Chapter I

Contemporary Memory Cultures in Europe: Monumental Forms, Cultural Codes, Analytical Concepts

1. *Monuments as "Sites of Memory" in the Formation of Social Cohesion*

A. Monuments as historical prisms

A monument may never lay claim to artistic autonomy from its social and historical context, for it is necessarily a product and reflection of its time, whether derived from the initiative of an individual, group or state. The production and reception of monuments are historically determined, such that they combine three diachronic historical moments. First, the moment of the historical event or figure which it represents or denotes. Second, the moment at which the monument was conceived and constructed. Third, the moment(s) of its reception, when subjected to interpretation or debate, either due to its renewed political relevance, vandalism, or a decision to renovate or demolish the monument, for example. Monuments may therefore act as a prism for understanding successive historical and political situations over time. They may be read as coded historical interpretations based on their form, size or situation, for example. Figurative monuments appeal to a sense of identification with the represented figure, while counter-monuments of the sort produced by the artists like Edward Kienholz or Jochen Gerz invite the spectator to call into question the process of monumental representation as such. However, since successive interpretations of historical monuments are themselves conditioned by the historical and political contexts from which spectators formulate critical reinterpretations, they are prone to historical relativism. On the one hand, interpretations may vary according to subjective criteria. The interpretations of individual spectators or critics depend upon prior knowledge of both history and the history of the monuments, upon the degree of personal and emotional involvement resulting from their participation or lack of participation. Direct participants naturally experience events differently than those who learn about them retrospectively via media such as monuments, books,

photographs, films or witness accounts. On the other hand, monuments may be subjected to relative interpretations when they acquire a new function in a political context different from the one in which they were erected. This occurs when political regimes change. After 1989, many monuments erected in the German Democratic Republic were demolished, but many were also retained following the decision of organisms such as the "Kommission zum Umgang mit den politischen Denkmälern der Nachkriegszeit im ehemaligen Ost-Berlin". Although ideologically incompatible with the political culture of the new Federal Republic, many monuments of the GDR were left intact. They were converted, or equipped with an additional inscription - either in order to modify their political content, or else to turn them into ironic public citations of the former state ideology by highlighting their ideological origins as a historical product of a defunct regime. Examples of these in Berlin are the memorial for German members of the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War in the Friedrichshain Park (converted 1994), and the Marx-Engels monument in the Marx-Engels-Forum near Alexanderplatz.[1]

This triad of historical reference points concentrated in a monument - the historical moment referred to, the moment of production, and the moment of reception - serves as an interpretative framework for most traditional monuments, but by no means applies to every example. Some monuments give rise to elaborate public debates which not only detract from the monument itself, but also mobilise a number of auxiliary rhetorical and visual media which play a key role in conveying a commemorative performance to a broad public.[2] Hence debates over monuments are essentially about the forms in which history is made accessible to a wide public and only indirectly about the represented historical events. They do not recount the past, but analyse the means of representing and understanding history in the present. While the debate over the Holocaust Monument in Berlin focused extensively on the sculptural form it should take and the very necessity and utility of such monuments, for example, the debate over the Vél' d'Hiv' in Paris focused on the rhetorical form of speeches at the annual commemoration staged on the site of the monument from 1992 onwards. The sculpture in the Place des Martyrs-Juifs nearby the site of the cycle stadium in Paris played no role in public debate, but served merely as a pretext for controversy over the role of the successive presidents François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac in commemorations, television interviews, and verbal statements. In this way, both monuments

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[1] Cf. Report of the "Kommission zum Umgang mit den politischen Denkmälern der Nachkriegszeit im ehemaligen Ost-Berlin", 15. February 1993, pp. 51-53; Dieter Rulff, "Ernst Thälmann fällt, Marx und Engels bleiben", *Tageszeitung,* 16.2.93, p. 17.

[2] Cf. Dietmar Schiller, "'Geschichtsbilder' im Fernsehen: Zur Militarisierung des öffentlichen Raums im vereinten Deutschland durch staatlich inszenierte Symbolpolitik", in *Kritische Berichte* 1, 1997: "Monumente und Rituale", pp. 39-54.

surpassed their quality as stone sculptures and inscriptions on urban sites by becoming focal points and pretexts for political controversy over forms of historical representation. In short, these monuments became sites of memory of the deportation and genocide of Jews in France and Germany, but also of the *process* of transmitting historical memories and of the public and state responses to this challenge in the 1990s. The debates preceeding and accompanying the inauguration of these monuments offer a historical document of the conception and construction of a historical medium in its first phase. This study will therefore investigate not the semiotic codes of monuments on the basis of their sculptural qualities alone, but the public debate conducted in *anticipation* of their sculptural, rhetorical and ritual encodement. According to the diachronic system outlined above, it will focus on the production of representations in relation to their intended reception.

Commemorative ceremonies such as wreath-laying, anniversaries, inaugurations or modifications of monuments, as both official expression of and as appeals to historical memory, reveal to what extent memorial representations are subject to intentions underlying their instigation, the context in which they are interpreted, and the forms in which they are performed, embodied, or transmitted. For this reason, I would like to outline three categories for the analysis of the function of commemorations as a contingent source of the production and reception of historical memory:

1. *Intention:* Monumental forms of commemoration are contrived. Memory is thus dependent on the initial intention of the commissioning agent and any inscription prescribing meaning. Both the construction and destruction of monuments, or the introduction and abandonment of ceremonies, are equally indicative of intention.

2. *Context:* The significance of ceremonies and monuments is subject to historical and political conditions, dependent upon changing political systems, parties, institutions and traditions. The production and modification of commemorative forms are, like their public reception, contingent upon changing contexts.

3. *Forms of Transmission:* The efficacy of commemoration depends on its forms. Ritual commemorations may create indifference towards the very event they are designed to evoke. The necessarily public nature of monuments, for instance, renders them banal. However, innovative monumental forms, and the activities of citizens' action groups, associations, the media or political bodies, may reverse this effect.

The sequence of production and reception does not always take place in linear succession. In the case of the Holocaust Monument in Berlin, for example, whose production was dogged for eleven years by the conflicting opinions and interests of the original organising association, of local and federal governments, as well as of architects, artists, journalists, intellectuals and the general public, the reception of this monument appeared to take place in anticipation of, that is, *before* its production. The size (20,000m^2) and symbolic situation of this monumentin central Berlin, between Leipziger Platz and the Brandenburg Gate, raised fundamental questions about the forms in which the past may be represented in plastic form, the status of the genocide in German national heritage, the function of symbols in the united Germany, and therefore about the function of monuments as such. This final metatheoretical question on the political function of monuments posed perhaps the greatest challenge to those people responsible for selecting a monument and brought into doubt the very utility of ritual forms conventionally used to sustain memory cultures. Do monuments provide plausible supports for social memory? Not only are monuments man-made constructions representing specific interpretations of the past, but monumentality itself is a construction or conventional aid to social cohesion inherent in Western societies, albeit one which is not indispensable for social cohesion as such.[3] The debates over the memory boom in the 1980s and 1990s therefore testify to a dual phenomenon: the intensity both of monumental commemorations and of scepticism towards their function. In light of the persistent use of monuments and commemorations, which are modern but relatively archaic forms of public commemoration in an age of digital telecommunications, we must therefore ask why and how states continue to sanction monuments today? Monuments evoking the Second World War have stirred heated and complex debates during the 1990s in several countries, and will therefore serve as examples for two case studies in Chapter II.

B. The convergence of art, history and politics in monuments

Artists and architects invited to design a monument are faced with the challenge of devising a form of historical representation which combines both factual documentation and art. All monuments, even anti-monuments which reduce to a minimum or eliminate symbolic elements, contain what Salomon Korn calls a "residual aesthetic".[4] According to this simplified dichotomy,

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[3] Cf. Lowenthal, 1994, p. 45.

[4] "Rest-Ästhetik": Salomon Korn, "Holocaust-Gedenken: Ein deutsches Dilemma", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 4, 17.1.97, pp. 23-30, p.28.

monuments are technical hybrids extending across disciplines. As historical documents, they testify to past events: dates, names, statistics and motives. As art, they testify to the intervention of witnesses and successive generations in the mediation and transmission of historical information, including attempts to recognise, understand and draw moral lessons from events of the past.[5] By transmitting information about the past, yet also conveying the interpretations of their creators and critics, monuments therefore fulfil both a documentary and artistic function. The art historian Jochen Spielmann defines a monument as follows:

> "Das Denkmal ist ein von einer bestimmten Gruppe in der Öffentlichkeit an einem bestimmten Ort errichtetes und für die Dauer bestimmtes selbstständiges Kunstwerk, das an Personen oder Ereignisse erinnern soll. Das Denkmal übernimmt in diesem Prozeß Funktionen der Identifikation, Legitimation, Repräsentation, Antizipation, Interpretation und Information. Es ist als Symbol in der politisch-historischen Auseinandersetzung in einer Gesellschaft, in seiner Verknüpfung von kultureller Formung und institutionalisierter Kommunikation, als Manifestation des kulturellen Gedächtnisses zugleich Manifestation des Geschichtsbewußtseins. Mit einem Denkmal kann kein Diskurs geführt werden; dafür eignen sich eher Ausstellungen, Tagungen, Publikationen etc. Das Denkmal ist das Ergebnis eines Kommunikationsprozesses der konflikthaften Verständigung über die Interpretation von Geschichte. Dabei ist der Diskussions-, Entstehungs- und Rezeptionsprozeß Bestandteil des Denkmals. Das Denkmal bedarf, um Denkmal zu sein und zu bleiben, der rituellen Rezeption."[6]

Spielmann here exposes the essential hybridity of monuments. He describes them as primarily functional, fulfilling a political purpose of "identification, legitimation and representation" as catalysts for a community's debate over its past, and whose very existence is dependent upon their social reception. However, he also emphasises the artistic *intention* of their creators insofar as they are designed to "endure over time" and solicit emotional adherence necessary for effective identification.

In short, monuments convey historical information packaged in an aesthetic form. By confronting the disciplines of history and the fine arts in a political context, they challenge the criteria of scientificity demanded of historical writings with the formal criteria of art and the contingency of their public reception. The disciplinary tightrope embodied in historical monuments therefore subjects history to art and politics, albeit without renouncing the function of transmitting information about history. According to strict definitions, the function of a monument is diametrically opposed to that of a document: a monument is a symbol of the past designed to

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[5] Jacques Le Goff, "Documento/monumento", *Enciclopedia Einaudi,* Vol. 5, Turin, 1978, pp. 38-48, p. 44.

[6] Jochen Spielmann, "Der Prozeß ist genauso wichtig wie das Ergebnis", Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (ed.), *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas",* Berlin: Verlag der Kunst, 1995, pp. 128-145, p. 129-130

"perpetuate memory", whereas a document is a form of "proof" claiming a degree of objectivity as historical testimony.[7] However, neither monuments nor documents ever totally elude the influence of the other. While monumental objects created in remembrance of the past and erected in public places both *denote* past events and *evoke* interpretations of events in the present, documents only make sense following the intervention of the historian in their selection, organisation and narrative elucidation.[8] However, whereas historical writings render documentary evidence, via narration and argumentation, monuments are not bound to employ documentary evidence and may incorporate plastic forms, inscriptions, rhetoric and ritual, making them more open to interpretation and vulnerable to manipulation.

Many existing studies of monuments are founded on a normative approach, stating a single rule governing types of monument, as noted above. The historians Michael Geyer and Sybil Milton further suggest that monuments are today perceived primarily via secondary forms of media, such that sculptural form is subjected to rules governing photographic and filmic media.[9] Milton claims that "the new aesthetic trend of photographing Holocaust memorials" testifies to an ongoing quest to find an optimal sculptural form which would solve the quest to design a monument providing an "appropriate" testimony to genocide. "We are still," claims Milton, "confronted by the issue of defining appropriate memorial art for public spaces designed in fitting memory of all victims of [...] the Holocaust".[10] However, Milton's allusion to an ideal, normative aesthetic standard detracts from the very reality of the numerous monuments which, regardless of aesthetic trends, are in fact erected in memory of genocide. However unsatisfactorily they appear to fulfil their function as historical representations, several hundred monuments, commemorations and memorials in memory of the genocide are still regularly installed, even in memory of massacres occurring during the wars in former Yugoslavia, in the commercial high street, Ilica, in Zagreb. I therefore propose to consider the question why conventional stone monuments, though anachronistic in relation to contemporary art, are in fact still built, why they still capture public attention, and what social and political function is thereby accorded to this apparently anachronistic form of historical representation.

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[7] This opposition is established by Jacques Le Goff, "Documento/monumento", *Enciclopedia Einaudi,* Vol. 5, Turin, 1978, p. 38.

[8] Cf. Edward H. Carr, *What is History?* (1961), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, p. 28ff.

[9] Michael Geyer, "The Place of the Second World War in German Memory and History", *New German Critique* 71, 1997, pp. 5-40, p. 6.

[10] Sybil Milton, "The Memoralisation of the Holocaust", *In Fitting Memory. The Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991, pp. 7-18, p. 17.

Both monuments examined in this study are conventional forms of commemoration insofar as they mark with stone a site in capital cities in remembrance of the past. Both were also preceded by debates over a search for an "appropriate" or optimal form of commemoration: a speech in the case of the Vél' d'Hiv', and a sculptural form in the case of the Holocaust Monument. Both debates were governed by the quest to fulfil these conditions. In this study, I will not prolong the object of the media debates by asking what form of commemoration should be employed, but attempt instead to assess the function of these monuments and their accompanying debates in relation to the national memory cultures of France and Germany during the 1990s, and therefore explain how political interests and history were mediated via these symbolic forms. On the one hand, the political dimension of art[11] was reflected in monuments and commemorations whose sculptural or ritual forms conveyed a specific political and historiographical significance or interpretation, for example, via the cult of an individual or didactic inscriptions, or when political messages were projected onto monuments and commemorations during the course of commemorative speeches or public debates. On the other hand, the aesthetic dimension of politics became evident when political leaders appealed for public support by informal means: by inaugurating monuments, performing ritual commemorations or delivering commemorative speeches. This phenomenon was particularly apparent during the French commemorations of Vichy in the 1990s, where debate between 1992 and 1997 focused on the wording of commemorative speeches made by political leaders on the occasion of ceremonies held on the site of the Vél' d'Hiv'. Commemorations and monuments are therefore a point of convergence for the aestheticisation of politics and politicisation of art, an interaction between two fields of activity often considered to be distinct. When examining monuments and commemorations, it is therefore not possible to distinguish entirely between a purely political message and the means with which it is expressed, between didactic "content" and "form", because commemorations and monuments are an informal means of political communication whose prime function is to promote consensus or the cohesion of as large a section of society as possible within a community of historical memory.

