

Studies in 20th Century Literature

Volume 23

Issue 1 *Empire and Occupation in France and the Francophone Worlds*

Article 3

1-1-1999

Unforgettable: History, Memory, and the Vichy Syndrome

Rosemarie Scullion

University of Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: <http://newprairiepress.org/sttcl>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Scullion, Rosemarie (1999) "Unforgettable: History, Memory, and the Vichy Syndrome," *Studies in 20th Century Literature*: Vol. 23: Iss. 1, Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1452>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in 20th Century Literature* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Unforgettable: History, Memory, and the Vichy Syndrome

Abstract

In 1987, the French historian Henry Rousso formulated an interpretive model that has decisively influenced the directions and forms of inquiry scholars have pursued in relation to *les années noires*, the period between 1940 and 1944 during which France endured a catastrophic military defeat and four years of occupation by a neighboring fascist state...

Unforgettable: History, Memory and the Vichy Syndrome

Rosemarie Scullion
University of Iowa

In 1987, the French historian Henry Rousso formulated an interpretive model that has decisively influenced the directions and forms of inquiry scholars have pursued in relation to *les années noires*, the period between 1940 and 1944 during which France endured a catastrophic military defeat and four years of occupation by a neighboring fascist state. Inspired by Pierre Nora's exploration of the complex interplay between "history and memory,"¹ Rousso astutely recognized the pall that the traumas of World War II and the Nazi Occupation had cast over French cultural and political life of the postwar period. Marshaling compelling evidence of the seemingly intractable collective malaise he terms "The Vichy Syndrome," Rousso defined this affliction as

the complex of heterogeneous symptoms and manifestations revealing, particularly in political, cultural and social life, the existence of traumas engendered by the Occupation, especially those linked to internal divisions—traumas that have been maintained, and sometimes heightened after the events are over. (*Le Syndrome* 18-19)²

The four essays that follow participate in exhuming remnants of Vichy's collaborationist past and can thus be considered part and parcel of the return of historical material that, Rousso argues, was vigilantly repressed in French cultural and political life in the immediate aftermath of the war. But unlike Freud's theory of the unconscious, in which memory traces of past traumas return involuntarily, often with tremendous emotional force, the fragments of historical

past revived in these essays are of the sort that Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn might view as instances of "counter-memory."³ The oppositional critical energy driving these analyses derives from a conscious will to contest the politics of forgetting that for decades after the war kept compromising and in some cases incriminating aspects of France's collaborationist past from coming to light. Not surprisingly, a central preoccupation in the contributions these scholars have made is the history of France's wartime relations with its Jewish minority, one of the darkest memories to have emerged from *les années noires* that has yet to be fully retrieved and understood.

As Rousso observes, collective memory is often forged through the skillful "organization of forgetting" (*Le Syndrome* 12). These terms aptly describe the erasure upon which France's immediate postwar order imaginatively constructed its wartime identity as a monolith of anti-fascist resistance. Sustaining the heady Gaullist claim that France, at war's end, was an undivided nation whose military glory had been restored through four years of valiant patriotic struggle required that all reminders of the nation's recent collaborationist past be expunged from collective awareness. This was not an easy task given the political realities of the day. For as Charles de Gaulle stood before Paris's Hôtel de Ville on August 25, 1944, paying rousing tribute to "the whole of France" that had "liberated itself" (qtd. in *Le Syndrome* 30) from Nazi rule, a good number of his compatriots were scrambling to reach Sigmaringen, the medieval fortress where a disintegrating Third Reich harbored France's collaborationist government-in-exile between September 1944 and May 1945.⁴ That the French presence at Sigmaringen figures only marginally in historical accounts of the period is in no small measure attributable to the vigilance with which France's emerging postwar order contained the signs of treason that hovered over the Liberation and continued to emanate from the Bavarian enclave in the final months of the war.⁵

