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Louis Alexander Segura

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THE PURGE AND THE CODIFICATION OF MEMORY
IN FRENCH LITERATURE AND FILM

By

LOUIS ALEXANDER SEGURA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Purge and the Codification of Memory in Postwar French Literature and Film

By LOUIS ALEXANDER SEGURA

Dissertation Director:

Andrew Parker

This dissertation is about the influence of the postwar Purge on *francité*, or French national identity and cultural memory, as expressed in cinematic and literary representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. My dissertation begins in 1944 with the Liberation of Paris when Paris was plunged into a war with itself in what is known as *l'épuration*. The Purge as it is commonly known in English was a series of expedited trials beginning before the liberation which were meant to punish French citizens known or suspected to have collaborated with the Germans during the Occupation. I show that the Purge created an aesthetic and political shift in postwar French literature and film by constituting new metaphors to articulate *francité* which continues to permeate contemporary representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. I argue that the Purge casts a shadow over postwar France and its on-going effort to navigate the codes of national identity, cultural memory, and by extension, *francité* to show how the Purge and representations of the Occupation and the Resistance are not just historical events but part of a living experience that continue to shape and be shaped by French cultural memory. I conclude that since 1944 there has been an interplay

between the political and the popular that manifests in the representations of the Occupation and the Resistance which I demonstrate by drawing attention to shifting signifieds like patriotism and nationalism which form the contours of a more diverse and heterogeneous *francité*. My dissertation considers films with literature on an equal basis and contributes an analysis of French films of the period which have not received the same critical attention as literature.

My dissertation is in two two-part chapters in which I contextualize popular cinematic and literary representations of the Occupation and the Resistance throughout the Purge and thereafter to highlight a development of a discourse of *francité*. Part I, “The Purge: The Resistance and Its Referents” focuses on the immediate postwar period (1944 to 1946) as represented in film and demonstrates the importance of cinema during the Purge as France begins to try to come to terms with what has come to be known as *les années noires*, or the “Dark Years,” of the Occupation. In first chapter “*La Libération de Paris* and the Liberation of French Cinema” I discuss the short documentary film *La Libération de Paris* while exploring the cultural and historical demands on the postwar film industry as constituted by the Purge. I argue that the Purge rearticulated French identity in liberated Paris, shaping French cultural memory via the documentary film *La Libération de Paris*. In chapter two “Purpose, Intention, and The Purge in *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho*” I develop this argument by analyzing two fictional films, both made in 1946, that portray the Occupation and the Resistance using documentary footage: *La Bataille du rail* (dir. René Clément) and *Jéricho* (dir. Henri Calef). In this chapter I argue that French cinema responded directly to the Purge which then went on to impact French

postwar cultural memory and subsequent representations of the Occupation and the Resistance.

In Part II, “Tracing the Purge” I focus on writing and authorial intention and how the Purge and its legacy continues to inform French politics and identity. I begin with a chapter on Albert Camus’ *La Peste* (1947) titled “*La Peste*: An Allegory of the Purge.” This chapter serves as a literary analogue to the exploration of film from Part I and engages directly with the ethics of representation, especially allegory. In the chapter I argue that *La Peste* is a critique of the Purge in that Camus draws attention to social and political conflicts of postwar France to construct a narrative of fragmented *francité*. In the final chapter, “Guy Môquet and the Memory Laws: Tracing the Purge in the 21st century” I contextualize the contemporary and recurring discussion of the Second World War in France in order to explore the legacy of the Purge and to consider how these representations shift into the twenty-first century. I argue that the Memory Laws are an extension of the Purge in that they re-frame current representations of the Occupation and the Resistance and the cultural memory of the war into a more diverse and heterogeneous *francité* for the 21st century.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation signifies exhaustive effort and the completion of a demanding task. It was completed without any bloodshed and with a few tears. Despite the effort and the undeniable sweat from Jersey summers, a fitting expression for my journey to earn a doctoral degree would be: “Debt, death, and disease.”

Debt. I owe a debt of gratitude to my dissertation committee for their commitment to and support of my project. In particular, I am grateful for Alan Williams’ resourcefulness for providing me with any film I needed, his sincerity about my work, and for introducing me to the quality cinema of early postwar France. I am grateful to Sandy Flitterman-Lewis and her encouragement, especially during the initial stages of my writing, and her perspective which made me more sensitive to questions of gender and Jewish identity. I am especially grateful to Andy Parker, my advisor, without whom this dissertation would never have been completed. His “tough love” pressured me to think (and to rethink) about the scope of my project and to consider (and to reconsider) my role as a student and as an academic. Working with him has given me insight into the demands of being an advisor and has framed how I might comport myself in the same role. Many thanks to all three. I also owe a great thanks to my external reader Richard Golsan (Texas A&M) for agreeing to engage in conversation with me at the defense. It was an honor to speak with him and to receive his feedback.

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I am in large debt to my family and friends for their encouragement and for their forgiveness for missed birthdays, vacations, and other significant life-events when I used my graduate studies to excuse my absences. In particular, thanks to M. Teresa Garcia for her unwavering commitment to my wife and children. And thanks, too, to Jessica Romero for saving me with the final edits and formatting of my dissertation.

And being at the end of my studies, I am of course in a literal debt which I can no longer defer.

Death. Death bears a great weight on this dissertation. It navigates through the beginning, middle, and end of my writing. There are the historical deaths which frame my dissertation – situated during the Second World War, the Purge and thereafter – of individuals whose biographies I learned and whose stories stir my chapters. And then there are the familial deaths which manifest between the lines of my dissertation. Uncles, cousins, and aunts have passed. However, this dissertation is marked by the loss of three people whose absences can never be filled.

During the course of my graduate studies my wife lost both of her parents and I lost my brother. My brother, Mainor, died on 13 April 2017 thus ending our late night discussions of Karl Marx, film, music, and whatever interesting stories I had read. I hope he learned from me as much as I learned from him. He understood my motivation to get a PhD and reminded me that I had nothing to prove. My father-in-law, Ernesto, died on 3 March, 2013 and my mother-in-law, Maria, died on 28 October 2010 leaving my wife feeling orphaned. My mother-in-law accompanied us, my wife and our two children, on our maiden flight from California to New Jersey where she remained with us for the initial weeks of our residence in Highland Park, New Jersey. Despite our separation of 2,800 miles and thanks to her great spirit of adventure, hers was a constant presence in our home returning as often as possible. Her death was the first personal loss of my graduate studies and still accents my studies with the regret of having separated my wife and children from our family by isolating us in New Jersey. Now, the end of my graduate studies directs us on a new journey where I'm sure my mother-in-law will join us in spirit.

Disease. Life has a way of reminding you who is in charge. Despite our usual optimal health, a few hiccups along the way refreshed my perspective. From a child's late night fever whenever essays were due, to a needy sick child at home from school during those same essay deadlines, or to fractured bones (three by the same child and within the same year), to another child's bout with bronchitis or his brief Lyme's disease, or to their respective need for a nebulizer throughout congested and suffocating nights, or to my wife's muscle spasms, sprained Achilles tendon, recurring aches, or even her own affliction with Lyme's disease.

Debt, death, and disease. Despite the separable categories of this expression for my journey, one person transcends the entire writing process and lurks in all the corners of each page. I am in the greatest debt to my wife, Maria Garcia, who endured the most during my solipsistic journey as a graduate student. It is she who provided the financial support to finish my studies. It is she who bore an hour-long commute twice a day when my funding ran out. It is she who spent time alone with our children whenever I needed to travel for a conference or whenever I was unable to travel with them because of my school work. It is she who endured the loss of her parents in California while she was isolated here in New Jersey. It is she who contracted Lyme's disease, endured muscular spasms in her shoulder resulting in a lengthy course of physical therapy. It is she who sprained her Achilles tendon during a casual stroll in one of the many charming woods of the Garden State. Yet, in spite of the debt, death, and disease, we have managed to make a home in Jersey, make new friends, delight in the differences of the East Coast, and nurture a wonderfully stimulating environment together. Maria, we did it!

Finally, it is my wish that this dissertation serve as an example to my children, Stefan and Alain, as the culminating homework assignment in my own journey as a student.

For my sons, Stefan and Alain.

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Introduction

This dissertation is about the influence of the postwar Purge on *francité*, or French national identity and cultural memory, as expressed in popular representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. The impetus for this project was an observation I made in my coursework on the Second World War. In general these courses used contemporary film and literature both to evoke relevant aesthetic movements (*Le Nouveau roman*, *La Nouvelle vague*, New German Cinema) and to portray the period in question. Much of the subject matter included the Holocaust as a major aspect of the Second World War. However, I began to notice a glaring omission in the texts being studied which drew me to focus on post-Occupation France: Much of the literature, and most of the films dating from the immediate postwar years were absent from these courses. I became curious about those earliest representations, if they even existed, and formulated an area of inquiry: If films and literature of the immediate postwar period exist, what did they portray? To what extent did they articulate a postwar aesthetic? And what is their legacy, if any, in contemporary representations? When I had articulated some of these questions and settled on the content I wanted to explore, I went searching for a book that had not yet been written.

To some degree Europe may have moved on from the Second World War as a colleague once suggested. But considering that Paris celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Liberation of Paris in 2014 and that in 2015 France declassified thousands of police and ministerial documents of the Vichy regime, I find it hard to believe that the Second World War has become irrelevant in Europe. In fact, while I can't speak for Europe in general, the Second World War is a topic that is very much embroiled into France's

psyche. One recent example is the award-winning television historical drama series about the Occupation *Un Village français* (2009-2017) which ran for seven seasons.

This dissertation begins in 1944 with the Liberation of Paris when Paris was plunged into a war with itself in what is known as *l'épuration*. The Purge, as it is commonly known in English, was a series of expedited trials beginning before the liberation which were meant to punish French citizens known or suspected to have collaborated with the Germans during the Occupation. The French *épuration*, “purification,” expresses the spirit of reform intended.

A loosely monitored popular movement at first, the Purge resulted in denunciations, public humiliations, and summary executions of French citizens. The legal component of the Purge which followed the initial popular movement was established by Charles De Gaulle's *Forces françaises libres* (Free France) under the Provisional Government of the French Republic (*Le Gouvernement provisoire de la République française* or GPRF; 1944-1946). The legal Purge also involved denunciations of suspected collaborators; however these were followed with formal trials which were often expedited and commuted to death sentences. Because of the dubious legal procedure involved with the trials most of the executions never occurred. Instead these death sentences were turned into cases of “national degradation” which involved the loss of civic rights. One tragic aspect of the Purge was the conflict among French citizens under the guise of justice and their respective identification as dutiful citizens. In my dissertation, I will refer to this condition of dutiful citizenship and the discourse of nationalism and patriotism associated with it as *francité* which will demonstrate the tragedy of a liberated nation that seems to implode. I do not make a distinction between

the different phases of the Purge noted above (legal and popular); I apply the general term of “the Purge” to the period of my study which includes the Liberation, those years under the GPRF, and the beginning of the Fourth Republic, roughly 1944-1947. I investigate emergent cultural codes within French fiction during the Purge as a means of demonstrating a collective sense of identity, or *francité*. I will show that the Purge created an aesthetic and political shift in postwar fiction by constituting new sign systems to articulate public memory.

I present a development of *francité* in French postwar cultural memory through literary and cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. Initially, I invoke the figure of Pierre Pucheu (1899-1944), the Minister of the Interior under the Vichy government who was executed during the Purge. His execution anchors my dissertation historically and symbolically. As Minister of Interior, Pucheu had the authority to free or condemn *résistants* (members of the French Resistance) or French citizens loyal to De Gaulle’s Free France. Symbolically, Pucheu establishes a theme for my chapters and serves to introduce their content.

The first two chapters highlight the Resistance as portrayed in early postwar films and explores the ideological conflict between two versions of the French dutiful citizen – those loyal to De Gaulle’s Free France versus those loyal to Philippe Pétain’s *État français* (French State), or Vichy France. Pucheu is central to this discussion because he collaborated with the Germans, condemned *résistants* to death during the Occupation and was selected as the first citizen to be executed under De Gaulle’s legal Purge initiative.

As we see in the third chapter, we learn that Albert Camus was morally opposed to Pucheu’s execution. Pucheu’s execution and Camus’ response helps to establish the

tone of action and reaction during the Occupation which Camus represents in *La Peste* (*The Plague*, 1947).

Finally, the fourth chapter draws attention to the testimony of one of Pucheu's victims, the adolescent named Guy Môquet, who was executed for his anti-Vichy Communist sympathies and his *de facto* association with the Resistance. This chapter goes on to examine French citizenship in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in light of the legacy of the Purge.

In one sense my dissertation is historicist; I contend that the Liberation of Paris inaugurated a new mode in French history and culture, and that the post-Occupation Purge evoked a cultural stress not seen in France since the 19th century revolutionary period. In a span of less than ten years during the Second World War the French government shifted from a democratic governance to a fascist state to a provisional government and ultimately to the short-lived Fourth Republic. My dissertation is also a cultural semiotic reading of the shifting signifieds of patriotism, nationalism, and treason all of which are used to signify *francité* as evidenced by the various regime changes during the period in question.

I work with both film and literature to constitute how I understand cultural memory. I propose that one legacy of the Purge was a new set of metaphors in postwar literature and film. My aim is to redirect the study of postwar French narrative away from the Occupation to draw attention to the Purge as the paradigmatic event that influenced postwar aesthetics and identity and by extension *francité*. Furthermore, my dissertation considers films on equal basis with literature and contributes an analysis of film in terms of representation and memory which has not received the same critical attention. Both

modes, film and literature, disclose the process by which the Purge generates meanings about the Occupation that permeate the postwar period.

Broadly speaking, I examine contemporary French fiction with an interest in the intersection of popular culture and cultural memory. My work on the Purge stems from a methodology which originates in the early work of Richard Terdiman, a scholar of memory and of 19th century French cultural history whose critical investigation of French intellectual history is hinged on a social perturbation in France after the 1789-1815 Napoleonic Revolution. With a similar interest in cultural history, I focus on the 20th century for my research and specifically the postwar era as a pervasive social experience. On one level I conduct a synchronic analysis of cultural codes in literary and cinematic representations of the Occupation in French memory beginning with the Purge and examine the cultural discourse that such a synchronic analysis creates about the Occupation in subsequent periods. On another level, I consider a diachronic analysis insofar as it situates my reading of these codes in the historical context from which they germinate, above all the Purge in the early postwar period and the *lois mémorielles*, or the “Memory Laws,” of the late twentieth century. My purpose is to contextualize popular cinematic and literary representations of the Occupation and the Resistance throughout the Purge and thereafter to trace a development of a discourse of *francité*. I will use the following questions to guide my response: How do intellectual debates about representation enter the public consciousness? That is, do metaphors in popular culture develop a collective memory? And what resources does fiction offer the documentation of these events?

