
Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory

Author(s): Hue-Tam Ho Tai

Source: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (Jun., 2001), pp. 906-922

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2692331>

Accessed: 24-05-2020 19:24 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2692331?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Oxford University Press, American Historical Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*

Review Essay
Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French
National Memory

HUE-TAM HO TAI

THE IMPACT IN FRANCE of *Lieux de mémoire*, the magisterial seven-volume collaborative project led by Pierre Nora, was consecrated in 1993 when the phrase “site of memory” entered the *Grand dictionnaire Robert de la langue française*. The publication of a three-volume English-language edition under the title *Realms of Memory* makes accessible to American readers 46 of the original 132 articles that were published in *Lieux de mémoire* between 1981 and 1992.¹ They have been superbly translated by Arthur Goldhammer and come with a useful foreword by Lawrence Kritzman and a new preface by Nora.

The gap of nearly two decades between the publication of the first volume of *Lieux de mémoire* in 1981 and the third volume of *Realms of Memory* in 1998 makes the task of evaluating the impact of Nora’s project on scholarship outside France difficult. During that time span, the field of memory studies exploded, with works by David Lowenthal, John Bodnar, John R. Gillis, Raphael Samuel, and Simon Schama, to name but a few.² Nor has the field been confined to analyses of representations of the past in North America and Europe, as the growing body of scholarship on memory work in Asia suggests.³ Nonetheless, it is useful to review *Realms of Memory* separately because of the currency the phrase “memory site” has gained as well as the differences between the English version and the French original.

I gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments and suggestions by Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Michael Grossberg, and anonymous readers of an earlier version.

¹ These include the introduction, “Between Memory and History,” and the afterword, “The Era of Commemoration,” both by Pierre Nora. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, 3 vols. (New York, 1996–98).

² David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J., 1992); John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, 1994); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, 1994); and Vol. 2: *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain*, Alison Light, Sally Alexander, and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds. (London, 1998); Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, 1995).

³ See, for example, Carol Gluck, “The Past in the Present,” in Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993); Rubie S. Watson, *History, Memory and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, N.Mex., 1994); Vera Schwarcz, *Bridge across Broken Time: Chinese and Jewish Cultural Memory* (New Haven, Conn., 1998); Grant Evans, *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance: Laos since 1975* (Honolulu, 1998); Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles F. Keyes, eds., *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Politics of the Past in the Thai World* (London, forthcoming); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, ed., *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam* (Berkeley, forthcoming).

Often lost from view as the phrase migrated from its original context is the beginning of the project in a seminar series, which Nora launched in 1979 to explore the construction of the French past. This research agenda is worth examining because of the questions it poses about nation, nationalism, and national identity, as well as its implications for the conceptualization of the relationship between history and memory offered by Nora. I write this review from the margins of both French history and of the French nation, as a historian (not of France but Vietnam) and as a postcolonial subject. Born in Saigon when it was still the capital of French Cochinchina, I began my schooling the very year the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu. As a result, unlike my father and even my older siblings, I was spared from having to recite “Nos ancêtres sont les Gaulois.” With numerous relatives permanently settled in France, I also write with a personal appreciation of the impact of postcolonial immigration on the French social and cultural landscape and on French notions of national identity.

Nora’s concept of “memory sites” is contained in the introduction, “Between History and Memory,” which appeared in English translation in *Representations* in 1989; his concept then migrated rapidly from its discipline (history) and place of origin (France) to other disciplines and areas, much as did Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” around the same time.⁴ Nora took his title from Frances A. Yates’s book *The Art of Memory* (1966), but his theme is not only different from Yates’s—French national identity rather than religious experience—his definition of memory sites is also far more catholic: “The archives and the tricolor; libraries and festivals; dictionaries and the Pantheon; museums and the Arc de Triomphe; the *Dictionnaire Larousse* and the Wall of the Fédérés (where defenders of the Paris Commune were massacred by the French Army in 1871).”⁵ The collection also includes real people (René Descartes and Joan of Arc), mythic ones (the Good Soldier, Nicolas Chauvin), battles (Verdun), competitions (the Tour de France), and novels (Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*).

Realms of Memory belongs to the genre known as *histoire des mentalités*, which grew out of the desire of French historians to free themselves from the Comtean determinism of nineteenth-century historical writings and the Marxist-inspired *Annales* without lapsing into the perceived elitism of the history of ideas.⁶ Nora characterizes his enterprise, which eschews the linearity of previous historical narratives, as a “history of the second degree.” He defines it as “a history in multiple voices . . . less interested in causes than in effects; . . . less interested in ‘what actually happened’ than in its perpetual re-use and misuse, its influence on successive presents; less interested in traditions than in the way in which traditions

⁴ Two quite different works, both citing Nora’s article, appeared in the same year: Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997); and Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, 1997).

⁵ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 6.

⁶ Pierre Nora co-edited with Jacques Le Goff *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology* (New York, 1984) (originally published as *Faire de l’histoire*, Paris, 1974), in which Le Goff contributed the article “Mentalities: A History of Ambiguities.” On the link between *mentalité* and memory, see Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *AHR* 102 (December 1997): 1388–89. For a defense against elitism, see Michel Vovelle, *Idéologies et mentalités* (Paris, 1982).

are constituted and passed on.”⁷ As Nora rightly observes, his approach to studying the past is far more prevalent and better developed in the United States than in France.

The ruthless process of selection involved in condensing seven volumes into three gave Nora an opportunity to refine his ideas. Some of the articles deleted from *Realms of Memory* are no doubt of limited interest to nonspecialists. This is probably the case with essays on various professions and administrative divisions. I regret that the article on painterly representations of the French landscape has been dropped, since twentieth-century imaginings of “la France profonde” bear the ineluctable imprint of nineteenth-century painters. The literary construction of France is represented by a single article on Proust by Antoine Compagnon. Proust may be the writer of memory par excellence, but a full appreciation of Alain Corbin’s disquisition “Paris-Province” might conjure up images from Balzac, Flaubert, Stendhal, or Choderlos de Laclos, to name but a few. Despite these deletions, *Realms of Memory* still represents a commodious compendium and typology of the memory sites that map the vicissitudes of French national identity, especially since the revolution.