It is a common fallacy that monuments directly express or reflect the political interests of their sponsors. The ruin of the Bastille, as suggested by the historian Günther Lottes, was a more effective support for the revolutionaries' memory of the *ancien régime* than if the building had been

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[11] Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (1934), in W. Benjamin, *Illuminationen,* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1977, pp. 136-169, p. 169. Benjamin examines extreme cases of the "aestheticisation of politics" under communist dictatorships, and the "politicisation of art" under fascist dictatorships.

left intact.[12] Likewise, the presence of monuments of the former GDR after 1989 do not indicate that the present government of the FRG supports communist ideology, for the often pompous forms of these monuments serve as an ironic reminder that the regime which gave rise to them no longer exists. In liberal societies, we cannot *equate* the political interests of governing parties or nations with the alleged messages of monumental objects. We should therefore be wary of using the term 'instrumentalisation' in order to define the political function of monuments such as the Vél' d'Hiv' or Holocaust Monument. These monuments were not supported by cohesive party policy. Attitudes towards them were determined rather by individual interpretations of history and in particular by the varying degrees of credence they lent to commemorations as supports for memories of historical events. The decision over the form of the Holocaust Monument, for example, was delayed not only by dispute over an appropriate form, but also over theoretical questions pertaining to the practice of commemoration itself: on whether a monument was necessary and what procedure was required to reach a decision on these issues. The monument divided people into multiple overlapping camps which were not obviously "political": those for and against the monument, those for the use of either abstract forms and conceptual art techniques or figurative and narrative forms, those for a particular model, or those for or against a vote on the matter by parliament.

C. Monuments as vehicles of historical ambivalence

The fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Second World War took place within the context of the memory boom which began in the 1970s and was characterised by an inflation of the number of historical commemorations, exhibitions, new museums and works of historical literature. The intensity and frequency of commemorative events led some critics to warn of the industrialisation, commercialisation, ritualisation and trivialisation of history. Robert Hewison warned of a "heritage industry"[13] in Britain, Bernhard Schulz of "monument tourism"[14] in Germany, while Dirk Schümer suggested that the inflation of historical commemorations may, in

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[12] Cf. Günther Lottes, "Damnatio historiae. Über den Versuch einer Befreiung von der Geschichte in der Französischen Revolution", in Winfried Speitkamp (ed.), *Denkmalsturz. Zur Konfliktgeschichte politischer Symbolik,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997, pp. 22-44, p. 24.

[13] Hewison, *The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline*.

[14] Bernhard Schulz, "Denkmal ist, was vorhanden ist", *Der Tagesspiegel,* 8.9.96.

extreme cases, lead to a public aversion or even indifference to historical tradition, a "blunting" *(Abstumpfung)*[15] of historical curiosity.

Rather than enter upon a polemic over the relative triviality, commerciality, or even misrepresentation of history resulting from popular representations, however, I will focus on the mechanisms by which monuments, as artistic objects of non-scientific historical value, acquire an expedient function within their immediate social context, that is, the way in which they lend themselves to the public articulation of history. In his famous conference "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" (1882), Ernest Renan observes that both forgetting and historical *error* "sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger"[16]. David Lowenthal describes the phenomenon of heritage in the 1990s in similar terms, arguing that historical *mis*representations should be observed and analysed as legitimate forms of historical transmission. "Heritage is often criticised for failing to abide by the tenets of historical evidence. I argue that this charge is correct but pointless, for the sources, aims and modes of persuasion employed by heritage are closer to those of memoirists than historians."[17]

How do monuments sustain social memory? Traditionally, they are experienced as a concrete form or sculpture in a public place evoking partial and vague memories which require complementary information in an inscription or commentary. On the one hand, they fulfil a heuristic function by reminding passers-by of something they already know or by imparting information about a previously unknown event. On the other hand, monuments may be inert if passers-by either do not see them, or see them but remain oblivious to, and therefore neither remember nor forget the event being commemorated. They may therefore either serve as a source of historical instruction or, in the words of Robert Musil, become "invisible" and generate indifference towards their political relevance.[18] However, the phases of conception, production and reception or even demolition of monuments is regularly monitored in public debates of the 1990s with such fervour that the relative heuristic effect or degree of inertia of a monument is governed by media, including the mass media, photography and forms of political representation, which surpass its immediate aesthetic effect. Some monuments remind us not only of the history to which they refer, but also of the history of their own tumultuous origins. We should therefore ask

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[15] Dirk Schümer, "Erlebnisraum Holocaust", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* 11.11.94, p. 41.

[16] Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (1882), Paris: Presses Pocket, 1981, p. 41.

[17] Lowenthal, "History, Heritage, and Memoir" (unpublished paper), 1996; "Fabricating Heritage", *History & Memory* 1, 1998, pp. 5-24, p. 9.

not whether a monument is visible or invisible, a spur for either memory or forgetting, but how it took effect, when and why, and what monuments convey to us today, whether history or the history of their own making in the present.

The habitual means for "working up" or reappraising the history of most nations are judicial and historical. Crimes of the past are dealt with before courts, while the research of professional historians serves as a corrective for public knowledge of and opinion on the past. However, the intense and prolonged public debates over national heritage or over monuments commemorating the Second World War in France and Germany during the early 1990s constitute a third form of historical representation which merits interpretation at two further levels. First, as an aesthetic, non-scientific medium including sculptural forms. Second, as the rhetoric of ritual speeches and critical reception conveyed via the mass media. The combination of plastic and rhetorical forms of discourse ensure that monuments are incorporated into a society's cultural heritage and offer a pretext for popular participation in history and heritage, and in the critical apprehension of modes of representation.

D. Monuments as spurs to participate in history through its formal mediation

The significance of monuments is dependent on sculptural, but also on auxiliary rhetorical, photographic and filmic means of communication by which they are reproduced. A monument is therefore both an aesthetic and ritual medium of history insofar as it provides a backdrop for commemorative ceremonies but also because it is repeatedly seen and "translated" into images, reports or scholarly interpretation. However, the ritualisation of memory by means of its repeated representation, whether during inaugurations of new monuments, annual ceremonies or photographic and narrative reproduction, appears to sap the essential function of commemoration: to call up or preserve the past in the present by means of memory. Just as monuments reduce history to a specific genre by symbolically marking a site with a tangible object and a fixed repertoire of forms such as statues, plaques, inscriptions, crosses, cenotaphs, or archways, the mass media reduce different historical events in different places and from different times to a single form, whether a journalistic report or television screen.[19] Since the specifically public and ritual

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[18] Robert Musil, "Denkmale", in *Gesammelte Werke* II, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978, pp. 506-509, p. 506.

[19] Cf. Peppino Ortevola, "Storia e mass media", in Nicola Gallerano (ed.), *L'uso pubblico della storia,* Milan: Franco Angeli, 1995, pp. 63-82, p. 64.

aspect of commemoration tends to render history banal by means of repetition, we may conclude that the transmission of historical information by traditional stone monuments and annual ceremonies has an analogous effect to that of the mass media.

According to Pierre Nora, the mass media reduce historical events to the status of information and spectacle, and therefore negate the very intention of commemoration itself: "L'information sécrète elle-même ses anticorps et la presse écrite ou parlée, dans son ensemble, aurait plutôt pour effet de limiter le déchaînement d'une opinion sauvage."[20] Nora's idea of the neutralizing effect of "antibodies" inherent in the transmission of information spotlights the essential paradox of commemoration, where the intention to foster historical consciousness is neutralised by the effective promotion of historical indifference. On the one hand, such indifference may be generated by the very familiarity and persistence of commemorative forms, sustained either by the physical presence of monuments, or by the regular succession of ceremonies, newspapers, or media broadcasts through time. On the other hand, commemorative "antibodies" may also be nurtured by the fact that commemoration, as historical representation, is in essence a *medium* separating events from spectators, who are condemned to what Nora calls a state of "participation without participation".[21] In this respect, traditional forms of monumental or ceremonial commemoration and the mass media transmission of the past share the role of calling to mind an event which is either *irretrievable in time*, or *contemporary but too distant* to impinge directly on the spectator's experience. Both forms therefore appeal to participation, yet stand as tangible evidence of its impossibility. In this respect, the participation of the citizens' action groups which initiated the Vél' d'Hiv' monument in Paris or the Holocaust Monument in Berlin is a form of participation in commemorative, but not in historical events, except insofar as these monuments have themselves become part of contemporary history. Although spectators of monuments do not participate in history, but are rather exposed to it as passive consumers, they participate in its interpretation, and in particular in the interpretation of the media of historical transmission. Monuments and commemorations are therefore contrived and virtual rather than actual embodiments of the past, hallmarks of modern societies reliant on written "sites" or records, archives, artifacts and traces.

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[20] Pierre Nora, "Le retour de l'événement", in Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (eds.), *Faire de l'histoire,* Vol. I , Paris: Gallimard, 1974, pp. 210-228, p. 215.

[21] Ibid., p. 215.

E. The relation of monuments to fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Second World War

Is there an optimum moment for the inauguration of a monument? The effectiveness of a monument or commemoration depends less on the lapse of time between a historical event and its commemoration than on the political and ideological benefit gained by evoking the event in the present.[22] A historical event which took place several hundred years ago is not necessarily less effective as a pretext for commemoration than one which took place only a few years ago - as witnessed in the case of the elaborate commemorations of the 1500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis in France (1996), the 750th anniversary of the foundation of Berlin (1987), or the 500th anniversary of the birth of Luther (1983), all of which represented political interests and triggered public debate in the present. At the other end of the time scale, one could also ask what is the shortest lapse of time in order for a commemoration to take place? Again, short-term commemorations depend on the continuing political relevance of the recent past to which they refer. An obvious example is the collapse of the Berlin wall, which has been commemorated annually since the first anniversary of this event in 1990. Perhaps the shortest elapse of time for a commemoration is the period of a 100 days, which is traditionally celebrated as a moment to take stock of a political leader's or party's first hundred days of operation, as in the case of the British, French and German governments under new prime ministers Tony Blair and Lionel Jospin and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on 9th May 1997, 10th September 1997 and 31 January 1999 respectively. These are examples of what David Lowenthal calls "instant tradition",[23] where even the very recent past is turned into an object of retrospection and deemed worthy of commemoration.

Heinz Schlaffer observes that, in contrast to previous epochs such as the eighteenth century, when antiquity was held up as a cultural model, or the early nineteenth century, when the Middle Ages took priority, periods commemorated in the twentieth century have been eclectic. The sole criterion for the selection of periods to be commemorated today, he claims, is a "zero" in the number of years passed since the original event.[24] However, Schlaffer's claim that the process of selecting events and epochs to be commemorated in the 1980s was therefore "gratuitous" and

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[22] Cf. Gert Mattenklott, "Denkmal", in *Daidalos* 49, 1993, pp. 26-35, p. 27.
[23] Lowenthal, 1996, p. 17.
[24] Heinz Schlaffer, "Gedenktage", in *Merkur* 479, 1989, pp. 81-84, p. 83.

plagued by "indifference"[25] is not entirely plausible, for there also appears to exist a hierarchy of periods governing the selection of monuments and commemorations within contemporary memory cultures. It is more likely that the proliferation of fiftieth anniversary commemorations in the 1980s and 1990s may be ascribed to the lapse in time after which the generation of participants in and witnesses of historical events begins to disappear. The passing of a generation entails the switch from one type of historical medium to another, from the oral sources of witnesses to written or recorded sources. Representations therefore play a particularly significant role in fixing impressions and interpretations of the past at a moment when a society's relation to its past becomes increasingly reliant on recorded or "archival" material.[26]

Since there is not a linear proportional relation between the intensity of public interest in a commemoration or monument and the elapse of time between an event and its commemoration, however, one must look for other factors in order to discover rules which may govern commemorative customs. If we again take the example of European commemorations of the Second World War in the 1980s and 1990s, we may observe that the cause of these commemorations was not simply the consensus over the zero in the fifty year time lapse, but the urgency with which political leaders sought to integrate this controversial period into national memory following the collapse of regimes in the eastern bloc. It is a commonplace to state that this event represented a turning point in national political traditions, yet the monuments and commemorations introduced in the 1990s help to remind us of the continuing relevance of the Second World War - as a rupture in tradition and moment of political regeneration - for the creation of social consensus in countries where consensus over the common aversion to communism was weakened after the end of the Cold War. In both Germany and France, the post-war years saw the introduction of new constitutions: in Germany, the creation of the German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic in 1949, and in France the creation of the Fourth Republic in 1944. Even Britain saw the introduction of radical political reform with the introduction of the welfare state in 1945.[27] For these countries, the Second World War represents both catastrophe and a new beginning, and the commemoration of this event naturally rekindles memories of the origins and the relative continuity of the present political administration *since* this rupture, both of which were recalled on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary commemorations.

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[25] Ibid.

[26] P. Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire", in Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire,* I. La République, Paris: Gallimard, 1984, pp. xvii-xlii, p. xxviii.

[27] Cf. Sarah Benton, "The 1945 'Republic'", *History Workshop Journal* 43, 1997, pp. 249-257.

2. The Memory Boom and the Maintenance of National Communities

A. Compensation or consolidation?. Two paradigms of contemporary memory cultures

Having established that the proliferation of monuments and commemorations since the 1970s raises complex questions about the relation of symbolic forms and auxiliary rhetorical and media forms of transmission to their social and political function, it is worth dwelling briefly on some arguments which have already been offered to explain *why* the present international memory boom came into being. What are the historical and political origins and the social consequences of this phenomenon? And how do contemporary societies legitimate their existence on the basis of memory and historical representations? The rise of memory cultures, which is regularly described in terms of impulsive collective emotion - as "the scramble to appropriate the past"[28] or "the passion of the past"[29], for example - is manifested at local, national and international levels, and has been a source of intense speculation over reasons why memory in general appears to play such a conspicuous role in assuring social cohesion. The proliferation of historical representations of the Second World War since the 1980s may in part be imputed to the natural succession of generations. According to Annette Wieviorka, for example, the commemorations between 1989 and 1995 were products of a social custom of commemorating fiftieth anniversaries, provoked by the anticipated loss of the generation of witnesses. The "age of witnesses" and "age of commemorations"[30] owe their existence to the voluntary expression and recording of living memories, the exceptional nature of the original event, and the desire to transmit witnesses' memories to subsequent generations, as well as construct or consolidate consensus among the public and scientific communities over the origins, significance and exemplariness of the event.

However, commemorations of the Second World War also relate to a more pervasive international drive towards commemoration as a means to reinforce traditions in reaction to rapid historical changes perceived as a source of disorientation. Some critics identify specific national causes of this phenomenon. In France, for example, interest in the past is often interpreted as a form of refuge from social insecurities resulting from rapid industrial growth, population migration

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[28] Füredi, 1992, p. 3.

[29] "La passion du passé", editorial of *Le Monde,* 2.2.95.