This dissertation is in two two-part chapters. Part I, “The Purge: The Resistance and its Referents” focuses on the immediate postwar period (1944 to 1946) as represented in film and demonstrates the importance of cinema during the Purge as France begins to try to come to terms with *les années noires*, or the “Dark Years,” of the Occupation.

In the first chapter “*La Libération de Paris* and the Liberation of French Cinema” I discuss the short documentary film *La Libération de Paris* while exploring the cultural and historical demands on the postwar film industry as constituted by the Purge. I argue that the Purge rearticulated French identity in liberated Paris, shaping French cultural memory via the documentary film *La Libération de Paris*. In chapter two, “Purpose, Intention, and the Purge in *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho*” I develop this argument by analyzing two fictional films, both made in 1946, that portray the Occupation and the Resistance using documentary footage: *La Bataille du rail* (dir. René Clément) and *Jéricho* (dir. Henri Calef). In chapter two I argue that French cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance respond to the Purge which refocalized French postwar cultural memory.

In Part II, “Tracing the Purge” I examine writing and authorial intention and consider how the Purge and its legacy into the 21st century continues to inform French politics and identity. I begin with a chapter on Albert Camus’ *La Peste* (1947) titled “*La Peste*: An Allegory of the Purge.” This serves as a literary analogue to the exploration of film from Part I and engages directly with the ethics of representation, especially allegory. I argue that Camus’ *La Peste* is a critique of the Purge in that Camus draws attention to social and political conflicts of postwar France to construct a narrative of fragmented *francité*. In the final chapter, “Guy Môquet and the Memory Laws: Tracing

the Purge in the 21st century” I attempt to contextualize the contemporary and recurring discussion of the Second World War in France in order to explore the legacy of the Purge and to consider how these representations shift into the twenty-first century. I argue that the Memory Laws are an extension of the Purge in that they re-frame current representations of the Occupation and the Resistance and the cultural memory of the war into a more diverse and heterogeneous *francité* for the 21st century.

The Second World War and the postwar period continue to agitate France. I would even posit that the legacy of the Second World War in France is best articulated as a *longue durée* – the long standing academic trope. More precisely, I argue that this *longue durée* of the postwar period and the ideological conflicts that shape *francité* and cultural memory that begin with the Liberation of Paris is initiated by the Purge. I consider the Purge as an attempt to stabilize the *francité* of the only European nation to both actively collaborate and resist the Germans, to affirm a binary between good and evil, French and non-French.

Part of the lasting interest in the Second World War is the confluence of three clear and decisive crossroads in France that engage directly with *francité*. First, the Liberation of Paris; second, decolonization and the May 1968 student revolt; and third, the Gayssot Act of 1990 and the various Memory Laws which followed. The legacy, or memory, of the war has never really receded and manifests itself violently, subtly, or legally, in these three crossroads. The postwar period is ever-present and the war or more precisely the Occupation and its representation continues to bear cultural capital.

Two terms frame my dissertation: *francité* and memory. *Francité* is drawn from Roland Barthes, but I use Pierre Nora’s re-imagining of the term which relates *francité* to

a French state of mind, as in a personality which reflects a mutual accord between the popular and the official. Barthes employs *francité* in his examination of cultural myths in *Mythologies* (1957). Myth, for Barthes, turns a sign into a signifier which, as he points out, is often imbued politically or is a thing of the tabloids. Barthes uses the example of a young black soldier saluting the French flag to identify two orders of myth. First as the signifier of an event, it is the image itself that one observes. In this case, the soldier saluting the flag. For Barthes, the second order is the location of myth. It is here that the signifier, or the image, resonates politically. At the second order the black soldier saluting the French flag signifies France as a multi-ethnic empire,¹ demonstrating both Frenchness, or *francité*, and militariness at the same time.

My dissertation is both more and less than an examination of myth in the Barthesian vein. That is, less because I do not consider the elasticity of the signifiers that I examine beyond their context of the Occupation and the Purge. More because by confining my analysis to the Occupation and the Purge I demonstrate an enduring effect of the signifiers as they continue to resonate both socially and politically within French cultural memory. Whereas myth distorts the meaning of certain signs, the codes I examine do not obscure their history. The signs I analyze connect to the Second World War, the Occupation, the Resistance, de Gaulle, and Vichy all still intrinsic to French culture. I show how the content of the signs is maintained diachronically.

¹ One might even consider updating the image Barthes uses with the shot of the current French president, Emmanuel Macron, sitting with the heroic undocumented migrant from Mali, Mamadou Gassama, in a room in the Élysée Palace in Paris. Gassama was offered French citizenship by Macron after he scaled the side of a building to rescue a child dangling from a balcony in Paris. Here Gassama substitutes for the saluting boy and Macron for the flag.

My other term, memory, has a robust history. As Susan Suleiman and other scholars of memory point out, there are almost as many theories of memory as there are theorists of memory. Related to my dissertation, is Terdiman's concept of "memory crisis" – memory in times of social crises – such as the Occupation, the Purge, and the Second World War in general. I also draw from Maurice Halbwachs' notion of "collective memory," and Jan Assman's expansion on Halbwachs with his concept of "cultural memory." I also explore Suleiman's idea of a "crisis of memory" (which is more than just a chiasmus of Terdiman's phrase) as referenced in her book *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (2006). She provides both an apt framework and a useful formulation for collective memory and representation, emphasizing a concern often overlooked in the field of memory – the conflict between individual memory and collective or public memory, which she describes as the "difficulties of remembrance" (5). Suleiman posits that "memory is a form of self-representation" (8) and that "crises of memory" are "moments that highlight the relations between individual memory and group memory, concerning a past event that is stipulated as important by a group at a time" (5). She draws attention to the function of choice in the act of remembering and its respective impact on collective memory. Suleiman holds that what gets represented, and more importantly, what gets popularized, complicates collective memory in that such representation and subsequent popularization is not a wholly collective process. In my dissertation every representation examined constitutes a crisis of memory per Suleiman's definition. However, beyond labelling the texts as such, I look more closely at the cultural resonance of memory and its representation. In short, I am interested in the

specific choices of representation (images and signs) during the Purge and how the Purge as a result mediates *francité*.

I situate my dissertation with two scholars of the Purge, French Cinema, and French postwar memory. First, Philip Watts who argues in his book, *Allegories of the Purge* (1998), that the literature of the Purge, relies on the Purge trials for their full signification while also pointing to an allegorical reading that is free for the reader to decide (10). He suggests that the “spirit of the trial” continues to haunt contemporary writing and reminds his readers that the Purge was about judging writers and that despite literature’s stake in representation it may be an unreliable witness. Watts articulates an effective method of understanding the interaction between literature and the Purge. However, he limits his discussion to Sartre, Blanchot, Eluard and Céline but does not include Camus – a writer whose omission from Watts’ book is noticeable. The title of my third chapter on Camus (“*La Peste: An Allegory of the Purge*”) is an homage to Watts’ study – one of the very few to address literature with the memory of the Purge. Second, Suzanne Langlois’ *La Résistance dans le Cinéma Français, 1944-1994: De La Libération de Paris à Libera me*, is an invaluable addition to the study of French Cinema and to the memory and history of the Resistance in cinema. It is a thoroughly researched book that spans fifty years of cinematic representations of the Resistance and was a significant resource for me.

Finally, I agree with Nora, who stipulates that French identity, or *francité*, develops and evolves over time. Cultural memory develops in a similar manner in that it is subject to spatial and temporal factors – forever changing, yet forever retaining a trace of its origin. As Assman proposes: “In cultural formation, a collective experience

crystallizes, whose meaning, when touched upon, may suddenly become accessible again across millennia” (Collective Memory 129). Here Assman presents a temporal distinction, which is central to Chapter 4. Nonetheless, the origin or distinguishing factor, the source, is central to the material of the first three chapters. As will be explored in chapter four, the diachronicity of memories enables a subject to “adopt” them or to become their addressee just as former French president Nicolas Sarkozy did when he invoked the letter that Guy Môquet wrote before his execution.

In these pages I will demonstrate a limitation of representation. Assman articulates three levels of memory – individual, communicative (collective), and cultural; and posits that the cultural level relies more heavily on the embodiment of memory in outward symbols like Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* (Communicative and Cultural Memory 111). This formulation of memory enables me to interpret the cultural codes that develop from the Purge as the crystallization of memory from a more collective level to a cultural level. Assman’s distinction between the collective and the cultural incorporates the realm of “traditions, transmission, and transference” that Halbwachs originally excluded from his concept of collective memory (Communicative and Cultural Memory 110). The first three chapters pertain to Assman’s first two classifications of memory (individual and communicative (collective)) both of which correspond to Halbwachs’ collective memory. Chapter four, which examines the subsequent period after the institutionalization of representation, corresponds to Assman’s third classification of the cultural. Consequently, I will trace a progressive codification of memory and its representation that develops from the Purge.

I hope that my dissertation sheds light on the impact of the Purge on literary and cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance; and that it demonstrates the pertinence of the questions raised, and the observations discussed. Despite the fact that the Purge, as documented historically, may have come and gone, it continues to cast a shadow over postwar France and its on-going efforts to navigate the codes of national identity, cultural memory, and by extension, *francité*.

Part I: The Resistance and its Referents

Chapter 1: *La Libération de Paris* and the Liberation of Paris

At dawn on March 20, 1944, five months before the Liberation of Paris, Pierre Pucheu, Minister of the Interior to the Vichy government who had signed various orders of execution during the Occupation, gave the order for his own. This time not as the head of the tribunal, but as prisoner, tried for treason and condemned to death by General Charles de Gaulle's Free French Army². Just before daybreak the headlights of the gendarmerie vans cast an ominous glow over the field of the Alger hippodrome. At 6AM Pucheu gave the order: "Êtes-vous prêts, Messieurs?...En joue...Feu" ("Gentlemen, are you ready?...Aim...Fire"; my trans; Pucheu 380)!

No visual record of Pucheu's execution exists. A written account was appended to *Ma vie* the memoir he wrote during the short period of his incarceration. The appendix was written by eye-witnesses of the execution including Pucheu's lawyer. During the collapse of the German Occupation and of the Vichy regime, Pucheu sought asylum in Algeria where De Gaulle's Free French Army had set up headquarters. However, upon his arrival, Pucheu was arrested for treason which included collaboration with the Germans and held accountable for the murder of *résistants*, members of the Resistance. De Gaulle needed a symbol of collaboration and Pucheu filled this purpose. Pucheu's execution marked the first official execution of what is known as the *épuration*, or the Purge and marked the advent of a postwar politics of complicity and dutiful citizenship in France that would come to the foreground with the Liberation of Paris.

² Below is a brief timeline of the French governing presence in Algiers.

1. November 1942 - Allied army arrives
2. May 1943 - De Gaulle arrives
3. June 1943 - Comité Français de Libération Nationale (CFLN) founded
4. (June) 44 – CFLN becomes Provisional Government of the French Republic

As early as November 43 a Provisional Consultative Assembly sat in Algiers to develop what would become the first laws of the postwar Republic (Lottman 44).

The Purge was a series of expedited trials intended to punish French citizens known to have collaborated or suspected to have collaborated with the Germans. Its French term, *épuration*, literally “purification,” further connotes the spirit of reform in which the trials were carried out. The trials took place from Pucheu’s execution in 1944 to January 1951. Despite Pucheu’s “official” execution in Algiers, initially the Purge in Occupied Paris consisted of summary executions and popular trials. The status of the Purge transitioned to a more legitimate due process after the Liberation. Legal trials were carried out until 1946 by the Provisional Government of the French Republic and then were carried out by the Fourth Republic. Alice Kaplan summarizes the trials as a “severe but short-lived manifestation of justice” (79). She further reminds us that the trials “were acts of war in a partially liberated country” (79). The ethics of the Purge further divided citizens loyal to Pétain’s Vichy government from those loyal to the Resistance and De Gaulle. The controversy which followed the Purge trials, and which still resonates today, concerned the legality of the procedures. Were individuals simply marked for revenge? Were the trials, which often lasted a mere couple of days, carried out with due process? And overshadowing their legality was *francité*, one’s allegiance to France, and people’s response to collaboration and complicity with the Germans all of which would feature critically both politically and aesthetically after the Liberation of Paris.

The Liberation of Paris on August 25, 1944 inaugurated a documentary aesthetic in both literature and film. However, in this chapter and the next, I will focus on the status of film during the Purge. My particular focus will be three films shot and released during this period – *La Libération de Paris*, released days after the Liberation, and *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho*, both released in 1946 and directed by René Clément and

Henri Calef respectively. All three films document the strain of Occupation as well as French citizens resisting the German Occupation. These films depict the critical network of the Resistance including the French railway workers to also depicting various acts of espionage and sabotage. Following standard plot development each film erupts in either a climactic battle against the German army, the derailment of a German train transport, the bombing of a city's ramparts. However, the films represent more than the effort of a band of French citizens who share a common cause. Filmed during the Purge, I argue that they represent a politics of complicity and dutiful citizenship. I contend that these films present a distinct response to the Occupation and exemplify novel cultural codes that existed in the postwar era.

Among the aforementioned representations of the Occupation and the Resistance that appeared after the Liberation of Paris, the collective and anonymous film project *La Libération de Paris* (1944) holds a privileged position. It is the first film to be screened in liberated Paris on September 1, 1944. Incidentally, by the time the film opened in Paris, the legal portion of the Purge was beginning as De Gaulle had relocated the Provisional Government from Algiers to Paris³. The film is a short 30 minute documentary with a voiceover narration and depicts the battle for Paris. We see episodic representations of the Resistance, Germans, barricaded Parisian streets, street level combat, and even De Gaulle. The film employs various shooting techniques such as high-angle shots to long

³ Later in 1945, the notable execution of French journalist Robert Brasillach would resonate within the production of *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho* and again within the public consciousness during their respective openings in 1946.

shots of combat, including over-the-shoulder shots of *résistants* positioned in a window marking an unseen target. [Figure 1]. The film's climax contains tanks rolling into the



Figure 1. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)

city, shots of captured Germans, and culminates with De Gaulle marching with an entourage of administrators along the Champs-Élysées. In short, we see the heroic struggle of France against the Germans. This documentary film is, what Albert Camus would later call, the “quest for legitimacy” [“la recherche d’une légitimité”] of his generation, that is, the generation of those who had lived through the nihilism and

destruction of the first half of the twentieth century⁴. *La Libération de Paris* is part of a general post-Liberation effort to represent the Occupation and Resistance⁵.

