collectivity that guarantees us the security of life and property, which ensures us all the benefits of order, law, justice and civilisation. It is the pride of a historical past of which we ourselves feel the co-heirs, it is the desire, which every honest man naturally has to preserve intact, and to increase if possible, the patrimony of glory that previous generations have bequeathed to him.<sup>102</sup>

This was a patriotism that evoked a political sense of nostalgia in the context of the construction of shared past histories. Nordau argued that Jews were amongst the most patriotic of French citizens, as they were grateful for their emancipation into full citizenship. It was an active patriotism, but only in those ‘countries [*pays*] that acted as true homelands [*patries*] for the Jews.’<sup>103</sup> None of these arguments is unusual in the context of the medical literature around the love of home/land, in which one form is personal and almost involuntary and the other dependant on the degree to which a state deserves

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<sup>102</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, pp.171-172. ‘*C’est de la gratitude pour la collectivité qui nous garantit la sécurité de la vie et de la propriété, qui nous assure tous les bienfaits de l’ordre, du droit, de la justice, de la civilisation, c’est l’orgueil d’un passé historique dont nous nous sentons les cohéritiers, c’est le désir que doit avoir tout honnête homme de conserver intact, d’augmenter si possible, le patrimoine de gloire que lui ont légué les générations antérieures.*’

<sup>103</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, p.174. ‘*Les pays qui ont tenu à être de véritable patries pour les Juifs.*’

the loyalty of an individual. Through such reasoning, Nordau attempted to remove the Jews from their status as a 'special case', and instead insisted that they reacted to their environment, whether physical or political, in the same terms as other groups.

Nordau's analysis offered new interpretative possibilities for identification of European Jews as existing, not only in a state of wandering, but as a state in exile. 'Wandering Jews' then acted not as a symbols of cosmopolitanism, but of the painful peregrinations of permanent exiles, operating in relation to the ultimate lost home - the preserved memory of which prevented them making anywhere else their home. The inherited environment which shaped Jewish subjectivity was in this representation, not based on a lack of a nation, but on a nation which continued to operate imaginatively. So, although homeless, through their insistent self-identification as exiles, Jews were at the same time maintaining their nation. Their nostalgic connection to the homeland was exactly that which trapped them in a wandering state.

In this nostalgic guise, the Jews were a symbol of the resilience of a national identity. They displayed a spiritual and racial affinity that could survive the absence of a physical home. At the same time, the Jews apparently relied on the symbolic centrality of a vision of a particular physical landscape. This overarching nostalgia did not operate on a personal experience of Israel as 'home.' Rather, it was closer to the form of abstracted love of *patrie* presented by French doctors as the preferable rationalised expression of patriotism, to the emotional love of a lost *pays*. It was a modern form of nostalgia in that a

love of 'home' developed through education rather than experience. Such nostalgia was preserved intellectually and emotionally on a group rather than an individual level, rather than the internal shaping of the individual by their direct experience of a specific environment.

This 'nostalgia', if modern in form, relied on the reconstruction of the Jews as a people supremely nostalgic for an ancient homeland. The longing was not only backward looking but, like Briet's vision of nostalgia as a force for change, acted as a prompt towards the new. Their homeland had a physical reality, but did not form a physical entity capable of acting as a home. If the distinction between modern and pre-modern nostalgic is made along the axis of the possibility of the fulfilment of the desire at its centre, then Zionism was both, referencing a home that was yet to be a home.

## 6.10 *eretz* Israel

Judaism contains perhaps some of the most pervasive and profound metaphors and meditations on the nature of exile and homelessness. The theme of exile is ever-present, expressed in myriad forms from the Destruction of the Temple and the Dispersal from the Land of Israel to the kabalistic doctrine of *tzimtzim*, the breaking of the vessels, in which humanity loses the full experience of God, to *galut* or homelessness.<sup>104</sup> However, in

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<sup>104</sup> See Arnold M. Einsen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986). Einsen suggests that the religious issues of exile and homecoming have been most pondered most keenly, while paradoxically, among Zionists who sought to harness the tradition in order to bring it to an end, pxi.

practical terms, calls for a return to the land of Israel were a product of the late nineteenth century. Such demands shared the rhetoric of national self-determination of the period, which saw an increased self-consciousness amongst minority populations of themselves as peoples, or nations. Zionism took much of the language and intellectual milieu of such nationalist movements in its evocation of arguments about race and nation. The call for the creation of a Jewish homeland was for many individuals prompted by the apparent failure of assimilation, but was also a project relying on the idea of the specificity of a group to a place.

Ultimately, Nordau's work represented a Jewish people crippled by a cosmopolitanism that was neither sought nor innate. He utilised the same scientific and racial frames of thought that doubly condemned Jews to refigure as a nostalgic race in very specific ways. He allowed some anti-Semitic ideas about Jews because by doing so he reinforced the urgency of the Zionist project. Just as Jews could be seen in late nineteenth-century France as symbol of cosmopolitan tendencies of modernity or as degenerated scions of an ancient race trapped by their own inheritance, the emerging Zionist programme can be read as the fulfilment of the old form of nostalgic desire, in the reclamation of a lost homeland; or alternatively, as the ultimate expression of an urge towards the new, the transformation of an idealised nation into a concrete one, which exists not in the past, but in the future. Zionist literature reshaped the figure of the Jew and re-made him as a nostalgic. This 'pathology' was acknowledged in so much as it demonstrated his state, not

inherently deracinated, but specifically suffering from his estrangement from his rightful *pays* and *patrie*.

Zionist longing was also nostalgic in the transferred sense of the term, in that it acted as the identification of a national group based on recollection and memory. Traditionally, victims of nostalgia had been those unable to leave their homes without psychiatric and physical distress. Modern subjects were those who could carry their culture, and especially their loyalty for their *patrie* with them. In his Zionist writing, Nordau portrayed Jews as in this sense the most modern of peoples. However, this ability to internalise their *patrie* was not the product of modernity but one preserved from antiquity. While he acknowledged the impact of the physical environment on subjectivity, importantly, he posed it as an externalisation of individual subjectivity, and so implied that it was European Jews who would shape the land of Israel, rather than the other way around.