In his essay "The Ghosts of Sigmaringen," Philip Watts demonstrates that memory of Vichy's German endgame has been decisively shaped by the rhetorical tropes via which knowledge of that inglorious past has been relayed to France's postwar generations. Watts identifies the crucial role Louis-Ferdinand Céline's 1957 novel *D'un château l'autre* (*Castle to Castle*) played in grounding two figures—the operetta and the ghost—firmly in the symbolic field where

both scholarly and broader cultural understanding of the Vichy legacy have taken form. In the opening pages of his illuminating history of the Vichy government-in-exile, for instance, Henry Rousso features passages from *D'un château l'autre* in which Céline the chronicler describes as "La rigolade de ce haut lieu" 'the ludicrousness of this lofty place' (qtd. in *Un château* 22) the grandiose setting in which Vichy notables exercised what he saw as their laughably diminished power. Rousso also borrows directly from Céline in characterizing Otto Abetz—German Ambassador to occupied Paris and orchestrator of French political life at Sigmaringen—as a "grand ballet master" directing a "Viennese operetta" (20). Numerous other commentators have also taken their cue from Céline, extending the novelist's Sigmaringen-as-operetta metaphor through a corpus of historical writing in which, rhetorically speaking, French collaboration at Sigmaringen sheds the weighty criminal significance postwar purge courts attributed to it and becomes but an amusing little political drama of negligible historical consequence.⁶ For Céline, this rhetorical move was a savvy one indeed. It undercut the widely held view that the author was a contemptible anti-Semite who had fled France in 1944 to escape prosecution for abetting the Nazi cause, and allowed him to recast himself as an accidental tourist who had happened upon the spectacle of Vichy's burlesque demise. In unthinkingly adopting the figural language in which *D'un château l'autre* represents the collaborationist saga at Sigmaringen, historians have, Watts persuasively argues, unwittingly purveyed the discourse of self-exoneration Céline and many of his fellow *émigrés* were intent on disseminating after the war.

The figure of the ghost Céline relied upon to reacquaint postwar readers with wartime traveling companions such as Robert Le Vigan has also been recycled by historians.⁷ This recourse to ghostly imagery works to dematerialize the Vichy presence at Sigmaringen and has the ideological effect of rendering seemingly immaterial the very substantive acts of collaboration these same scholars have conscientiously retrieved for the historical record. Yet historians are not alone in failing to recognize the exculpating force of the "Sigmaringen-as-ghost-town" metaphor. Even prosecutors trying cases of high treason after the war succumbed to the rhetorical lure of casting Vichy exiles as members of a "phantom government," failing to appreciate that while this figure served to minimize the significance for postwar France of the reactionary ideologies acted

out at Sigmaringen, it also diminished the political, legal, and moral import of those acts.

Among the documents that bear witness to the outlook Vichy exiles had on the increasingly worrisome geopolitical and military circumstances closing in around them in late 1944 and early 1945 is the daily newspaper *La France*. This publishing venture was generously subsidized by the Germans and placed under the direction of Jean Luchaire, the displaced regime's newly appointed Commissioner for Propaganda and Information.⁸ Remarkably, Watts's analysis of *La France*'s cultural and political discourse reveals that the figure of the ghost made its rhetorical appearance in Sigmaringen's symbolic order well before the war ended. Journalists writing for the daily made liberal use, Watts demonstrates, of prosopopeia, the trope via which the absent speak to the present and, in the pages of *La France*, through which deceased artists and writers of a variety of political persuasions (the sculptor Maillol, F.T. Marinetti, Voltaire, Romain Rolland, and Robert Brasillach) are both commemorated and made to speak in defense of the community of French collaborators nestled away in the Hohenzollern fortress. But the most ghastly inscription of the presence of specters in the pages of *La France* is an inconspicuous entry dated November 5, 1944, in which Watts astutely recognizes what may well be the earliest French form of Holocaust negationism. The article bears the title "Auschwitz, an Exemplary Camp" and lauds the industriousness of French labor conscripts who, it was reported, were spending their day happily toiling away for the German war effort. As a sign of the good will and spirit of cooperation prevailing between French deportees and their German overlords, the reporter points to the skill and imagination the workers deployed in staging a carnival of sorts whose chief attraction was a "highly successful" *haunted house*. In its championing of French ingenuity, the article appropriates Auschwitz as a site of French national pride and promptly effaces the memory of the nearly one million European Jews who were methodically murdered in its confines. That the vast majority of the some 76,000 Jews deported from France between March 1942 and July 1944 perished at Auschwitz, and that Vichy bureaucrats reading this article contributed so decisively to sealing their fate, provides an eerie illustration of the intrication of rhetorical erasure and actual political violence.