The first days of the Liberation of Paris were an uncertain period. Public debates on complicity with the Germans and the revelation of collaborators gained traction. With Pucheu's execution taking place five months before the Liberation, the initial reactions to Pucheu's execution reveal 60% approval while 75% felt that additional executions should be deferred until the Liberation. Additionally, leading up to the Liberation numerous impromptu tribunals were set up to expedite so-called justice. In the six administrative districts grouped around Toulouse for example there were 654 executions ranging from D-Day, June 6, 1944 to August 20 by which time most of the region had been liberated (Lottman 62). It was not until after the Liberation when the Provisional Government was relocated to mainland France when the official legal Purge would reduce the people's tribunals and its summary executions. Herbert Lottman, in his study *The Purge* writes that after the Liberation, during the months of September 1944 and October 1944 there had been "some one thousand victims of summary executions during the liberations, and about a thousand others sentenced to death and executed by special tribunals, court martial, and resistance courts" (74). The film, *La Libération de Paris*, plants the seed of association for *francité*; that is, it outlines the earliest visual conception of what it means to be French. The film defines loyalty to France by juxtaposing collaborators with

⁴ In 1957 Camus would receive the Nobel Prize for literature. In his speech Camus suggests that his generation must forge an art of living against the "instinct of death" ["l'instinct de mort"] of the twentieth century, or to what he calls the "times of catastrophe" ["temps de catastrophe"]. Camus' Nobel Prize speech will be explored briefly in chapter 3.

⁵ Incidentally, documentaries about the Occupation and the Resistance were also made during the Occupation such as *Caméras sous les bottes!* (Robert Gudin, 1944). This short documentary was shot clandestinely in Occupied Paris with a camera hidden in a storage compartment (saddle bag) of a motorcycle.

German atrocities and makes a public spectacle of the expectations of French citizens and their role in the war. The figure of the *résistant* figures prominently which signifies an early cinematic representation of *résistancialisme*, the Gaullist myth, as conceived by Henri Rousso in his book *The Vichy Syndrome* (1987), that posits a unanimous French Resistance against the German Occupation. The film would etch itself in the French postwar consciousness. In her book, *French National Cinema* (1993), Susan Hayward remarks that *La Libération de Paris* depicts a “different war,” that is, “an imaginary war.” Or as Hayward further defines this difference, the film depicts the Second World War as a war “in which France did not fight except as a *résistante*” – a detail that is emphasized in the subsequent representations of the Occupation and the Resistance after the Liberation. Hayward finds that, during the post-Liberation period between August 1944 to December 1945, eleven films about the war were made with eight being about the Resistance to constitute about 15% of the total film output (seventy six) (189).

The impact of *La Libération de Paris* comes from various scenes and how they portray themes, which we can call codes. These scenes will reappear in various subsequent postwar representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. The codes constitute the combination of signs, symbols and their shared meaning within a culture. I employ the words “signs” and “symbols” as separate yet connected elements. The words can be synonyms. For instance, signs and symbols communicate information; and in the film, signs and symbols that connote complicity and citizenship intersect. Although the words overlap to some degree in their use and meaning, in my argument there are a few distinctions. In particular, symbols are one type of sign. Signs are used to represent something that is absent by means of a photograph or an object imbued with meaning (for

example, a relic or a piece of the original) while symbols represents something absent by an arbitrary connection. For the sake of clarity, I use the distinction offered by Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz in her book *Semiotics and Communication* (1993) where a sign is a “building block” and functions as a “general category” whereas a symbol is a “particular variety of sign” (22). For example, consider the words “patriot” and “traitor.” These words constitute a code, and during the Purge their respective meanings, or signification, depend on the dominant discourse. For instance, the *gendarmarie* and the *milice* were patriotic during the Occupation under the Vichy regime while the Gaullists were represented as the traitors. There is nothing inherently patriotic or treasonous in De Gaulle’s *croix de Lorraine*, a symbol which existed before its association with Gaullist patriotism. The distinction between “patriot” and “traitor” relies on a discursive representation and its accepted meaning. For women this distinction between “patriot” and “traitor” is also marked symbolically. During the Purge, French women accused of collaboration with the Germans had their heads shaven to signify treason. The shaven head, or *tondue*, functioned as an icon, or reference to treason and was implicitly juxtaposed to a woman whose head was not shorn to reference patriotism or dutiful citizenship. This distinction revolved around femininity and its association with unshorn or longer hair worn by a woman. The signs and symbols developed during the Purge, like those seen in *La Libération de Paris*, such as the *tondue*, become the codes that are used to represent the Occupation and the Resistance. Audiences would connect with these codes which then would foster a cultural memory. The codes then continue to appear in the fictional texts from the Purge and thereafter.

The codes, or images introduced in *La Libération de Paris* that would become recycled in a variety of films following the Liberation can vary. These codes are images of famous figures like Charles de Gaulle and anonymous individuals like *les tondues*. They also include sequences of film for example De Gaulle marching along the Champs-Élysées and of tanks in Parisian neighborhoods. The idea of repeating images and scenes from a primary source reminds us of the argument Benjamin puts forth in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936). Benjamin concludes in his essay that film, like art, does not lack its presence in time and space (240-41). Rather, I propose that film suspends its presence in a constant and extended deferral forming a series of recognizable images that evoke uniformity and collectivity for a target audience. In the case of postwar France the reproduction of scenes of the Occupation imagines a narrative for a distressed society or at least a society bearing the weight of its own troubled *francité* and produces, what French historian Pierre Nora has called, *lieux de mémoire* [“sites of memory”]. The reproduced and recycled images from *La Libération de Paris* can be seen later in such films as Marcel Ophüls’ polarizing documentary *Le Chagrin et la pitié* in 1966 and René Clément’s mega-production *Paris brûle-t-il?* also from 1966 or even later in Edgardo Cozarinsky’s *La Guerre d’un seul homme* from 1982. Scenes and images from the Occupation become iconic through their respective repetition and begin to connote cultural tropes with the primary source material being *La Libération de Paris*; however, it must be noted that newsreels from the Occupation become *lieux de mémoire* as well as proponents of a collective cultural memory. For the sake of continuity of my argument, I will limit my discussion to the footage presented in *La Libération de Paris* and omit discussions of “*actualités*” or newsreels from the period.

La Libération de Paris sets a standard for postwar representation of the Occupation. Its influence is noted greatly in Clément's *Paris brûle-t-il?* which recycles much of the battle sequences and the celebratory scenes for its culminating sequences. The film eschews the idea of a journey or the representation of an individual and it is estimated that more than half of the adult population viewed the film upon its release (Langlois, *Résistance* 46). *La Libération de Paris* represents the fight for liberty of the population of a besieged city, Paris. Furthermore, we see the portrayal of a mass movement without the idea of a singular hero – a concept which will be underscored in Clément's *La Bataille du rail*. And yet, like *La Bataille du rail*, the film represents a group of individuals, the *résistant*. More markedly however, the film amplifies the city itself. Paris is the proverbial hero of the film which even De Gaulle acknowledges towards the conclusion of the film when he is seen proclaiming: "...Paris libéré. Libéré par lui-même." The notion of a collectivity begins here and is central to the narration that accompanies the images.

Film historian Suzanne Langlois reminds us that the Paris insurrection, the subject in that the event was in actuality a carefully planned production (Images 465). This means that the seemingly haphazard appearance of the film as a spontaneous and incidental document of the insurrection is itself more of a newsreel. Consequently, the film connects with French film critic and philosopher François Niney's assertion regarding the constructed parallel between fiction and non-fiction films. Langlois notes that film in general during the immediate postwar years in France had a "social and historical mission to fulfill" with a dominant association with education (Images 466). With such moral urgency in mind, postwar cinema of the Purge, whether conscious of its

own conditions and the legacy of its representations of the Occupation and the Resistance finds a dominant figure in the image of Charles de Gaulle. [Figure 2.]. Therefore, it is possible to note that De Gaulle is the unstated or implied hero who is visually celebrated throughout the closing shots of *La Libération de Paris*.



Figure 2. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)

Allegiance to either Phillipe Petain's legacy and the Vichy government or to De Gaulle and the anti-Vichy resistance divided France during and after the war. There are many shades to this division, but at stake during the Purge was *francité* and the dutiful French citizen who harbored between complicity and citizenship.

The figure of Charles de Gaulle occupies a prominent role in the culminating scenes of *La Libération de Paris*. The film does not portray an individual or a singular hero. Yet, De Gaulle's representation at the end of the film might situate him as a hero of the Resistance. In August 1944, one month before the Liberation of Paris and five months

after the execution of Pucheu, the official capacity of the Purge trials had just been relocated from Algiers to Paris. While the official capacity of the Purge is being established in Paris unofficial summary executions of citizens deemed as collaborators was the order of the day. The situation was dire. De Gaulle and the FFI needed to establish order as the planned insurrection for the end of the August was approaching. The climate of having a popular Purge and a legal Purge fostered a tenuous condition for *francité*. This conflict between the popular and the legal needed a resolution in order for France to move forward as a unified nation. Did one move forward with De Gaulle as the new symbol of a liberated France, or did one remain loyal to Pétain, the hero of Verdun and figure of indisputable patriotism? The political and national intersections between De Gaulle and Pétain polarized French citizens. Charles Rearick summarizes this situation as: “Everyone not with [Pétain] was ‘anti-France’” (252). Rearick goes on to explain that Pétain’s “new order” Vichy government made use of Pétain’s public image and legacy as a war hero to the extent that his propagandists deemed Le Maréchal a “Messiah, a Christlike figure, redeeming his fallen country and bringing salvation” or simply deemed Pétain to be the nation incarnate: “Pétain is France / France is Pétain” as the lines of the popular song “Maréchal, nous voilà!” from 1941 indicate (253). Vichy propagandists promoted the local rural life, the *terroir*, and deemed work and the land as “saving graces, the guarantors of an ‘eternal France’” (253). The Resistance by definition was a terrorist organization pit against the fabric of French cultural identity. De Gaulle’s rallying spirit against the German Occupation presented a clear binary to Pétain’s complicity against France which divided the public. *La Libération de Paris* suggests an

answer to the civil rift at the time of the Liberation which was to signify de Gaulle as a unifying and edifying symbol.



Figure 3. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)

De Gaulle's marching along the Champs-Élysées and the concurrent celebration at the Place de la Concorde carry historic and cinematic value. [Figure 3.]. In addition to this culminating sequence in *La Libération de Paris*, other notable sequences include the juxtaposition of shots between the Resistance and the Germans during the street fighting. These sequences further an iconography of the Liberation. They frame the central ideological opposition between *francité* and resistance. The themes of paranoia, collaboration, victory, and salvation all layer the narrative of *La Libération de Paris*. These themes play out visually on screen and in novelist Pierre Bost's screenplay which is narrated by a notable *résistant* within the film community, Pierre Blanchar (English narration by Noël Coward). Furthermore, the themes would occupy postwar politics and, as I contend, postwar representation and mnemonic discourse of *francité*. Additionally,

the film contains shots of collaborators and their respective charge of denouncing France, the *tondue* – women shaven and humiliated publicly, the roundup of Germans, and American tanks and troops. Together, these shots constitute mnemonic codes, that is, they become reference points for repetition and subsequent iteration for a French public of the mid 1940s caught in a transitional period reconceptualizing its own collective memory and *francité*.

La Libération de Paris marks the beginning of French postwar film and representation of the Occupation. I qualify the film's status first by its initial public presentation on 29 August 1944 just after the liberation of Paris, by its subsequent dissemination throughout France, and by the public's presumed presence in the theaters to view the short documentary. I would even argue that *La Libération de Paris* is the first postwar cinematic success of France. According to the *Fondation de la Résistance* website, the limited available electricity in postwar Paris was reserved for those theaters showing the film increasing the possibility that it would have been seen. Secondly, I qualify the film's status by the images that become recycled in subsequent films representing the Occupation suggesting the influence that this film offers. In addition, I further qualify the film's significance given the postwar screenwriting success that its writer Pierre Bost would come to have. In short, as cited by the *Fondation de la Résistance*: "The Liberation of France will have been, above all, one might say, the liberation of French cinema." ["*La Libération de Paris* aura été, presque avant tout, pourrait-on dire, la libération du Cinéma français." Merry Bromberger in *Le Livre d'or du cinéma français* (1945) qtd in Debono.]

La Libération de Paris sets in motion postwar cinema, that is, a cinema that is one, not censored by Germans, but administered by the French themselves; and two, a distinct rupture from the poetic realism of the prewar period. Despite the seemingly haphazard production of the film, the conception and distribution of this “quasi-documentary” as Susan Hayward has called it (190), were very calculated. The production crew of the CLCF (Comité de Libération du Cinéma français) led by Hervé Missir, a reporter during the Allied landing on Normandy, along with a full team divided Paris into ten sectors and set to the streets during the Battle for Paris between 16 and 26 August 1944. After the De Gaulle’s triumphant march along the Champs-Élysées which signified the end of the Occupation of Paris, the film was quickly turned around and became the first film presentation of Liberated Paris on August 29, 1944 (Debono).



Figure 4. From *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945)

Although *La Libération de Paris* contains footage that will become stock for various subsequent representations of the Occupation and the Liberation, it is worth

noting that the films that would fill Parisian cinemas during the initial years of the Liberation would be bereft of representations of De Gaulle. For example, in 1945 the top three grossing French films, *La Cage aux rossignols* (remade in 2004 as *Les Choristes*), the much celebrated *Les Enfants du paradis*, and *Carmen* contain no explicit references to De Gaulle. The two latter works are period pieces which removes any potential recourse to evoke a temporal signifier such as De Gaulle. However, the opening credits to *Les Enfants du paradis*⁶, which were added after the Liberation, acknowledges its Jewish crew⁷. [Figure 4.]. Additionally, *La Cage aux rossignols* takes place in the 1930s but centers on the protagonist trying to get published in the journal *La Dépêche* which was banned after the Liberation for its collaboration and support of Pétain. [Figure 5.]. The following year in 1946 the top three French films contain two representations of the Occupation, *Mission Spéciale* and *Le Père tranquille*, and a literary adaptation, *La Symphonie pastorale*, all of which still make no direct reference to de Gaulle. There are two avenues to consider here. First, the respective positions of the top grossing films reflect what people are actually paying to see. The other consideration is the rebuilding of the French film infrastructure which may have influenced the increase in representations of the Occupation and the Resistance.