The idea that Europeans would degenerate in hot climates had been brought up by Jewish anti-Zionists, and by Nordau himself in his non-Zionist writing.<sup>105</sup> Yet, he ignored, often deliberately evading, ongoing scientific debates over the fate of Europeans in hot climates, and threats posed to colonising projects.<sup>106</sup> Instead he argued that colonisation of Palestine would

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<sup>105</sup> See Nordau, *Paradoxes*, p.376, Nicault, *La France et le sionisme*, p.20.

<sup>106</sup> See, for instance, Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).



effectively be a process in which European Zionists would impose culture on a landscape, rather than being moulded by it:

But in fact we are so perfectly sure of our status as Europeans, gained over the course of some two thousand years, that we have the right to greet with a smile that teasing, which consists in saying to us that in Palestine we will be transformed into Asiatics. We will no more become Asiatic there (if you attach to this term a sense of anthropological inferiority or backwardness) than Anglo-Saxons became Red-Skins in North America, than they became Hottentots in South Africa or in Australia, Papuans. We will endeavour to do in Asia Minor, that which the Englishmen achieved in India, to extend the work of civilisation, not the work of conquest; we intend to come to Palestine as the flag-holders of civilisation, in order to roll back the moral boundaries of Europe to beyond the Euphrates.<sup>107</sup>

As Alain Dieckhoff has noted, the persistent identification of Jews as 'Oriental' in Europe had been used by Zionists to legitimate their colonisation of Palestine, but at the same time they rejected that idea that this would

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<sup>107</sup> Nordau, *Écrits sionistes*, pp.187-188. '*Mais en fait, nous sommes si parfaitement sûrs de notre qualité d'Européens vingt fois séculaires, que nous avons le droit d'accueillir d'un sourire cette plaisante taquinerie, qui consiste à nous dire qu'en Palestine nous nous transformerons en Asiatiques. Nous n'y redeviendrons pas plus des Asiatiques, si vous attachez à ce mot un sens d'infériorité anthropologique ou de civilisation arriérée, qu'en Amérique du Nord les Anglo-Saxons ne devinrent des Peaux-Rouges, qu'en Afrique du Sud ils ne devinrent des Hottentots, et en Australie des Papous. Nous nous efforcerions de faire en Asie Mineure, ce qu'ont accompli les Anglais dans l'Inde, l'étends l'œuvre de civilisation, non le travail de conquête ; nous avons l'intention de venir en Palestine comme les porte-drapeaux de la civilisation, afin de reculer les limites morales de l'Europe jusqu'au delà de l'Euphrate*'

constitute a move towards oriental culture: 'strangers in Europe, the Jews became abruptly European in the Middle East.'<sup>108</sup> The simultaneous persistence of European identity adds another level of complexity to Nordau's arguments for some kind of fusion between people and place as critical in the Zionist project. His use of land echoes new sense of milieu as a social-political, rather than physical environment. The land of Israel was to operate as a moral space.

I have argued earlier that by the twentieth century nostalgia became a primarily cultural longing, based on an idealised past landscape. Instead the Zionist project and the eventual creation of the state of Israel saw a radically different process taking place, in which an ideal or metaphysical homeland was made a physical and political reality. In the course of this process, traditional processes of urbanisation were for many migrants reversed, with urban Jews arriving not just to the Land, but to the soil, assuming an agrarian lifestyle. Zionism used nostalgic loss as an impetus for reclamation. In one sense Israel is the ultimate fulfilment of nostalgic desire, the reclamation of a lost homeland. In this, it effectively redefined nostalgic desire, projecting back into its pre-modern sense. But at the same time it relied on a shared vision of a past to turn an imagined nation into a physical one.

The European crisis of the 1930s and '40s created new political pressures for the creation of a Jewish state. Yet, discussion within Jewish scholarship

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<sup>108</sup> Alain Dieckhoff, 'Max Nordau, l'Occident et "la question arabe"', in Bechtel, *Max Nordau*.

regarding the potential impact of exposure to the Palestinian landscape did not end. Concern over the potential physical and psychological changes the Palestinian climate might effect on European Jews remained an ongoing concern. As late as 1948 Arthur Koestler, writing in the *Manchester Guardian*, shares much of the language and assumptions of Nordau's theories. Koestler begins by noting the 'lost generation' of European Jews, who having fled the persecutions of their original homes, found that their attachment to the *patrie* could not be matched by a physical ease with the *pays*: 'They finger lovingly their Israeli passports, but they cannot get used to the climate...They hebraise their names, but Hebrew remains an acquired language.'<sup>109</sup> These lost Ashkenazim and recent Sephardic immigrants formed for Koestler an 'amorphous mass which as yet lacks the character of a nation.' He saw the profile of the nation emerging only in the profiles of its first generation of *sabras*, Jews born on the soil of Israel:

In physical appearance he is almost invariably taller than his parents, robustly built, mostly blond or brown haired, frequently snub-nosed and blue-eyed. The young male's most striking feature is that he looks entirely un-Jewish.<sup>110</sup>

Four decades after Nordau, and in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and National Socialist racial science, Koestler was still deploying biological and racial thinking similar to Nordau's in order to describe Jewish identity. He argued that this change in physique demonstrated that 'the race is

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<sup>109</sup> Arthur Koestler, 'Israel: The Native Generation', *Manchester Guardian*, 19 November 1948.

<sup>110</sup> Koestler, 'Israel: The Native Generation.'

undergoing some curious biological alteration.’ He believed that this effective de-judification, which reads more as a re-ayranisation, showed the extent to which stereotypically ‘Jewish’ characteristics had been the product of their precarious social and political situation in the Diaspora. The muscular Jew had emerged, but was no longer Jewish as this had been previously understood. In a few generations Koestler concluded, Israel would have become an entirely “un-Jewish” nation.’<sup>111</sup> But in the meantime, those for whom Israel had only acted as a theoretical homeland during their youth was experienced as an alien environment. It offered a *patrie* but not a *pays* in which they could feel at home.