The essays by Ora Avni, Raymond Bach, and Richard Golsan that follow work to retrieve knowledge of the very sort the pages of *La France* sought to repress. In a variety of textual spheres—the

literary, cinematic, historical, and juridical—each sheds light on the history of Jewish persecution in wartime France and raises troubling questions regarding the ease with which postwar Gaullist France forgot the crucial contributions Vichy power brokers had made to furthering the Nazi regime’s “Final Solution” to the “Jewish Problem” in Europe. Recollection of this grim political past would not begin in earnest until the late 1960s and early 1970s when, Henry Rousso argues, a series of cultural interventions—most notably Marcel Ophuls’s documentary film *The Sorrow and the Pity*—foisted upon a younger generation the task of reassessing Vichy’s collaborationist legacy and of coming to terms with emerging evidence of France’s deep complicity in the genocidal campaign Hitler had waged against Jews in the 1940s.

Ora Avni analyzes the tensions between Jewish memory of the Occupation and the more scintillating version preserved by the dominant culture by way of Patrick Modiano’s 1968 novel *La Place de l’étoile*, another of the cultural texts Rousso identifies as having played a decisive role in unraveling the Gaullist fiction of occupied France’s steadfast and unequivocal resistance to German Nazism. Appearing precisely at the moment that students and workers were boldly challenging Charles de Gaulle’s own political and ideological grip on Fifth Republic France, *La Place de l’étoile* fissured the mirror the nation had held up to itself for nearly a quarter of a century in which it saw an imago of its wartime self intrepidly defying the occupying power and obstructing its every political design. With biting wit and irony, Modiano’s novel looked France’s collaborationist past in the eye, naming names, identifying places, and conjuring facts and circumstances, whose full meaning could only be appreciated through the careful reconstruction of the very historical experience that *résistancialiste* mythmakers had worked so arduously to erase from memory.

Central to the project of recovery Modiano undertook in *La Place de l’étoile* was the task of exposing the deplorable treatment occupied France reserved for its Jewish minority. Countering the long-held belief that responsibility for the decimation of nearly one quarter of France’s prewar Jewish population lay solely with the Nazi occupier, Modiano dotted his literary landscape with onomastic signposts pointing to indigenous sources of the anti-Semitic discourse that had flourished in France in the immediate prewar years and, he clearly suggests, that liberally oiled the machinery of mass murder the Third Reich set in motion in France in the spring and

summer of 1942. Were the curious reader of *La Place de l'étoile* to track down the narrator's reference to one Darquier de Pellepoix (37), for instance, she or he would find accreting around this proper name the history of the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives* (Commissariat-Général For Jewish Affairs), a French-administered agency legislated into existence in March 1941, whose principal function was to implement the *Statut des juifs* (Statute on the Jews), draconian legal restrictions the Vichy regime had, of its own design and volition, placed on Jews in the flurry of anti-Semitic measures it enacted in October 1940. The *Statut des Juifs* promptly de-emancipated all Jews residing in France, stripped Algerian Jews of their French nationality, and authorized the detention of tens of thousands of Jewish refugees in French-run internment camps whose dreadful material conditions claimed the lives of many. As head of the CGQJ between May 1942 and February 1944,⁹ Darquier presided over an agency that from its inception in early 1941 had scrupulously counted France's Jews, abrogated their civil rights, "Aryanized" their property, deprived them of the opportunity to make anything but the most meager living, and, when the time came, lent indispensable administrative support to the Nazi effort to deport the whole of France's Jewish population to death camps in the East.

With a bit more biographic legwork, Modiano's reader would discover that Darquier had been bolstering his racist credentials since the late 1930s when he founded the "Documentation and Propaganda Center," a clearing house for virulently anti-semitic propaganda that was indirectly subsidized by the Germans. Darquier's operation maintained close ties with the Office of National Propaganda, another racist "research center" to which Louis-Ferdinand Céline appears to have turned in gathering materials for one of interwar France's bestselling publications, the inflammatory anti-Semitic pamphlet *Bagatelles pour un massacre* (1937).¹⁰ It is in activist circles such as these that Modiano has his protagonist move, reconstructing networks of affiliation that extend from the shadowy margins of interwar France's racist extremes to the center of its literary, cultural and political life during the Occupation years. As a self-proclaimed "anti-Semitic Jew" and unapologetic champion of the Nazi cause in France ("je suis le seul juif, le bon juif de la Collabo" 'I am the only Jew, the good Jew of the collaboration' [37]), Modiano's narrator Raphaël Schlemilovitch encounters his share of Nazi celebrities ("Luchaire me fait connaître Abetz" 'Luchaire introduces me to