⁶ Shot in Nice during the Occupation.

⁷ Alexandre Trauner and Joseph Kosma frequent collaborators with Marcel Carné had fled to the Unoccupied Zone after the installation in 1940 of C.O.I.C. (Comité d'organisation de l'industrie cinématographique, the Vichy organization that restricted Jewish employment in the film industry.



Figure 5. From *La Cage aux rossignols* (1945)

In 1945, a little over a year after the release of *La Libération de Paris*, De Gaulle's interim government created a "Ministry of Reconstruction" which would continue to be part of the French government through the Fourth Republic and renamed in the Fifth Republic as the "Ministry of Construction." The function of this branch was the literal "reconstruction" and "construction" of buildings which included theaters. In October of 1946, more than two years after *La Libération de Paris*, film was nationalized with the creation of the CNC, *Le Centre national de la cinématographie* (National Center for Cinematography [Cinema and the Moving Image]). The implementation of a regulated public entity positioned film in France to receive structural aid from the government in all aspects of film including production and distribution. *La Libération de Paris* predates these initiatives which are still in effect today. However, the film was part of the proto-national organization the CLFN which organized and funded the project in

the interest of creating the collective discourse which resonates in the film. In fact, the CLFN declared the films made during the Occupation under Vichy and/or the Germans as invalid (Jeancolas 13-14).

The French film industry suffered during the Occupation. The onset of war had suspended French film production; and under the Occupation in 1940 much personnel (actors, directors, crew, etc.) either emigrated from France or fled to the Unoccupied Zone in the South. As Alan Williams writes in his book, *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking*, French cinema under the Occupation was “disastrously divided” finding itself with “facilities and capital in the North” and “personnel in the South” (248). Despite the fact that C.O.I.C., the Comité d’Organisation de l’Industrie Cinématographique (Organization Committee for the Cinema Industry), a Vichy sponsored agency, managed to save the French film industry from ruin, the eventual implementation of Vichy’s anti-Semitic laws would further divide the industry. In 1942, the Germans would take complete control over France and its film industry which would be overseen by Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda. French film production would continue but under German censorship. During the Occupation, the Germans managed to control much of the market and controlled French film production. The post-Liberation reconstruction and reanimation of the film industry fostered a wave of literary adaptations re-connecting France with its legacy to cinema and the arts in addition to releasing previously unreleased fictions films like Marcel Carné’s *Les Enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*, 1945), which ran with a credit to the Resistance. As the French film industry regained its momentum after the liberation, representations of the

Occupation and the Resistance would become popular, some of which would include newsreels and *actualités* to tether itself to French collective memory.

In October 1946, French postwar cinema underwent a careful reconstruction that would culminate with the establishment of the *Centre national de la cinématographie* (National Center for Cinematography), the CNC. *La Libération de Paris* was made before the CNC was founded making the film more significant because it contains the immediate and raw memory of the Occupation and the Resistance. That is, it contains a memory unmediated by a national discourse⁸. The memory represented in the film is personal to the viewers and the filmmakers. The nationalization of film and founding of the CNC would mediate the discourse regarding the Occupation and the Resistance, encounters that would result in a collective discourse towards a singular conception of *francité*. That is not to say that the CNC dictated content. However, I contend that the creation of an institution like the CNC would influence a collective memory of such a catastrophic national experience, especially during a time of reconstruction.

Colin Crisp highlights various perspectives surrounding the development of French cinema after the war. *La Libération de Paris* demonstrates the “clean break” or the “radical break” that Colin Crisp notes in *The Classic French Cinema 1930-1960* that occurred in the conception of French cinema after the war (43-44). He notes various perspectives that suggest the complication of cinematic continuity for France. But it is this film that lays the framework for the public and introduces the on-screen representation of the *resistant*, a central figure that will embody popular memory and become a collective representation during the latter half of the 20th century. On the one

⁸ Similarly, *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho* are products of a pre-CNC film industry. A point which will be explored in chapter 2.

hand it is a decidedly radical shift in the production. On the other hand it is the consequence of a legislative framework established shortly after the Occupation. Crisp posits that the liberation in fact did not bring forth a new beginning, but rather that the “industrial conditions established during the war served as the foundation of postwar classic French cinema” (44). Although this position is cogent and I agree with the framework of a classic French cinema after the war as a continuity of sorts, his argument puts emphasis on the economic and the political condition of 1940. I also agree with Crisp that the political conditions require primacy in the case of postwar cinema, but the postwar Purge and the aesthetic climate of a national impulse and reaction to the Occupation need further attention in relation to the development of film after the Liberation.

Crisp provides a useful analysis of the political conditions of the Occupation in relation to French cinema that ultimately influenced the economics of film production, distribution, and exhibition. It is logical, as Crisp notes, that the Germans through their Occupation of France would seek control of “the principal systems of signification and representation” (45). This condition would lead to the need to purge any trace of this effect after the war. The aesthetic response becomes a singular experience that positions itself firmly alongside film. This conception functions well especially if we consider the nature of film as an accessible and popular art form. Leah Hewitt reminds us that French cinema after the war was in a singular position aesthetically in tandem with its political role in that after the war a cinema culture developed where “France’s public audiences and its government officials looked on French cinema as an integral part of its postwar rebuilding, and more generally of its cultural patrimony” (7). Crisp continues his analysis

of German-controlled cinema by pointing out that the control and monitoring of cinematic production by the Germans or this “sanitizing of social consciousness” by totalitarian regimes was one of “progressive unification with a view to nationalization” and had already begun to take place with the German-controlled production agency, Continental Films (45). By 1944 Continental Films had achieved a major share of the market and allowed the Germans to control French film production. It is these political conditions that led to the articulation of a post-Liberation collective memory that I find more useful to arrange French postwar cinema.

Postwar film critic André Bazin notes that after the war there was a lot of death on the screen in Europe (169, 138). In fact he continues by stating that the war was the only identifiable object of representation with which a European could identify collectively. But it is in France where the collective memory of the war becomes complicated. France’s status as both officially resisting and collaborating created a complex scenario for the public as it negotiated its wartime memory (Hewitt 2). Leah Hewitt points out the significance of film as a medium for disseminating a common memory and for gauging a public’s definition of itself. It is film’s “accessibility and popularity,” she states, that positions it to possibly be “the most forceful of art forms in articulating a public sense of the historical and political stakes of the war” (5). *La Libération de Paris* established itself as a paradigmatic film after the war. It suggested the national and essential direction of the postwar memory of the war which as Hewitt further states regarding the nature of film in general: “It is an effective way to create public (national) identity via a shared story, a communal fiction that can organize recognizable elements of a past—whether as myth or as critical re-evaluation—as totalizing narrative or deconstructive multiplicity (5-

6), and that “[i]n addition to its capacity to reflect and shape popular views of past events, film allows for and promotes the airing of current concerns through the lens of memory’s (re)creations” (6). It is useful then given this apt definition of film and its utility to see how the idea of the Resistance is portrayed in *La Libération de Paris* and the tone that it suggests for subsequent films that address the Occupation.

The Purge promoted a collective cultural identity, or *francité*. Cultural identity involves an interplay of behavioral and symbolic systems. The behavioral system refers to distinguishing actions and their respective responses while the symbolic system represents the conventions that convey meaning. The result is a permanent yet evanescent condition. That is, a mutable condition dependent on the dominant discourse. Given the interplay previously explored, *francité* is the signification of the ideal citizen through thoughts and ideas. Advocates of the Purge articulated this ideal citizen in opposition to treason. For example, initially the Purge utilized rhetoric from the 1789 French Revolution’s “Reign of Terror.” The penal codes⁹ articulate the complicity of those guilty of treason by identifying acts that are against France. Furthermore, the commentary in *La Libération de Paris* connects certain scenes with the commune of the 1870s. For example, an image of Charles de Gaulle in 1945 the chairman of the provisional

⁹ From Herbert Lottman. *The Purge*. 1988. (pp. 44-47).

Crimes to be punished were those already defined in existing legislation; no new crimes were to be created. Such as Articles 75 to 83 of the penal code.

Article 75 (the principal authority for the trials) defined as a traitor punishable by death:

- Any French person who bears arms against France;
- Any French person who engages in collusion with a foreign power for the purpose of encouraging it to wage war against France...
- Any French person who, in time of war, engages in collusion with a foreign power or with its agents for the purpose of assisting the acts of this power against France.

Article 76 goes on to deal with defense secrets, demoralization of the army or the nation; subsequent articles deal with attacks on the security of the nation (punishable by terms of hard labor), acts harmful to national defense (prison, fines, a five- to twenty-five year loss of civil rights).



Figure 6. From *Le Monde Illustré* (12 May 1945): De Gaulle victoire
www.arretsurimages.net/chroniques/2015-05-09/Le-Pen-le-rouge-et-le-V-id7718

government and the liberating general on the cover of *Le Monde Illustré* represents the optimism of the postwar period against the stark memories of the Occupation. [Figure 6.]. The future president of the Fifth Republic whose call to arms in 1940 indicated himself as

the person the follow¹⁰ (“I call upon all Frenchmen who want to remain free to listen to my voice and to follow me.”) and follow they did as memorialized in the final sequence of *La Libération de Paris*. While his image is loaded with optimism, its same presence is parodied later in the sixties. During the May 1968 students riots the image becomes a caricature and resonates more as a generational divider as the image bears the weight of a burdened administration. [Figure 7 (left)]. The image evokes change yet it is a constant idea that evokes the legacy of French identity as understood in the distinct silhouette of de Gaulle and his military hat. The fluctuating images retain the same signified content (de Gaulle) but its signification varies according to its composition and its context: the first image evokes the stoic and triumphant presence of an esteemed military leader which becomes its antithesis and caricaturized in 1968 during the dissolution of his postwar Republic. The silhouette thus suggests the absence of substance or any corporeal legitimacy. Subsequently, the signification of De Gaulle’s historical double valence is further connoted, however ironically, during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, especially during the 2008 student protests against Sarkozy’s plans for education reform. [Figure 7 (right)]. A similar arc occurs for Pétain before, during, and after the war. Pétain represents French nationalism, a return to traditional values and ideals, yet Pétain’s signification fluctuates. The valence of such imagery and what essentially are codes of representation can be worked through a series of questions: How do images resonate change? What do codes offer a culture? And for the sake of the examination performed within the limits of this project, how do we identify change and how do we know when

¹⁰ Incidentally, De Gaulle’s broadcast was largely unheard in France but managed to secure his leadership role in the eyes of the British cabinet of Winston Churchill.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/18/charles-de-gaulle-bbc-broadcast>

there is change, or when there is a need for change? I contend that in postwar France the system of change in the cultural context that is motivated through signification is understood through the political lens of the Purge which continue to resonate beyond their specific legal existence of the late forties of Liberated Paris.



Figure 7. From *Le Figaro* (10 Oct. 2015): “Chienlit”: De Gaulle / Sarkozy
www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2015/10/15/chienlit-ce-mot-mis-a-l-index_4790489_823448.ht

As a film *La Libération de Paris* is not just a vehicle for memory or an historical document, it is an exercise in style. And this style, I contend, comes from the period of the Purge that puts forth the problematic relationships among French citizens and the various ideological positions with which a citizen can identify. The film would be well defined as a documentary; however, François Niney reminds us that a documentary – here understood to be a narrative representing nonfiction or fact – cannot stand without, or is always imbued with, the fictive. In his study *Le Documentaire et ses faux-semblants* (2009), Niney suggests that the shot, the basic element of a film, and which fiction films

and documentaries are based, transforms real time into a narrative; and that the fiction film can act or pretend to be a documentary because no shot can prove its referent (62, 78).

Let us consider for a moment three respective types of films and their relationship to representation of the Occupation. *La Libération de Paris* is a documentary. I refer again to Niney's thoughts on the genre. *La Libération de Paris* "documents" the event referenced in its title – the insurrection of Paris against the German Occupation at the end of August 1944. Niney likens the contrast between the genres documentary and fictional films to the difference between the essay and the novel (16). He reminds us of the common characteristics of a documentary, often highlighted in its dictionary definition – the opposition of real imaginary: the didactic purpose which is not a fictional film. However, to avoid epistemological complications suggested by these oppositions, Niney surmises that both fiction films and documentaries can have a didactic, or informative, capacity. He proposes that the documentary could just as well be a boring fictional film burdened with commentary, while acknowledging that this position does not account for fiction films with voice-over narration (16). Niney uses this playful approach to highlight a central characteristic of the differences in genre among films, the relation to the real. Niney proposes that the nature of a documentary should be determined not by its content but by the form (i.e. interaction between the camera and the world), the mode of address, and the belief demanded from the audience:

[L]e caractère documentaire ne serait pas déterminé par le seul contenu (informatif) mais par la forme (d'interaction caméra/monde) et par le mode d'adresse (sérieux et non feint) et de croyance (plutôt anthropologique et historique) demandé au spectateur. (17)

The character of a documentary would not be determined solely by the content (informative) but by the form (interaction of camera and world) and by its tone (serious and genuine) and by the trust (most likely anthropological and historical) demanded of the spectator. (my trans.)

It is this characteristic which contributes to the development of cultural memory.

La Libération de Paris comprises a commentary written by Pierre Bost and narrated by the actor Pierre Blanchard and stood for two noteworthy objectives in its original conception. First it was to serve as a testimony to the Parisian revolt against the Germans, and second it was to set the standard for future newsreels that the CLCF would release in liberated France. These newsreels in fact would come to occupy a greater presence than the American run newsreels of *Le Monde libre* (Debono).

To understand the condition of film under consideration here, it is necessary to examine different modes of memory involved and what these differences suggest. Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* reminds us of the codifying nature of print language for mnemonic national discourse. Anderson suggests that novels and newspapers “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is a nation” (25). This technical aspect of print creates a mechanical method of developing a discourse. The twentieth century introduces a new technical means, that is, a new mode of memory: the moving image. Film serves memory in a more identifiable and accessible structure through its visual composition.