This discussion has dealt only with nineteenth-century French narratives of wandering and homecoming. It has also been concerned with the Wandering Jew, and stateless Jews because of the ways in which these figures were mobilised in the arguments which have been my concern throughout the thesis: the role of the land for identity; the nature of the emotional links which individuals and collectives have with their physical landscape; what constitutes the home and the pathologies that were believed to result when these relationships were disturbed. However it is impossible to ignore that the construction of a Jewish *patrie* produced a very similar set of conditions for another people, as those that it was held to resolve for European Jews. Removal from their land, and restricted rights to act as citizens in their own

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<sup>111</sup> Koestler, ‘Israel: The Native Generation.’

state effectively acted, and acts, as a loss of physical home and political nationhood for Palestinians:

We see in Nordau's writing a mixture of historically distinct understandings of the nostalgic connection. However, in all its guises, nostalgia continues to carry a significant emotional charge. In his exploration of nationalism, Ernest Renan commented that a nation must rely on a common commitment to the errors of history for its survival. That is, a willingness of the community to choose to forget as well as remember aspects of the past in order to build nurturing and satisfying national myths.<sup>112</sup> Nordau's use of nostalgia demonstrates both the persistence of ideas about place and identity central to nostalgia in its old sense, and the power of nostalgia in its newer forms to reshape political and physical landscapes.

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<sup>112</sup> Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, Conférence fait en Sorbonne le 11 Mars 1882 (Paris, 1882).

## *Chapter 7 - Conclusion*

In tracing the history of a concept and recording its fragmentation this dissertation has demonstrated how, over the course of the nineteenth century, nostalgia's changing interpretations illustrated a transformation from geographical to social and historical accounts of the formation of the self.

This change can be broadly understood as one in which the axis of nostalgia moved from that of space to that of time. These changes reflected a broader process of internalisation and historicisation of identity formation, a process linked to growing prominence given to heredity and race in late nineteenth-century French constructions of identity and nationality.

Nostalgia had become a useful analytical category for medical writers after the Revolution since it encapsulated a number of issues that became socially and politically critical. These related to questions of the influences that shaped identity, and the possibilities for forging new identifications and attachments appropriate in the new nation state. The immediate post-revolutionary period had emphasised a sense of civic nationalism, in which being French was a question of volition, the voluntary participation in a social 'contract.' In this context, nostalgia was theorised as a biological and emotional attachment to the home with a dual nature, demonstrating the inter-relation of mind and body, and of the human organism with its external environment. In broader cultural terms, nostalgia acted as a symbol of the apparent natural limits of individual adaptation, in particular, adaptation to new realities of the French state. Curing nostalgia was therefore a political as much as medical victory.

The cure of nostalgia thus acted as a powerful narrative through which the ability of the French to feel 'at home' within new political and cultural practices could be measured. It seemed to indicate the success of a civic nationalism based on a concept of voluntary and rationally guided membership to engage its citizens emotionally.

Ultimately, doctors tried to cure their patients by instilling in them a sense of 'home' in the nation. Medical speculation about how this transformation from local, geographically based, to abstract, national attachments occurred, ultimately caused nostalgia to take on ideological meanings. These continued to relate to issues of 'connectivity', but now considered them in collective terms, relating to membership in a political body, and the duties of a citizen within the nation state. The politicisation of the concept of nostalgia undermined its clinical integrity and opened up the possibility that it could act both as individual psychology and a prompt to collective identity. It suggests that nostalgia is a useful starting point from which to begin further investigations of the shifting meanings of emotional attachments, the cultural acceptability of their expression, and their role in forming national identities.

By the middle of the century nostalgia had begun to be used in literary works, predominately in its clinical sense, but with an expanded sense of the objects upon which nostalgic desire could be focused. At the same time, sustained medical attention was no longer being directed towards nostalgia. More crucial questions about the ability of the French population to 'adapt' to the new were posed in relation to social and economic processes. The milieu to

which the French were now being asked to adapt was no longer that of a new environment or political attachment. Rather, it was to the conditions of modernisation - urban living and industrialisation.

Born in, and of, the city, a specifically modernist nostalgia referenced a former state of innocent idyll, of undisturbed identity, which was not literally located in the rural landscape but associated with it; nostalgia promised a landscape which had not suffered disruption in the course of industrialisation and modernisation. In such circumstances, the environment began to be seen in far more sociological terms, the stability of a sense of belonging being threatened less by geographical displacement than by the speed of social change. In addition, there was a significant difference in the way nostalgia began to be understood. Rather than homesickness operating as its primary referent, nostalgia had taken on a temporal aspect. If progress had released people from psychic and physiological bonds that tied them to their homes, it had at the same time thrown the discontinuities between past and present into sharp relief.

Medical discussions of the decline of nostalgia in the late-nineteenth century understood the condition as operating on an opposing trajectory to modernity. Simultaneously, the technological and cultural shifts identified with modernity generated new ideas about self and nationhood. Nostalgia became enrolled in the constitution of narratives of collective cultural memory, whether national myths of idealised pasts, or emotional attachments to the popular culture of one's childhood. In effect, the end of nostalgia as a disease



marked its normalisation as part of life. That is, that the loss of the landscape of childhood came to be assumed as inevitable. As such, nostalgia may perhaps be better understood not as antithetical to modernity, but instead as providing a way of locating ourselves within it, a backdrop against which to measure our personal and cultural histories. Critically examining the history of nostalgia offers a way of thinking critically about the contingent role of place and the past in the construction of identity and self, and the continued construction and disruption of national and social identities. Whether considered in its clinical or modern form, nostalgia raises questions about how identity is formed and the influences believed to shape or threaten individual subjectivity.