[30] Wieviorka, "1992. Réflexions sur une commémoration", *Annales ESC* 3, 1993, pp. 703-714, p. 703.

from the countryside to towns, decolonisation and immigration, the weakened legitimacy of republican ideology, as well as cultural and educational reforms.[31] The newly found national unity of Germany since 1989 has also reinvigorated public interest in history, exemplified by debates over the extent to which architectural symbols of Berlin such as the Pariser Platz or Hohenzollern palace should be historically reconstructed in their pre-war states. In both these cases, rapid social or historical change appears to have rekindled interest in history as a form of compensation for a sense of lost identity. The contemporary proliferation of history and memory is not unique, however, but one in a chain of historical precedents. The French Revolution, the process of urbanisation during periods of rapid industrialisation, or periods of social and political instability and technological progress during the nineteenth century in Europe, for example, were all moments in which history served as a form of national legitimation, and when preservation movements were founded in order to conserve relics of the past like ancient monuments.[32]

Another historical interpretation of the increase in commemorations of the past is proposed by the historian Frank Füredi, who explains the tendency to mythicise the past as an expedient measure to counteract the elusive nature of the future, brought about by the loss of political orientation in the West and East since the breakdown of the balance of power at the end of the Cold War. The ideological vacuum following the dissolution of the Eastern bloc led a whole spectrum of political parties or minority groups to reinforce either national or particularist identities, claims Füredi, by seeking a conservative reappropriation of the past.[33] The current race to commemorate the past with anniversaries, monuments, films and books may therefore be defined as a symptom of what Füredi identifies as an international, if not global, revival of the authority of the past as a foil for the crises of national and particularist histories, which "is not simply an intellectual problem, but reflects a more pervasive ideological and political crisis in society".[34] The large scale of D-Day commemorations in 1994 on the coast of Normandy, involving the Allied powers except the former Soviet Union and excluding Germany, was perhaps symptomatic of the use of the past in order to compensate political disorientation in the present.

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[31] Cf. Jean-Michel Leniaud, *L'Utopie française. Essai sur le patrimoine,* Paris: Mengès, 1992, pp. 29-32.

[32] Institutions of preservationism founded at this time include: Ancient Monuments Protection Act (Britain, 1882), Loi sur la protection des monuments historiques (France, 1887 & 1913), foundation of the Heimatschutz association (Germany, 1904). Cf. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 394f.

[33]. Cf. Frank Füredi, *Mythical Past and Elusive Future* London, Concord Mass.: Pluto Press, 1992, p. 36.

[34]. Ibid., p. 22. See also J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past* London: Penguin Books, 1969; Edgar Wolfrum, "Geschichte als Politikum - Geschichtspolitik", *Neue politische Literatur* 3, 1996, pp. 376-401, p. 393.

Andreas Huyssen also attributes a compensatory function to the present memory boom, as a form of contestation of new information technologies: "The memory boom [...] is a potentially healthy sign of contestation: a contestation of the informational hyperspace and an expression of the basic human need to live in extended structures of temporality."[35] Museums and monuments, according to Huyssen, provide a sense of "permanence" in a "culture dominated by the fleeting image of the screen and the immateriality of communications".[36] Huyssen's interpretation of the popularity of monuments, museums and historical artefacts as an expression of "the basic human need to live in extended structures of temporality" is therefore a form of reaction to a sense of historical disorientation, according to which historical change intensifies our consciousness of threatened historical traditions.

Although Huyssen identifies the significant social attraction of authentic historical artefacts and memorial sites, one should nevertheless guard against imputing the memory boom primarily to a general contestation of technological progress. Historical tradition or "extended structures of temporality" are not necessarily incompatible with technology. The argument that the memory boom represents "a contestation of the informational hyperspace" suggests that technology is a primary cause of historical disorientation and therefore of the popular quest for cultural orientation with sites of memory and in museums. Although relics of the past, monuments and museum exhibits harbour a "material quality" to which people may flee for refuge from a sense of the rapid flux of time, Huyssen overlooks the fact that technology is also an indispensable aid to memory. Printing and computer technology, for example, enable nations to store large quantities of recorded memories as proof of their cultural legitimacy. This principle was demonstrated in 1993 when the French national archives were the object of fierce debate over the inconsistent criteria applied when granting dispensations to historians seeking access to politically sensitive archives.[37] Furthermore, since computerised archives offer the capacity for storing unprecedented quantities of information, they are as much part of the memory boom as monuments and museums. Although the aura of a historical object resulting from its physical presence, as in museums or memorial sites, may evoke a sense of authenticity and therefore provide a place of historical "refuge" not offered by technological reproductions or archives, it does not follow that the memory boom as such is a reaction against the "informational hyperspace". Technically reproduced archives or images may

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[35] Huyssen, 1995, p. 9.
[36] Ibid., p. 255.
[37] Cf. Sonia Combe, *Archives interdites. Les peurs françaises face à l'Histoire contemporaine,* Paris: Albin Michel, 1994.

also provide access to the historical past, and images on the screen are not necessarily "fleeting", as Huyssen suggests, but may be fixed and nuanced over a prolonged period of time, as prints, films or via CD-Rom, for example, and thus act as a support of memory. According to Jacques Le Goff, the "present excesses of memory"[38] may be considered as a *product* of technology. At the beginning of the twentieth century, new technical facilities for stocking written, audio and visual data arose parallel to discoveries made in the fields of literature, philosophy, sociology, history and psychoanalysis, which equipped societies with material means to master and underpin their social traditions on the basis of cultural memory.[39] Technological facilities and social memory are therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The paradigm of compensation may apply to almost every society in which history and memory play a prominent role in public discourse. The sheer number of monuments, museums and commemorations initiated since the 1970s suggests that history plays a significant role in a given community's self-understanding, that historical representations compensate for a lost sense of identity at a time of change and insecurity, and that they are manipulated by symbolic gestures in order to achieve political ends. In short, the memory boom is characterised by a heightened awareness of history which consequently becomes a significant support of social understanding. However, since history and memory are contingent upon constant interpretation and revision - not only by politicians, but also by professional historians and journalists in the public sphere - they offer a platform for the pluralistic negotiation of historical identities.

I would like to end this brief survey of existing critiques of memory cultures with two remarks to underscore the relevance of these theories for this study. First, these interpretations of the proliferation of memory cultures as a form of compensation - for rapid historical change, lost political stablity or technological advances - are based on purely negative premises. They attribute the rise of memory cultures to the collective desire to flee either from an insecure present or an unimaginable future to the illusions of an imagined past which is assumed to be preferable to the present. However, the cult of memory is an expression not only of flight from an unbearable present, but also a consolidation of traditions. Monuments and commemorations fulfil a specific historical and political role by building up stocks of national cultural symbols designed to guarantee the future memory of the past. Future and past are, according to Hermann Lübbe, complementary: "Hat man diese Zusammenhänge begriffen, so sieht man, daß Herkunftswelt und

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[38] "Les débordements actuels de la mémoire".Cf. Le Goff, 1988, p. 110.
[39] Cf. ibid., p. 175.

Zukunftswelt nicht in einem Verdrängungsverhältnis zueinander stehen, vielmehr in einem Verhältnis der Komplementarität. Je zukunftsbereiter wir sind, um so mehr Vergangenheit produzieren wir, und um so nötiger wird der Impuls, sie musealisiert oder umfunktioniert maximal gegenwärtig zu halten."[40] Lübbe argues that interest in the past springs from a desire not only to flee from the present and an unknown future, but also to revive or revise a society's shared memories of the past in order to articulate them afresh in the present. Likewise, the memory boom of the 1980s and 1990s should not be understood as a form of cultural pessimism compensating for a sense of loss, or as a collective flight into the past, but as a *rearticulation* of shared memories of the past which are designed to consolidate the cohesion of contemporary society. The aesthetic, narrative, rhetorical or ritual forms of this rearticulation must therefore be examined in close relation to the political context in which they arise.

Second, the argument that memory cultures compensate a sense of unfamiliarity with present-day, everyday life following rapid historical changes - due to political instablity following the upheavals of 1989 or due to technological innovation - are only valid if the events and images of the past are idealised. The politically motivated inventions of historical traditions are almost invariably based on events of the past which are interpreted in a positive manner: 1848 in Germany, 1789 in France, 1688 or even 6 June 1944 in Britain. In cases when commemorations recall events which appear detrimental to the cohesion of national memory, however, they are often recalled precisely in order to be better negated. Under pressure from the lobbying of witnesses and associations in the 1990s, the French and German governments did precisely this by constructing central monuments to deportation and genocide. How do states incorporate memories of state crimes into their otherwise positive national heritages? The commemorations of the deportations and genocide of the Second World War upheld a negative example, the rejection of which lent legitimacy to the new post-war constitutions of France and the GDR and BRD. We may therefore impute motives for the fiftieth anniversary commemorations, and associated monuments and rituals recalling crimes of the Second World War, to the political strategies of those responsible for their implementation. The artistic dimensions of the Vél' d'Hiv' and Holocaust Monument will therefore be given particular attention in Chapter II, because both sites incorporated conspicuous sculptural, rhetorical and ritual interpretations of the past in relation to their urban and political contexts.

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[40] Hermann Lübbe, *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit. Kulturelle und politische Funktionen des historischen Bewußtseins,* Oldenburg: Heinz Holberg Verlag, 1985, p. 22.

B. The nation as a vector of memory

The cultural legitimacy of nations is often sustained by the management and sponsoring of social memory on the basis of historical monuments, commemorations, the mass media and even tourism. Governments play a direct role in sponsoring exhibitions, commemorations, cultural foundations, monuments and museums - forms of political intervention in the organisation of public representations of history which, claims Kevin Walsh, promote both social pedagogy and a leisure activity with commercial interests for the tourist industry.[41] The recognition that monuments, historical relics exhibited in museums, or public commemorations are a pedagogical asset has led to the creation of state institutions designed to administer cultural heritage, if not "nationalise" historical memory. Since 1978 in France, 1992 in Britain and 1998 in Germany, where governmental departments were appointed to oversee the administration of "patrimony", "heritage" and "culture" respectively, the maintenance of national memory cultures has become an integral part of state policy.

France, for example, has a long history of state institutions created to preserve national culture, dating from the appointment of an Inspector of Historical Monuments in 1830 and a Commission of Historical Monuments seven years later. This tendency continued after the Second World War with the creation of a Ministry of Culture in 1958, a Director du Patrimoine under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture in 1978, and a Heritage Foundation to finance the upkeep of historical monuments in 1996.[42] Following the creation of a high council for the memory of war veterans *(haut conseil de la mémoire combattante)* in January 1997, President Chirac and representatives of the Ministry of War Veterans also speculated on the increased institutionalisation of the state memory of the two world wars.[43] Jean-Michel Leniaud describes the responsibility of the state as an "entreprise de sensitisation" and as the "gestion [...] de l'opinion publique dans ses dimensions affectives".[44] The introduction of events such as "L'Année du Patrimoine" in 1980 and the annual conference "Entretiens du patrimoine" in 1988, continue the tradition of representing state interests in public commemorations.

Similar measures to administrate national memory on the basis of artefacts, architecture or historical sites exposed in museums or as memorials have been undertaken in Britain, where the

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[41] Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past. Museums and Heritage in the Post-modern World*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 176.
[42] Cf. Choay, 1992, p. 10; "Castles and Heirs", *The Economist* 27 July-2 August 1996, pp. 28-9.
[43] Cf. Jean-Michel Aphatie & Pascale Robert-Diarel, "Vers la création d'un ministère de la 'mémoire'?", *Le Monde,* 18-19.7.99, p. 5.

National Heritage Act was passed before parliament in 1983 and ultimately led to the creation of a new government ministry, the Department of National Heritage, in 1992. The first extensive critique of these measures by Robert Hewison in *The Heritage Industry* (1987) fuelled political debate over the role of the state in administrating culture and fostering national historical myths. Questions were raised regarding the degree to which institutions should sponsor historical relics from the past rather than contemporary art,[45] the effect of commercialisation on historical exhibitions and education,[46] the extent to which institutions should represent either "official" national history or an "inofficial" history of everyday life, and the relative responsibility of political parties in fostering the national conservation movement, concerning the conflict between the Labour and Conservative parties over the methods and legitimate claims to best represent patriotic interests.[47]

In Germany, unlike Britain and France, the responsibility for administrating historical culture has traditionally fallen on local governments and associations, but only partly on the federal government. In 1996, there existed a total of 27 associations for the preservation of historical monuments (Denkmalpflege) and 24 local history (Heimatkunde) associations, as well as numerous local independent associations such as the "Initiative Historisches Berlin" which campaigns for the "historical reconstruction" of architecture in Berlin as it was in the 1930s. Local history associations are nevertheless grouped under the national umbrella organisation Deutscher Heimatverbund in Bonn, and foundations such as the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg are sponsored directly by the federal government, while some memorials, like the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, are co-sponsored by both federal and local governments. In 1998, the newly elected SPD/Green coalition government nominated Michael Naumann as State Minister for Culture, whose task was to coordinate federal cultural policies, and represent Berlin and cultural projects abroad.[48] The same government also introduced a comprehensive national policy on "democratic memory culture" in April 1999, designed to coordinate the management and

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[44] Leniaud, 1992, p. 28.

[45] Cf. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline,* p. 141.

[46] Cf. Walsh, 1992, p. 182.

[47] Cf. Samuel, 1994, p.291 & 297.

[48] Official title: "Staatsminister für Kultur im Kanzleramt", a new post created on 3 February 1999 following a provisional status as "Bundeskulturbeauftragter" from 27 September 1998. Equivalent status in English-speaking countries: "Minister Without Portfolio". Cf. Jürgen Kolbe, "Michael, der tapfere Ritter", *Frankfurter Rundschau,* 13.11.98, p. 10.

financing of memorials and museums of the National Socialist and communist dictatorships.[49] The implementation of cultural policy nevertheless continued to be regularly obstructed by differences of opinion between local and national governments, as in the case of the Holocaust Monument.