Richard Terdiman in his examination of 19th century cultural memory and representation puts forth two points that I would like to consider as I see the development of representation in the 20th century. First, in relation to print culture and newspapers in particular, Terdiman observes that “the daily paper was arguably the *first* consumer commodity...[and] became the most ubiquitous example of the habits of consciousness

and of socioeconomic practice which in more explicit, thematic forms it sought to impart to its audience” (Discourse 120). He argues that newspapers sold a “transformed perception of its culture” (Discourse 120) and essentially embodied the dominant discourse of the middle class. Incidentally, Terdiman examines newspapers along with department stores as subsystems of the emerging dominant discourse of the 19th century. Terdiman’s articulation of the function of newspapers is significant here because the newspaper constituted a technical composition of daily life, that is, it was a sign system that had organized social life much in the same way that Anderson argues for print language. Elsewhere, Terdiman introduces his notion of a “memory crisis” which he suggests is a disarticulation of time and subjectivity where recollection ceases to integrate with consciousness. In short, a “memory crisis” is a sense that one’s past has evaded memory (Part 3-4). For Terdiman, a “memory crisis” is more complicated than simply forgetting something over time. In fact it is quite the opposite. A “memory crisis” is the incoherence between recollection and consciousness. It is a cultural stress where the rapid alteration of the present disrupts the coherence of a people’s relation to their history. Terdiman finds this “crisis” to exist in the representation of memory in the 19th century’s post-Revolutionary writers who contested the hegemonies of the era and who contributed to what we hold as modernism (*modernité*). Terdiman’s argument for and development of a “memory crisis” is hinged on a social perturbation in France after the 1789-1815 Napoleonic Revolution. The Liberation of Paris inaugurated a new mode in French history and culture, and the post-Occupation Purge evoked a cultural stress not seen in France since the social flux of the 19th century revolutionary period. In a span of less than ten years during the Second World War the French government shifted from the

democratic governance of the third republic to Pétain's fascist French state to a Provisional government and ultimately to the short-lived Fourth Republic. The period in question here demonstrates a series of revolving governments each with its own ideological agenda acting in the service of the national interest. The postwar Purge instated a similar mnemonic rupture in the disruption of the ideological expectations fostered by the Liberation and by De Gaulle's concurrent speeches. There is a disruption of consciousness during this period and the Purge in particular denotes a cultural stress. A cultural stress reminiscent of the 19th century revolutionary period. The Purge created a lived experience of paranoia and fear that was reminiscent, or what seemed as an extension, of the Occupation. While the Occupation is known as *Les années noires* [the "Dark Years"], one might consider the period of the Purge as the "*Darker* Years." The effect was beyond the intelligible and graspable and stunted the continuity of history. The Purge trials and the provisional government were a move away from the conditions of the Occupation, but it was impossible to resurrect the grandeur of the prewar period. Terdiman bases his theoretical framework in the 19th century and not in the century of the moving image. Yet, Terdiman recontextualizes Anderson's use of print language by layering it with the dynamic of social interplay. The textual production of print memory required literacy and distribution of the text for public consumption. Newspapers certainly provided this resource for the public as Terdiman points out; however, the introduction of film and its effect in the twentieth century and more specifically in the postwar period as I am arguing, employed images to evoke principles of culture and identity, or *francité*, avant la lettre. Film made memory more accessible to the masses in

the dissemination of a collective discourse making it more successful than print media in creating an imagined community.

Michel Foucault articulates this idea effectively in an interview for *Le Cahier de Cinéma* in 1974. The interview titled, “Film and Popular Memory” uses the recent election, at the time, of Valéry Giscard D’Estaing as president of France in conjunction with the rise of the *la mode rétro* in film to examine popular memory and representations of the Occupation and the Résistance in a post-Gaullist France. Foucault notes the political complication of the right, that is, of the national right of De Gaulle and of the collaborating right of Pétain. He suggests that the two are “inextricably linked” and the current election of D’Estaing in addition to the influx of films like *Le Chagrin et la pitié*, Louis Malle’s *Lacombe Lucien* (1974), or even *The Night Porter* (*Il portiere di notte*, dir. Liliana Cavani, 1974) point to a healing of the breach between them. Furthermore, the fact that the exoneration of the right by de Gaulle which had ended, as Foucault describes, with the election of D’Estaing, presents an “old right” that is “coming back into the lime-light” (25). The condition, as Foucault sees it, is a struggle over popular memory. Popular memory is the memory of the people, that is, of the individuals who are “barred from writing, from producing their books themselves, from drawing up their own historical accounts” (25). Foucault reminds us that these people nevertheless have their own way of recoding memory which was more active during the 19th century. These memories would be transmitted orally or through songs for example. Foucault continues by contextualizing popular memory in the postwar era, and more contemporarily in a post-Gaullist era, as having been successfully obstructed by various apparati, like film, to reprogram popular memory. He summarizes his idea simply: “So people are shown not

what they were, but what they must remember having been” (25). Foucault isolates a political crossroads to present a shift in consciousness and a shift in awareness of the history of France, especially as it relates to the Occupation and the Résistance. The primary theme he isolates in the films and the history written so far had been of representations of heroes (de Gaulle, Churchill, etc) and the absence of a popular struggle which *Le Chagrin et la pitié* calls into question. *Le Chagrin et la pitié* complicates the heroic memory of the past to re-present the official history of the experience in the guise of “what really happened.” The effect is the disruption of a mythology of the war and the rise of a social ambiguity in a post-Gaullist period which urges the French public to question the official history of what they have been told and to effect a perspective that, in addition to the absence of heroes, was an absence of a struggle. Later, French historian Henri Rousso in his book, *The Vichy Syndrome* (1991), would refer to this Gaullist mythology as *résistancialisme*. Foucault further contextualizes the contemporary climate by asking if it would be possible to make a positive film about the struggle of the Résistance at the moment. Foucault’s observations on the period help explain for instance the critical rejection of *Paris brule-t-il?* and the box-office success of the comedy *La Grande vadrouille* in 1966. Yet Foucault understands that the complication he observes and his insistence on a popular memory are not simply about the disruption of the hero discourse of the postwar period: “The problem’s not the hero, but the struggle. Can you make a film about a struggle without going through the traditional process of creating heroes?” (26). The conditions presented by Foucault urge us to rethink the films of the immediate postwar. If *la mode rétro* presents the end of Gaullism, what does *La Libération de Paris* present? At the time of the Liberation there is no distinct film

movement or style. The classic style of the “Tradition of Quality” (*La Tradition de qualité*) is forthcoming which will lead to its successor in the New Wave (*La Nouvelle vague*). The early days of Liberation during the Purge consist of a nascent postwar film industry organized by the CLCF, La Comité de liberation du cinéma français (The Committee for the Liberation of Cinema), a creative team that would later gain individual notoriety for their own work¹¹. This early film movement contains the seeds of Gaullism which will flower shortly during the Fourth Republic with the election of Vincent Auriol in 1947.

The insurrection in Paris against the Germans marked a new paradigm in the development of film. Insofar as the Liberation of Paris initiated a liberated cinema, the political condition of postwar France in one way constricts yet also fosters the aesthetic impulse of works that address the recent events of the war. The impulse to identify and bring down collaborators after the war grasp the collective memory of the French public. French individual memory and the private experience of the Occupation became a public spectacle. *La Libération de Paris* demonstrates the genesis of a collective memory and portrays the critical issues that will govern French collective memory through discursive combat up to the twenty-first century. “Memory,” Jan Assmann notes, “is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level” (Communicative 109). Conceived during a period of crisis, or as previously explored, a “memory crisis,” *La Libération de Paris* offers a framework of the recent events in a mnemonic narrative for a French public that just four days prior had watched de Gaulle march along the Champ-Élysées. The memory seen on-screen rallies

¹¹ For example, in 1954 alone two of the top films of that year belong to two members of this committee: Jacques Becker, *Touchez pas au grisbi*, and Jean Paul Le Chanois, *Papa, maman, la bonne, et moi*.

its viewers within the cinemas of a politically divided French public. *La Libération de Paris* proposes the direction for an ideologically unified French public in what will become *résistancialisme* – the myth of a collective unanimous Resistance.

La Libération de Paris was produced prior to the nationalization of the film industry in the midst of the civil disorder of the Purge. There is a general feeling of reconstruction after the liberation of Paris. It is a period of national reconstruction of both the film industry and of *francité*. The tumult of the Purge casts a political shadow for the other films of the period.¹² *La Libération de Paris* filled Parisian cinemas upon its debut and *La Bataille du rail* went on to win the Jury Prize and the Director prize at the Cannes film festival the same year. This signification becomes more evident as the genres of films shift into the sixties with dramas and comedies and still even later into the late 20th and early 21st centuries with a diverse signified content which one suspects was always already present but had remained untold.

La Libération de Paris determines codes of representation and many of the symbols that are prevalent in postwar French cinema such as the image of the *résistant*. The film follows a chronology of events that culminated nicely in terms of narration with a climactic battle and subsequent celebration. Yet the film is also only half an hour in length with a script by Pierre Bost and narrated by Pierre Blanchar. The brevity of the film offers snapshots that become cinematic fodder. However, as the first cinematic release in liberated Paris, postwar representations of the Occupation and the Resistance were only barely underway and by extension so was the effort to define *francité*.

¹² The three films represent the same period in question but they do so very differently. The three films currently being analyzed, *La Libération de Paris*, *La Bataille du rail*, and *Jéricho*, are not an exhaustive list. Rather, they have been singled out for their distinct forms which facilitate a general survey of post-Liberation representations of the Occupation and the Resistance.

Chapter 2: Purpose, Intention, and the Purge in *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho*

The Liberation of Paris in August 1944 generated a liberated French cinema. The first film of Liberated Paris was the appropriately titled documentary *La Libération de Paris* which recounted the Paris insurrection against the Germans and their surrender all of which had happened a few days before the film's release. The film captured the tension of the Occupation, the valor of the Resistance, and culminated with General Charles de Gaulle's triumphant march along the Champs-Élysées. *La Libération de Paris* exemplifies the significance of film during the postwar reconstruction of the French film industry. Additionally, it fostered *francité* during the tumult of the Purge – the postwar initiative to filter French society of its complicity with the German Occupation. *La Libération de Paris* stimulated a category of cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. After the Liberation, the Purge expanded. It grew from a public initiative to a legal procedure to criminalize collaboration with the Germans and gained greater prominence in the public imagination. The film industry continued to explore *francité* – the relationship between the dutiful citizen and the Occupation. The question of complicity or resistance impressed significant social pressure on postwar France. In 1946, the films *La Bataille du rail* by René Clément and Henri Calef's *Jéricho* stand as representative examples during the Purge for their articulation of *francité*. The films use signs and symbols to mitigate the Purge and to cultivate a collective memory of the Occupation and the Resistance.

Henri Calef's *Jéricho* offers a distinct representation of *francité* that is worth exploring first. Like *La Libération de Paris*, *Jéricho* juxtaposes the oppression of the Occupation with the exhilaration of Liberation. Unlike *La Libération de Paris*, *Jéricho* is

a more complex narrative of liberation. The theme of Liberation is central to both films and is the general theme of most representations of the Occupation and the Resistance. *La Libération de Paris* addresses *who* liberated Paris by showing that it is Paris, as De Gaulle asserts in the film, who liberates itself thus personifying the city and signifying its population. The American army which is known to have participated in the Liberation has a passive role in the film which focalizes the act of liberation to the French and the Resistance and contextualizes it as a proto-*résistancialiste* film. For *Jéricho*, *francité* and the Resistance figure prominently, yet *résistancialisme* is only marginally represented. It shows the claustrophobia of the period while complicating the condition of French citizens. Furthermore, although the Resistance plays a role in the film, its heroes are pilots of the British Royal Air Force, the RAF. These factors make *Jéricho* less glorious than *La Libération de Paris* or even than *La Bataille du rail* (which will be explored later) all of which result in an early example of the strain in the collective memory of the Occupation.

Jéricho was released on December 14, 1946. It tells of the liberation by the British Royal Air Force (RAF) of an unnamed town (which turns out to be Amiens) in which the German army is scheduled to execute fifty inhabitants of the town. *Jéricho* depicts heroism but the heroism of the *résistant* is elided. The film includes a dedication and an epilogue that reference the RAF as the liberator of the town with the Resistance playing a supporting role. Unlike *La Libération de Paris* or even *La Bataille du rail*, liberation in *Jéricho* is portrayed as the effect of external forces. *Jéricho* does not represent the encomium of a self-made liberation which De Gaulle bestows on Paris at the end of *La Libération de Paris*. Instead, the RAF delivers the freedom.

In an article published one year after the Liberation, Jean-Paul Sartre observes: “These days, if a man isn’t willing to say that Paris liberated itself, he is taken for an enemy of the people” (Liberation 161). Here Sartre comments on the agency of the Resistance and its legitimacy one year later. He provides a window into the Purge and the burgeoning *résistancialisme* of 1946 to suggest a dubious agency of the Resistance in the Liberation. Sartre indicates that *résistancialisme*, *avant la lettre*, was already an aspect of postwar collectivity. Regarding the Resistance, Sartre states that the Liberation was the result of Allied forces and posits wryly that “[o]ne does not...drive out people who are leaving of their own free will, and by the time the insurrection first broke out the Germans had already begun to evacuate the city” (Liberation 161). A year after Sartre’s article, *Jéricho* would echo Sartre’s assertion and represent liberation by the RAF. Despite *résistants* only marginally effecting liberation, *Jéricho* emphasizes human agency in freedom. That is, the “power of freedom” which Sartre acknowledges in the previously mentioned article and which Sartre underscores as the essentially unifying principle of the Paris insurrection irrespective of the impact of the Resistance:

All Paris felt, during that week in August, that it still had a chance, that it could still win over the machine; and even if the battle had ended with the crushing of the Resistance forces, as it did in Poland, these few days would have been enough to prove the power of freedom. So it makes little difference that the FFI did not strictly speaking, liberate Paris from the Germans: at each instant, behind each barricade and on each street they exercised freedom for themselves and for each Frenchman. (163)

Jéricho is a representation of an historical experience – the liberation of fifty hostages at Amiens scheduled for execution after the murder of two German officers. Aerial documentary footage contributes to an effect of realism and serves as an homage to the British Royal Air Force. The film portrays the town’s inhabitants as fearful yet

spirited victims of the Occupation, the Resistance as a small and restive and almost ineffectual enclave, the Germans as impersonal aggressors, and the British Royal Air Force as valiant heroes despite their limited on-screen presence.

The film presents the isolation of the Resistance and the RAF while presenting their interdependence. The Resistance and the RAF are working towards the same goal of liberation yet the film presents a difference their respective force and authority. The town's inhabitants (which I categorize here as non-*résistants*) are in their homes, the *résistants* are in their hideouts (and their homes), the British army is geographically isolated, and even the patrolling German soldiers appear isolated from the town they occupy. All of these factions are interdependent yet the film presents how they come together at a single point in history.