The instability of apparently once stable identities in the later part of the century was articulated in an increasing theoretical concern with fragmentation. Clinical concern once directed towards nostalgia now turned to new conditions, which appeared to demonstrate the impossibility of retaining links to any stable sense of home. The rise of new 'wandering' diseases, forms of insanity leading to compulsive travelling and multiple levels of consciousness, reflected anxiety over the loss of traditional ties, social arrangements and institutions, and contributed to a growing literature that questioned the internal coherence of the self. Like nostalgia, these conditions associated a loss of place with a loss of self, but while the nostalgic could be cured by a return home, these wanderers pointed to the apparent impossibility of finding a stable sense of belonging. While these diseases were theorised in terms of an active search for displacement, they could equally be seen as the

response of a population in flux, vacillating between concrete and abstract notions of where the home was or could be situated, and the possibility of it ever providing sufficient emotional succour. Likewise, they act as a medicalised expression of unease with the concept of cosmopolitanism, another category worthy of far more historical analysis.

Industrialisation reshaped the physical as well as social landscape; the very idea that 'home' could be associated with a stable and unchanging environment now seemed to belong to the past itself. The *fin-de-siècle* adaptation of nostalgia as a useful way of describing a fractured relationship with the past reflected a variety of cultural phenomena, relating to the perception that political, social and technological change had produced an irredeemable chasm between older practices and ways of being with those of a modern, industrialised state. This is perhaps the point at which nostalgic longing began to be trivialised, since, its assumption that a locale or lifestyle could remain immune from the forces of modernity increasingly seemed impossibly naïve.

The turn towards fantasy was also a turn towards the past. This was reflected in the new ways the concept was used to describe Arcadian, ageless, and crucially, fantasised landscapes, since a landscape that existed without massive disruption could now only be understood as one that existed outside time. Even as modern technologies of communication and transportation made places vastly more accessible, what could not be accessed were those places as they had been. The physical destruction of the past as it had

previously been manifested, whether in buildings, traditions, local habits and dialogues was far more in evidence than any sense of continuity.

The wandering diseases had seen automatism, regression and the will become important categories in considering the construction of subjectivity. In particular, they had contributed to a burgeoning questioning of the stability of the psyche, and new theories as to its maintenance. Until the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the human faculty considered to facilitate the establishment and integrity of identity was that of imagination. In particular, the early-nineteenth century Idéologues emphasised the importance of imagination as the connecting point between the moral and physical spheres. In this paradigm, it was memory's lack of affective content that distinguished it from the imagination. In the later part of the century, only a few major writers, such as Charles Féré at the Salpêtrière, tried to retain a place for the imagination within medicine. Even he was quick to state that only those functional troubles which were produced by a mental fixation could be cured through moral treatments: 'for one cannot accuse us of claiming to kill microbes by persuasion.'<sup>1</sup> Already, the power of the imagination was understood as being restricted to the psychological sphere, and more generally, the imagination as a pathogenic or curative agent was largely being replaced by suggestion.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Féré, 'La Médecine d'imagination', *extrait du Progrès médical* (Paris : Delahaye et Lecrosnier, 1886), p.11. 'Qu'on ne nous accuse pas de prétendre tuer les microbes par la persuasion.'

Unlike suggestion, the imagination had been believed to operate within the conscious sphere. While the imagination was viewed as an internal and subjective process, suggestion implied the manipulation or influence of the practitioner on the unconscious mind. Work like Charcot's use of hypnosis on hysterical patients demonstrated the extent to which the personality could apparently be manipulated by suggestion, without the knowledge or cooperation of the patient.<sup>2</sup> Whether following Charcot's argument that being able to be hypnotised was a sign of mental pathology or degeneration, or taking Bernheim's view that hypnosis could be effective on any subject, the use of suggestion clearly demonstrated the potential malleability of subjectivity without the subject's awareness.<sup>3</sup> The implications of the replacement of imagination with suggestion as the means by which psychological states could be manipulated or transformed is worthy of far more academic attention. It is related to another neglected area of study, the focus of medical and psychiatric attention away from imagination to memory as the central faculty unifying mind and body.

The temporalisation of nostalgia demonstrates in miniature the broader medical and psychological turn towards memory as the crucial factor in

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<sup>2</sup> Such manipulation went further than Charcot imagined. Patients at the Salpêtrière were coached, or imitated others, in their depictions of the stages of hysteria. In the years immediately following his death in 1893, Charcot's theories of hysteria were systematically deconstructed, often by his former followers. By 1899 hysteria was disappearing as a category, but there were still a few women at the hospital willing to act out hysterical attacks for a fee. See Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of The Unconscious* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp.100-101.

<sup>3</sup> On the ideological disputes between the Salpêtrière and Nancy schools over the hysteria diagnosis, see Ruth Harris, *Murders and Madness: Medicine, Law, and Society in the fin de siècle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.177-181.

understanding the human psyche. The incorporation of emotional content into memory allowed nostalgia a place within systems of memory, and was crucial to *fin-de-siècle* psychological accounts of the self. Like the shift from imagination to suggestion, the related replacement of the imagination with memory has broad implications for the history of psychology and psychiatry. This thesis may suggest the need for more histories describing the process by which the notion of memory was expanded so that it became a determinant of identity in an unprecedented manner.

Increased interest in memory and its impact on individual health was linked with a re-association of the body and its ancestral past. Internal hierarchies of civilisation and primitiveness were mapped onto group development so that just as individuals were shaped by their personal past, groups were seen to be influenced by hereditary instincts that acted like memories over a longer time scale. Politically, these scientific trends led to a re-evaluation of nationality and to new questions: to what extent could nationality be chosen, rather than determined in terms of heredity? What was the role of race within French identity?

In addition, in terms of the changing concept of milieu mapped throughout the thesis, the environment to which individuals must adapt was now theorised within the European concept almost purely in terms of 'civilisation'. This was a twofold process, firstly one in which the environment that shaped subjectivity became increasingly understood in terms of cultural and socio-political forms, rather than places and climates. Secondly, the internal milieu

or landscape was conceptualised in terms that increasingly emphasised memory and the past as central to the formation of individual identity. Failure to adapt, whether through atavism or degeneration, indicated a lack of psychic flexibility or potential.