Several ghosts hover over the discussions of both memory and French national identity in this work. The first is the ghost of the French Revolution, a continual site of contestation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The conflicts and divisions that arose out of that experience are foregrounded in *Realms of Memory* as a way of introducing non-French readers to some themes that run through the rest of the articles. (They appeared in the first volume of *Les France*, the fifth in the larger collection.) The principal and often overlapping lines of tension over the last two centuries were those between monarchists and republicans, Catholics and seculars, French and foreigners, and Right and Left. Equally powerful is the ghost of Ernest Lavissee, the Third Republic historian whose self-imposed mission was to teach French schoolchildren to love the motherland through the study of history and whose primary textbook, *Le petit Lavissee*, has been read by millions of those children.⁸ Nora’s aim is no less than to dislodge Lavissee from his pedagogical pedestal and offer his own project as France’s new memory site.⁹

Lavissee’s *Histoire*, on which the condensed *Petit Lavissee* was based, embodied the synthesis of nation and republic that Ernest Renan expounded in his influential lecture of March 11, 1882, “What Is a Nation?” The loss of Alsace and Lorraine to Prussia in 1870 was a palpable force behind his argument that a nation is a “soul, a spiritual principle” founded on “a rich legacy of memories” and the “clearly

⁷ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: xxiv.

⁸ “[D]onner aux enfants de la France cette *pietas erga patriam* qui suppose la connaissance de la patrie.” Quoted in Jean-François Sirinelli, “Début de la publication de l’Histoire de France d’Ernest Lavissee, 1900,” available on the World Wide Web at www.culture.fr/culture/actualites/celebrations2000/index-celebrations.htm, accessed April 25, 2001. Lavissee’s 27-volume *Histoire de la France*, covering the period up to the revolution, was published between 1900 and 1911; it was augmented by the 9-volume *Histoire de la France contemporaine* (Paris, 1920–22).

⁹ “Only certain works of history are *lieux de mémoire*, namely those that reshape memory in some fundamental way or that epitomize a revision for pedagogical purposes.” Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 17.

expressed desire to continue a common life.”¹⁰ Against German determinism based on language and race, Renan represented the nation as a “daily plebiscite.” Just as Lavissee’s *Histoire* bears the imprint of Renan’s influence, so does *Realms of Memory* reflect that of the late François Furet.¹¹ It was Furet who pointed out in *Penser la Révolution française* (1978) the pivotal role of the French Revolution both as the end of monarchical history and beginning of the republican narrative and who observed that “the French Revolution is over.”¹² Nora began his project still very much in the shadow of Lavissee and Renan. The original four volumes of *Lieux de mémoire* consisted of one volume devoted to “La République,” two to “La nation,” and one to “Les France.” According to Nora, the publication of *La nation* in 1986 reversed a trend in which leading historians seemed to “have rejected the nation as a framework for doing history.”¹³ The return to a nation-centered approach gave Nora the impetus to resume his project. Meanwhile, the publishing hiatus¹⁴ allowed him to incorporate more fully Furet’s idea that “the revolution is over.” Perhaps the best sign that it is truly over is the dropping of an article on Marianne, the symbol of the embattled Republic, from *Realms of Memory*. Indeed, the underlying theme of *Realms of Memory* is that the great divisions and conflicts that began with the revolution have now lost their power to convulse the French nation and topple governments.

Nora traces the death of the monarchical idea to that of Charles de Gaulle (in 1970), of the conjunction between Catholicism and French national identity to Vatican II, and the terminal decline of the agrarian idea of “la France profonde” to the 1960s, when the rural population dropped to less than 10 percent. A once-powerful current whose demise is also felt through the collection is Communism as both a political and an intellectual force. As it collapsed, Communism lost ground not just as an object of study but also as an epistemology. While these trends began well before François Mitterrand’s presidency (1981–1995), it was during his tenure in office that their full implications were absorbed by the French political and scholarly worlds. Lawrence Kritzman is thus entirely right to describe Nora’s project as “one of the great French intellectual achievements of the Mitterrand era.”¹⁵ With so many ghosts hovering over the collection, no wonder it has a strong autumnal quality (Kritzman calls it *fin-de-siècle* melancholia).

As Nora moved away from using post-revolution fault lines as the organizing principle of French national history, he came to put greater emphasis on diversity and polyphony. While the study of the revolutionary legacy occupied a single volume, *La nation* expanded to three, as did the exploration of diversity (*Les France*). But more than the revolution and fantasies of monarchical restoration were over, so was France’s long colonial career: its bloody end came in 1957 in Algeria. Yet neither Lavissee, writing during the Third Republic, nor Nora, during

¹⁰ Ernest Renan, “What Is a Nation?” translated by Martin Hom, in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London, 1990), 19.

¹¹ Furet contributed the article “The Ancien Régime and the Revolution.”

¹² François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris, 1978), 11.

¹³ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: xii.

¹⁴ During that hiatus, Furet and Mona Ozouf collaborated on the *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1988); others also participated in preparations for the bicentennial of the French Revolution.