Abetz' [37]), but he most often finds himself in the company of prominent French journalists, literati, and politicians who are eager to curry favor with Nazi authorities. The list of historical figures with whom Schlemilovitch rubs elbows reads like the "Who's Who" of anti-Semitic activism and fascist fellow-traveling. Well before the military debacle of June 1940, a number of these personalities had injected public discourse with hateful political rhetoric that fueled xenophobic passions and fostered the collective belief that France had a "Jewish Problem" that urgently needed to be solved. Unfettered by Vichy's speedy revocation of the *Décret Marchandeau*, a 1939 law seeking to curb the dissemination of such venomous speech, these movers and shakers of Parisian collaboration saturated the pages of *La Gerbe*, *Je suis partout*, and *Le Pili* with vicious attacks on Jews, invective that cannot help but have insinuated itself into the hearts and minds of the thousands of French citizens who at some time during the war were called upon to locate, register, dispossess, arrest, intern, and cram into cattle cars members of a minority group the nation now officially spurned. For those who did the homework Modiano implicitly assigned his compatriots in *La Place de l'étoile*, illusions of France's wartime grandeur swiftly dissolved. In their stead stood the hornet's nest of historical knowledge this daring young novelist had stirred in recalling France's dismal wartime record of institutionalized anti-Semitism, a record that bore a good many more French fingerprints than the postwar era had thus far ever imagined, or perhaps cared to acknowledge.

But as Avni illustrates, Modiano is fully aware that France's conflicted relation with its Jewish minority is not a recent phenomenon. While *La Place de l'étoile* pointedly asks Jews to examine their place in French society of the post-Holocaust era, he does so by spotlighting the non-place French Jewry has occupied for centuries in the nation's cultural imagination. Sketching the historical *longue durée* of this symbolic elision, Avni shows how Modiano's literary project artfully contests the founding myths and images through and around which French national identity has historically been constructed, texts that scrupulously avoid all reference to the country's Jewish community. Her reading further brings into critical relief the counter-discursive force of Modiano's attack on an entire historiographic tradition that ratified the broader societal view holding Frenchness and Jewishness to be mutually exclusive phenomena. Even the modern Republic, which had generously emancipated Jews during the Revolution of 1789 and made them full-fledged citi-

zens of the Nation, did so by obliging this long-ghettoized minority to blend into the cultural woodwork and to forget the possibility of expressing in public space any religious particularism or multicultural allegiance. Avni's contextualizing analysis underscores how deeply French Jews of the post-revolutionary era had become invested in the assimilationist pact that had enabled their modern emancipation, an investment whose political limitations and the tragic losses they entailed in wartime France haunt *La Place de l'étoile*.

In his concise history of Jewish identity and its symbolic marginalization in the life of the French nation, Pierre Birnbaum observes that remarkably little has been done to memorialize the physical sites that might remind the postwar era of the persecution Jews suffered during World War II. No small wonder, then, that historically meaningful sites such as the notoriously harsh concentration camps at Gurs, Rivesaltes, and Pithiviers and the suburban Parisian transit camp at Drancy, from which the vast majority of Jews were deported, hold little significance for a general public increasingly removed in time from the brutal realities of *les années noires*.¹¹ Even the site of the Vélodrome d'Hiver, perhaps the most recognizable of the place-names associated with the Nazi's "Final Solution" and its implementation in France, is difficult to locate among Paris's many national landmarks. Where once stood the sports arena in which thousands of Parisian Jews were held in July 1942 prior to being deported to Auschwitz, one now finds but a modest historical marker. If dramatic moments such as the *La Grande Rafle du Vél d'Hiv* "The Great Vél D'Hiv Roundup" have been commemorated in such minimalist fashion, it is not difficult to fathom how other important events tied to Vichy's anti-Jewish campaign have faded from historical view. Raymond Bach recalls one of the more ignominious of these events in his discussion of the "Le Juif et la France" exhibition, a parade of anti-Semitic stereotypes and racist pseudo-science that filled the halls of Paris's Palais Berlitz between September 1941 and January 1942. As with the *Grande Rafle du Vél d'Hiv*, the history of this exhibition reveals how amenable certain segments of the population were to the possibilities the Occupation presented for eradicating the Jewish presence in France. Although it was conceived by German propagandists intent on introducing Nazi racist thought into newly conquered lands, the project quickly found indigenous support among members of the intelligentsia who were eager to provide a French cultural and political specificity to the eliminationist discourses the exhibition purveyed. Bach illustrates