The nature of the self was described in geological rather than geographical metaphors, with the mind reflecting geological strata in which different evolutionary stages could be found. The linkage of psychic potential to heredity resulted in a distinct change in the attitude to nostalgia and the potential of its cure. In non-European populations a propensity to nostalgia was now interpreted as a sign of being caught in a particular stage of cultural development – ‘living fossils’. Among French citizens, the disease began to be viewed primarily in psychological terms. This explains the relatively minor place nostalgia took in the literature surrounding acclimatisation in colonial populations - the modern European subject may suffer from disease in the colonial context, but had the psychic ability to adjust mentally to new surroundings.

Yet, as the work of Max Nordau powerfully demonstrates, the elements of thinking behind the construction of nostalgia in both its clinical and transferred senses remained politically powerful. Nordau’s Zionist writing suppressed the duality of *pays* and *patrie* and instead insisted that they must be aligned, grounding his modernist ideals of nationalism on century-old medical concepts. Nordau portrayed European Jews as literally and mythically deracinated, and in doing so, used nostalgia in a way that

prefigures its ongoing political life. The idea that a cultural or ethnic group can have a special relationship with, or connection to, a specific landscape or place, has become a stock piece of 'common-sense' knowledge in conservative nationalism. Nostalgia plays a central role in such arguments, providing an idealised link to former glories and the places where these glories were perpetuated.

### **Future directions**

This dissertation has focused on the history of the clinical category of nostalgia primarily from a medical and political perspective. The area is so under-explored that my emphasis throughout has been on exhuming contemporary medical and political understandings of nostalgia.<sup>4</sup> Nostalgia, as it was, has effectively fallen victim to its modernist successor, its own history obscured by a more sanitized version of events. Just as the medical writers of the nineteenth century quoted Ovid, Ulysses and the Psalms in an effort to impart a sense of historical authority and authenticity to a late seventeenth-century neologism, the ahistoricising and masking tendencies of modern nostalgia have successfully obscured much of the term's own history

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<sup>4</sup> This has left little space for a closer analysis of the clinical experience of the disease. As previously noted, nostalgia's popularity as a theme in medical theses and texts is matched by a surprising absence in the records of hospitals and asylums. Yet, the interest taken in nostalgia by such central figures in nineteenth-century French medicine, psychiatry and public health as Phillipe Pinel, Dominique Larrey, François-Joseph-Victor Broussais and Michel Lévy suggest a potentially rich archive of material that could usefully be explored in the future. Likewise, scholarly work examining nostalgia in New Caledonia and North Africa provides useful starting points for following the disease from France into the colonial sphere. See Alice Bullard, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilisation in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900* (California: Stanford University Press, 2000); Bertrand Taithe, 'Colonial Performances of the Hygienic Body: colonisers of the French Empire c. 1860-1930' [unpublished typescript].

and the variety and extremity of the experiences with which it was associated.<sup>5</sup>

Uncovering the neglected story of nostalgia as a clinical entity has opened up numerous new areas of potential investigation, whether within literary, psychiatric or military studies. The connections and disjunctions between nostalgia in its original and transferred senses deserves a far fuller treatment.

One of the fascinating aspects of nostalgia's subsequent career has been its ability to cross between different spheres, mutating meanings as it does.

Nostalgia had been a disease that was particularly resistant to any forms of cultural cross-fertilisation.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as it became defunct as a disease nostalgia simultaneously became highly culturally resonant and was incorporated in broader linguistic and cultural terms. At the same time, the implicit ideas about the impact of the landscape on shaping human subjectivity and identity that made nostalgia a meaningful diagnosis continued to be deployed in new forms.

In its original clinical sense, nostalgia deserves far more attention in relation to the history of trauma and development of psychiatry. Interpretations of the

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<sup>5</sup> Quotations of the 137<sup>th</sup> Psalm ('By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion ... how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?') and the Odyssey are commonplace. See José-Feliciano Castilho, 'Dissertation sur la nostalgie', (medical thesis, Paris, 1831) 7, no235 pp.10-12 for extensive quotations of Ovid. This tendency to frame nostalgia in terms of its apparent Greek origin is shared by some twentieth century theoretical accounts, see for instance Lynne Huffer, *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures: Nostalgia, Ethics and the Question of Difference*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.14.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.153.



relationship of nostalgia and trauma have also been complicated by its association with the military. The French identification of nostalgia as a military disease reflected demographic realities, in which military service was the main disruption to village life. This was strengthened by the predominance of medical men with military backgrounds who chose to write on the disease.<sup>7</sup> However, for French commentators, nostalgia's association with war was largely incidental. Removal from home and enforced presence in uncongenial conditions were the main causes of the disease: the boredom of the barracks rather than the heightened emotions of the battle fostered nostalgia. As the *Dictionnaire de médecine et chirurgie pratiques* of 1834 noted, 'nostalgia rarely occurs in the middle of the triumphs of arms.'<sup>8</sup> Battle decreased the incidence of nostalgia dramatically, leaving soldiers no time for reflection, while evoking new emotions and passions. Nostalgia was rather a reaction to harsh conditions, unfamiliar languages and surroundings, stultifying routine, poor food, and the discipline and regimentation of army life.

The recurrent calls for nostalgia's revival as a category in the twentieth century have reflected its complex relationship with the theatres of war. In France, there were attempts to revive the diagnosis in response to both the

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<sup>7</sup> See Jack D. Ellis, *The Physician-Legislators of France: Medicine and Politics in the Early Third Republic, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.30; Thomas N. Bonner, *Becoming a Physician: Medical Education in Britain, France, Germany and the United States, 1750-1945* (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p.124.

<sup>8</sup> Louis-Jacques Bégin, 'Nostalgie', *Dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie pratique*, 12, (Paris : Méquignon-Marvis & J-Ballière, 1834), 76-84, p.77. 'Au milieu du triomphe des armes...la nostalgie se montre rarement.'