¹⁵ Lawrence D. Kritzman, foreword to Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: ix.

the Fourth, takes the experience of empire into his consideration of how the French nation and national identity were constructed, or assesses its role in French collective memory. This is all the more striking since, four years after the loss of Algeria, Nora published *Les Français d'Algérie*.¹⁶

For all of Nora's embrace of polyphony and polysemy, the French nation of *Realms of Memory* is a given rather than a problem or project. The contests and conflicts that are so amply documented in the collection are not about France per se but about the nature of its national identity. The overall effect is, while there may be many perspectives on France (monarchic, republican, Catholic, among others), they have only one object. This is a France that is indivisible even when understood differently over time and by different segments of the population. One article that has not been retained in the English edition is Eugen Weber's, which suggests that the Hexagon as a symbol of France's territorial boundaries, rather than being deeply rooted in the past, is largely a post-World War II image. Neither has another article by Charles-Robert Ageron on the Colonial Exposition of 1931. The France of *Realms of Memory* includes Corsica (acquired in 1768) and Alsace and Lorraine (lost to Germany between 1870 and 1919) but not what used to be known as "la France d'outre-mer." This vast overseas empire included the Indian enclaves of Pondicherry and Chandernagor and various islands that had come under French rule well before Corsica,¹⁷ as well as parts of Africa (Tunis, Madagascar, the Congo, Niger) and Asia (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) that were conquered during the Third Republic.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of the noble savage was deeply influenced by *Paul et Virginie* (1788), Bernardin de St. Pierre's tale of innocence corrupted by civilization, which was set on the island of Mauritius (under French rule since 1715). The dynastic drama of the First Empire involved characters who were marginal: Napoleon Bonaparte, who was born one year after Corsica became French and spoke French badly; his first wife, Joséphine, born in Martinique in 1763, one year before it became crown property; and his Austrian second empress, Marie Thérèse. Luckier than Rochester's mad wife, Joséphine spent her last years not in an attic but in the splendor of Malmaison, outside Paris. As for Napoleon, who had aimed to rule far more than the Hexagon, he spent his in damp exile on British-ruled St. Helena. Though central to French history, Napoleon (and Joséphine) thus exhibited the alienation and displacement (double in their cases) out of which whole careers in postcolonial theory have been carved. Even though postcolonial studies have reshaped scholarship on both former colonial countries and one-time colonial powers, their influence is noticeably absent from *Realms of Memory*.¹⁸ Poor Napoleon: although he gave France its *Code civil* and the Third

¹⁶ Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie* (Paris, 1961).

¹⁷ Pondicherry was acquired by the French East India Company in 1668. Other French posts were opened in Mahé (1725), Yanam (1731), Karikal (1739), and Chandernagor (1688). Occupied by the British in 1778 and 1793, they were returned to France in 1816. Under the Second Republic, Indian residents of these French territories in India were granted universal suffrage. These reverted to India after 1947. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Pondicherry" and "Chandarnagar."

¹⁸ In this, Nora's approach is in sharp contrast with that of Samuel in *Island Stories*; see in particular "Empire Stories: The Imperial and the Domestic," 74–97. For an example of the importance attached to colonialism in the construction of European societies, see Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Cooper and Stoler, eds.,

Republic realized his dream of empire—in different places, to be sure—he does not rate an article of his own.

Parts of the French empire predated the revolution, but both its nineteenth-century expansion and its problematic twentieth-century legacy derive from the revolution itself. As Eugen Weber pointed out in *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976), the Third Republic's chief architect, Jules Ferry, presided over a double colonialism emanating from Paris: internally, through the imposition of universal conscription and free compulsory education and the expansion of the bureaucracy to the provinces, and externally, through the expansion of the empire in Indochina and Africa. Renan ignored this colonial reality when he affirmed: "A nation never has any real interest in annexing or holding on to a country against its will."¹⁹ But it had been a slave revolt in her native Martinique that brought Joséphine de Beauharnais to Paris in 1788. The conjunction of republic and empire was as powerful as that between republic and nation, and it resulted in forced attempts to reconcile the *oeuvre coloniale* with lofty revolutionary ideals.²⁰ Those who opposed French colonialism often argued that it was a betrayal of the ideal of "liberté, égalité, fraternité." Equally germane was the contradiction between the universalism of the concept of "Man" and the more narrow definition of community embedded in the notion of the "citizen" contained in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1792. Universalism was a Janus-faced principle in whose name Frenchmen were enfranchised while other people were subjugated. Lavisser's conceptualization of the French national community withstood waves of immigration from other parts of Europe (which, as Gérard Noiriel points out in "French and Foreigners," rivaled those experienced by the United States during the same period). Postcolonial immigration reveals the elasticity of the French demarcation of citizenship outside the Hexagon, where it was neither fully inclusive nor fully realized (as suffrage was granted only to naturalized colonials) and did not entirely reject German notions of common racial origins as the foundation of nations. Being required, as were my father and older siblings, to recite "Nos ancêtres sont les Gaulois" was a reminder to colonized people of their own powerlessness; it was also the logical outcome of the Third Republic's policy of popular empowerment through compulsory, uniform education. Dutifully claiming Gallic ancestry, however, did not give the Vietnamese the right to vote, even though, as a French "overseas territory," French Cochinchina sent a deputy to Paris. Still, after French rule ended, France's ambivalent views on race and citizenship allowed Cochinchinese natives like myself to claim, if they so wished, "reintegration" into French

Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley, Calif., 1997). The authors' premise is that "Europe was made by its imperial projects as much as colonial encounters were shaped by events and conflicts in Europe."

¹⁹ Renan, "What Is a Nation?" 20.

²⁰ See, for example, Albert Sarraut: "A great nation like ours, wherever it might go, whatever it might do, must be able to say that it remains everywhere faithful unto itself. It must be able to look squarely even into its colonial policies as the mirror of its conscience" (my translation). Sarraut, *Projet de loi de mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris, 1921), 15. Sarraut, then minister of colonies, had served two terms as governor-general of Indochina.

nationality (and the right to vote) on the grounds that they had not freely chosen to relinquish it.²¹

The shrinking of its territory from far-flung empire to compact hexagon, coupled with its ambiguous policy of partial inclusion, left France with a highly diverse and contentious population. It has moved far from the France of Franks and Gauls. The presence in France of large immigrant communities, a product of the paradoxes of empire, is one of the reasons behind Nora's attempt at historical revisionism. But while the old historical narrative is unable to capture the new complexities of the French social landscape, the pull of that narrative remains so strong that Nora has not quite succeeded in fashioning an American-style embrace of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism or achieving true polyphony while avoiding cacophony. In *Realms of Memory*, in fact, Nora attempts to restore some of the thematic unity to his enterprise that was being lost as it proceeded through the later volumes.