that, far from being impervious to the racist theories that impelled the Nazi regime's war against the Jews, wartime France produced its own share of pundits whose "expertise" in matters of race gave them, in some cases, life-and-death authority over potential Jewish deportees.

In addition to tracing the history of the "Le Juif et la France" exhibition and assessing its ideological effects, Bach locates fragments of knowledge about this racist past in a number of postwar texts. We learn, for instance, that the chillingly clinical scene of racial categorization with which Joseph Losey opens his 1976 film *M. Klein* owes much to French "ethnologist" Georges Montandon, whose writings informed the "study" of Jewish "morphology" the exhibition featured. Losey's overture draws almost verbatim on the historical record Montandon left of the physiological examinations he conducted on individuals desperately seeking the *Certificat de non-appartenance à la race juive* 'Certificate of Non-Belonging to the Jewish Race' that would keep them from falling into the clutches of the Nazi death machine. Bach assesses the scandalizing effect of another direct reference to the exhibit found in Jacques Renard's *Blanche et Marie* (1985) and further demonstrates how François Truffaut's *Le dernier métro* (1980) ably deconstructs the very anti-Semitic stereotypes that organizers of the "Le Juif et la France" exhibition sought to project. But almost a decade before these cinematographers began grappling with wartime France's institutionalized racism, Patrick Modiano had already begun goading French society into making the 1941 exhibition a nationally recognizable "lieu de mémoire" 'site of memory.' In embracing the anti-Semitic stereotype, *La Place de l'étoile* renders utterly laughable the grotesque images of Jewish depravity and racial inferiority that were taken so seriously at what Modiano's narrator dubs "the zoological exhibition of the Palais Berlitz" (47). The literary and cinematic recuperation of this sliver of Occupation history has driven home to postwar audiences the fact that the biological racism that proved so deadly to the Jews residing in France during the war was not, as conventional *résistancialiste* wisdom long held, solely of German provenance. Although it took nearly a quarter century after the war to begin confronting this history, the cluster of texts Bach analyzes provides heartening evidence of a willingness to acknowledge the prejudice that was allowed to thrive in wartime France and, more importantly, of a will to eradicate any vestiges of it that still survive.

The question of French responsibility for the contributions made to the implementation of the "Final Solution" in France is one that has been posed with increasing political force and public visibility in recent years. The controversy sparked in 1992 by President François Mitterrand's refusal to acknowledge the crucial supporting role French institutions played in advancing the Nazi racial cause amply attests to the rawness of the nerve even the suggestion of French involvement in the Holocaust strikes in the body politic a half century after the fact.¹² The drive to hold French intermediaries accountable for delivering Jews en masse into Nazi hands has, nonetheless, gathered momentum over the past two decades as advocates intent on honoring the memory of Holocaust victims have pressed the French judiciary to pursue their wartime persecutors for crimes against humanity, a charge, Richard Golsan explains, that was not available to prosecutors after the war.¹³ Golsan's analysis of the 1949 trial of René Bousquet, the consummate administrator who commanded the French national police between April 1942 and December 1943, presents a disturbing portrait of prosecutorial indulgence toward a defendant whose key role in ushering tens of thousands of Jews to their death at Auschwitz did not preoccupy unduly the High Court of Justice before which he stood trial in June 1949. Indeed, court documents reveal an almost callous disregard for the devastation France's Jewish community suffered as a result of the net Bousquet cast when his underlings set out in July 1942 to detain and expel the Jewish populace, which the Vichy regime had kept fixed in its sights since the defeat two years earlier. Focusing rather on the toll Vichy police forces took on the Resistance, the court was able to sidestep the matter of French accountability for the crime of genocide, which bureaucratic henchmen of Bousquet's ilk unquestionably abetted. This failure to give serious consideration to the full scope of Bousquet's wartime actions allowed this defendant to walk away from the proceedings practically unscathed. Although he was re-indicted forty years later for the crimes the 1949 purge court saw fit to ignore, the record of Bousquet's original trial raises troubling questions about the lack of resolve postwar justice showed in pursuing Vichy authorities, whose actions had had such deadly consequences for the minority population they targeted.