First and Second World Wars. In a 1916 article, M. Estève reassessed Delmaïs-Eugène Pilet's work from the 1840s. Estève defined nostalgia as psychoneurosis caused by the combined monotony and stress of warfare, which was common among soldiers, and almost universal among prisoners of war.<sup>9</sup> The hostilities of the Second World War saw the psychiatrist Maurice Bachet make a similar, and less theoretically naïve, diagnosis of nostalgia in French prisoners of war held in German camps.<sup>10</sup> However, outside of these, unsuccessful, attempts to re-establish the concept, the correlation of nostalgia and the military has been historiographically perpetuated so that it has come to be interpreted as a specific reaction to warfare, rather than the army life. This has resulted in a secondary literature that retrospectively places nostalgia in a genealogy of shell shock and related war neuroses.

Nostalgia certainly deserves a place in the history of war disorders, and military medicine. However, just as psychoanalytical accounts have downplayed the spatial aspects of the disease, so too have military histories distorted nostalgia's relationship to conflict. Nostalgia has been re-interpreted as a precursor to shell shock, a pre-industrial form of 'psychologically wounded soldier'.<sup>11</sup> While there are clearly links between the two, this ignores

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<sup>9</sup> M. Estève, 'La Nostalgie des militaires', *Gazette médicale de Paris*, 87 (1916), 122-123

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Bachet, 'Étude sur les états de nostalgie', *Annales médico-psychologiques*, 108, nos. 1 and 2 (1950), 559 - 587, 11-34

<sup>11</sup> Hans Binneveld, *From Shellshock to Combat Stress: A Comparative History of Military Psychiatry*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997), p.3. Wendy Holden makes a similar argument in her more popular history of shell shock. She refers to the Surgeon General of the Union Army during American Civil War, William Hammond as describing as 'nostalgia' as a condition in which 'veterans continually relived horrible events.' In fact, Hammond followed French commentators in relating nostalgia to situations of tedium and inactivity when there was no active campaign. Wendy Holden, *Shell Shock*, (London:

the somatic aspects of nostalgia and lacks an acknowledgement that the 'shock' of nostalgia was that of the new, not that of battle.

The present examination of nostalgia also offers a historical perspective on accounts of trauma. The 'invention' or discovery of new forms of memory, whether emotional or unconscious, opened up novel ways of understanding the structure of the psyche. The ability of the body to store emotional pain was an important precursor in the process by which the notion of trauma became psychologised, a late nineteenth-century trend completed by Freud. Originally used to describe wounds to the body, the possibility of 'moral' trauma became recognised after the mid-nineteenth century. This occurred largely as a result of observations of railway accidents in which sufferers who seemed to have escaped physical injury later displayed psychological and physical symptoms of distress.<sup>12</sup>

If memory was purely intellectual then affective life had no roots in the actual past. The possibility of psychic trauma pointed to the unconscious preservation of emotional states in the body that could manifest at a later time. The pathological import of such preservation was expressed in Freud and

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Channel 4 books, 1998), p.9. William H Hammond, *A Treatise on Insanity in its Medical Relations*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1883), p.412.

<sup>12</sup> For an extended discussion see *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930*, ed. by Mark Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Breuer's famous formulation that hysterics 'suffer from reminiscences.'<sup>13</sup>

Here, the myriad somatic and psychic manifestations of hysteria were based on repressed and masked memories in the unconscious. Ruth Leys' examination of trauma describes its threat to victims through their identification with the traumatic event. In her model, the experience of trauma is one in which a traumatic event 'refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present.'<sup>14</sup>

Nostalgic desire had the same mechanism, in which imaginative recall of past events refused their proper representation *as* past. However, this recall protected against, rather than being, the traumatic event. Nostalgia was thus understood at the time as acting in substantively different mode, providing an emotionally successful retreat in which internal recollection guarded against present intolerable realities. As such, there was no identification with the traumatic event, but rather a refusal to incorporate it.

While diseases of memory, whether amnesia, aphasia or hyperamnesia, related less to the return of repressed memories which masked trauma, all depended on a sense of the personality and the body being situated in time, so that correctly moderated access to the past was crucial to health. While clinical nostalgia was a largely defunct category by the time in which these diseases of memory were under scrutiny, its transferred sense allowed it to become re-incorporated into psychiatric thinking in a subtly new way. Freud,

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, vol.2, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), p.2.

while largely silent on the question of nostalgia, uses it once in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to describe 'Frau B's 'nostalgic dream one night which took her back to the old days'. This dream provides both wish-fulfilment, and a screening affect, substituting one figure important to Frau B with another.<sup>15</sup> The notion of nostalgia used here is one in which it acts as a screen affect allowed nostalgia a psychic role in which it distorted the past, acting so as to mask past distress by investing it with a sentimentalised overlay. This is a useful example of the new uses to which nostalgia was put in psychoanalytic work, as a resistance to the realities of the past.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, nostalgia was used to portray a distorted relationship with the past, whether that of an individual or a nation. In its collective usage, nostalgia seems to offer the possibility of recreating national myths that reinforce the relationship of a particular people and land. At the same time, the claim that an historical account is 'nostalgic' can be used to dispute its authenticity by those with competing narratives of the past. The inference is clear that nostalgia is a retreat into fantasy, and that nostalgic desire no longer reliably turned towards the real. As expressed by the poet Adrienne Rich, nostalgia becomes 'amnesia turned around'.<sup>17</sup> Rather than a form of memory, it obscures connections between past and present, a

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<sup>15</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, vol.5, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p 624.

<sup>16</sup> For example see David S.Werman, 'Normal and Pathological Nostalgia', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association*, 25, no.2 (1977), 387-98; Nandor Fodor, 'Varieties of Nostalgia', *Psychoanalytical Review*, 38 (1950), 25-38.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Edward S. Casey, 'The World of Nostalgia', *Man and World*, 20 (1987), 361-384, p.361.

culturally coded way of misremembering, so as to become primarily an expression of discontent about the present.