The fierce conflicts that raged through most of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth are a thing of the past, but the arrival of new immigrants in the Hexagon complicates old fault lines between religion and secularism, French and foreign. The historical link between religion and politics, in particular between Catholicism and nation, makes it difficult to separate discussion of old tensions and new battles neatly into "Political Divisions" and "Minority Religions" as in *Realms of Memory*. Partly as a means of protecting themselves from Catholic oppression, both Protestants (studied here by Philippe Joutard) and Jews (studied by Pierre Birnbaum) identified themselves with republican, secular France. Identification with the republican bureaucracy (which was opposed by the Catholic-supported monarchist forces) led to two cruel betrayals of French Jews, first in the Alfred Dreyfus case and more tragically during World War II. As Birnbaum (whose article, "Gregory, Dreyfus, Drancy and Copernic," should be read in tandem with Claude Langlois's "Catholics and Secular") makes clear, it was Vichy bureaucrats who delivered Jewish colleagues into Nazi hands. French anti-Semitism has diminished in virulence, but is it a consequence of the final triumph of the secular republic over the Catholic monarchy, or have both secularism and Catholicism found a new and common "other" in Islam? As Langlois observes, the proliferation of mosques poses a challenge to the religio-monarchist amalgamation that is at the heart of "la France profonde" and that even the staunchest republicans have accepted: "In terms of monuments . . . France is either Catholic or secular. There is no middle term."²²

On one side of the great nineteenth-century divide, Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front combines residual Catholic allegiances with anti-immigrant sentiment to produce a virulent strain of racism that is mostly directed at Muslims. On the other side, the proclaimed secularism of the French state poses nearly as great a challenge to Muslims. Many Muslims do not abide by the official demarcation between secular public education and private religion that was arrived at in 1904, when Catholics were stripped of their former role in education. Sporadically, Muslim girls come into conflict with upholders of educational secularism when they

²¹ Until Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's reforms, Hong Kong natives residing in Britain could vote but could not work there without a work permit.

²² Claude Langlois, "Catholic and Secular," in Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 116.

insist on wearing the veil in school. From a Muslim perspective, however, French public life, organized as it is around Catholic-inflected notions of time, is anything but secular. It is no coincidence that the famed French “mois de vacance” usually begins with the celebration of the Republic on July 14 and ends with a Catholic holy day, the feast of the Assumption.²³

If race is an unstable basis of national identity, what about language? *Lieux de mémoire* contained several articles devoted to the French language, a measure of its importance in French identity politics. The only one that has been retained in *Realms of Memory*, by Marc Fumaroli, chronicles the stages whereby the language of Ile-de-France gradually displaced Latin, and how this language, which was originally based on the linguistic and rhetorical practices of the French court, nonetheless survived the demise of the monarchy because of its adoption by the people of Paris. Still, as Weber showed, it did not become widely spoken throughout the country until the Third Republic’s public schools turned *patois*-speaking peasants into French-speaking citizens.²⁴ The role of language as national unifier perhaps explains the innate conservatism of the Académie Française and its periodic attempts to protect the French language from the pollution of *franglais*, although that issue is not taken up by Fumaroli.

The success of another component of the Third Republic’s nationalizing and republican project, universal conscription, is attested to by the monuments to war dead that dot the French landscape and by the importance given to Verdun as the distillation of war experience. Antoine Prost, who contributed articles on both topics, attributes the importance of Verdun to the fact that the entire French army was involved as a result of Marshal Pétain’s policy of sending each unit to that front for only a short time (to reduce the horrors to which it was exposed). Equally important, the army that fought at Verdun was made up of conscripts from all over the country. Verdun, as the battleground of this republican and national army, thus presents an interesting contrast to another World War I site of memory, the Somme, which has become, in English literature, a symbol for the passing of the old aristocratic order in Europe. Now that peasants are disappearing, television may prove a more powerful unifier than military conscription.

A third component of the Third Republic’s nationalizing project was the spread of the bureaucracy. Like the expansion of empire, the spread of the bureaucracy, when viewed from the center, can seem like an act of integration, but when seen from the periphery, it can look like oppression. Among the bureaucracy’s many achievements is the organization of public memory. Despite the deletion of several articles devoted to this topic, *Realms of Memory* stands as a monument to bureaucratic centralization. Its polyphonic aspirations notwithstanding, *Realms of Memory* offers a vision of France that is more top-down and Jacobinist than *Lieux de mémoire*’s. Gone are articles on *départements*, regions, north-south divisions, center and periphery. The problem of regionalism is not altogether absent from *Realms of Memory*, but it tends to be analyzed from the vantage point of Paris, as

²³ Having a Muslim relative by marriage has sensitized me to the problems posed by French calendrical time. It has been noted that Thanksgiving is the most widely observed holiday in the United States because people of all religions (as well as atheists) can observe it.

²⁴ Even in the 1940s and 1950s, it was not unusual for rural children to speak *patois* at home and only begin to speak French after they started school.

in Corbin's article "Paris-Province." Corbin does an excellent job of laying out the role of Paris in the construction of French national identity, but readers might wish to know if the rest of France has accepted the overweening role of Paris as both focus of the national imagination and shaper of it, as well as Parisians' perception of anywhere but the capital as a place of exile. France today is a country where regional stereotypes remain plentiful and deeply entrenched. Are regional identities and loyalties, then, signs of diversity, or do they contain an element of resistance to the national idea?