Figure 8. From *Jéricho* (1946)

Jéricho begins with a standard title screen and opening credits over a background soundtrack of a German military march. The marching boots of the German soldiers

signify the oppressive regime and serves as a leitmotif for the German army. Unlike *La Libération de Paris* which employed cultural codes that were politically motivated (i.e. *les tondues*, De Gaulle), *Jéricho* imbues a mundane object: the boot, with the signification of standing in for the German army. This example of metonymy produces a new cultural code that will function alongside those already introduced in *La Libération de Paris*. The marching becomes a thematic element at two poignant scenes in the film.



Figure 9 From *Jéricho* (1946)

The first scene is in the opening of the film. This scene establishes the tone of the omnipresent German soldiers. The cadence of their boots tramping around the town is menacing yet it concurrently disempowers the soldiers because it signals to the town's inhabitants of their approach. The shots of the marching soldiers vary from either close-up tracking shots of the marching boots to long shots of the marching soldiers. [Figures 8 and 9]. The emphasis is on the boots and their sound as the soldiers are reduced to faceless automatons. The second scene comes near the end of the film before the planned

execution. In this scene German soldiers march in formation to the execution site. [Figure 10]. This second scene is the prelude to the air-raid by the Royal Air Force that will destroy the German hold on this town and provide the culmination to the allusion established in the title of the fortified biblical town of Jericho¹³ and to the destruction of its walls. Despite the foreboding presence of the soldiers, there is a disempowering of the German soldiers in both scenes. A similar effect occurs in the opening scene of the film. Here, the sound of the boots ends abruptly when the dialogue in a café commences. Although the rupture could have been a technical limitation in sound editing, this rupture connotes the significance of the citizen's voice over the marching boots. The voice of the citizen takes precedence over the threatening presence of the Germans.



Figure 10. From *Jéricho* (1946)

¹³ Incidentally, the film takes its title from the historical raid by the Royal Air Force: Operation Jericho – so called because of the rampart surrounding the town.

Leah Hewitt reminds us that postwar French cinema conforms to French historian Ernest Renan's assertion of forgetfulness in the development of a national consciousness which Benedict Anderson also echoes in *Imagined Communities*. Hewitt points out that De Gaulle's heroic vision of France galvanized a mythos of *résistancialisme* that appeared markedly on the screen (10). But such a vision of France is absent during the immediate postwar period of the Purge. The immediate postwar period is largely glossed over by Hewitt with the indication that "an abundance of films about the war appeared before the French public," and noting that twenty "heroic" war films were made in 1945 and that between 1946 and 1948 France averaged about three films per year on the topic (35). In short, Hewitt does not adequately explore the period in question. The question to explore then is not simply why were these films of such interest, but how or to what extent were these films engaged in the poetics of reconstruction, or more specifically in the process of the Purge which can be understood as an ideological turn that fostered an aesthetic and political response in the collective consciousness of the French public?

While any selection of films might sufficiently explore this question, I have chosen the two films for this chapter for their singularity in terms of representation about the Resistance. In particular, I am interested in the imagery that presents an idealized French public. By extension, I want to show how this imagery demonstrates an implicit relation to the Purge which is part of the cultural fabric and the psyche of a French audience viewing these films. Most importantly however, the films were selected for their popular acclaim in French cinema as suggested by Simon Simsi's numbers in his impressive guide, *Ciné-passions* (2000). While *La Libération de Paris* does not appear on this list, it provides the framework for working within this context and provides some of

the visual vocabulary and the images that will be recycled which establish referential continuity among the viewing public.

What makes this film about the Resistance and the Occupation? Despite the temporal markers: homage to the RAF and the presence of Germans marching in the town; what are the signs that categorize *Jéricho* as a representation of the Occupation? Renowned French film critic André Bazin notes that *Jéricho* is a respectable film but suffers because of its dialogue (110). As he puts it, the Resistance is a “subject that doesn’t have a high tolerance for dialogue” (198). According to Bazin, a film signifying the Resistance should contain a prevalence of documentable “actions,” that is, codes that one can associate with the Resistance.

By comparison, recall that the actions documented in *La Libération de Paris* are underscored by a voice-over narration. As a documentary, *La Libération de Paris* is expository; *Jéricho*, a fictional film, presents an intersection of filmic demands. It commemorates the action of the RAF and it presents a story of the internal conflicts among the hostages. Interestingly, it includes a collaborator as a character. This character indicates the period and signifies a distinctive action in the recent memory of its contemporary French audience. The image of a collaborator distinguishes this film and positions the film as a document of immediate postwar experience. Calef uses close-ups to evoke critical moments for the viewer as in the confessional scene and during the marching sequences of German soldiers.

A French audience of 1946 would be familiar with the framework of signs that the film evokes. *Jéricho* and *La Bataille du rail* are both released in 1946 with *La Bataille du rail* becoming the paradigmatic film of the Resistance. In 1944 when *La Libération de*

Paris was released the episodic images of *tondues*, of Germans, of fighting in the streets and of the heroism of the Resistance against the backdrop of Paris flood the screen.

[Figures 11,12, and 13.].



Figure 11. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)



Figure 12. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)



Figure 13. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)

Audiences also see De Gaulle as the liberator and benefactor of Liberation receiving a bouquet of flowers from a grateful citizen. [Figure 14.]. Historian Charles Rearick points out in his book, *The French in Love and War* (1997) that the French public throughout its wars of the twentieth century were in constant negotiation of how to articulate its past into a contemporary situation of war in order to maintain a positive and mythological approach to its self-identity. Rearick illustrates that *Les Enfants du paradis* which debuted in Paris of March 1945 reaches beyond the idyllic prewar years into the mid-nineteenth century to evoke the time honored image of the “le petit people.” In fact, *Les Enfants du paradis* occupies a definitive role in the perception of postwar French cinema in that among the top grossing French films that year, it is the only film currently

distributed widely.¹⁴ Although *La Libération de Paris* was the first billed film of postwar France and received a positive response across France and beyond, *Les Enfants du paradis* is the first popular postwar fiction film, especially in Paris.¹⁵ The significance of this position can be underscored by the symbol of a flower, a subtle icon that would later resonate in some of Clément's early films.



Figure 14. From *La Libération de Paris* (1944)

The image of the flower, Rearick notes, became prominent in the postwar cultural life (271). As Parisian nightlife resumed to its prewar grandeur during the Purge, Maurice Chevalier's song "Fleur de Paris" which debuted in October of 1944, became a popular favorite among the French public (271). The titular flower signifies *francité*. As

¹⁴ The top grossing film in France in 1946 is *The Great Dictator* (1940) by Charlie Chaplin from the United States.

¹⁵ Actually, *Les Enfants du paradis* is a special case in which the film was released after having been made during the Occupation.

expressed in the song, the flower has kept its colors – blue, white, and red – after four years and blossoms with hope:

Pendant quatre ans dans nos coeurs
Elle a gardé ses couleurs,
Bleu, Blanc, Rouge,
Avec l'espoir elle a fleuri,
Fleur de Paris. ("Fleur de Paris" 00:00:48-00:01:02)

For four years in our hearts
She kept her colors,
Blue, White, Red,
With hope she blossomed,
Flower of Paris. (my trans.)

The song invokes the pervasive and probable resistance of many citizens in the role of public service including the grocer, tax collector, pharmacist, etc. all of whom have cared for or nurtured the flower. In Clément's films the flower would generate a similar association as its portrayal lies with characters who embody dutiful citizenship – Public servants, *résistants*, and children.

Clément's use of flowers demonstrates a similar *francité* as articulated in "Fleur de Paris." For example, in *Le Père tranquille* (1946) Noël-Noël plays an insurance agent/clandestine leader of the local Resistance unit who uses his orchid nursery to conceal his true identity. Also, in *Jeux interdits* (1952) the young protagonist, Paulette, carries a flower-adorned necklace which Michel, the boy who endears himself to the recently orphaned Paulette, tries to hide when she is taken by the *gendarmes* in charge of retrieving lost children to return them to the Red Cross. These two films function as bookends to the imagery of the flower that begins with the popular song "Fleur de

Paris.¹⁶ *Le Père tranquille* was released shortly after *La Bataille du rail* in 1946 and *Jeux interdits* was released in 1952. These films coincide with the years of the Purge. It is probable that Clément did not intentionally create this bookend treatment. However, the timing of the films and their respective use of flowers function as symbolic markers of the period.

The aftermath of the liberation of Paris required significant reconstruction in order to reconstitute both Parisian life and the public psyche. In Paris of September 1944 cinematic activity was minimal. There was a shortage of studios especially since the largest and most productive studio of the Occupation, Continental Films, had been run by the Germans. These conditions are outlined in greater detail in Jean Cocteau's production diary for *La Belle et la bête*, a film which would eventually be released in 1946 (Jeancolas). Despite these and other conditions of film production, Parisian night-life would soon return and Clément would put together his most notable work of the period: *La Bataille du rail*.

In 1946 *La Bataille du rail* became a popular success and immediately occupied a singular, almost mythical position in French cinema which is still true today. Its popularity alone in particular allows us to contextualize the film in terms of collective memory. It quickly became a highly celebrated film and appeared at the first Cannes Film Festival the same year and won both the Jury Prize and the Grand Prix (International Best Director).¹⁷

To underscore this point, Noah McLaughlin in his book *French War Films and National*

¹⁶ To some degree, *Les Enfants du paradis* contributes to this imagery through the eponymously named love-interest in the film, Garance. Flowers comes to stand in for the character played by Arletty. Additionally, the character's name is also the word for a type of flowering plant, *garance*. Although *Les Enfants du paradis* was released after the liberation and its flower imagery corresponds to the period in question, the film was actually made during the Occupation and predates the song.

¹⁷ Also, in 2010 the film was one of the official selections of the Cannes Classics and was digitally restored and re-released on DVD.

Identity concludes that “[*La Bataille du rail*] was a story that the French wanted to tell and be told” (116). McLaughlin also suggests there are three distinct features that surround *La Bataille du rail*: 1) It was the most celebrated film of its time, 2) It has a documentary-like aesthetic, and 3) It eschews the Western convention of an individual protagonist for a collective one. Consequently, the film offers its own perspective of portraying (and possibly recovering) a divided *francité*. *La Bataille du rail*’s representation of the *cheminots* demonstrates collectivity through the activity of the Resistance. While the content of *La Bataille du rail* appeals to collectivity and embodies postwar *francité*, the form in which the content is communicated is worth exploring as well.

La Bataille du rail is part documentary and part fictional film. The documentary film footage evokes a sense of realism.¹⁸ Clément’s early work in the 1930s as a cameraman and director of short documentaries influenced this aspect of the film (Williams 303). In fact, Clément’s work on a documentary of the Resistance Railway Workers entitled *Résistance-Fer* would become the feature length film *La Bataille du rail*. The use of documentary or stock-footage to evoke realism was a feature of films about the war during this period, as was seen with *Jéricho*. While *Le Père tranquille* was more of a character analysis portraying individual *résistants*, *La Bataille du rail* focuses on collective action for its representation. Although there was an uptick in film production, the postwar film industry was still recovering.

¹⁸ Bazin actually says that this was one of the faults of the film that, as he defines it, prevented it from achieving the unity of style of a masterpiece: “l’empêche d’accéder à l’unité de style d’un chef-d’oeuvre” (151). He notes that: “Conçu à l’origine comme un documentaire, partiellement commenté, il semble que le film ait souffert de son étirement final. Sauf exception, un 2400 mètres ne saurait se passer d’une histoire. L’intrigue est ici à la fois insuffisante dans sa construction dramatique et un peu confuse dans son développement. Le film n’a plus la nudité du documentaire sans se décider tout à fait à nous intéresser d’abord ses personnages et à leur histoire” (151-152).

National reconstruction and the Purge seemed like inauspicious conditions for film production. Nevertheless, Clément was an industrious filmmaker during the Purge. In addition to *Le Père tranquille* and *La Bataille du rail*, Clément's other films during this period include *Les Maudits* (1947) and *Au-delà des grilles* (1949). Liberated France provided the opportunity to return to prewar conditions of cultural entertainment, and yet *La Bataille du rail* reflects the problematic process of postwar film production. The initial production of *La Bataille du rail* was for it to be a short film documenting the French railway workers, *les cheminots*. As production continued and as Clément screened portions to backers of the film, he garnered more interest in the film until it became what it is today – a feature length film representing various stories of the railway workers including their derailment of a German artillery transport. Its final sequence represents the victory of the *résistant*-railway workers. *La Bataille du rail* culminates with in the capture of the German soldiers and the declaration of liberation of a provincial French town. During production, Clément is working within the interim government's "Ministry of Reconstruction" and in the shadow of the *Comité français de libération nationale* which saw the production and distribution of *La Libération de Paris* one year earlier. Moreover, *La Bataille du rail* was released in 1946 before the creation of the *Centre national de la cinématographie* (CNC) and its eventual *lois d'aide* in 1948 which would ensure financial support for the creation of French films. Despite these conditions, *La Bataille du rail* was a success. *La Bataille du rail* would not be glossed over as one of many. Instead it would stand out as a singular achievement in the representation of the Resistance and as an early contributor to the promotion of a mythos of the Resistance which would polarize the French public during the Purge. The paradigm that these early

postwar years created was a binary of those who collaborated versus those who did not, and if one was not a collaborator then one presumably was a member of the Resistance.

During the Purge, the French film industry was reorganized to engage more directly with national identity and the effects of the Occupation. As a result numerous feature films about the Resistance were made. These films addressed *francité* not just for the nation and for how it perceived itself, but for audiences abroad as well. This aspect of the films was important given the visible divisions of France during the Occupation and the ongoing civil division of the Purge. *La Bataille du rail* emphasizes resistance and more specifically the theme of “action” which resonated with Sartre’s proposition of social responsibility and *engagement*. Clément’s *La Bataille du rail* exhibits this aspect of *engagement* through its distinct form and content as part fiction film and part documentary about the actions of the Resistance¹⁹ during the Occupation.

The suturing of documentary and fictional film in *La Bataille du rail* creates a stylistic overlapping. The overlapping can be read allegorically as a reconstitution of a divided *francité* and cultural memory. In much of the scholarship on the film, the Purge is often just the historical backdrop during the film’s production. For instance, Sylvie Lindeperg’s article “Political and Narrative Ambiguities in *La Bataille du rail*” considers the political tug of war during the film’s production which involved various groups offering Clément financial support seeking to mediate representation and political allegiance in the film. However, there is no interpretation of the climate to imply its influence on Clément or on the production of the film itself. Ultimately, the Purge and its political transition

¹⁹ From this point forward I use the term Resistance to refer to both the railway workers, about whom the film concentrates, and the *maquis* who also play a significant role in the film but seem to occupy a critical yet marginal role of resistance in the film.

complicate any potential aesthetic postwar cinematic intention. I contend that *La Bataille du rail* fulfills a purpose. Contemporary viewers of the film constitute citizens in the midst of social and political reconstruction which stirs a particular effect in this audience. The idea is analogous to the politically minded scope of literary creations which Sartre qualifies with his notion of *engagement*.