By the end of the nineteenth century, questions about the nature and resolution of desire were largely being explored outside the medical domain. Other disciplines and categories were taking up the concerns that were once associated with nostalgia; whether the increasing French interest in the concept of spleen, or Durkheim's use of anomie to explore the apparently disastrous effects of social disintegration on the individual psyche.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, nostalgia in its transferred sense began to be explicitly explored in French literature, most extensively in Marcel Proust's exploration of the potentially redemptive powers of memory in *À la Recherche du temps perdu*. The concern with the accuracy of memory reflects another of the unresolved tensions of nostalgic desire, where and whether desire can be fulfilled. Proust drew on the new models of embodied memory to explore the myriad ways in which experiences of the past shaped the experience of the present. For Proust's narrator it was ultimately involuntary memory that provided access to the re-experience of the affective states of the past. However, he could only come to this resolution having struggled with the question of where desire could best be satisfied. He did this by rereading nostalgia, while his work remained deeply evocative of nostalgia in its old sense as well.

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<sup>18</sup> See Henry Le Savoureux, 'Contribution à l'étude des perversions de l'instinct de conservation : le Spleen' (medical thesis, Paris, 1913), 30, no.230; Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1897).

Another fruitful area of further enquiry is the re-reading of such supremely 'nostalgic' texts as *À la Recherche du temps perdu* with an awareness of the contemporary resonances of nostalgia. The narrator's dilemma over Venice brought together the different possibilities fulfilment of desire offered by old and new versions of nostalgia. Desiring Venice, was it better to travel there, and risk disappointment, or to invest in the imaginative construction of Venice as you would wish it to be? <sup>19</sup> Like the nostalgic soldier, it was a question of the extent to which desire can be internally resolved. Crucially, the answer to this question changed over the course of the century.

Nostalgia's pathology had lain in its sufferer's attempts to realise desire through the workings of the imagination rather than seeking gratification elsewhere. The traditional cure for nostalgia relied on the successful external resolution of the sufferer's desire. This was a solution perceived by medical theorists to have become a fantasy by the end of the century, as demonstrated by the insane wanderers who found that to reach their goal was only to desire another. The perceived inevitability of a gap between fantasy and reality is the basis for nostalgia in its current forms.

In the twentieth century, cultural geography became one of the few places that any notion of the impact of desire for the home continued to find a place. Even here, notions of space and place played a minor theoretical role, only being reasserted as important categories of critical analysis in the later part of

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<sup>19</sup> See Marcel Proust, 'Venice', Chapter 3, *Albertine disparue*, vol. 7, *À la Recherche du temps perdu* (Paris : Nouvelle revue française, 1927)

the century.<sup>20</sup> The lack of emphasis on place contributes to the retrospective reduction of nostalgia to a historical precursor to conditions such as PTSD (post-traumatic shock disorder), which reflect only aspects of the category. The closest successor to nostalgia might be better understood as the concept of 'culture shock', a condition defined by the American anthropologist Kalervo Oberg in the 1950s. Oberg described a number of stages of rejection and discomfort a newcomer experiences in a new culture. While not explicitly concerned with spatial displacement, Oberg's definition of culture shock assumes it, and describes the aversion to a new environment in strikingly similar language to that of Hofer in his 1688 description of nostalgia.<sup>21</sup> The concept has gained wide currency, and is used extensively in popular guides to expatriate life, while being relatively under explored in academic terms.<sup>22</sup>

Given the massive population movements that have occurred in the twentieth century, it is surprising that the pathological potential of homesickness has received so little attention. A significant literature, often based around the experience of displacement in World War Two, has grown up around questions of attachment and separation.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the focus has been primarily on disconnections and disturbances relating to removal from the family or social milieu, rather than spatial displacement as a traumatic event in itself.

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<sup>20</sup> See *Place Attachment*, ed. by I. Altman and S. Low, (New York: Plenum, 1992); Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London and New York: Verso, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> Kalervo Oberg, 'Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments', *Practical Anthropology*, 7 (1960), 177-182.

<sup>22</sup> See *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, ed. by Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner, (Hove: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> See John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 2 vols, (London: Hogarth Press, 1969).



However, there is a small, but growing literature that combines cultural and medical geography, psychology, anthropology, and psychiatry in seeking to determine how the physical loss of home or homeland impacts on displaced people.<sup>24</sup> One contemporary example of the new categories emerging from this literature is a new syndrome, that of 'pervasive refusal', which describes phenomena so far without a clear aetiology or explanation. Since 1991 a cluster of symptoms has been observed in refugee and asylum seeking children. These echo those of nostalgia closely, including severe introversion, refusal to eat and speak, depression and resistance to care. Since 2003 over 400 cases have been documented in Sweden, primarily in children from Eastern Europe.<sup>25</sup>

The demise of nostalgia cannot be attributed in its entirety to changes in medical focus. Clearly, other, supra-medical factors were influential in the category's decline. Yet, while the models of subjectivity on which it depended may have been overturned, the history of nostalgia remains a highly useful way to begin to understand the experience of displacement. Whatever the legitimacy of explanatory models used by Johannes Hofer and the subsequent practitioners who diagnosed and treated nostalgia, the emergence of conditions like 'pervasive refusal syndrome' suggest that dislocation continues to be experienced by some as a highly traumatic event.

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<sup>24</sup> For example, see Mindy Thompson Fullilove, 'Psychiatric Implications of Displacement: Contributions From the Psychology of Place', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 153, no.12 (December 1996), 1516-1523.