In spite of the partial erosion of the sovereignty of nation-states - either from below following claims to the recognition of regional autonomy, rights or "identity", or from above following the displacement of financial, legal and political authority to supranational institutions such as the European Union,[50] and as a consequence of the transgression of national boundaries by communications, travel and economic exchanges - historiography and historical commemorations and representations are still largely conceived in national (though not necessarily nationalist) terms, and states continue to pursue elaborate programmes of historical commemoration. While national governments are bereft of some of their former functions, they nevertheless continue to secure legitimacy by seeking acceptance of their particular historical interpretations in the form of symbolic representations or narratives. The appointment of government ministers for patrimony in France (1978), culture in Germany (1998), and for heritage in Britain (1992) confirms this trend in cultural protectionism. Moreover, discrepancies between terminologies used to discuss memory cultures and separate means of communication (journals, the press) in different countries inevitably maintain barriers between historical communities. The elaborate fiftieth commemorations of the Second World War provided further evidence of this phenomenon. Although international ceremonies of common remembrance were staged, the media, gatherings of veterans, eye-witness reports, flags and mementoes simultaneously underscored the national scope of patriotic claims to memories of this period.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm interprets the survival of national memory cultures as a form of compensation or substitution for supra- and subnational political forces. "In western Europe," claims Hobsbawm, "it has been, as usual, the collapse of larger hopes and aspirations as well as the crisis of macro-national state power, real or apparent, which has allowed nationalism to fill the void in the souls of intellectuals and militants. It is a substitute for lost dreams."[51] It is essential to distinguish here between the nationalisms of new states of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and those of existing nation-states such as France, Britain or Germany. The former are

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[49] Policy consisted in the coordination of projects and an increase in the annual federal budget for memorials, essentially original historical sites, from 30 to 50 million DM. Cf. Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestags. Stenographischer Bericht - 14. Wahlperiode - 35. Sitzung, 22.4.99, pp. 2864-2875; Christine Tilmann, "Naumann kündigt mehr Bundesmittel für Gedenkstätten an", *Der Tagesspiegel,* 24.7.99, p. 29.

[50] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991,* London: Michael Joseph, 1994, p. 576f.

[51] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 178. Hobsbawm reiterates this thesis in the concluding chapter of *The Age of Extremes*, p. 576f.

subject to conflictual nationalisms in pursuit of territorial sovereignty, whereas the latter pursue what Hobsbawm defines as a "defensive" maintenance of national culture.[52] In light of Hobsbawm's argumentation, we may conclude that the reduced *political* (and therefore institutional, economic and legal) sovereignty of existing states has been compensated by *cultural* programmes of commemoration. There appears to exist a causal relation between the undermining of national sovereignty and memory cultures. The political scientist James Rosenau expresses this as a dialectic of globalising and localising forces in which "new increments of globalisation foster new increments of localisation".[53] One could therefore argue that the present nationalisation of memorial events by such institutions as the Minister for National Heritage in Britain, the "Directeur du Patrimoine" in France or the appointed "Staatsminister für kulturelle Angelegenheiten" in Germany is in part a reaction to both globalisation and the regional or ethnic identity politics described by Hobsbawm and Rosenau. The programmes to maintain or reconstruct national memory cultures with commemorative projects in the 1990s may be interpreted in part as a reaction to the combined challenge of local and supranational forces.

Following the appointment of governmental departments to oversee the administration of heritage, patrimony and culture in Britain, France and Germany, the maintenance of national memory cultures became an integral part of state policy. What consequences do the policies of these institutions have for contemporary memory cultures in France and Germany? In contrast to the nation-building of the nineteenth century, based largely on movements for the emancipation of individual territories from multinational states such as the Habsburg or Ottoman Empires, for the integration of separate territories or for the conquest of new territories, most established European nations today strive for the consolidation of nationhood in the face of sub-national organisations, supra-national bodies, or increased communications, travel and economic exchange. The political will of states to commemorate national histories is therefore not designed to achieve emancipation from a hegemonic power but to reassert former sovereignty symbolically. Almost all existing nations of Europe are confronted with challenges of this kind. In the 1990s, Britain introduced the progressive devolution of Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland, the unity of Italy was challenged by the separatist party "Liga Nord", Spain and France continued to face claims of regional independence movements either in Catalonia and the Basque region, or in Corsica, Occitania and Brittany, while Germany attempted to reconcile persisting social differences between

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[52] *The Age of Extremes*, p. 576.

[53] James Rosenau, "The Dynamics of Globalization: Toward an Operational Formulation", in *Security Dialogue* 3, 1997, pp. 247-262, p. 255.

its former eastern and western zones. The memory boom of the 1990s may therefore be defined as a symbolic form of "reform" nationalism,[54] consisting in the reaffirmation of sovereignty by an existing state as a form of defence against interior or exterior challenges, a process which involves a state's reform or adaptation to new circumstances. A characteristic example of this phenomenon is the annual European Heritage Days event, when museums and historical sites normally closed to the public open their doors during one weekend in mid-September, and where the term "European" is used despite the fact that the sites are of strictly national or local interest: castles, factories, old cinemas, museums, archaeological and architectural sites. In similar fashion, European-wide commemorations of the end of the Second World War in 1995 were largely national in character, when political leaders rarely marked the event in common ceremonies, but in a series of ceremonies in separate capital cities. Though similar in form and scope, memory cultures are generally administrated under the aegis of national policies.

Although nations do not have an exclusive claim on memory cultures, recent commemorations and new monuments testify to the dominance of national over regional or supranational forms of memorial discourse. In spite of repeated controversies over the administration of national heritage, both supporters and opponents of governmental intervention appear to be caught in debate over the nation, which remains a yardstick of the scope of memory cultures. The principle of nationhood has traditionally been based on competition between states. Military and economic conflict are obvious sources of such competition. However, most contemporary European states continue inadvertently to sustain memory cultures on a national basis without being in a state of conflict, by appealing to public adhesion to commemorations on the basis of a common history. This leads to the somewhat paradoxical situation in which societies sharing the same (national) type of political system are effectively divided by the very system they tacitly agree to share: the use of particular national symbolic reference points continues to divide nations, yet also binds them in the pursuit of a common interest of national memorial specificity. Whereas public interest in memory cultures during the 1990s was an international phenomenon, the issues which galvanised public interest in each case were debated in terms of their national relevance only. This paradox was reinforced by the fact that debates over national memory were generally conducted within a given structure of national terminologies, institutions and mass media. The very interests, languages and modes of communication assured the limited national scope of each debate from the outset. Moreover, while participants in memory debates within any

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[54] Cf. Peter Alter, *Nationalismus,* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985, p. 39ff.

one country often disagreed over specific issues, their very disagreement stemmed from consensus on the nature of the authority (the nation) whose heritage they perceived to be worthy of dispute.

According to Lowenthal, heritage - the cultivation of the past within a given memory culture - is by definition incomparable and inscrutable, "a jealously *un*shared possession".[55] The fact that history since the nineteenth century has been conceived in terms of nation-building and conflicts opposing one nation against another, means that references to collective historical memories today generally tap into an existent rhetorical and symbolic repertoire which is similarly national in scope. Contemporary symbols and terminologies of memory are an intrinsic part of national forms of historical consciousness since they provide a medium with which history is transmitted from one generation to the next. However, although issues, institutions, symbols and terminologies of historical memory are national in scope, as exemplified by the divergent commemorations of the common experience of the two world wars, present-day monuments and commemorations of specific national histories share similar, non-specific *generic forms*: monuments, inscriptions, national holidays, speeches by political leaders, and public debates in the national press and television. Despite local variations and specific contents, these shared generic forms of commemoration, in which nations continue to commemorate their pasts, merit comparison. I therefore propose to examine two debates in France and Germany arising from the projects and inaugurations of monuments commemorating the Second World War, and their gradual emergence as "sites of memory" in the 1990s. Before embarking upon these empirical case studies, however, it is necessary to clarify some of the terminology used in existing research on memory cultures, in particular the term "site of memory", which offers a basis for defining the political and symbolic functions of monuments.

3. Analytical Terms of Memory Cultures

Before embarking on two case studies of monuments in France and Germany, it is essential to define some of the terminology employed in relation to memory cultures and in existing studies of political symbols. This is particularly necessary when exploring debates which were conducted in French and German, which I intend to analyse in English. In this section, I will therefore explain some existing terms, suggest which ones can be applied to the chosen case studies and, finally, explore in particular detail frequently used, yet deceptively complex and elusive, analytical term

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[55] D. Lowenthal, "Identity, Heritage and History", in Gillis, 1994, pp. 41-57, p. 48.

"site of memory". Even analytical terms operate within a discursive system and are founded on historiographical and political assumptions of which we should be aware when examining memory cultures. In the final chapter I would therefore like to inquire whether some of the precepts underlying this term are applicable to the French and German monuments, in particular the way in which these cultural artefacts or "archives" sustain a memory culture or even, in Nora's terms, a "memory-nation".

A. A case for the overcoming of linguistic boundaries between memory cultures

The dramatic increase in the number of historical monuments, commemorations and exhibitions since the 1970s is an international phenomenon, as demonstrated by the historian Frank Füredi in his extensive study of memory cultures in Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States.[56] In Europe, for example, debates over historical monuments, museums and commemorations have occurred with such frequency and intensity since the 1970s that the debates themselves have become paradigmatic moments if not intellectual monuments of contemporary historiography. Controversy over the cult of the past or the "heritage industry"[57] following the National Heritage Act of 1983 in Britain, the "Historikerstreit" in Germany in 1986, or the debate over the bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution in France in 1989 - though thematically unrelated - were comparable insofar as they all raised fundamental questions about the historical foundations of national memory. One consequence of the proliferation of such debates is their explosive political nature. Monuments and commemorations are often rendered political by controversy in the press, where they are perceived as symbols of collective historical consciousness. Or they are instigated in the interest of associations, lobbies representing victim groups or by national institutions, and are therefore political from their very inception. Such debates testify to both the multiplication of public commemorations of the past, and of acts of mourning victims, and to the intensification of the public awareness of memory and history. They likewise offer a forum for competing historical narratives appealing to the integration of citizens within a coherent memory culture. The authority accorded to public debates about memory is a political phenomenon and requires further analysis. In similar vein to the study of the discourse of

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[56] Cf. Frank Füredi, *Mythical Past, Elusive Future. History and Society in an Anxious Age,* London: Pluto Press, 1992.
[57] Cf. Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline*.

"normalism" in Germany by Jürgen Link, I propose to decipher in part the function of the contemporary semantic networks founded on memory. "Diskurstragende Kategorien," claims Link, "sind solche, durch deren 'Entfernung' [...] der betreffende Diskurs nicht länger 'halten' könnte und in sich zusammenbräche wie ein Kartenhaus."[58]

The debates which have repeatedly flared up in the media and in books and films have left a legacy of concepts which constitute a linguistic and intellectual heritage in their own right. Memorial concepts are used by historians and politicians alike to interpret or legitimate certain memories of events or symbols of the past, such as "heritage" in Britain, and "patrimony" in France. These terms have become so much part of English and French vocabulary that they pervade all levels of public discourse: everyday, educational, media, political and academic.[59] Beyond historical events themselves, debates about commemorations draw on a wealth of concepts to forge, celebrate and bemoan, or to describe and analyse the construction of public memory, and therefore reflect the complexity of attitudes to history within political and public spheres. Many commemorations or monuments thus derive their complexity from the speeches and debates which precede and produce them, or which they produce in their wake, so that their social and political significance can only be deduced within the broad context of verbal and visual media beyond the monument or the initial commemorative event.

These debates, and the language employed within them, therefore offer an indispensable key to understanding the historical and political assumptions underpinning monuments and commemorations. However, the very concepts available to analyse commemorations are themselves also underpinned by historical, political and even aesthetic assumptions. One example of conceptual confusion regularly arises in analyses of the political function of monuments, where several different terms appear to express the same idea. It is widely assumed, for example, that monuments promote not remembrance but forgetting by conveying to spectators the impression that monuments *embody* a memory and thus relinquish spectators from the responsibility to remember. "Once we assign monumental form to memory," claims James Young, "we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember."[60] Other critics express a similar thought in different terms. Stephanie Endlich refers to an "alibi function",[61] Detlef Garbe to the

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[58] Jürgen Link, *Versuch über den Normalismus. Wie Normalität produziert wird,* Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997, p. 14.

[59] Levels defined by Siegfried Jäger, *Kritische Diskursanalyse*, Duisburg: Duisburger Institut für Sprache und Sozialforschung, 1993, p. 183.

[60] Young, 1993, p. 5.

[61] Stefanie Endlich, "Gedenkstätten und Gedenkorte in Berlin", in S. Endlich & T. Lutz (eds), *Gedenken und Lernen an historischen Orten,* Berlin: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1995, pp. 9-15, p. 14.

"delegation",[62] and Willi Goetschel to the "substitution"[63] of memory by monuments, to name just three examples.

With repeated use, however, the meaning of many of these concepts either becomes obscure or acquires multiple connotations when used in different contexts and different languages, or else becomes hackneyed. There is little consistency between the terms used in different languages such as English, French and German to define the increased social prominence of history and memory. Not only are the themes of debates over historical memory in different countries specific to each nation, but linguistic divergencies between vocabularies used to express the past also perpetuate the national confines of the cultures from which they were born, such that debates over historical memory often remain impervious and resist comparison. Memory cultures, perpetuated on a national scale via specific themes and vocabularies in which they are expressed, are thus entrenched within both scientific and everyday discourses. The linguistic variations in English, French and German, for example, appear to reflect both institutional divergencies and differences in perceptions of the functions of national memory cultures. Caution is particulalry urgent where terms in English are borrowed from other languages and could foster misunderstandings, such as "working up" *(aufarbeiten),* which could be mistaken for the term "working out", or "coming to terms with the past", the standard translation of the German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. For this reason, I will clarify some meanings of English, French and German terminology currently used to describe the function of aesthetic objects and ritual in memory cultures.

Three broad categories of terms referring to history and memory may be identified. The first category, of "affirmative" terminology, describes national memory cultures in broad and positive terms, the most common examples of which are found in English as "heritage" and in French as "patrimony". These almost synonymous terms acquired their present meaning in the 1970s and refer to collective, generally national, cultural inheritance, having previously signified private family inheritance. According to Françoise Choay, patrimony refers to an institution and a mentality, which is sustained by "the continuous accumulation of a range of objects which share a common belonging to the past: works and masterpieces of fine arts and applied arts, works and products derived from all human learning and know-how".[64] In Britain, heritage has been subject

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[62] Cf. Ibid.

[63] Willi Goetschel, "Ab/Deckerinnerung im großen Stil", in Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (ed.), *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas",* Berlin: Verlag der Kunst, 1995, pp. 52-56, p. 56.