Pétain's vision of a France built on "Work, Family, Fatherland" was already obsolete in the 1930s. It might be premature to sound the death knell of "la France profonde" just because the proportion of the French population engaged in agriculture has fallen. The agrarian nostalgia of "la France profonde" was always infused by a strong anti-Parisian sentiment. This has carried over into the National Front, whose stronghold in the south is a hotbed of hostility toward both the center (Paris) and the periphery (foreigners, international organizations, globalization). The targets of this hostility can be human (African immigrants) as well as inanimate (cars with Parisian license plates, for example). In his chapter on "Gastronomy," Pascal Ory asks plaintively: "Will French cuisine be all that remains when everything else has been forgotten?"²⁵ Like the rest of the contributors, he fastens on its elite manifestation (*haute cuisine*) rather than its cherished regional variations from *cassoulet* to *choucroute d'Alsace* to *tripes à la mode de Caen*. But can that last bastion of Frenchness withstand the combined onslaught of American fast food and Asian-inspired fusion cuisine? The fight against McDonalds is less about the inroads of American mass culture (McDonalds met little resistance when they first opened in France in the 1970s) than about a conception of Frenchness that a dwindling number of French farmers, their villages rapidly being converted into vacation homes for Parisians, insist on preserving. That the farmers' fight has gained wide support has probably less to do with concerns over genetically altered food than with the enduring power of "la France profonde" as a rallying cry in French culture wars.

Subnationalism—as distinct from regionalism—is notably absent in the collection as well. A. L. Rowse entitled his memoirs of his Oxford University days *A Cornishman Abroad* (1976). Devolution has changed the shape of politics in Tony Blair's New Britain. By contrast, in the introduction to *Realms of Memory*, Nora dismisses the problem of Corsican separatism and Breton resentment in a couple of sentences.²⁶ Corsicans may have to work hard at remaining Corsicans, as Nora suggests, but one might ask whether their self-conscious attempts to cling to a Corsican identity is fundamentally different from the attempts of French farmers to slow down the invasion of American fast food or of the Académie Française to safeguard the purity of the French language. Furthermore, subnationalism has gained an ally in globalism in its fight against the Jacobin nation-state. Bretons performing Druid rituals as a way of affirming their cultural distance from (the rest of) France are finding new supporters among New Age enthusiasts. Globalism works both ways: Thich Nhat Hanh, the displaced Vietnamese monk who runs

²⁵ Pascal Ory, "Gastronomy," in Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 2: 443.

²⁶ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 11.

retreats in France and the United States, has gained adherents from diverse religious backgrounds and ethnic origins on both sides of the Atlantic for his synthesis of the teachings of Buddha and Jesus. While the legacy of empire has not been fully absorbed, neither have the challenges to fixed notions of French national identity that come from the forces of both trans and subnationalism.

THE CONJUNCTION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY and national identity that provides the structure of *Realms of Memory* arises from Ernest Renan's definition of nation as being constructed from a rich legacy of memories.²⁷ His and Nora's focus on the national and the relative neglect of both the colonial and the local, far more evident in the English version than in the original, shape how the relationship between history and memory is conceptualized throughout the collection. Nora's formulation of this relationship is based on a sharp distinction between history and memory, *lieux* and *milieux de mémoire*. Yet there is a certain fuzziness in the way Nora defines and deploys the concepts of "history" and "memory," which allows him to make claims that at times seem to contradict one another.

In his introduction, Nora avers that history is made necessary when people no longer live in memory but become conscious of the pastness of the past and need the aid of written documents to recall it. According to him, *lieux de mémoire* come into being when *milieux de mémoire* disappear. Such a distinction comes close to paralleling the distinction between orality and literacy. Historians of non-Western societies may well take exception to his assertion that "among the new nations, independence has swept into history societies only recently roused from their ethnological slumbers by the rape of colonization."²⁸ It echoes the discredited notion that only the West has history, while others have culture, with the West providing appropriate subjects of historical inquiry, while the changeless cultures of the rest can be studied through the lens of Lévi-Straussian structuralism.²⁹ As structuralism's dominance waned, the historically constituted dimension of culture gained acceptance among anthropologists just as historians turned their gaze away from the national and toward the local. As anthropologists moved beyond the study of the purely local, they did not shed their distrust of the state, and this distrust was extended to the nation. The growth of scholarship on memory in the United States thus coincided with increasing disenchantment with nationalism and nationalist projects. This constitutes a significant point of difference from Nora's project: social memory is as likely to be invoked as a counterweight to the modern nation-state as it is a shaper of national identity. Anthropologists, in particular, have pointed out that collective memory is far from being unmediated and unself-conscious.³⁰

Some American scholars, under the influence of Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and other theorists of power, are more concerned with the potential for memory to be shaped by the nation-state or some other powerful group as well as

²⁷ Renan, "What Is a Nation?" 19.

²⁸ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 1–2. Eric R. Wolf made ironic reference to this Eurocentric perspective on history and culture in *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982).

²⁹ The colonial origins of anthropology are themselves the subject of a vast body of literature.

³⁰ See, for example, Evans, *Politics of Ritual and Remembrance*. Also see Rubie S. Watson, "Introduction," *History, Memory and Opposition under State Socialism*.

to serve as a source of opposition to power.³¹ American scholarship on memory also bears the influence of dissident writings from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (such as those of Milan Kundera), especially on the need for counter-hegemonic memory. The collective memory of certain interpretive communities exists in a state of tension with national identity and history, unlike the symbiosis that Nora, after Renan and Lavissee, seeks to preserve.³² The importance of scholarship on the Holocaust in American studies of memory has been profound. As Michael Schudson observed: “There are two kinds of studies of collective memory—those that examine the Holocaust, and all the others. Even people whose own work lies in that second group find Holocaust studies inescapably important, capable of illuminating every corner of the general topic with intellectual clarity and urgency.”³³ By its very nature, Holocaust scholarship focuses on memory that is not linked to national identity or imagination.³⁴ Memory—localized, diffuse, polysemic—is thus often seen as undermining nationalizing, totalizing projects. Studies written in that vein tend to argue the need to preserve or salvage the memories of individuals or small communities as antidotes to the narrative of dominant groups and oppressive states and to emphasize the importance of counter-memory. It is instructive to note that *Lieux de mémoire* contained only two articles on counter-memory: one on the Vendée, a region associated with the counter-revolution, and one on the Mur des Fédérés, which commemorates the Paris Commune. Both have been dropped from the English version. Such deletions would be more difficult to imagine in an American collection. Adding to the complexity, post-socialist scholarship suggests a quite different relationship between history and collective memory than is envisaged in *Realms of Memory*. Instead of presenting memory as either providing the raw material of history or subverting official narratives, some scholars have focused on the way in which official history shapes memory.³⁵