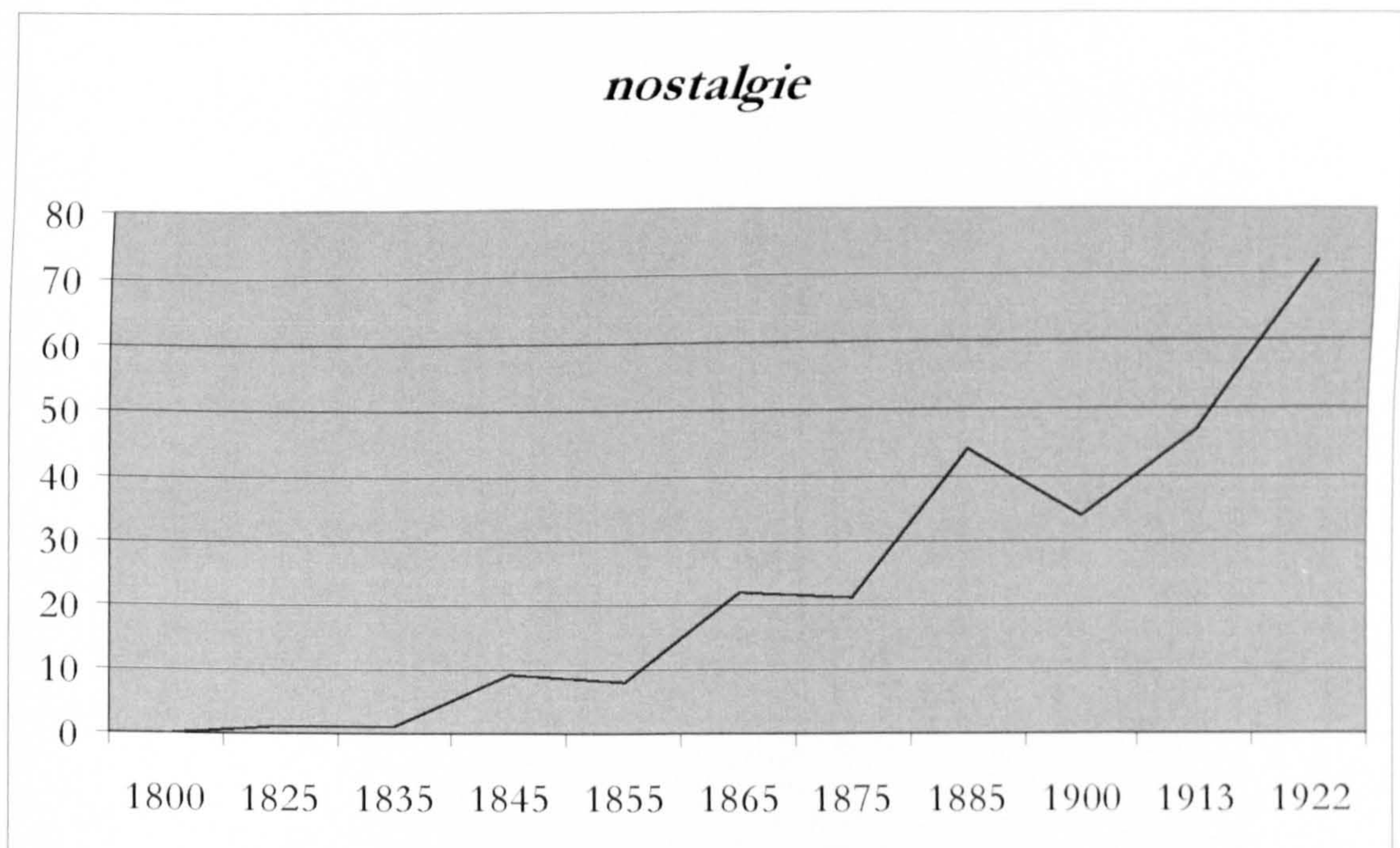
<sup>25</sup> Nadar Ahmadi et al, *Asylum-seeking Children with Severe Withdrawal Behaviour – Status of Knowledge and Survey*, Report 2005:2, Statens Offentliga Utredningar, Sweden.

## Appendix 1

Etienne Brunet's analysis of the core French vocabulary of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, based on the *Trésors de la langue française* and the *dictionnaire des frequencis* records the following figures for 'nostalgie':

1800	1825	1835	1845	1855	1865	1875	1885	1900	1913	1922
0	1	1	9	8	22	21	44	34	47	72

Brunet, Etienne, *Le vocabulaire français de 1789 a nos jours: d'après les données du Trésor de la langue française*, (Paris: Libraire Champion, 1981).



*Dictionnaire des fréquences: vocabulaire littéraire des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, t1,*  
*table alphabétique, ed. by Paul Imbs (Nancy: Centre de recherche pour un*  
*trésor de langue française,1971)*

		Absolute frequency	For century	I <sup>st</sup> Half	2 <sup>nd</sup> half	prose	verse	poems in prose	soliloquy	dialogue	other
<b>nostalgie</b>	<b>19c</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>195</b>
	20c	553	1468	883	1820	1471	1534	1115	1641	670	1596
<b>nostalgique</b>	<b>19c</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>157</b>			<b>68</b>	<b>42</b>
	20c	128	339	268	382	328	1073	223	310	181	382

## Appendix 2

Louis-François Benoiston de Châteauneuf, *Essai sur la mortalité dans l'infanterie française, extrait des Annales d'Hygiène Publique*, (Paris: Paul Renouard, 1833)

Châteauneuf describes 97 soldiers dying of nostalgia between 1820 and 1826, a figure he states he believed would be much higher if doctors made more accurate notes on death certificates.

No. of deaths	Origin of deceased
18	North-west, north and the north-east provinces
54	The provinces of the west, of centre and the east
20	The south-west, south and south-east
1	Corsica
4	Switzerland

Michel Lévy, 'Rapport sur les progrès de l'hygiène militaire', (Paris: Hachette, 1867), printed under the auspices of Ministry of Public Instruction, series *Recueil de rapports sur le progrès des lettres et des sciences en France*, pp52-3.

	No. of deaths	Proportion per 1000 men
1863	2	0.006
1864	3	0.009
1865	3	0.009
Average over 3 years		0.008

**Victor Le Goïc, 'La Nostalgie et son diagnostic', (medical thesis, Lyon, 1890), 54, no.569, pp49-50.**

Year	No. of deaths
1862	1 (+ 1 congé)
1863	2
1864	3
1865	25
1866	6
1867	3
1868	3 (+2 congé)
[no figures 1869-1871]	
1872	4
1873	2
1874	2
1875	2
1876	1
1877	2
1878	5
1879	2
1880	0
1881	7
1882	1
1883	1
1884	no deaths from this date

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