[64] "L'accumulation continue d'une diversité d'objets que rassemble leur commune appartenance au passé: oeuvres et chefs-d'oeuvre des beaux-arts et des arts appliqués, travaux et produits de tous les savoirs et savoirs-faire des humains." Françoise Choay, *L'Allégorie du patrimoine,* Paris: Seuil, 1992, p. 9.

to severe critical analysis. Robert Hewison defines heritage as "bogus history"[65] which appeals to a sense of nostalgia, while David Lowenthal attributes religious value to heritage as an "act of faith"[66] in the past. Both patrimony and heritage are, in part, the product of state cultural policies following the foundation of the French Direction du Patrimoine and the British Ministry of National Heritage. Germany, where cultural administration has traditionally been the responsibility of regional governments, and which had no equivalent comprehensive national institution for the administration of heritage prior to the appointment of a Minister for Cultural Affairs in 1999, also has no agreed linguistic equivalent to "heritage" or "patrimony". These terms are customarily rendered in German as "Kulturerbe"[67] or "Erbgut",[68] while M. Rainer Lepsius makes a further distinction between "cultural heritage" *(kulturelles Erbe)* in general, and "cultural heritage as historical tradition" *(Kulturelles Erbe als geschichtliche Überlieferung).*[69]

The second category, of "critical" terminology, arose in the process of interpreting historical events perceived as catastrophes or sources of collective trauma. Again, this terminology is specific to languages in which relevant discussions have taken place, and resists satisfactory translation. Events in Germany such as the historians' debate in 1986 and the debate since 1989 over the legacy of the German Democratic Republic have enhanced the wealth of terminology describing political and psychological processes of appropriating the legacies of the National Socialist and communist dictatorships. Terms have therefore evolved in the German language which constitute a highly subtle linguistic medium for analysing historical memory. The past may, for example, be "come to terms with" or "overcome" *(bewältigt)*, "disposed of" *(entsorgt)*, "reappraised" or "worked up" *(aufgearbeitet),* "relinquished" or "divested of" *(entäußert),*[70] "distorted" *(verbogen),*[71] "repressed" *(verdrängt)*, "made reparations for" or "put right" *(wiedergutgemacht)* or "worked through" *(durchgearbeitet)*. A number of terms referring to memory have also emerged in everyday French, often with moralistic overtones, such as "memory work" *(travail de la mémoire),*[72]

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[65] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline,* p. 144.

[66] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History,* London: Viking, 1997, p. 2.

[67] Joseph Hanimann, "Das schwierige Erinnern", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* 13.1.97, p. 25.

[68] Lowenthal, 1997, p. 4.

[69] Cf. M. Rainer Lepsius, "Die Teilung Deutschlands und die deutsche Nation", in Lepsius, *Demokratie in Deutschland,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, pp. 196-228, p. 219.

[70] Brigitte Rauschenbach (ed.), *Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten. Zur Psycho-Analyse deutscher Wenden,* Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992, p. 115.

[71] Hilmar Hoffmann (ed.), *Gegen den Versuch, Vergangenheit zu verbiegen,* Frankfurt/Main: Athenäum, 1987.

[72] Olivier Abel, *Libération,* 9.10.97.

"memory duty" *(devoir de mémoire),*[73] "memory act" *(acte de mémoire),*[74] "memory claim" *(revendication mémorielle),*[75] or the verbal phrase "to engage in memory work" *(faire oeuvre de mémoire).*[76] Memory cultures relating to the Second World War and state crimes are thus discussed, but also consolidated on the basis of terminology borrowed from legal, moral and psychological discourse.

A third category of terminology referring to the past may be described as "analytical" insofar as it is used in critical writings, to define the phenomenon of the social and political role of memory and history. Critics regularly refer in English to "politics of memory" or "identity politics",[77] while similar terms *"politique de la mémoire"* or *"politique du patrimoine"* have entered the French language.[78] A broad variety of analytical definitions have also evolved in German, including "politics of the past" *(Vergangenheitspolitk),*[79] "history-politics" *(Geschichtspolitik)*[80] or "politics with memory" *(Politik mit der Erinnerung).*[81] All these terms emphasise the political instrumentalisation of the past, although they each predicate different means with which political aims are pursued: either with identity, the past in general, history, or memory. The use of each of these terms is not gratuitous, but conveys a specific meaning requiring clarification. The term "identity" implies a specifically Western ideology of "cultural essentialism" based on the boundedness, continuity, uniqueness and homogeneity of collective memory.[82] The meaning of the "past" in "politics of the past" is vague, although its author Norbert Frei uses it to define the legal implementation of amnesty and reintegration of National Socialist leaders and sympathisers during the late 1940s and 1950s. "History" in "history-politics" presupposes the political *abuse* of historical knowledge: "Mit Geschichtspolitik gemeint ist die von verschiedenen Akteuren getragene und mit unterschiedlichen Interessen befrachtete politische Nutzung von Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit, um mobilisierende, politisierende oder legitimierende Wirkungen

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[73] Used by Lionel Jospin in his speech at the Vél' d'Hiv' commemoration 1997, in *Le Monde,* 22.7.97; for a critique of this term, see Henry Rousso, in an interview with Philippe Petit, *La Hantise du passé,* Paris: Les éditions Textuel, 1998, p. 14.

[74] Cf. Jean Dujardin, *Le Monde,* 1.10.97.

[75] Cf. Annette Wieviorka, "1992. Réflexions sur une commémoration", in *Annales ESC* 3, May-June 1993, pp. 703-714, p. 713.

[76] Cf. Henri Hajdenberg, *Le Monde,* 1.10.97.

[77] Eric Hobsbawm, "Identity Politics and the Left", in *New Left Review* 217, 1996, pp. 38-47.

[78] Marc Guillaume, *La Politique du patrimoine,* Paris: Galilée, 1980.

[79] Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit,* Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996, p.13f.

[80] Cf. Peter Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung. Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit,* Munich: Hanser, 1995, p. 13ff; Edgar Wolfrum, "Geschichte als Politikum - Geschichtspolitik", in *Neue Politische Literatur* 3, 1996, pp. 376-401.

[81] Cf. Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung*.

[82] Cf. Richard Handler, "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-cultural Concept?", in R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 27-40.

in der politischen Auseinandersetzung zu erzielen."[83] If we consider the literal sense of the respective definitions of the "politics of" either "identity", "the past", or "history", however, none of these categories encompasses the necessarily ambiguous processes of the production and reception of history on the specific basis of *representations* and may not be adequately applied to the interpretation of monuments. Representations constitute a third element of formal mediation between the interests of political actors and the public understanding and reception of representations. Monuments and commemorations neither express the collective identity of a society nor pretend to historical truth. Instead, they represent projections of social memory whose interpretation is contingent on forms of mediation by political and intellectual elites. As expressions of heritage, they appeal not to a social demand for scientifically grounded facts but to "faith"[84] in history, which relies on an understanding of history derived from the aesthetic, rhetorical and ritual forms in which the past is publicly represented and understood and in which, from a scientific point of view, the past is potentially misrepresented and misunderstood.[85]

Statements related to the Vél' d'Hiv' and Holocaust Monument reveal equivocal attitudes among individuals, political representatives and their parties. One cannot therefore speak of the political "instrumentalisation" of the past, history or of public memory in relation to these symbols, because their formal sculptural, rhetorical and ritual qualities conformed to processes of both aesthetic and political representation. The studies of the political use of history, the past or identity named above presuppose a binary relation between present-day political interests on the one hand and past historical events (history, the past, memory) on the other, and focus only incidentally on the medium by which this process takes place. I will therefore attempt to evaluate the significance of the Vél' d'Hiv' and Holocaust Monument in Chapter II in relation to the rhetorical and symbolic means by which the objects of debate evolved into national symbols. Both monuments acquired symbolic significance primarily as a result of their relation to surrounding architectural sites in Paris and Berlin and as a result of public debate, and thereby turned rhetoric and art into a political issue. According to Walter Grasskamp, the political dimension of conflicts over art in public places has been notoriously evaded. "Wenn das für die Konflikte um Atomkraft, Abrüstung oder Geburtenkontrolle gilt, warum sollte ausgerechnet die konfliktfreudige Kunst davon ausgenommen

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[83] Wolfrum, "Geschichte als Politikum - Geschichtspolitik", p. 377.

[84] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History,* London: Viking, 1996, p. 2.

[85] Lowenthal explores in depth modes of error and fabrication inherent to public representations of history, in: "Fabricating Heritage", *History and Memory* 1, 1998.

sein?"[86] The resulting public outcries and exchanges of complex arguments therefore merit analysis in their own right as discursive events. For although party political interests were at stake in these debates, the monuments provided ineffective pretexts with which to rally cohesive partisan support. Individual interpretations did not coincide with traditional party allegiances. Participants in these debates were therefore subjects *of* political ideas but also subject *to*[87] the complex discourse on the political function of monuments.

For the purposes of this study, I propose to use the generic terms "politics of memory" to describe the process, and "memory culture", "memory community"[88] or, more accurately, "commemorative culture" to describe the social context in which monuments and commemorations take effect. Both these expressions may easily be translated into most languages as *"Erinnerungskultur"*, *"culture de la mémoire"*, for example, and may refer to any community - local, national or supranational - which shares a repertoire of common memories and which is not exclusive, but permits multiple contiguity between one set of memories and another,[89] and which is inherently conflictual. In the words of Reinhard Rürup, director of the Topographie des Terrors documentation centre in Berlin, "es gibt kein einheitliches und erst recht kein verbindliches Geschichtsbild, wohl aber einen - in Einzelfällen gewiß immer wieder aufgebrochenen - demokratischen Grundkonsens hinsichtlich des Umgangs mit der Geschichte. Die Erinnerungskultur einer demokratischen Gesellschaft ist genau auf diese Verbindung von Offenheit, Pluralität und Konfliktfähigkeit einerseits und demokratischem Grundkonsens andererseits angewiesen".[90]

On the basis of the expressions outlined above, we may draw some general conclusions about the way in which people today talk and write about the past. First, the wealth of expressions underpinning the discourse of memory and history in English, French and German is proof of a vibrant international interest in this topic. Second, thematic and institutional variations in different

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[86] Walter Grasskamp, "Invasion aus dem Atelier. Kunst als Störfall", in: Grasskamp (ed.), *Unerwünschte Monumente. Moderne Kunst im Stadtraum,* Munich: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 1992, pp. 141-169, p. 168.

[87] Cf. Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation", in Hall (ed.), *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices,* London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks: Sage, Open University, 1997, pp. 13-64, p. 56.

[88] Robert Fowler, "Community: Reflections on Definition", in Amitai Etzioni (ed.), *New Communitarian Thinking,* Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1995, pp. 88-98, p. 91.

[89] Local, national and supranational "memory cultures" are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and may exist parallel to other community bonds such as religion or race. This potential for multi-layered memory cultures is not accounted for in Jan Assmann's definition of "Erinnerungskultur", characterised by "Auserwähltheit" (the quality of being chosen), and which therefore overlooks the possibility that multiple identities may exist simultaneously within one person or group: e.g. French Algerians. Cf. J. Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen,* Munich: Beck, 1992, p. 30.

[90] Reinhard Rürup, "Lebendige Erinnerungskultur in der Demokratie: Gedanken und Erwartungen", paper held before the *Enquete-Kommission des Deutschen Bundestags,* Berlin, 10.11.97, p. 2.

countries give rise to considerable terminological variations between languages. Third, the relatively impervious vocabularies of memory cultures impede the task of comparing representations of history and memory, and their public discussion and analysis in different countries. The standard terms "memory culture" and "politics of memory" may therefore serve to bridge the existing linguistic gap by referring to the analogous booms in monuments and commemorations in different countries, while nevertheless respecting thematic variations of specific local or national histories and their concomitant monumental or ritual forms.

This brief introduction to some of the terms describing monuments and memory is designed to offer practical insight into specific terminology, but also demonstrates that the very means of debating in each country are largely specific to national memory cultures. Any comparison of memory cultures must therefore take into account the historical, institutional and academic discrepancies between the terminologies in which debates over historical memory have been conducted. The above remarks about monuments and memory cultures also suggest that different levels of discourse - symbolic, everyday, media, political, and critical, for example - are interrelated. If we assume that history, or the past and memory in general are the object of what we may call "battles over political concepts" between opposing "communities of interpretation",[91] we must ask in what way interpretative tools of research on memory relate to other levels of discourse, how they are used in such battles and whether these battles either entrench the closed, exclusive nature of communities participating in them, or reveal structural analogies with other memorial communities. To what extent are analytical concepts subject to the very political functions they are designed to expose and interpret? One of the most prolific concepts and tools of research relevant to the field of memory politics is "site of memory" *(lieu de mémoire),* first employed by the historian Pierre Nora to analyse the relation between memory and nationhood in contemporary France on the basis of shared historical symbols. This is one of the few terms adopted internationally in analyses of memory cultures, and which is used in both everyday and academic discourses. In the following section, I propose to explain the sense of this complex term with respect to its underlying political premises, before embarking on two case studies of the Vél' d'Hiv' and Holocaust Monument. At first glance, these monuments merit categorisation as "sites of memory" according to Nora's definition. However, in light of controversies over the crimes of the

[91] Terms originally used by Edgar Wolfrum, "Die Preußen-Renaissance", in Martin Sabrow (ed.), *Verwaltete Vergangenheit. Geschichtskultur und Herrschaftslegitimation in der DDR,* Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1997, p. 148, 150; and A. Lorenzer, *Sprachspiel und Interaktionsformen,* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 16.

Second World War in France and Germany, they also require us to redefine some of Nora's presumptions about the function of historical memory as a force of national cohesion.

B. "Site of memory". A critique of Pierre Nora's theory of memory cultures

The notion "site of memory" became known as the title of a seven-volume work edited by the historian Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,*[92] which traces the history of over 130 symbols of French national memory. Having been developed in a seminar led by Nora during the 1970s, it brings together 130 essays by over a hundred historians on subjects as diverse and as apparently incongruous as "Coffee", "Vichy" and "The King". These thematic studies are organized within three sections under the headings "La République", "La Nation" and "Les France" which analyze the origins and evolution of the symbols of contemporary French identity: traces of the political and cultural construction of the Third Republic, of national unity and national division spanning fourteen centuries of history from "The Franks and the Gauls" to "Vichy". Consistent with the diversity and conflict inherent in French history, *Les Lieux de mémoire* projects a pluralist understanding of memory; not collective memory, therefore, but a collection or constellation of memories which, in various combinations, constitute the memory of French individuals. Paradoxically, however, while Nora's work testifies to the pluralist and fragmented nature of contemporary memory, it also projects a unitary history under the all-encompassing, though elusive, banner of Frenchness.

Since its inception, this term has almost become a commonplace in the French language. President François Mitterrand used it in his inaugural speech of the memorial museum of Izieu, a children's internment camp during the Second World War, promising to transform this place into a "site of memory and education".[93] In the annual speech on the "National Commemorative Day of Racial and Anti-Semitic Persecutions" on 20 July 1997, the French prime minister Lionel Jospin also used the term twice without explaining its meaning,[94] thus assuming that it was well understood by the general public. However, the difficulty in grasping the precise meaning of this term is reflected in the multiple ways in which it is translated into English, including "place",

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[92] Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire,* 7 vols.: I. *La République,* 1984; II. *La Nation* (1, 2, 3), 1986; III. *Les France* (1, 2, 3), 1993, Paris, Gallimard; for a selection of essays from this work in English, see *The Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (three volumes), New York: Columbia University Press, 1997-8.

[93] *Le Monde,* 24-25.4.94, p. 8.

[94] *Le Monde,* 22.7.97, p. 8.