³¹ “[T]he main problem is how is it possible to struggle against a cultural power which has a monopoly of the production and diffusion of information and images?” Alain Touraine, in Michael Ignatieff with Ralf Dahrendorf and Alain Touraine, “The New Politics,” in Bill Bourne, Udi Eichler, and David Herman, eds., *Voices: Modernity and Its Discontents* (Nottingham, England, 1987), 76. See also Gail Hershatler, “Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on Subaltern Theory and Chinese History,” in *positions* 1 (Spring 1993): 103–30. Hershatler makes the point that, in the 1950s, at the moment of their greatest apparent agency, namely acquiring a voice, Chinese prostitutes were made to speak the language of victimization given to them by the Chinese state to recall their experiences in the 1920s. Also see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn., 1990).

³² An example of that trend is Bodnar, *Remaking America*, in which he opposes vernacular and official memory. For a critique of Bodnar’s approach, see Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History,” 1401–02.

³³ Michael Schudson is the author of *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* (New York, 1992). He was responding to a query about “breakthrough” books on collective memory from *Lingua Franca* (March/April 1996), available on the World Wide Web at www.linguafranca.com/Special/books.9603.html, accessed May 8, 2001. Another example is the journal *History and Memory*, founded in 1989 by the Holocaust scholars Saul Friedländer and Gulie Ne’eman Arad, and dedicated to “understanding the National Socialist and Fascist epoch and its massive impact on the contemporary imagination as well as the perplexing aspects of its representation.” Pierre Nora is on its editorial board.

³⁴ An important exception, of course, is the link between Zionism and studies of the Holocaust. See Alon Confino’s discussion of Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, 1995), in “Collective Memory and Cultural History.” An attempt to link and compare different communities of memory is by Schwarcz, *Bridge across Broken Time*.

³⁵ See, for example, the essays in Watson, *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*; and

Nora's project exhibits a problem that Alon Confino has suggested is common to memory studies, an emphasis on construction at the expense of reception.³⁶ Nora's project is very much dominated by historians, even if they practice "history in the second degree." Not all take up the more theoretical issues explored in his introduction. Some prefer to write in the style of conventional historians rather than as students of memory; they discuss how certain sites came to be constructed and have evolved over time but do not seek to assess their present place in the French commemorative landscape.

The predominance of historians among Nora's collaborators and the focus on the national at the expense of the local have had a major influence on the way the study of memory is approached. Noteworthy is their heavy reliance on the kind of archival records that forms the basis of traditional historical writing. Despite Nora's distinction between history and memory, it is not evident in the scholarly scaffolding of much of the project. Closely linked to this approach is the accent on elite opinion-makers (who left behind records) as opposed to ordinary localized communities of memory. It is here that the scholarly strategy employed in the project differs most strikingly from the more anthropological one, and where it becomes difficult to distinguish between history and memory, ideology and *mentalité*. Nora claims for history as a profession a critical spirit that is not always borne out by the evidence. Indeed, as he notes, French history is a *lieu de mémoire*: "History was holy because the nation was holy."³⁷ The several articles dealing with French history textbooks by Mona Ozouf and Nora himself, as well as the analysis of debates about Franks and Gauls by Krzysztof Pomian, make the case that French collective memory has been indelibly shaped by a primary and secondary curriculum that was put in place under the Third Republic. The great conflicts of the last two centuries in France were fanned in large part by practitioners of history. Debates about Franks and Gauls and their respective contributions to the making of France began well before the French Revolution. But it is the spread of compulsory education that kept the Franks and the Gauls from disappearing from French popular memory. It is not necessary to have labored over Julius Caesar's *De bello Gallico* or to have participated in debates about the origins of France to appreciate *Astérix*, but that cartoon hero could not have been possible without these antecedents. Memory thus does not exist outside of history.

Besides Frances Yates, Nora was influenced by Maurice Halbwachs, whose *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* was published in 1925 (although it was not translated into English until 1975). Yet it is not easy to discern the socioeconomic and regional bases of the different and conflictual images that make up French national identity, or the power relations that governed their construction, much less their reception. This lack of focus on the social bases of memory gives the impression that, on the whole, national memory transcends boundaries of region and class. There are, to be sure, certain exceptions: the discussion of the role of the Museum of the Desert in sustaining Protestant memory (although this is not offered as an example of

the essay by Peter Zinoman, "Reading Revolutionary Memoirs," in Tai, *Country of Memory* (forthcoming).

³⁶ Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History," 1395–99.

³⁷ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 1: 5.

counter-memory), or Maurice Agulhon's description of the division of Paris between the working class and revolutionary eastern sector and the more affluent and more conservative western sector.³⁸ In general, however, the lack of attention to the "social frames" of memory—to borrow from Halbwachs—leaves unanswered some important questions.