Golsan points out that historians have attributed the indifference purge courts showed toward Vichy anti-Semitism to an unspoken prohibition that kept the society from confronting its complicity

in the unspeakable atrocities the Nuremburg trials had just recently offered up for all the world to see. This would suggest that French society had at least an unconscious understanding of the responsibility the wartime institutions it had created bore for the decimation of a significant portion of the country's Jewish population. After all, what need would there be to impose a taboo if discussion of a topic under prohibition did not in some way threaten the community in which it functions? The peril this recent history presented might well have derived from the specific ways in which the so-called "Jewish Problem" had become intricately entangled in the Franco-French cultural wars and political battles that, Henry Rousso notes, have periodically erupted between Left and Right since the Revolution of 1789.¹⁴ Occupying what Pierre Birnbaum views as a symbolically charged position of otherness "at the heart of French History," Jewish identity and the disruptive difference it has long represented may well have come to emblemize numerous other schisms in the national community that had generated so much civil strife in the immediate prewar years and especially under the Occupation. This lengthy period of domestic discord had proven so destructive that it was, Rousso has famously argued, a principal source of the collective trauma and attendant "névrose" 'neurosis' with which French society wrestled for decades after the war. De Gaulle, after all, found the legacy of this internecine struggle so threatening to the nation's well-being that the political symbol he and his *résistancialiste* spinmeisters began fashioning at the Liberation required complete repression of its memory. No small wonder, then, that institutions such as the purge courts were reluctant to come to juridical terms with Vichy's ruthless conduct toward a beleaguered Jewish minority, whose departure it had worked so ardently to hasten.

In their reflections on France's current preoccupation with the Vichy past, Eric Conan and Henry Rousso question the wisdom and even challenge the historical validity of the 1992 demand made by the *Comité Vél d'Hiv '42* that the President of the French Republic perform "the symbolic gesture of recognizing Vichy responsibility in the 'Final Solution' " (qtd. in *Vichy* 34). Clearly exasperated by "the incessant quarrels of memory" surrounding the Occupation that seem invariably to "crystallize around Vichy's anti-Jewish policies" (68), Conan and Rousso strongly suggest that it is high time French society began putting memories of World War II to rest, a move ensuring that much of the public hand wringing over Vichy anti-Semitism would also be given what they plainly see as a much

needed rest. Why, they wonder, has memory of the Shoah taken on such an obsessional quality over the past three decades when, even at war's end, "except in a few rare instances, neither French nor foreign Jews had the desire to demand justice *as Jews* for the crimes [committed by] Vichy and collaborators" (38)? Although they are correct in stating that survivors of the Shoah in France did not, for the most part, wish to draw attention to the particular indignities Jews had suffered at the hands of Vichy and the Nazis, Conan and Rouso make this point in critical terms that fail to explore the complex reasons French Jewry undoubtedly had for not contesting the silent treatment post-Liberation France was all too ready to give the matter of French complicity in the Final Solution. How likely is it, after all, that a minority that had just experienced an era of state-decreed discrimination and been subjected to a flood of vilifying stereotypes, not to mention mass deportation, would find its survivors eager to rush into the public arena demanding justice for the wrongs they suffered? In intimating that France's current "obsession" with Vichy's complicity in the Nazi genocide does violence to the wishes of actual survivors of the Holocaust, Conan and Rouso cast a pall of inauthenticity and even illegitimacy over the efforts made by successive generations of postwar artists, intellectuals, and activists who have sought to come to terms with a history of racial and ethnic intolerance that was, perhaps, not of their own making, but which they have earnestly endeavored to "own" as part of the nation's past. That historians of Rouso's stature in Occupation studies are now showing impatience with the emphasis discussions of World War II place on the Holocaust might well be read as a sign of renewed cultural resistance to accounting as fully as the historical record will allow for Vichy's devastation of France's Jewish community.¹⁵ The essays that follow illustrate, I believe, how misguided it is, particularly at the present historical juncture, to curb inquiry into the Vichy era. Rather than seeing the memory of Vichy as a tiresome matter that just won't seem to go away, Watts, Avni, Bach, and Golsan have each recovered fragments of that history and asked them to speak to a contemporary political culture that is wrestling with issues of cultural identity and difference not unlike those that ignited public passions in 1930s and 1940s. As such, their contributions not only enhance understanding of the cataclysmic historical forces that have marked France's recent past and shaped its present, but they also provide insights that may well prove invaluable in the dizzyingly diverse world toward which glo-