"site", or "realm" of memory.[95] In order to retain the authenticity of the original term and avoid the difficulty of translation, many writers quote the French *lieu de mémoire*.[96] According to its author, a "site" or "place" of memory refers to the various symbolic "sites" or cultural expressions of collective memory such as geographical regions, monuments, commemorative ceremonies, well-known personalities, political movements, professional institutions or social habits described by Nora as the "focal points of our national heritage".[97] A site of memory may be defined, therefore, as a cultural support for a particular collective memory. It is not necessarily a topographical site, however, such as a historical monument, for it may be more loosely defined as a focal point of shared emotional attachment including broad cultural characteristics such as gastronomy or revolution (in France), and Luther or the Weimar Republic (in Germany). In 1993, this term was even introduced into the *Grand Robert* dictionary, which defines a site of memory as an "unité significative, d'ordre matériel ou idéel, dont la volonté des hommes ou le travail du temps a fait un élément symbolique d'une quelconque communauté".[98] The emphasis here on the signification pertaining to a "symbolic element" of a "community" brought about by "will" or the "effect of time" suggests that a site of memory is essentially a semantic element or tool which renders collective identity intelligible on the basis of historical origins ("will" or "the effect of time") and contemporary political utility (the cohesion of a "community"). According to definition, therefore, sites of memory act as vehicles for shared memories underpinning social cohesion.

This term was originally used to describe the oratorical technique of associating ideas with places - objects, architectural spaces and visual images - in order to remember them in logical order.[99] Sites or images were also used in the arts of memory practised during the Renaissance. Nora, however, lends this term new political and social meaning by defining a "site of memory" as a shared symbol sustaining social cohesion in the present-day. The suggestive vagueness of this term increases its appeal, for it may be applied to almost any common historical symbols. Furthermore, in spite of its resistance to translation, it may therefore be employed within any

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[95] Arthur Goldhammer's translation of this term as "realm of memory" is rather misleading, since its etymological roots in the old French *reialme* and Latin *regimen* signify "rule". The royal connotations of this term falsely suggest a monarchic, pre-revolutionary context of French sites of memory, which effectively disregards the wealth of post-revolutionary symbols of national memory in France. Cf. P. Nora (ed.), *The Realms of Memory,* 3 vols. (trans. Arthur Goldhammer), 1997.

[96] This problem has not arisen in German, where the term *Erinnerungsort* has become widely established.

[97] P. Nora, "Das Abenteuer der *Lieux de mémoire",* in Etienne François et al (eds), *Nation und Emotion,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995, pp. 83-92, p. 83.

[98] *Le Grand Robert de la langue française,* 1993.

[99] First developed by Cicero and Quintillian, and in the treaty *Rhetorica ad Herennium* in the first century B.C. Cf. Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory,* 1966, [p. 14.] For a concise history of the concept *lieu de mémoire,* see Pim den Boer, "Lieux de mémoire et l'identité de l'Europe", Pim den Boer & Willem Frijhoff (eds), *Lieux de mémoire et identités nationales,* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1993, pp. 11-29.

memory culture whose history has given rise to collectively recognised symbols. Hence this concept has been readily adopted internationally and has inspired a new field of inquiry into the political function of shared historical memories.

Additional terms have emerged in the wake of the international interest in memorial symbols. The historian Raphael Samuel claims that Nora's understanding of this phenomenon is an expression of coercive national memory,[100] and proposes the alternative term "theatres of memory", which lays emphasis on the theatrical, artistic or fabricated aspect of collective symbols as well as their popular social rootedness. An original alternative has also been proposed by the anthropologist Marc Augé: "non-site" *(non-lieu),* which refers to places of transit such as motorways or airport waiting rooms.[101] "Non-sites" are void of historical symbolism, easily forgotten, and therefore do not constitute a focus for shared historical memories, except insofar as they may themselves become symbols of the contemporary experience of places which appear to bear no trace of the past. The sociologist Nicole Lapierre makes a further distinction between *lieux de mémoire* and *lieux du souvenir,* where the latter refer to non-collective and voluntary, invented, sites of memory such as individual memorial stones.[102]

An obvious example of the political function of memory and therefore the theoretical pertinence of *Les Lieux de mémoire* is the spate of fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Second World War between 1989 and 1995. Commemorative ceremonies marking the beginning, end, and major events during the conflict underscored not only the readiness of the mass media to evoke images of the past, but also the enthusiasm with which the public indulged in remembrance or, for those who have no personal memory of that period, in the construction of memory. Although the anniversary of the Second World War is not the only prompt for the contemporary fascination with the politics of memory, it provides an effective prism through which to examine the complex interaction of local, national, international or supranational politics in the construction of social memories. The intensification of commemorative events since the 1970s has generally taken place on a national scale: the staging of major bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution in 1989; the controversial foundation of a Ministry for National Heritage in Britain in 1993; the disputes over historical symbols and rituals in the capital city of Berlin since

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[100] Samuel bases his definition of popular memory as "unofficial knowledge" on a critique of what he refers to as Nora's "official" places of memory (Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* Vol. 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture, London: Verso, 1995, p. 11). However, although Nora's inventory of places of memory is indeed structured within the framework of French national memory, to call them "official" suggests unfairly that they are imposed by dictate. Samuel's polarization of social memory into "official" and "unofficial" categories overlooks the liberal political convictions underlying Nora's insistence on the pluralist and fragmented nature of memories loosely classified as "French".

[101] M. Augé, *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité,* Paris: Seuil, 1992, p. 97ff.

reunification in 1990, including monuments, museums, street names, the national holiday (now 3 October), and the transfer of the seat of government from Bonn, for example.

Although the symbols under discussion in *Les Lieux de mémoire* are confined to the context of France, Nora's theoretical reflections on the relation between history and memory mark a valuable methodological contribution to the exploration of the historical and political role of memory in general. As a history of symbols tracing the evolution of the representation of events and cultural traditions rather than the events or traditions themselves, this work has been described by one critic as a characteristically postmodern approach to history, one which "reduces the memory of the past to the history of its images".[103] However, although Nora focuses on the symbolic representations of history, this does not imply that he disregards the quest to understand the facts of historical events and their social consequences. At no point does Nora enter into the debate over definitions of "modern" and "postmodern". *Les Lieux de mémoire* could therefore be understood less as a confirmation of history as an aesthetic phenomenon and of the inaccessibility of facts of the past than as a conscious attempt to investigate the means by which residual collective images of this past have been socially constructed. In this way, it serves to expose the mechanisms of the constructions of such images.[104]

Nora's contribution to the debate over the politics of memory is twofold. First, *Les Lieux de mémoire* offers a structured insight into the construction of French memory, a model method for the interpretation of historical symbols. Second, this work is itself a monument, a symbol and a *symptom* of the political role of social memory in France today. It projects a cultural rather than political apprehension of national self-understanding, but is therefore underpinned by political assumptions about the foundation of memory cultures.

Some critics of this work have adapted or rejected it on ideological grounds. Raphael Samuel bases his definition of "unofficial knowledge" on a critique of what he refers to as Nora's "official" sites of memory.[105] Although Nora's inventory of sites of memory is indeed structured within the framework of French national memory, to call them "official" suggests unfairly that they are imposed by dictate. Samuel's polarisation of social memory into "official" and "unofficial" categories overlooks the liberal political convictions underlying Nora's insistence on the pluralist

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[102] Nicole Lapierre, "Hommages de pierre", *Le Monde des Livres,* 16.6.95, p. X.

[103] Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory,* Hanover & London: Vermont University Press, 1993, p. 22.

[104] The terms "modern" and "postmodern" in this respect may be misleading. Although critics Patrick H. Hutton and Nancy Wood agree that the transmission of memory via symbolic media may be contrasted to earlier "natural" forms of "living experience", Hutton describes this contrast as one between modern and postmodern, while Wood describes it as one between pre-modern and modern. See: Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory,* p. 21, and N. Wood, "Memory's Remains: *Les Lieux de mémoire",* in *History and Memory* 1, 1994, pp. 123-149, p. 127.

and fragmented nature of memories loosely classified as "French". Another historian, Jay Winter, also acknowledges the influence of Nora in his study of sites of memory of the First World War,[106] yet chooses to challenge the notion of sites of memory by examining them in a specifically international context. However, these critiques do not explicitly probe the historical, historiographical and political assumptions underlying the notion of sites of memory, and the reasons for writing a national history of France on the basis of its memorial heritage. In order to do this, one must first investigate the conceptual apparatus Nora uses to describe the role of memory today. The structure of *Les Lieux de mémoire* is significant in its own right. It is not an exhaustive but a selective inventory of contemporary French memories. Its structure and the editor's theoretical commentaries together constitute an explanation of the state of contemporary French memory. Central to this explanation is the idea of rupture or historical discontinuity as the cause of radical transformations in collective consciousness: from historical memory to patrimonial, cultural, social, historiographical or archival memory - concepts which require closer examination.

a. "Memorial patrimony" as a prop for plural, non-partisan consensus

The instrumental or functional role attributed to memory by Nora does not mean that he interprets sites of memory as forces capable of rallying communities in defence of minority or national rights. The object of *Les Lieux de mémoire* is not collective memory as such; by defining memory as "collective", one suggests that a single memory is shared by a largely homogeneous community. In this respect, we must also treat the term "identity" with caution insofar as it evokes a fixed stock of memories harboured by an individual or a community, while not allowing for the necessary complexity and instability of symbolic attachments within any society: attachments which are in a state of flux or which arise in varying combinations, and which may command different degrees of emotional adherence.[107] Rather than promote a fixed collective memory or closed sense of identity, Nora recognizes the plural and composite nature of social memory. The French national memory conveyed by *Les Lieux de mémoire* does not imply homogeneity or coercion, therefore, but openness to new configurations and combinations of coexisting memories.[108] An individual may identify with any number of sites of memory as diverse as

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[105] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary British Culture*, London & New York: Verso, 1995, p. 11.
[106] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
[107] Cf.E. François et al, "Die Nation. Vorstellungen, Inszenierungen, Emotionen", in *Nation und Emotion,* pp. 13-35, p. 17.
[108] Cf. Gérard Namer, *Mémoire et Société,* Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1987, p. 26.

"Gaullists and Communists", "The Industrial Age" or "The King" without necessarily falling victim to a conflict of identity. Places of memory are, claims Nora, not a basis for a "community of memory"[109] and must not, therefore, be confused with the binding interests serving the cohesion of minority groups in contemporary Western societies, defined by race, religion or gender. Almost none of the sites of memory in question ("Coffee" or "The Forest", for example) could today serve to bind minority identities.

In addition to this pluralist interpretation, Nora identifies a qualitative change in French memory, where sites of memory serve as artificial props though not substitutes, for a lost national memory. The very fact that sites of memory such as the customs of "Dying for the Fatherland" or "Coffee" may today be perceived as *symbols* of national heritage makes them appear unnatural, for they can no longer be experienced without the awareness that they originally embodied meanings quite foreign to those they embody today. Places of memory are thus a symptom of rupture, an end of tradition-based continuity: "Il y a des lieux de mémoire parce qu'il n'y a plus de milieux de mémoire."[110] In the wake of the social transformations of modernity, broadly categorized by Nora as globalisation, democratisation, massification and mediatisation, sites of memory function as traces of tradition in a society cut off from tradition; a society which commemorates and monumentalizes these traces as a means to perpetuate its lost tradition and maintain collective identities.[111] Even explicitly political themes such as "Gaullists and Communists", "The People" or "Dying for the Fatherland" - once forces of social cohesion - are, as sites of memory and objects of *study,* appropriated as politically inert forms of cultural heritage. Individuals may thus freely identify with any combination of sites of memory at the same time, without the risk of one excluding the other on partisan grounds. Sites of memory do not, therefore, function as a basis for consensus fusing or dividing community figurations in French society; Nora's system does not account for the problem of minority identities opposed to integration. Instead, they function as symptoms of politically and historically inert memories - the prime example today being the French Revolution - which sustain contemporary French identity. The resurgence of revolutionary thought and activity culminating in the uprisings of 1968 was, asserts Nora, a form of celebration rather than effective political action, while the bicentenary of the French Revolution focused public

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[109] Nora, "La génération", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* III. *Les France* 1, pp. 931-971, p. 964.

[110] Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire. La problématique des lieux", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* I. *La République,* pp. XVII-XLII, p. XVII.

[111] For a succinct account of Nora's interpretation of the dichotomy between modern and premodern memory, see Nancy Wood, "Memory's Remains: *Les Lieux de mémoire",* in *History and Memory* 1, 1994, pp. 123-149, p. 127.

attention on controversies over the commemoration itself rather than on the event being commemorated.[112]

If sites of memory, including commemorations and the increasing monumentalisation of the past, are indeed symptoms of a politically inert past and radically pluralist identities, the dictionary definition of a site of memory as "a symbolic element of a given community" is rather misleading, for it suggests that a site of memory is a force of homogeneous political cohesion. "The Forest" or "Coffee" are not likely to mobilize community identities, however. If they did, it is unlikely that either one could guarantee homogeneity or exclude any member of the community from simultaneous allegiance with other symbolic elements. Places of memory and community identities are not isomorphic. Each symbolic element underpins the identity of a community only in conjunction with other elements, or else in a hierarchical configuration, but only rarely could one element eclipse all others as the sole legitimation of a given community. The *Grand Robert* definition is in fact a misquotation from Nora's essay "Comment écrire l'histoire de France?" in which a site of memory is defined more precisely as "un élément symbolique du patrimoine mémoriel d'une quelconque communauté".[113] "Memorial patrimony" here points to a distinctive *quality* of contemporary memory associated with all memorial symbols rather than to the distinguishing contents of a specific community's memories or symbols. Nora's aim is not to oppose the different memories of particular groups, but to determine their common qualitative basis which, as "memorial patrimony", is cultural rather than political, grounded in the "héritage collectif des enjeux traditionnels de la mémoire elle-même".[114] In other words, having lost their initial political pertinence, traditional divisions such as "Civil France Versus Religious France" or "Gaullists and Communists" are no longer experienced as exclusive social divisions, but as a cultural residue or heritage founded on memory alone, and therefore, paradoxically, as a basis for political consensus void of politics.[115]

b. The historical present: interpreting the past via representations pertaining to a specific generation

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[112] Nora, "L'ère de la commémoration", p. 980.

[113] Nora, "Comment écrire l'histoire de France?", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* III. *Les France* 1, pp. 11-32, p. 20 (my emphasis).

[114] Nora, "La nation-mémoire", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* II. *La Nation* 3, pp. 647-658, p. 650.

[115] Cf. Nora, "Comment écrire l'histoire de France?", p. 29: "Comme si la France cessait d'être une histoire qui nous divise pour devenir une culture qui nous rassemble [...]."