Who defines the nation and national identity? How well is that definition accepted? By whom? Renan's claim, that "every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre at St. Bartholomew,"³⁹ is dubious, given its central place in Protestant memory. Does the definition change over time as new events lead to reinterpretations of the past?⁴⁰ Do even the most committed republicans take pride in the royal, Catholic legacy—the cathedrals, the palaces and chateaus, even certain rituals—in spite of the triumph of the Republic or precisely because the vanquishing of the Catholic monarchy has made available its symbolic resources to non-Catholic, secular French? Who selects memory sites? With which segment of the population is the enduring notion of "la France profonde" associated, especially since the rural population declined rapidly in the twentieth century? Is memory of "la France profonde" slowly melting away like the watch in Salvador Dali's painting, the *Persistence of Memory*, or is it just a vocabulary that remains useful in fighting back against various targets: Paris, immigrants, globalization, modernity, and postmodernity? How can the pastoral nostalgia for "la France profonde" coexist with disdain for "la province"? Could the answer be found in Corbin's observation that "la province" should not be confused with "la campagne," where, long before Marie-Antoinette played shepherdess, Parisians sought refuge from the stresses of urban life and continue to do so today?

If variations by region and class are not made salient in most discussions, the same is true as well for gender. Certainly, there is a wide range of female voices throughout the volumes, such as those of Mme. de Sévigné and the nuns of Port-Royal; Joan of Arc is given an article of her own as the quintessential symbol of the three bases of national identity that are claimed to have died: monarchism, religious faith, and agrarian roots (the shepherdess from Domrémy) and as a focus of veneration by both the Left and the Right. But I am not talking about images of women or even of writings by individual women. I am suggesting instead that gender plays a role in shaping collective memory that could be usefully explored. This is particularly true since so much of French national identity is constructed around battles. Were the horror and heroism of World War I, as symbolized by Verdun, remembered the same way by men and women, or is war defined strictly in masculinist terms? The question is only tangentially addressed in Prost's discussion of war memorials that feature grieving widows and orphans.⁴¹ Philippe Burrin observes in "Vichy" that "France has tended to conceive of its conflicts in historical

³⁸ Philippe Joutard, "The Museum of the Desert: The Protestant Minority," in Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 353–78; Maurice Agulhon, "Paris: A Traversal from East to West," in Nora, 3: 523–54.

³⁹ Renan, "What Is a Nation?" 11.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York, 1975), and George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, 1990). Both works, especially Mosse's, show the impact of the Vietnam War on American scholarship of World War I.

⁴¹ A useful contrast is provided by Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992).

terms, and to conceive of its history in terms of conflict.”⁴² Such an identification of history, memory, and politics can only marginalize the experience of women, who did not gain the right to vote in France until 1945.

Memory seems at times to assume the dimension of an autonomous causative factor in shaping behavior precisely because it is not anchored in a specific social community.⁴³ This is most visible in Jacques Revel’s article on the monarchical style in French politics. He sees in contemporary presidents successful emulators of Louis XIV’s absolutist rule. But is the governing style of every president since de Gaulle—one is tempted to call it the imperious presidency—attributable to the enduring influence of Louis XIV, a conscious strategy to distract the French public from unpalatable truths (in the case of de Gaulle, the loss of empire), or a consequence of their attempts to make the most of the peculiarities of the French political system in the twentieth century? To what extent does present action reinforce the power of memory and ensure its continuation? Is memory product, process, cause, or a bit of all?

The issue of forgetting is perhaps more prominent in American studies of memory than it is here. Nora and a few of his contributors, notably Ozouf, bring up the issue of amnesia as a necessary component of collective memory (a point made by Renan originally). In his afterword, however, Nora suggests that there may be an overabundance of memory and commemoration, particularly of World War II. Yet one can argue that what today looks like compulsive remembering may be the delayed result of decades of willful amnesia during which the French conveniently forgot the small and large compromises they made in order to survive. Until recently, as Burrin shows in “Vichy,” the issue that long dominated discussions of France’s record during World War II was the very narrow one of governmental legitimacy rather than the extent of French responsibility—collective as well as individual—for the shameful betrayal of the Jews. The controversies that have surrounded the sensational trials of Vichy-era criminals owe their heat not only to the nature of their crimes but also to the long silence that enveloped them. It is worth noting how much our knowledge of this period of French history owes to American scholarship—something fully borne out by the bibliographies contained in *Realms of Memory*.⁴⁴

If we are to take Halbwachs’s theory seriously, then the distinction between *lieux* and *milieux* is not really tenable. Today, viewers look at religious paintings of the Renaissance as desacralized objects of beauty. But as Yates showed in *The Art of Memory*, at the time they were painted, they were mnemonic devices that drew on viewers’ familiarity with biblical stories and at the same time reinforced their recollection of these stories: they were sites that were both saturated with memory and worked to promote memory. In the Renaissance, then, one may claim that *lieux*

⁴² Philippe Burrin, “Vichy,” in Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 182.

⁴³ It shares that problem with ideology, which *histoire des mentalités* was supposed to avoid.

⁴⁴ The American historian of France Robert O. Paxton was called as a witness in the trial of Maurice Papon in 1999 to testify about Vichy France. For an account of that trial, see Paxton, “The Trials of Maurice Papon,” *New York Review of Books*, December 16, 1999. For an insightful discussion of issues raised by Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), see Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History.”

and *milieux* coexisted and reinforced each other. The same can be said about Verdun. Prost laments that, with the passing away of veterans of the Great War, Verdun will lose its potency as a site of memory. Until then, it will be a *lieu de mémoire* because there still is a *milieu de mémoire*. In the Balkans, history and memory are constantly recycling each other to reproduce violence: in this setting, the pastness of the past does not exist. Tragedies that occurred several centuries ago are as vivid in the ethno-national consciousness as if they had happened yesterday. As William Faulkner wrote in *Requiem for a Nun*, “In the South, the past is never dead. It’s not even past.”⁴⁵ As a result, the Balkans are full of both *lieux* and *milieux de mémoire*, and, unlike Verdun, they are unlikely to lose their potency any time soon.