balization is rapidly propelling not only French, but the whole of human society. With challenges of this sort on the horizon, can French or any society with recent or distant memories of eliminationist crusades gone by afford not to scour that field of historical experience for any understanding it might purvey to the culturally complex, multi-racial future that is upon us?

Notes

1. For a concise discussion of this problematic, see Nora, "Between History and Memory: *Les Lieux de mémoire*."

2. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

3. See Davis and Starn's "Introduction" to the special issue "Between History and Memory."

4. For an account of the Vichy regime's exile, see Roussio's *Un château en Allemagne*. Conjuring memories of the flight French aristocrats took during the French Revolution, Philippe Burrin places the number of what he calls "ces nouveaux émigrés" 'those new emigres' between 10,000 and 15,000. See Burrin (461).

5. Burrin relates that a number of Sigmaringen's residents sought to make themselves useful to the Germans by "projecting radio propaganda in the direction of France and by establishing training programs for intelligence and sabotage operatives" (461). Approximately 7,000-8,000 Frenchmen fought in German uniform, grouped together in the Charlemagne Division, a branch of the Waffen-SS. For a discussion of the history of this military formation, see Roussio's *Un château* (201-15).

6. Along with Céline, a good number of Vichy notables who took refuge at Sigmaringen (most notably Philippe Pétain and Pierre Laval) were indicted for treason under Article 75 of the French criminal code, an offense that carried the death penalty.

7. Robert Le Vigan was a well known actor who appeared in numerous films of the interwar period including *Madame Bovary* (J. Renoir, 1934), *La Bandera* (J. Duvivier, 1935), and *Le Quai des brumes* (M. Carné, 1938). Céline had met and frequented Le Vigan in Montmartre, where they both lived during the 1930s. Le Vigan continued to make films during the war (including Jacques Becker's *Goupi mains-rouges* [1942-43]), and participated in pro-German radio broadcasts at Radio-Paris. Céline and his spouse Lucette Destouches met Le Vigan at Baden-Baden, Germany, at the beginning of August 1944. The three traveled together until November 1944

when they arrived in Sigmaringen, where Le Vigan would remain following the couple's departure in March 1945. Le Vigan's flight from France in the summer of 1944 obliged him to abandon his role in Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du paradis*, which was taken over by Pierre Renoir.

8. Jean Luchaire was editor of the collaborationist daily *Les Nouveaux Temps*, a publication that was subsidized by the Germans to the tune of a sum between 25,000 and 700,000 francs per month. After the war, Luchaire was later tried, condemned to death, and executed on February 22, 1946. See Rubenstein 153.

9. Darquier replaced Xavier Vallat, the first Commissioner General for Jewish Affairs, in early 1942. Vallat's fierce nationalism and what German authorities perceived to be his tepid anti-Semitism made him, to their mind, an unsuitable figurehead for an agency that was to be accorded a central role in the implementation of the "Final Solution" in France.

10. See Kaplan.

11. Gurs and Pithiviers were just two of the French-run concentration camps used following Vichy's October 1940 adoption of "Le Statut des Juifs," legislation that authorized the detention of approximately 50,000 foreign and stateless Jews, many of whom were refugees fleeing persecution in Nazi-occupied countries of Eastern Europe. Other camps included Argelès, Beaune-la-Rolande, Le Vernet, Rieucros, Noé, Récébedou, and Les Milles. Vichy internment of this population as early as 1940 greatly facilitated the administrative task French authorities would undertake two years later when they began filling trains destined for Auschwitz.