Places of memory serve as a prop for memory, which in turn serves as a medium for the subjective apprehension of historical continuity. Paradoxically, however, this sense of continuity - the ongoing awareness, for example, of the historical significance of monuments or social customs such as the Pantheon or the 14 July celebrations in France - is undermined by a radical qualitative breach in memory itself, which modifies the moral and political values attached to the past. Memory, now dependent on external symbols or *lieux* and no longer transmitted naturally within social *milieux,* suggests that modern consciousness as such has also undergone a transformation, and that historians must therefore take account of the increasing influence of memory on public opinion, on the process of historical understanding, and on the historical discipline itself. Nora's notion of the "historical present" is a response to this transformation.[116]

It is a truism to state that memory functions in the present, yet Nora's insistence on the significance of sites of memory as "la présence du passé dans le présent"[117] or that of memory itself as "l'administration du passé dans le présent"[118] or "als Mittel zur Situierung der Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart"[119] is indicative of an innovative legitimation of the present, and of the role of memory as previously neglected objects of historical research. A characteristic example of the rupture between the natural *milieux* of memory and the unnatural *lieux* or sites of memory is provided by Mona Ozouf, who associates two such types of memory with the Pantheon: first, as a functional monument to sanction republican ideology, then as an inert symbol of a bygone age. The Pantheon, inaugurated as a sepulchre for the remains of national heroes in 1791, is one of the key monuments to French national memory. According to Ozouf, however, it is now an anachronism. Its initial function as a prop to the cult of "great men" instituted following the Revolution was not merely symbolic, for a place in the Pantheon was a reward to individual citizens - in the form of public memory extending beyond their lifetime - for services to the state, and therefore played a practical role by sanctioning both the political value of citizens and the democratic ideal of meritocracy as opposed to the earlier despotism of the *ancien régime.* In the political and historical environment of the 1980s and 1990s, however, the symbolic role of the Pantheon took precedence over its functional role, for the ideals it served lost their original

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[116] Cf. Nora, "De l'histoire contemporaine au présent historique", in Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, *Écrire l'histoire du temps présent,* Paris: CNRS Editions, 1993, pp. 43-47.

[117]. Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire",* p. 20; "Entre mémoire et histoire...", p. XXXVII.

[118] Nora, "Comment écrire l'histoire de France?", p. 25.

[119] Nora, "Das Abenteuer der *Lieux de mémoire"*, p. 91.

pedagogical and therefore political function. For this reason, both the Pantheon and the values it represents have only a memorial role to play today, as archetypal sites of memory.[120]

Such genealogical investigations into the specifically contemporary significance of symbolic elements of French history pose a significant challenge to established methods of historiography. First, the focus on the present requires us to call into question standard periodisations, generally confined to the past, such as "pre-", "ancient", "modern" or "contemporary" history. Second, the study of the present renders consultation of documentary evidence practically impossible, and is therefore concerned less with establishing the veracity of historical facts than with the ways in which the past is understood and appropriated within contemporary consciousness. Nora answers these two problems by positing the "historical present" as a branch of historical study in its own right. Unlike contemporary history, which analyses events and phenomena from the recent past (a period beginning with a given historical rupture such as a revolution or war, or a period measured according to the limits of living memory, for example), the historical present focuses strictly on current or *actual* phenomena (those acting or happening in the present). Its essential medium is therefore memory, an elusive support which lacks the historical legitimacy of documentary evidence available in the practice of contemporary history. Unlike oral history, however, which relies on memory as a means to documenting everyday perceptions of a past event with respect to the event itself, the historical present focuses on memory as an object of study for its own sake: the medium by which the past is rendered intelligible, and the resulting consciousness it sustains.

By laying emphasis on the present and on the *intelligibility* of the past in the present, therefore, Nora describes a fundamental change in contemporary memory, which is no longer a simple vehicle for a sense of historical continuity, but a medium fraught with critical detachment from the past. He claims that "à la solidarité du passé et de l'avenir, s'est substituée la solidarité du présent et de la mémoire",[121] and thus interprets this change in the experience of time in terms of a general transformation of "conscience historique" into "conscience sociale",[122] while suggesting two reasons for this transformation. On the one hand, attention accorded to the present and the instrumental role of memory in the present are a consequence of pressing social and political changes and the economic crisis beginning in France in the seventies: the departure and death of de

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[120] Cf. Mona Ozouf, "Le Panthéon", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* I. *La République,* pp. 139-166, p. 162.
[121] Nora, "L'ère de la commémoration", p. 1009.
[122] Ibid.

Gaulle, the demise of French socialism, the end of the economic boom known as the "trente glorieuses" and the rise of new political trends including the *Front National*, ecological and human rights movements.[123] More fundamentally, however, the importance of the historical present is a consequence of a new collective apprehension of actuality *(l'actualité)* or current events triggered at the end of the nineteenth century by an increasingly effective mass media. The urgency of actuality is typically conveyed by "live" transmissions and thereby engages the emotional involvement of the spectator in the present while preventing retrospection. The cultivation of public opinion via the mass media is therefore indissociable from the modification of people's awareness of time and space in the form of acceleration (acute awareness of the passage of time) and globalisation (the bridging of distances between events and spectators). "L'accéleration et la mondialisation," claims Nora, "ont imposé une mutation qualitative du présent, elles ont démocratisé l'histoire elle-même; celle-ci n'est plus le privilège de l'historien."[124] The newly defined "social consciousness" therefore corresponds to a displacement of the authority over collective consciousness from professional historians, through the medium of state archives, educational institutions, publications and the traditions they uphold, to journalists and public opinion, invited to participate in the process of fixing the present as it becomes past via the mass media. The effectiveness of the state and its institutions under the Third Republic ensured that social memory then largely reflected official historical interpretation as a means to sustain the relevance of past events in the future on the common assumption that history is governed by long-term linear continuity. This legitimation of tradition on the basis of history and "historical consciousness" has thus been reversed by a new "social consciousness" bound to events only insofar as they are of consequence in the immediate present and future. In Nora's system, memory therefore takes over from history as an increasingly autonomous dynamic force in society.

One of the major causes of the increased political authority of social memory in the present and the sense of rupture between tradition and the "historical present", according to Nora, is the distinction between successive generations. Each generation identifies itself in opposition to the previous or succeeding generation; indeed, a generation is founded on shared memories with which it draws a temporal boundary between itself and both the past and the future. It is brought about by the natural succession of age groups, historic events and transformations in social conditions or political systems resulting in the introduction of new education programmes, for example.

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[123] Cf. Nora, "La nation-mémoire", p. 652; "De l'histoire contemporaine au présent historique", p. 46.
[124] Nora, "Le présent", in J. Le Goff et al (eds), *La nouvelle histoire*, pp. 467-472, p. 470.

Categories such as "the war generation" or "the sixties generation" in the West are highly charged with meaning and presuppose a determining set of experiences and values common to a specific social age group. However, the cohesion of generational identity is, according to Nora, sustained by "pure memory" where individuals are bound not only by common experience but also by a common reaction to something *not* experienced, yet which is associated with the previous generation. Hence the pithy but somewhat elliptical definitions of generations as "le présent en tant que présent" or "antécédence permanente".[125] Nora claims that "la rupture générationnelle [...] consiste pour l'essentiel à 'immémorialiser' le passé pour mieux 'mémorialiser' le présent. En ce sens, la génération est puissamment et même principalement fabricatrice de 'lieux de mémoire', qui constituent le tissu de son identité provisoire et les repères de sa propre mémoire."[126]

Generational consciousness, an expression of a broader social consciousness identifying with the present and firmly dissociating itself from the past, therefore plays an essential role in determining the nature and function of sites of memory in the historical present. It fosters a form of social memory based on its "patrimonial" quality, not on its force of cohesion or homogeneity. In this respect, generational "collective" memory had a decisive influence on the form and content of the very work *about* sites of memory, *Les Lieux de mémoire:* the mere fact that historians choose to read or write about "The Names of Streets" or "Lavisse, a National Teacher" testifies to the relevance of these themes in contemporary France. Furthermore, the very act of focusing on the *actual* symbolic significance of sites of memory, as codes for understanding the present, automatically leads to the marginalisation or "immemorialisation" of the past as an anachronism, as in the case of the Pantheon. The site of memory most characteristic of generational consciousness is perhaps "The *Ancien Régime* and the Revolution", for the very act of naming the Revolution, as well as the idea of revolution as radical change, tends to eclipse all that preceded it; the expedient term *"ancien régime"* likewise reduces ten centuries of history to an amorphous temporal block preceding the Revolution.[127]

Another aspect of generational or social consciousness, apart from its preoccupation with actuality, instrumentalisation of memory and marginalisation of the past, is its *provisionality,* resulting from the "acceleration" of time and the constant flux of generations. In this respect, Nora's entire method, the foundation of a national history on sites of memory, is itself provisional: all the

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[125] Nora, "La génération", pp. 948, 958.
[126] Ibid., 959.
[127] Cf. François Furet, "L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* III. *Les France* 1, pp. 106-183, p. 107.

authors of *Les Lieux de mémoire* are professional historians of a generation which experienced the economic, political and social transformations during the seventies in France, as well as the challenge of the mass media. The choice of sites of memory in *Les Lieux de mémoire* is therefore subject to criteria determined by this generation's particular symbolic attachments. These criteria are not definitive, but primarily subjective and "social", determined by concerns of the present and the complex configurations of collective memories in contemporary France.

c. Archival memory. The "delegation" of memory to representations

The shift from historical to social consciousness, which displaces political authority from the professional historian to society itself, has coincided with a radical modification of the supports sustaining collective memory. Positivist historians in the nineteenth century had recourse to documentary evidence stored in archives in order to legitimate a specific reconstruction of the facts of the past worthy of social consensus or collective memory. Public opinion, on the other hand, legitimates or renders its understanding of the "presence of the past in the present" intelligible by means of "significant units" or symbolic places representing particularist interests or memories of an atomized society. Commemorations to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, the Vél' d'Hiv' commemorations from 1992, the inauguration of the Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Neue Wache monument in 1993, the project for a Holocaust Monument in Berlin from 1988, or the international fiftieth anniversaries of the Second World War, were all designed to foster national consciousness, but often triggered prolonged disputes over particularist "social" interests. They are therefore remarkable examples of the dynamic social force of commemorative events, in which the role of the mass media and public opinion is paramount, and where the historian's pedagogical role is reduced to that of a critic or moral guardian. Sites of memory therefore take over from documentary archives as *symbolic* archives supporting a type of memory which Nora describes as "archival" - albeit not in order to compare memory to a state archive or data bank, but to underline its dependence on external recorded material foreign to the remembering organism: a "mémoire-prothèse", or "mémoire enregistreuse, qui délègue à l'archive le soin de se souvenir pour elle".[128]

Nora not only expands the notion of "archive" to include all objective or material representations which support contemporary memory, but also maintains that the shift from

[128] Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire...", pp. XXVIII, XXVI.

historical to social consciousness has resulted in a profound modification of the role of existing institutional archives, whose public historical utility has been progressively subsumed to the sphere of private memory. Public archives are not only being extensively exploited for private purposes by genealogists and biographers, but are also receiving an increasing influx of documents from private or family sources, as well as from commercial enterprises or associations. In addition, public archives are today being rivalled by a considerable number of private archives fostering memories under the aegis of administrations which escape the monopoly of the state, such as companies, families, political groups and religious orders.[129] The rise of "archival" memory has also brought about a radical modification of the forms by which memory is maintained and transmitted. Institutional archives are traditionally literal, classified chronologically, convey the authority of being given or "found" rather than "fabricated" items, and represent the interest of the institute in question. Places of memory or symbolic "archives", on the other hand, are not necessarily literal, and may take any symbolic form, whether concrete or abstract: in Nora's terms, they may be "immaterial" ("Heritage", "History", "Landscape"), "material" ("Territory", "State", "Patrimony") or "ideal" ("Glory", "Words").[130] In *Les Lieux de mémoire*, they are not classified chronologically, but according the politico-historical categories of "The Republic", "The Nation" and "Les France", and according to symbolic types such as "Monuments", "Heritage" or "Political Divisions". Finally, they are generally "fabricated" rather than "found", and represent social rather than institutional interests.

The most significant aspect of Nora's notion of archival memory is the critical distance it introduces on the part of individuals towards the cultural tools traditionally used to maintain historical continuity. When Nora describes contemporary memory as "archival", on account of its tendency to delegate the responsibility of remembering to objects or symbolic archives, he does not suggest that sites of memory serve only as objects onto which individuals project a sense of belonging in order to construct an identity, but that they may also facilitate "historiographical" consciousness by serving as objects for critical inquiry into the mechanisms by which their memories are constructed. It is for this reason that *Les Lieux de mémoire* includes analyses of some landmarks of French historiography: Ernest Lavisse's *Histoire de France* (published in two series: 1903-1911, 1920-1922; analysed by P. Nora); François Guizot, the historian-statesman who promoted the French national archives and educational institutions under the Third Republic

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[129] Cf. Nora, "Présentation", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* III. *Les France* 3, pp. 13-16, p. 15.
[130] Cf. Nora, "Comment écrire l'histoire de France?", p. 12.

(Laurent Theis); the Annales "school" of historians in the twentieth century (Krzysztof Pomian); studies of the national archives in Paris (K. Pomian), and the historical role of genealogy (André Burguière). These histories of historical writing inevitably entail an intellectual detachment from historical tradition: "Faire l'historiographie de la Révolution française, reconstituer ses mythes et ses interprétations signifie que nous ne nous identifions plus complètement avec son héritage. Interroger une tradition, si vénérable soit-elle, c'est ne plus s'en reconnaître uniment le porteur."[131]

Yet the dissociation or "disidentification" from historical tradition characteristic of archival memory is not only a consequence of analytical detachment, but also of historical developments: the dwindling credibility of the state, which was formally guaranteed institutionally by the cult of "great men"; as well as the reduced pedagogical effectiveness of national symbolics. The efficacy with which the Third Republic guaranteed national cohesion was achieved not only by means of its educational institutions, but also by the effective use of public art and monuments in conveying republican ideology. Public monuments of the nineteenth century were, according to Ozouf, an expression of faith: "Ce qui soutient le culte des grands hommes, au moment où il s'élabore, c'est la foi dans la solidarité spontanée de l'esthétique et de la morale, dans la nécessaire docilité du public à la leçon des sens et dans l'efficacité d'un art-pédagogue."[132] It is this contrast between the former pedagogical effectiveness of political symbols and the relative indifference or contestation of the public today which characterizes monuments like the Pantheon. However, public indifference to political symbols in the late twentieth century is only relative. Ritual and familiarity alter the relation of individuals to objects or symbols, but do not necessarily efface them altogether from memory. Places of memory such as "The Pantheon", "The Tour de France" or "Gastronomy", for example, may continue to bolster a sense of national pride, for they are objects of ritual, habitual or even physical familiarity[133] acquired unconsciously during an individual's lifetime and reinforced by a passive solidarity with the habits of previous generations: of passers-by (passing the Pantheon), cyclists (participating in or following the Tour de France) or eaters (of French gastronomy)! The historicity of these symbols does not presuppose knowledge of their history. Ritual, habit and familiarity are not necessarily the products of ideological intentions, but nevertheless foster a collective sense of belonging liable to conserve national heritage.