The references to “modern societies” and to the “modern metamorphosis of memory” beg the question, when do societies become modern? When did France? It would appear that Nora equates modernity with the nation-state, hence his polarization between national history and memory on the one hand and collective and atomized memory on the other. Nora briefly distinguishes between “dominant” and “dominated” *lieux de mémoire*. (In American scholarship, the trend seems to be more toward a distinction between “winners’ history” and anti-hegemonic counter-memory.) What Nora takes to be a “unified national consciousness” may be only the result of the ability of winners to impose their interpretation on the past, relegating other interpretations to “dominated sites,” “places of refuge, sanctuaries of instinctive devotion and hushed pilgrimages.”⁴⁶ The fragmentation of this national consciousness may thus be due not only to the diversification of the French population but also to the work of critical historians who, “turning everything into prose,” have exposed the-history-as-commemoration that is another name for official history. If there seems to be a surfeit of commemoration, it is because hitherto-silenced minorities have become vocal even as the politics of both history and memory have been exposed.

In a sense, the distinction between history and memory is too simplistic. Even atomized memory uses the milestones of official, national history to construct or reconstruct the past. “During the Great War,” “Under the Khmer Rouge” are used as markers in both national and individual biographies. In certain societies, personal histories are constructed collectively, contradicting Western notions of individual autonomy. It is the lack of alignment between the personal and the national that makes it difficult to preserve a history of rural decline in France. Despite the persistence of the idea of “la France profonde” as a slogan, the agrarian past is disappearing from French memory not just because of the dwindling number of farmers but for lack of specific sites and milestones around which to construct stories of loss.⁴⁷ They just do not hew to the same chronological scaffolding as national history. Loss of farms, the exodus of the young from the land, technological obsolescence, all these are undramatic occurrences and long-term trends that are experienced in isolation rather than collectively. This contrasts with working-class

⁴⁵ William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951; New York, 1975), 80.

⁴⁶ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 19.

⁴⁷ See, in particular, Michel Bozon and Anne Marie Thiesse, “The Collapse of Memory: The Case of the Farm Workers (French Vexin, Pays de France),” in Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, Lucette Valensi, and Nathan Wachtel, eds., *Between History and Memory* (Chur, 1990).

memory, which is structured around strikes, acts of heroism, and martyrdom, that is, around specific individuals and dates, all of which generate the type of records, archival as well as oral, that organize and preserve memory. Moreover, working-class memory, unlike agrarian memory, is constructed and maintained collectively.

What, then, of the *nation-mémoire*, the memorial nation? It would seem that nations are most likely to be in need of *lieux de mémoire* when they are in their most liminal states: when they are being born and are in need of instant antiquity or when they are besieged, either by internal or external forces. Nora observes what he calls an “acceleration of memory”⁴⁸ as a result of ever-multiplying technologies of remembering; these technologies also have the effect of undermining traditional nation-states. Fax machines, the Internet, the telephone, and television help preserve memories and even create instant pasts; they also transcend borders, making possible both what Benedict Anderson calls “long-distance nationalism” and what Aihwa Ong calls “flexible citizenship.”⁴⁹ The memorial nation may not survive disenchantment with the nation-state, a stage of relatively limited duration in the scope of history. Sites of memory may become confused with theme parks.⁵⁰ Unified national histories may become even harder to write. This notion was at the heart of Raphael Samuel’s *Theatres of Memory*: because he was less concerned with defining the nation, he was more fully aware of the impact of colonialism on British identity and more willing to incorporate vernacular sites than Nora and his collaborators. And because he more readily acknowledged the contingent nature of historical knowledge, he did not seek to draw a sharp distinction between history and memory but saw both as being joined in a symbiotic relationship.

If imperialism is the nineteenth-century version of universalism, globalism is its late twentieth-century reincarnation. This time, however, it is not the French republic that is spreading its ideals and practices abroad but a one-time colony (of Britain, not France), the United States. French identification with the feisty but parochial Gaul, *Astérix*, is a far cry from the self-assured rhetoric of “mission civilisatrice.” While Caesar’s rampaging legions have been replaced by tourist hordes, a new threat to the descendants of the Gauls comes from distantly located techno-nerds. In the new world order, France’s role has been reduced from one of “mission civilisatrice” to “francophonie.” This consists of international jamborees often held in former colonial countries whose natives never spoke French in great numbers in the first place, the free and compulsory education of Jules Ferry having largely been denied them.

An article by Samuel that never saw the light was to be called “The Difficulty of Being English.” It stemmed from “his unstable sense of nationality”⁵¹ and his commitment to Communism, which encouraged him to write from the margin and from below, to subtitle *Island Stories* “Unravelling Britain.” By contrast, *Realms of Memory* is written from the center and embodies a top-down approach to its subject. It is, as well, the product of a peculiar conjuncture: the rise of critical historiogra-

⁴⁸ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1: 1.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, N.C., 1999).

⁵⁰ See, for example, John Pemberton’s discussion of the Suharto theme park “Mini-Indonesia” in *On the Subject of “Java”* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994).

⁵¹ Editors’ preface, Samuel, *Island Stories*, ix.

phy, of “history of history,” and of the combined pressures of internal diversity and globalization, whether owing to the growth of the European idea or to the spread of American popular culture, on French national consciousness.

“The nations are not something eternal,” declared Renan, predicting a European confederation.⁵² A unified Europe was the dream of another Frenchman, Jean Monnet (1888–1979), who died the very year Nora launched the seminars that gave rise to *Lieux de mémoire*. Monnet’s dream has yet to be realized. Meanwhile, for Nora, the revolution is over but not yet the nation. In that sense, his publishing project is as much an artifact of the late twentieth century as Lavissee’s history was of the nineteenth.

⁵² Renan, “What Is a Nation?” 20.

Hue-Tam Ho Tai is the Kenneth T. Young Professor of Sino-Vietnamese History at Harvard University. She was educated in France (where she attended a primary school named after Jules Ferry), Vietnam, and the United States. The author of *Millenarianism and Peasant Politics in Vietnam* (1983) and *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (1992), Tai is currently exploring issues of collective memory, museums, and post-socialist historiography. She is the editor of *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam* (forthcoming), to which she contributed an article on gendered images of remembrance and forgetting.