12. In July 1992, on the fiftieth anniversary of the *Grande Rafle du Vél d'Hiv*, Mitterrand balked at a petition presented by the *Comité du Vél d'Hiv '42* demanding that the government of France formally acknowledge "the Vichy's regime's state anti-Semitism and its complicity in the Nazi genocide." For a discussion of this incident, see the chapter entitled "Le Vél d'Hiv' ou la commémoration introuvable" in Conan and Rouso (33-65). Resistance of the sort Mitterrand mounted in 1992 has since begun to crumble. In 1995, newly invested President Jacques Chirac became the first postwar representative of the French government to recognize formally the role French officials and agencies played in the wartime deportation of Jews. In a similarly contrite mode, prominent leaders of the Catholic Church in France gathered in September 1997 at Drancy (the suburban Parisian transit camp from which Jews were deported, the majority to Auschwitz) to proclaim that the Church had erred during the war in acquiescing before Vichy's anti-Semitic policies and in failing to protect Jews against the violence they engendered.

13. For an informative discussion of the effort to bring collaborators such as René Bousquet and Paul Touvier to justice, see Golsan.

14. See Rousso, *Le Syndrome* 42-55.

15. The following excerpt from *Vichy: un passé qui ne passe pas* directly ties the current focus on (and to the authors' way of thinking, the obsession with) Vichy anti-Semitism to the "awakening" of Jewish memory by the generation of May '68. The passage in question only thinly veils the authors' irritation with the centrality Vichy's anti-Jewish policies have been accorded in discussions of World War II. They write: "[i]t was in the mid-1970s—the last phase [of the Vichy Syndrome], that *les années noires* became the object of obsessional memory. The awakening of Jewish identity, which demanded, for the first time since the emancipation, its 'right to be different,' entailed a focalization on the memory of the Genocide, which henceforth stood at the heart of all discussions of World War II . . ." (22-23). In light of Conan and Rousso's readily discernible wish in *Vichy: un passé qui ne passe pas* to see that France's discussion of Vichy anti-Semitism is hurried along, it is interesting to observe that seven years earlier in *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, Rousso also showed a similar impatience with Jewish memory, giving it but six short years after its "awakening," (by events such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the 1968 publication Patrick Modiano's *La Place de l'étoile*) to exhaust itself discursively before becoming an "obsessional" phenomenon in 1974. Six years is precious little time, it would seem, for the full record of Vichy's racist past to be assessed before taking on what Rousso's psychoanalytic rhetoric suggests is an unwholesome character. It is perhaps worth noting, in fact, two North American historians, Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, provided one of the first and most comprehensive studies of Vichy's anti-Semitic policies and practices in *Vichy France and the Jews*, a work that was not published in France until 1981, seven years after Rousso claims Jewish memory entered its "obsessional" phase.

Works Cited

- Birnbaum, Pierre. "Grégoire, Dreyfus, Drancy and the Rue Copernic: Jews at the heart of French History." *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. 3 vols. Ed. Pierre Nora. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. 3 vols. New York: Columbia UP, 1996. I: 378-423.
- Burrin, Philippe. *La France à l'heure allemande*. Paris: Seuil, 1995.
- Conan, Eric and Henry Rousso. *Vichy: Un passé qui ne passe pas*. Paris: Fayard, 1994.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon and Randolph Starn. "Introduction" to special issue "Between History and Memory." *Representations* 26 (1989): 1-6.

Golsan, Richard, ed. *Memory, The Holocaust and French Justice*. Hanover: UP of New England, 1996.

Kaplan, Alice. "Sources and Citations in *Bagatelles pour un massacre*." *L.-F. Céline and the Politics of Difference*. Eds. Rosemarie Scullion, Thomas Spear, and Philip Solomon. Hanover: UP of New England, 1995. 29-46.

Marrus, Michael R. and Robert Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews*. New York: Schocken, 1983.

Modiano, Patrick. *La Place de l'étoile*. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.

Nora, Pierre. "Between History and Memory: *Les Lieux de mémoire*." Trans. Marc Roudebush. *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-25.

Rousso, Henry. *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours*. Paris: Seuil, 1990.

—. *Un château en Allemagne: La France de Pétain en exil - Sigmaringen 1944-1945*. Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1980.

Rubenstein, Diane. *What's Left: The Ecole Normale Supérieure and The Right*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991.