Film scholar Suzanne Langlois observes that postwar cinema in 1946 demonstrates a shift. She asserts that immediate representations of the Occupation were “using the Resistance instead of serving it” – which made many earlier examples disappointing. According to Langlois, the earlier representations were disappointing until release of *La Bataille du rail* which “imposed its aesthetic and emotional weight on all films which came after” (Images 479). The argument Langlois traces is that these early explorations lacked an “essence of the Resistance,” which was captured in *La Bataille du rail* by orienting the film to the “action” of the Resistance. Here we see that she agrees with Bazin’s earlier statement about the proverbial essence of a film about the Resistance which he felt was missing in an example like, *Jéricho*. Langlois further concludes that postwar film production revolved around navigating the Purge and the respective values of *francité*. Langlois articulates this point efficiently:

Despite the emphasis placed on action, it is possible to discern some of the values expressed in the films. They were collective: patriotism, solidarity, and even *esprit de corps* as far as railway workers were concerned. These values could inspire a range of attitudes: energy, courage and audacity, sometimes even recklessness; or discretion and humility, or a spirit of sacrifice. No individual was irreplaceable. Patriotism remained the essential motivation and a common denominator because it could reconcile the Resistance’s diversity, from the Left to the patriotic Right. As political ideas were moving to the Left after the Liberation, the emphasis on action in post-war films allowed for this reconciliation, even including the anti-republican Right. The spirit of the Resistance, for a good part influenced by patriotism, was more concerned with the republican values of liberty, equality and human rights. But the spirit of the Resistance was not considered a very cinematographic subject

in 1944-6 so the patriotic Right, even the anti-republican type, could be included in post-war films. Anti-republicanism would have been contrary to the spirit of the Resistance but was not contrary to the action of the Resistance. (479)

Langlois reconciles the problematic that seems to distill contrasting political motivations into core values. This contrast of politics and values eventually disseminates into the action of the films which effects a purposive cinema. For my argument, I borrow “purposive cinema” from pioneer film critic and filmmaker, John Grierson. Grierson defines “purposive cinema” as a cinema with a responsible social intention. That is, it fulfills a conscious purpose which is ethically and ideologically responsible or as Grierson has described it: “propaganda that is ‘right’” (qtd. in Ellis 344). In the present consideration of Clément, and more specifically *La Bataille du rail*, this cinematic intention must be read within the politics of the Purge – the public trials and executions of French citizens. Yet we must also consider the urgency to document the travails of the Resistance as testimony beyond any political motivation. In fact, Clément was concerned with achieving authenticity of the subject. He felt that casting actual railway workers as actors would help achieve his desired authenticity. He was also concerned with timing of the filming and wanted to avoid delays while shooting because his intention was to provide a visual testimony and to shoot the reality of the event and not artificial ruins (Langlois, Images 472). Clément is working in a postwar context where prevalent cinematic trends in postwar Europe, such as Italy’s Neo-realism or Germany’s *Trümmerfilm* (Rubble films), suggest a distinct aesthetic for representation.

The medium to unify *francité* was French postwar cinema this was most likely due to its social and historical mission. On one level unification involved reaching into the cultural fiber of France’s historical position in the development of cinema and on the

other hand it meant exploiting the function of film to bring people closer together (Langlois, Images 466). *La Bataille du rail* has a mission and function as previously stated, but this function is to serve as an effect within the spectrum of categories emerging in this period.

Three distinct categories exist in postwar French cinema. These categories include the large scale productions of the *La Tradition de qualité*, or the Tradition of Quality, film noir, and the apparent successor to the Tradition of Quality, *La Nouvelle vague*, or the “French” New Wave. *La Bataille du rail* is not a Tradition of Quality film, it is not film noir, and it is much too early to be a New Wave film. Yet its timing can qualify it as partly Italian neorealist for its postwar working class subjects, or even, but to a lesser extent, as a Rubble film because of Clément’s use of sites and props from the war to create authenticity in the subject matter. Central to each movement and of primary concern for Clément is the effect of realism. In an interview in 1985, Clément reminds us that he had always sought realism in his films, as seen in *Au-delà des grilles* (1949) for example. Clément further insists that he was shooting in the style of the New Wave ten years before the fact (71). His example here helps to articulate the difficulty of categories especially since creative innovation cannot be bound categorically. No aesthetic movement is made in a void. Therefore, the Purge provides unique conditions – however brief – for a cinematic aesthetic. Despite the emergence of the Tradition of Quality, the fiction of the period is at a crossroads of representation and memory.

There is no distinct cinematic category for films during the Purge. Instead, what we find is a group of films in the process of both rebuilding a national cinema and tethered to a tenuous political backdrop. These films, like *La Bataille du rail*, demonstrate a politico-

aesthetic in the vein of collective testimony and representation. If the Purge is marked by Sartre's call to *engagement* on the part of the artist or writer, the conditions for filmmakers is analogous. In 1946, *La Bataille du rail* shares the French cinematic field with imported films and holdovers from the Occupation, like Disney's animated film, *Pinocchio* (Norman Ferguson et al) or the British film *The Thief of Bagdad* (Ludwig Berger et al), both originally from 1940. Unlike the other films, *La Bataille du rail* is a self-referential film. It is a representation of recent events and not a literary adaptation like Jean Delannoy's *La Symphonie pastorale* or escapist adventure to a distant past like Robert Vernay's *Le Capitaine Corcoran*. *La Bataille du rail* uses authentic material from the war which approximates it to Italian neorealism. However, Italian neorealism has a distinct grounding in post-fascist Italy that does not necessarily correspond to the French postwar experience. Nevertheless, Langlois reminds us of yet another category of films from the era, *films-documents*. Films of this nature demonstrate qualities of both documentary and fiction films (Images 474). Regardless of a category, *La Bataille du rail* is an example of a postwar nationalization of French Cinema, that is, a national cinema that, like *Jéricho*, constructs a narrative of endurance and human freedom. Since film had both a social and historical mission to fulfill during the immediate postwar period – reaching into the fabric of a national consciousness of France's role in development of cinema and bringing people together because of film's educative function (Langlois, Images 466), cinema was the best medium to unify *francité*. The Liberation of Paris presented the opportunity for France and in particular, French cinema, to initiate a renewed social program similar to the way that was taking place in Italy and Germany. Although *La Bataille du rail* does not necessarily fit into any of the postwar film categories, one might consider it as an unrealized "French" neorealism.

However, this label does not account for the distinct effect and condition of cinema in France during reconstruction and the Purge.

La Bataille du rail has a function during the Purge. However, this function is to serve as an effect within the spectrum of categories emerging in this period. The films made during the Purge perform a distinct effect – it is a purgative effect which generates a particular interpretation of postwar *francité* instituting signposts and markers which will determine the aesthetic motivation of the postwar. In addition, the films constitute a unique direction in French cinema creating a narrative of national unity.

Unlike the visual and overall composition of Tradition of Quality films, *La Bataille du rail* is more concerned with effect than quality. Hollywood films inundated the French market after the Liberation. The consequence of such an influx of American cinema, forced the French to compete at the level where success was assumed to require high budgets for stars, attractive costumes, elaborate sets, etc (Williams 278). Or as Alan Williams observes about the Tradition of Quality: “[S]tars turned into fetishes acting in wish-fulfilling decors and stories (Republic 284). The consequent cinematic wave of The Tradition of Quality, among many factors, was to compete with the American market and to emphasize a tradition of “French” quality, that is, of *francité* – in this case “French” being qualified as non-“German” or non-“American” and the representation of perceived cultural difference or uniqueness. In short, French cinema during the Purge, like the public trials from which these films germinate, emphasizes *francité* to construct a distinct representation of collective memory. However, the pressure for *La Bataille du rail* was not necessarily an “exotic” American cinema. Instead, the contentious legal climate and the complex condition of rebuilding and restructuring *francité* after the Occupation fostered an

atmosphere of purpose in French cinema, especially when it came to representing the recent memory of the Occupation and the Resistance. The war had divided France literally and ideologically. The result was a period of purging anything anti-“French.” The recent memory of a German controlled cinema led to filmmaking that underscored national unity. Made during the Purge, *La Bataille du rail* is not strictly a Tradition of Quality film. It nevertheless produces an effect. It generates a particular interpretation of postwar *francité* and constitutes a new direction in French cinema. *La Bataille du rail* constructs a narrative of national unity. This function of the film corresponds to the literary movement of *engagement* that Sartre defines during this transitional and agitated period. Consequently, *La Bataille du rail* is a committed text and engaged politically.



Figure 15. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

Let us consider two scenes from *La Bataille du rail* that demonstrate the film’s political engagement and promotion of *francité*. The film begins with a scrolling preface that lists the production companies involved and informs viewers of the historical

backdrop. The documentary footage of the Resistance with a voice-over narration in the first part of the film contributes to its realism. Despite its realism, the film also functions allegorically to constitute a theme of *francité*. For instance, three important codes contribute to this theme: first, the smoke/steam of the opening sequence; second, the railway system itself; and third, the city of Paris. These codes are cultural and generate an associative effect for the viewer which breaks from the expected “action” of so-called successful postwar films.



Figure 16. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

The use of smoke/steam during the film’s opening credits can be read two-fold. [Figure 15.]. The billowing smoke immediately suggests the central figure of the film – the train. It further connotes the murky and suffocating atmosphere of the Occupation. Smoke and steam are recurring motifs and return throughout the film at critical moments. They are represented conventionally throughout the film trailing behind moving trains, jetting from braking trains and those preparing to run, but their reappearance during an

execution of *cheminots* suggests the train's personification and omnipresence. This scene implies autonomy by the train as seen by the way the train seems to disrupt the execution and assert its resistance against the Germans. In the scene immobile trains begin to bellow smoke/steam and whistle in response to the death of the *cheminots*. The second feature is the railway system itself. The significance of the railway is self-evident because of the title of the film. However, its importance is indicated throughout the opening credits of the film from listing "les cheminots de France" as actors in the film and to thanking the French Railways National Society (SNCF). Nevertheless, the symbolism of the railway system that is underscored in the film connotes a life-source like an interconnected network of veins and arteries that sustain the life of the nation. First, consider the opening long-take with the train's arrival into the station with the German soldiers who remain mostly immobile and awaiting the train's arrival. The immediate observation is the resemblance to Lumière's famous train shot. With the camera angle and the train's diagonal arrival Clément writes himself into a dialogue of national cinematic tradition. In fact, Clément was filming *La Bataille du rail* on the 50th anniversary of Lumière's famous train shot (Spear 284). Furthermore, the effect of this scene evokes the subordination of all the characters to the train and railway itself. The mostly immobile German soldiers appear powerless waiting for the approaching train to stop. [Figures 16 and 17.]. Furthermore, the scene evokes Bazin's observation that Clément is working with particularly cinematic material, that trains and the railway have been privileged themes of film (150). Finally, the third feature needing exploration is Paris. The capital of France indicates a national referent which is absent in the film. Paris is the city which defines the nation, and it is the city which must be saved. Yet, the

characters of the film are not Parisian; they are local *cheminots* engaged in the struggle for liberation. The film is set in Chalon-sur-saône, a town approximately less than 200km from Vichy lying on the periphery of freedom and Occupation and through which the *ligne de démarcation* passes. The town is geographically isolated from Paris and essentially is isolated from the national unifying symbol, the capital. Yet the town participates in the construction of the nation as a town with a train station and part of the national the railway system. I propose that the town's inhabitants are isolated enough from Paris and are less familiar with the goings-on of the capital than those who are closer. It stands then that the *cheminots*, presumably drawn from the town, are unified in their effort to save a city which, by association, signifies their sense of *francité*. One key scene in which this notion manifests comes before the large scale attack on the armored German transport with the armored car. In this scene a young *résistant* discovers a glow-worm and wonders if these worms are used to light the city of Paris. [Figure 18.]:

SIXIEME RESISTANT. Oh dis donc... (*Il se penche en avant sa main vers la gauche où scintille une petite lumière*).

CINQUIEME RESISTANT. Quoi? (430. *Plan taille du jeune résistant de profil droit au second plan qui tient le ver luisant dans sa main. Le résistant chauve au premier plan sourit*) quoi, c'est un ver luisant. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a?

SIXIEME RESISTANT. J'en avais jamais vu.

CINQUIEME RESISTANT. Ça alors!?

SIXIEME RESISTANT. Tu t'imagines qu'ils s'en servent pour éclairer les rues à Montrouge? (*Il repose le ver luisant et sourit*) c'est marrant, j'en ai appris des choses depuis un an: le seigle, l'orge, le colza, les vers luisant. (*Il touche la bande de chargement de balles de la mitraillette devant lui à droite*).

(SIXTH RESISTANT: Oh, hey look... (He leans forward, his hand on the right where a little light sparkles).

FIFTH RESISTANT: What? (430. Right profile medium shot of the young *résistant* in the background holding the glowworm in his hand. The bald *résistant* in the foreground smiles) what, it's a glowworm. So what?

SIXTH RESISTANT: I've never seen one.

FIFTH RESISTANT: Really!?

SIXTH *RESISTANT*: Do you think that they are used to light up the street in Montrouge? (He puts down the glowworm and smiles). It's funny, I've learned a bunch of stuff this year: rye, barley, rapeseed, glowworms. (He puts put his hand on the bullet cartridge of the machine gun in front of him on the right); my trans; Rebouillon 46)



Figure 17. From *L'arrivée du train à la Ciotat* (1895)

First, there is something to say about the young *résistant* who has only just discovered particular grains or a new variety of worm because of his association with the Resistance. One implication is that he might not have ever been to the countryside or another possibility is that his discoveries suggest his coming of age as he learns of the basic ingredients of bread and oil with the glowworm signifying his enlightenment. However, of primary significance is the site of Montrouge. “Montrouge” is a working class suburb of Paris and it is the birthplace of Robert Brasillach, French author and film critic executed during the Purge for his collaboration with the Germans and for his association as an editor with the fascist newspaper *Je Suis Partout*. A character that is removed from the cultural center of Paris, the young *résistant* can only speculate how the

city lights are illuminated. There might be a bit of naïveté here on the part of the *résistant*, but the scene demonstrates the importance of national unity in Benedict Anderson's sense of an "imagined community:" "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Aside from *La Libération de Paris* the network of films like *Jéricho* and *La Bataille du rail* do not portray Paris but use the city as a reference point. One can imagine the effect of such a representation of the Occupation and the Resistance – it broadens the scope of liberation and the extent of the Occupation to provide a virtual perception of the nation by means of film. It further appeals to the environs of Paris and the disparate factions of the nation by providing a collective framework of *francité* on-screen.