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[131] Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire...", p. XXI.

[132] Ozouf, "Le Panthéon", p. 163.

[133] Cf. Paul Connerton's study of the role of "bodily" or "incorporated" social memory, *How Societies Remember,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

The ambiguity of archival memory, as a force of either identification or "disidentification", is inherent to Nora's understanding of sites of memory and national symbolics in general. In his first theoretical presentation of the project to found a history of France on the basis of sites of memory, he asserts that "il s'agit à tout moment de nous déprendre de nos habitudes familières, vécues dans la chaleur de la tradition, de cartographier notre propre géographie mentale".[134] However, he goes on to advise readers that although the ultimate purpose of a study of sites of memory is to promote insight into the mechanisms of historiography and historical representations, they should, despite a "risk of intellectual regression and the return to Gallocentrism", first seek "pleasure and interest" via an "innocent reading".[135] This ambiguity of memory as a medium for non-critical identification or critical "disidentification" is particularly apparent in the case of the *Dictionnaire de pédagogie* (1882-1887), a highly influential school manual during the Third Republic conceived by the educational reformer Ferdinand Buisson and modelled on a similar pedagogical encyclopaedia produced in Germany (1858-1875). The pertinence of this manual today is not, according to Nora, determined solely by the insight it affords into the political or historical education administrated under the Third Republic, founded on an ideological framework of the French Revolution, Republican ideals, reason, democracy and education.[136] Instead, its initial function, which Nora describes as "historical and journalistic, corporative and universal", has given way to its dual role as a support for sentimental (emotional and uncritical) or ethnological (scientific and critical) memory:

> Le *Dictionnaire* combine ainsi plusieurs types de mémoires: historique et journalistique, corporative et universelle, sentimentale et ethnologique. Les deux premières viennent des auteurs, les deux suivantes appartiennent aux utilisateurs, les deux dernières sont les nôtres, lecteurs d'aujourd'hui. Ce qui fait de cet ouvrage un lieu de mémoire est l'effet des quatre premières sur les deux dernières, et leur profondeur ainsi retrouvée. Lieu de mémoire, le *Dictionnaire* a voulu l'être sur le moment pour ses contemporains; mais à ce premier degré, sa signification a disparu, incorporée dans la pratique de ses utilisateurs. Lieu de mémoire, il ne l'est cependant pour nous que parce que nous savons qu'il avait voulu l'être autrefois. C'est cette dialectique qui, à nos yeux, le constitue comme tel [...].[137]

The example of Buisson's dictionary leads Nora to define the memory fostered by sites of memory in terms of a dialectical relationship between first and second degree understanding, between the original historical, journalistic, corporative and universal interests of their creators and

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[134] Nora, "Présentation", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* I. *La République,* pp. VII-XIII, p. VII.
[135] Ibid., p. XIII.
[136] Cf. Nora, "Le *Dictionnaire de pédagogie* de Ferdinand Buisson", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* I. *La République,* pp. 353-378, p. 353.
[137] Ibid., p. 375.

users, and the sentimental or ethnological interest awakened retrospectively: an awareness of the rupture between their original and memorial functions. However, second degree memory is itself prey to a dialectic operating between *sentimental* and *ethnological* memory, suspended between an uncritical indulgence in or identification with sites of memory, and a critical interest in studying the very motives and mechanisms by which memory serves to build identity. Nora even defends such ambiguity as a characteristic of the method of *Les Lieux de mémoire*. Memory, a key medium for the transmission of tradition, is an instrument of both "construction" and "deconstruction":

> Ce travail de décryptage est l'âme de toute l'entreprise. Mais il passe par deux types d'opérations différentes et même opposées: tantôt la construction de l'objet en symbole, tantôt sa déconstruction. Dans le premier cas, il s'agit de faire parler ce qui est muet, de donner sens et vie à ce qui, en soi, n'a ni sens ni vie. Dans le second, il s'agit au contraire de dissiper la familiarité d'une évidence trop parlante et de rendre son étrangeté d'origine à ce que le temps nous a légué comme un héritage tout constitué.[138]

The technique of constructing or deconstructing memorial symbols is most apparent in the third section of the volume *Les France,* subtitled "From Archives to Emblems", where the relatively little-known archival mechanisms perpetuating social memory such as "Archives" and "Workers' Lives" are constructed as symbols or emblems, and the relatively well-known emblems such as "The Eiffel Tower" and "The King" analytically deconstructed.

The purpose of studying sites of memory is not simply to define contemporary memory as a state of awareness of the rupture between historical and social consciousness, or between first and second degree meaning, between "the milieux of inwardly experienced values and the sites of their external commemoration".[139] Instead, it is designed to "lend a voice" to silent symbols or "dispel familiarity" in the case of familiar symbols, and therefore *intervene* in the status and configuration of the symbolic framework of contemporary memory by highlighting less familiar sites of memory and tempering the emotional appeal of more familiar sites. In both cases, whether as a construction or deconstruction of symbols and their meanings, the notion of "sites of memory" serves as a heuristic tool for understanding the present-day political expediency of memory and, more importantly, for constructing a canon of the supports of contemporary French identity. Nora's primary concern is practical, not theoretical: the monumental seven-volume publication is itself a kind of encyclopaedic archive or inventory of French memories which therefore bears comparison

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[138] Nora, "Présentation", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* III. *Les France* 3, p. 14.

[139] Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover & London: University of Vermont Press, 1993, p. 149.

with the monumental pedagogical works produced during the nineteenth century by Lavisse.[140] The lapse in time between the publication of the first (1984) and last (1993) volumes even permitted their editor to remark, in the final volume, that *Les Lieux de mémoire* had already become a site of memory in its own right, before completion, on account of its widespread enthusiastic reception.[141] The monumentality of this publication (containing contributions by over a hundred reputed specialists of French history) and the force of its unorthodox title which, contrary to historical practice, denotes a historiographical method rather than its historical theme (French identity), have guaranteed its pedagogical aptitude as a scientific work of reference. However, the publication of *Les Lieux de mémoire,* as a "symbolic element of a given community", does not conform to the doctrine of sites of memory expounded by Nora. Whereas sites of memory are the symbolic embodiments of archival or "secondary degree" memory - formal cultural motifs of once politically dynamic "first degree" memory - *Les Lieux de mémoire* projects a *third* degree of memory by analysing historical representations and by projecting a new pluralist and unitary model of French memory. Although the notion of sites of memory is open, and the selection of themes not exhaustive, this work nevertheless fixes the analyses within a tight literary structure based on the politico-historical categories of "The Republic", "The Nation" and "Les France", corresponding to the titles of the three respective volumes. The work itself is a construction, an *analytical* archive of symbolic archives, and therefore a projection for the future of a new form of French history. Its authors are historians who, by coming to terms with the role of memory in contemporary society, effectively reclaim political authority back from memory, from public opinion and the media, by offering an interpretation of the supports of divergent shared memories categorised collectively as an *idea* of Frenchness. The fragmented or "atomized" configuration of private memories characteristic of social consciousness is hereby given a loose yet distinctly unifying form: the object of *Les Lieux de mémoire* is not strictly a national history, however, but the more elusive idea of national memory or identity, based on a collection of fragmented (not collective) cultural memories, which is defined openly within the three categories of the Republic, the nation and *les* France, yet which refuses to be reduced to any one to the exclusion of the others.

d. "Memory-nation". Redefining nationhood on the basis of memory

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[140] Cf. François Hartog, "Temps et histoire. 'Comment écrire l'histoire de France?'", in *Annales HSS* 6, 1995, pp. 1219-1236, p. 1228.
[141] Cf. Nora, "L'ère de la commémoration", p. 977.

Historical rupture or discontinuity is perhaps the most decisive historiographical paradigm in Nora's writings on history and memory. The history of France traced in *Les Lieux de mémoire* is a history of national memory in a state of transition, a testimony to the process of coming to terms with and projecting a new political function of memory, whether as an instrument for maintaining national heritage or "patrimony", as a support of social rather than historical consciousness, or as the source of historiographical (ethnographical or sentimental) rather than historical consciousness. In all three cases, Nora's objective is to maintain a sense of historical continuity[142] by devising a new programme or method for the renewal of national history on the basis of symbolic sites of memory.[143] The means for achieving this objective are not chauvinistic, however, but balanced between "ethnological" or "sentimental" retrospection. They are founded on a critical apprehension of the traditionally political legitimation of the French nation since the Revolution and therefore express a concern to reconstitute the nation as a cultural or "memory-nation" *(nation-mémoire),* involving "das schwierige Unterfangen einer Loslösung von der gesamten historischen Tradition Frankreichs, die zugleich wieder aufgenommen werden soll".[144] This programmatic venture to rewrite French national history in terms of memory and identity raises two key questions regarding Nora's historiographical method.

How does Nora justify the necessity to rewrite French history on the basis of memorial rather than political or historical continuity, and to compensate for the alleged end of two centuries of political tradition beginning with the Revolution by proposing to reclaim this tradition as cultural heritage? The ruptures in French history addressed by Nora are manifold, and include the rise of "actuality" in the 1890s, 1918 ("disaster-stricken Europe"), 1945 ("the false victory"), 1962 ("the end of the global projection" marking the independence of Algeria after French colonial rule),[145] as well as the social, economic and political upheavals in France during the 1970s.[146] The most decisive rupture of all is portrayed as the consequence of the crisis of the 1930s: the end of the legacy of the Enlightenment, of political universalism, of historical progress, of the Revolutionary inheritance of the nation-state and, above all, the demise of the Third Republic. For Nora, this rupture coincided with the end of the synthesis between historical practice and social memory (the pedagogical efficacy of history in ensuring social consensus), and therefore triggered

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[142] Ibid., p. 1012.
[143] Cf. Nora, "Présentation", *Les Lieux de mémoire,* II. *La Nation* 1, pp. IX-XXI, p. XX.
[144] Nora, "Das Abenteuer der *Lieux de mémoire",* p. 89.
[145] Nora, "L'ère de la commémoration", p. 1007.
[146] Cf. Nora, "La nation-mémoire", p. 652.

the switch from the bond between state and nation (the ideological unity of collective memory) to that between state and society (an association of private memories).[147] The consequent rise of "archival" memory or "historiographical" consciousness, dependent on memorial prostheses or representations such as commemorations, is therefore symptomatic of what Nora calls the voluntary, unnatural maintenance of memory in contrast to spontaneous, natural memory: *"Les lieux de mémoire* naissent et vivent du sentiment qu'il n'y a pas de mémoire spontanée, qu'il faut créer des archives, qu'il faut maintenir des anniversaires, organiser des célébrations, prononcer des éloges funèbres, notarier des actes, parce que ces opérations ne sont pas naturelles."[148] The distinction between unnatural and natural or spontaneous memory does not correspond to the difference between literate and non-literate societies - between Western societies and some African communities in which culture is traditionally transmitted orally, for example, or between official and clandestine factions of the French and German resistance during the Second World War, which avoided or destroyed written evidence. Nora refers rather to the distinction between "spontaneous" memory preceding and "unnatural" memory succeeding the crisis of the thirties, before and after the crumbling of French republican tradition which had been upheld by institutions of the Third Republic and effective historical education. The switch from "natural" collective memory as a support for national historical tradition to private memories supported by particular symbols, from spontaneous to archival or "prosthesis" memory, is expressed by Nora as a fall from the grace of consensual or collective memory, where history, via the historian "moitié prêtre, moitié soldat",[149] played a sacred role in the maintenance of national memory. *Les Lieux de mémoire* is a response to this rupture, a recasting of national history as politically inert "memorial patrimony".

What political assumptions underlie the conception and organisation of memory in the "archive" *Les Lieux de mémoire,* a wide-ranging collection of genealogical studies affording historical insight into cultural landmarks? Nora presents contemporary France as a purely symbolic reality, an open configuration of cultural focal points in an "à la carte" France,[150] from which each individual may construct a personal "menu" of memories. The very structure of the seven-volume publication therefore reflects Nora's political programme. Its sheer bulk (130 essays) surpasses the reader's capacity to gain an overview and renders futile any attempt to read this history from cover to cover as a narrative chronology. It therefore engages the reader in the active selection and

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[147] Cf. Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire...", p. XXII.
[148] Ibid., p. 12; p. XXIV.
[149] Ibid, p. 11; p. XXIIf.

construction of a personal palette of historical identities while maintaining a sense of mystique by obscuring the precise historical theme of the project behind a generic title indicative of method *(Les Lieux de mémoire),* whose theme is therefore necessarily diffuse, a collection of particulars: plural, and therefore variable and inexhaustible by definition. "Les France" is also plural, while "The Republic" and "The Nation" are historically determined, if not anachronistic, for they no longer fit Nora's conception of France as an expression of memory and identity. *Les Lieux de mémoire* therefore presents a radical attempt to dispense with traditional political categorisations of France, if not with definitions outright.[151] Nora rejects republican principles, is sceptical towards the "authoritarian", "unitarian", "exclusionist" and "universalist"[152] character of the Republic, and therefore subsumes political definitions of the nation based on territory, universal suffrage and constitutional principles of citizenship, to the cultural dimension of memory.

In spite of the radical qualitative rupture in memory described by Nora, the criterion common to the memories projected in *Les Lieux de mémoire* remains the nation. While the pluralist model of "national memory" is conceived as an *alternative* to coercive republican "national history",[153] it nevertheless reflects the republican model of cultural integration. According to Nora, memory is all-pervasive and neutralizes division. "Gaullists and Communists", "The French and Foreigners" or "Catholics and Laymen" are each presented as *single* sites of memory, as cultural appropriations of a politically inert past. However, some of the most stirring symbols of French culture during the 1980s and 1990s such as the "Islamic veil" or the "suburb" (resulting from controversies over Muslim schoolgirls claiming the right to wear the veil in secular state schools or over social unrest in the immigrant ghettos of large cities)[154] are absent from *Les Lieux de mémoire*. Their political pertinence has not been subsumed to patrimonial memory. These concerted expressions of post-colonial challenges to French cultural uniformity, as well as commemorations and monuments instigated in memory of crimes committed during the Second World War, therefore challenge the conventional national framework of memory in *Les Lieux de mémoire.* Nevertheless, Nora's historiographical innovations - the implications of "social", "archival" or "historiographical" consciousness and of the "historical present" - provide remarkable

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[150] Nora, "Comment écrire l'histoire de France?", p. 30.
[151] Ibid., p. 23.
[152] Nora, "De la république à la nation", in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* I. *La République*, pp. 651-659, p. 652f.
[153] Nora, "L'ère de la commémoration", p. 1010.
[154] Cf. Françoise Gaspard & Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard et la République,* Paris: La Découverte, 1995.

insight into the mechanisms of contemporary social memory by which events from the past become part of the present.