Figure 18. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

In the midst of articulating *francité* and of cultivating a national identity in these films, the Jewish community is marginalized.²⁰ In 1946 it is reasonable to infer that the French public was aware of the camps and the conditions of repatriation for its *déportés*. During this year, Robert Antelme's *L'Espèce humaine* and David Rousset's work *l'Univers concentrationnaire*, winner of the prix Renaudot that year, were already in circulation. That is not to suggest that any reference to the war or to the Occupation in France should comment on or connect to the Jewish situation during this period, but the large omission in popular film and literature of the period is worth noting. As for *La Bataille du rail*, one trait of the film is its indirect reference to the condition of the Jews as seen in its opening shot. [Figure 19.]. This absence is not atypical. Similar to the absence of Paris in these films, the Jewish situation is secondary. This opening shot to the film establishes the demarcation between the zones using a sign that restricts the entry of Jews into the occupied zone. The prologue that appears before this shot went through multiple revisions (Lindeperg, Political 149-50). Early script versions of the opening prologue put an emphasis on the *ligne de démarcation* (recall that the film is set in Chalon-sur-saône along the *ligne de demarcation*) and the need to cross it in order to promote and achieve liberty. Thus the opening image of the sign indicating the *ligne de demarcation* is a remnant of the early drafts of the prologue and merely functions to orient the setting and to remind viewers of the line that must be crossed as an act of resistance. Consequently, any representation of the Jewish situation in France during the war is incidental. In short, the viewer's first image

²⁰ Adapted from Jacques Companeez's 1945 play, Raymond Bernard's *Un ami viendra ce soir* (1946) is an exception. Jewish himself, Bernard, a politically minded filmmaker and member of the Resistance, makes one of the earliest, if not the earliest, cinematic references to the Holocaust. His father and brother were sent to concentration camps and his nephew was deported and died in an extermination camp (Langlois, Resistance 85). It is a psychological thriller/war film filled with drama, action, and hidden identities where a group of *résistants* pose as mentally ill patients and hide in an asylum in the Alps where the Swiss doctor is also a German spy.

of the film after the opening credits is a bilingual (German/French) sign that indicates the Jewish situation, but neglects to pursue this theme further.²¹ Such an opening today immediately denotes the time period and suggests a context for the film. However, the context of the film is not the transportation of Jews across France to the camps, but the disruption of the transport of German soldiers and weapons to the front lines of conflict within the French borders. It might be understandable that this theme should remain secondary given the film's subject of the resistance of *les cheminots* and their role in Liberation. Nonetheless, Clément does portray clandestine smuggling of unnamed men. The men at the beginning of the film who are nearly drowned might be Jews being smuggled across the line. However, there is no evidence for this interpretation except for the suggestion implied by the opening shot when juxtaposed with this smuggling sequence. This near-death experience is not associated with Jews – by name at least – nor is the previously explored execution of the *cheminots*. Instead these are representations of the death and near-death of “French” *cheminots* and the “French” Resistance, in short, of French citizens. In a film in which the railway is the distinguishing characteristic, the surprising absence of the Jewish situation is critical given the role of the SNCF in transporting Jews to concentration camps (Spear 281-2).²² However, this is the definitive characteristic of the film as it invokes *francité*: while collaborators are tried and executed in the world of the viewer, the France within the text is removed from any complicity with the Holocaust and is the locus of “French” Resistance against the Germans. This is an early

²¹ In fact, the first French film to acknowledge implicitly French participation in the Holocaust is Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955) (Lindeperg, Political 159).

²² This notion is further complicated given the recent apology by the SNCF in 2011 to Holocaust victims for its involvement in the transportation of Jews to the Franco-German border for further shipment to death camps. The apology comes in response to a failed bid to acquire the contracts to build a high speed train in the United States (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/26/world/europe/26france.html?_r=0).

representation of the *résistancialisme* that Henri Rousso defines in his book, *The Vichy Syndrome* (1991).



Figure 19. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

The final sequence portraying the disintegration of German control of the railways and the roundup of German soldiers underscores the potential intention of the film to document resistance and to effect *francité*. Viewers observe a medium low angle shot of a window that opens to reveal a celebrating station master hanging a French flag outside his window when gunshots are heard. Promptly, he removes the flag. A moment later a high angle shot reveals a row of German soldiers being led with their arms raised with hands resting on their heads in surrender. The medium low angle shot returns and the station master brings out the flag again and proclaims: “On est libérés!” [Figures 20-23.]. The effect is quite clear – the double-take with the flag draws the viewer’s attention to it and the flag itself is a metonym for France herself – the result is an evocation of *francité*.



20.



21.



22



23.

Figures 20,21,22,23. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

La Bataille du rail's political motivation and effect are more than a convenient film analogue to Sartre's definition of postwar writing. Instead, there is a genealogy to be explored. The film's genesis as a documentary project about *les cheminots* that is expanded is one consideration. I propose another consideration in that the film's composition suggests a dialogue with the cinematic features of soviet cinema. The film's hybrid intercutting composition or montage – the juxtaposition of stock footage and originally produced sequences – demonstrates what the legendary soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein defines as “the collision of independent shots—shots even opposite to one another” (49). For example, consider the firing squad execution scene where a group of *cheminots* are being held accountable for attempted sabotage. Here independent shots are used to convey

saturnine tension. [Figures 24-27.]. In particular, the scene's perspective captures the anticipation and angst of the final railway worker. The viewer is given a shot of the line-up and the death of the first railway worker. The shots then transition between close-ups of the final railway worker and the various final, seemingly mundane, images he perceives before his execution.



24.



26.



25



27.

Figures 24,25,26,27. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

Nevertheless, *La Bataille du rail*'s more direct corollary to soviet cinema would be filmmaker and theorist, Dziga Vertov's newsreels and his politically and aesthetically motivated group known as the LEF²³. In particular, it would seem that Clément's aesthetic in *La Bataille du rail* during the Purge suggests what the later LEFist artists would promote through Constructivism's "socially useful and revolutionary products" (Bordwell 13). Much like the social upheaval in Russia during the early part of the 20th century that

²³ LEF is an acronym for *Levii Front Iskustva* which would translate as "Left Front of Arts."

influenced these artists, the tumult and trauma of the Occupation prompted a similar reaction in artistry in France during the Purge. This consideration shows how *La Bataille du rail* presents a vertovian gesture of creating something aesthetic and “functional.” In other words, as Vertov outlines the idea in his central work *Kinoks-Revolution*, *La Bataille du rail* corresponds because of its social function and how it constructs a world out of fragments. To what degree is Clément’s film style in *La Bataille du rail* “functional”? Clément’s social intentions with *La Bataille du rail* demonstrate a principle of unifying diverse classes. However, the effect of its quality posits a purposive text documenting the Resistance and the *cheminots* which, given the context of the Purge, fosters a social function.



Figure 28. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

The Resistance in the *La Bataille du rail* is represented as an anonymous collective force. Despite the occasional presence of character names in the film, there is no singular

autonomous human hero. Yet, we do come close with the engineer who derails the train. However, I would classify him, and his action as heroic, but not qualify him as a hero per se in the film. Instead, I interpret his function as an extension or appendage, albeit more visible than others, of the body of the Resistance. Incidentally, as in *La Libération de Paris*, we might even consider Charles de Gaulle the film's implicit hero because of his call to arms in 1940 which urged a collective French endeavor. However, De Gaulle is unnamed and any such context is absent in *La Bataille du rail*. The only signifying agent and potential hero or subject of the film is the train itself. It is the agent of both good and evil – it transports the German soldiers and their equipment across France, yet belongs to the national French railway system and is controlled by French citizens. The train seems to be the protagonist of the film that ultimately overcomes the Germans to achieve victory.



Figure 29. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

The significance of the train is suggested by the title, the opening sequence of billowing smoke/steam of the film, and of course the final shot where the audience is left

with the image of the train riding away triumphantly into the proverbial horizon and hopeful future as in a Hollywood film. [Figure 28.]. The idea that Clément's film is more about the evolution of representations of the train is documented in Laura Spear's study *Vanishing Vectors: Trains and Speed in Modern French Crime Fiction and Film (1877-1955)*. In this work Spear traces the history of the train in French literature and film and contextualizes the changing representation through crime and violence of the train and railways as a vehicle of modernity. She concludes her work with a chapter on *La Bataille du rail* in which she argues that the film "reveals a shifting interest from the interior space of the wagon or compartment [as in Zola's *La bête humaine*] to the encompassing network of tracks" (280). She argues that "the new focus on the railway network rather than the isolated spaces of the train leads toward an abstraction of the cultural object" that will become more evident in the experimental literature that will follow in the fifties and sixties (280). The effect of such an exploration of the train in the film is similar to Vertov's proclamation years earlier about the effacement of the human agent in cinema and the insistence on the "poetry of machines" through his manifesto of "kinoks."

Numerous scenes in *La Bataille du rail* portray the mechanical complexity of the railway system and the mechanical intricacy of the train. For instance, early in the film an establishing shot introduces the viewer to a control room of the railway network and later viewers are given a glimpse into the framework of the train's cabin that requires two men to control [Figures 29 and 30.]. Vertov "poetry of machines" and a general transition from man to machine as subject is underscored during the previously explored execution scene. The scene presents a sequence of cuts between the *cheminots* facing the wall awaiting their execution by firing squad and trains stationed in attention as if observing. The execution is

followed by a series of whistles of protest in solidarity from the trains with minimal human agents pictured. Another striking example of the autonomy of the machine comes just prior to this execution. The scene has a *cheminot* drilling into the underside of a wagon when he is spotted from above by a patrolling German soldier standing on a coal wagon. The soldier prepares to shoot the *cheminot*, when he is suddenly shot instead and fortuitously falls among the coal where he is promptly buried by other *cheminots*. The scene then cuts to other *cheminots* wondering where to do hide the dead soldier's rifle. During the discussion a group of German soldiers march past when one of the *cheminots* inadvertently drops his shovel on the tracks which results in a distracting clang. [Figures 31 and 32]. The soldiers, machine-like, turn in unison towards the sudden noise when their attention is immediately disrupted by an abrupt train whistle that seems to blow on its own. The whistle distracts the soldiers and reminds them to maintain their course. The two hiding *cheminots* are left unnoticed and unharmed. From this point forward the train becomes an object that seemingly must avenge the adverse conditions of the *cheminots*, and will ultimately sacrifice itself in a climactic derailment to prevent the Germans from transporting reinforcements to the front.



Figure 30. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

While many modern war films have a tendency to be sensational, *La Bataille du rail* represents the Occupation and the Resistance differently which resonated with critical approval. André Bazin praised the film as being worthy of not just the French Resistance, but of French cinema in general. He observed that “resistance” was a common subject for the European countries who experienced the German Occupation in that it marked a distinct event that each citizen of Europe would understand collectively, as an affective common denominator (“un commun dénominateur affectif”) (Langlois, Images 466-7).



Figure 31. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

La Bataille du rail advances *francité*. It offers a reflection on the condition of Occupation while concurrently suggesting an anonymous omnipresent oppositional collective Resistance. The execution scene noted above delivers what one might consider a “call to arms” against the German army. Unless a film was a literary adaptation, many films during the Purge were about the war. More than a dozen feature films about the Resistance premiered in 1946 (Langlois, Images 461). Moreover, Bazin accordingly noted that in 1946 there was a great deal of death on the world’s screens: “On meurt énormément sur les écrans du monde en 1946” (169). Clément had two films about the Resistance in 1946 (*Le Père tranquille* and *La Bataille du rail*) and he would consistently return to the war in a number of his works: *Les Maudits* (1947); *Au-delà des grilles* (1948); *Jeux interdits* (1952), even into the sixties with *Le Jour et l’heure* (1963) and *Paris brûle-t-il?* (1966). Clément also worked on Jean Cocteau’s 1946 film *La Belle et la bête* and if we

read it as an allegory of France's vulnerability during the Occupation we may even include it among this list.



Figure 32. From *La Bataille du rail* (1946)

La Bataille du rail focuses on the resistance of the *cheminots*, but it is much more than that. In a brief commentary entitled “un film mythique” in the journal *L’Avant Scène: Cinéma*, André Gomar conceptualizes the singularity of *La Bataille du rail* and dismisses its capacity as a documentary. Gomar asserts a common observation regarding the film’s fictional aspect by suggesting that it is not a documentary because of the presence of a director (or *réalisateur*) which connotes a sense of “making,” or “making real”—essentially of fabricating and putting something together like a fiction (81). He defines *La Bataille du rail* as “le film mythique des cheminots” in part because of its documentary origins and elements which then give, in the course of the film, the profound impression that all the railway workers were part of the Resistance. Gomar reminds us however, that many

individuals after the Liberation discovered their own history of resistance and he advises: “il faut replacer ce film dans son contexte d’après guerre. Tourné dans l’euphorie de la Libération, peut-être dans l’urgence, peut-être aussi avec une tendance à enjoliver l’histoire” [“one must situate this film in its post war context. Shot in the euphoria of the Liberation, perhaps in the urgency, perhaps also with a tendency to embellish history;” my trans.] (81). Gomar’s considerations are important and address the concerns by other film scholars who treat the film. *La Bataille du rail* is not just about the Liberation nor is it just made in the postwar era, but the film suggests another fold in its reading if we consider more deeply the effect of the Purge.

The political context of the Purge creates an effect found in the fiction of the period. In the case of cinema, I contrast such an effect within the context of a nascent postwar French cinema and the forthcoming so called Tradition of Quality. After the Liberation, the ban on Hollywood films imposed during the Occupation was lifted and American cinema presented the French market with a competing aesthetic. The result incited the French to compete at the level of American abundance where success seemed to be dictated by high budgets for stars, costumes, and sets. To some extent this emphasis on high production standards was already in place during the Occupation. Nevertheless, the presence of Hollywood was not just a by-product of the Liberation or an example of the hegemony of Hollywood cinema, but the result of a deal struck between the governments of France and the United States to reclaim and bolster the French film industry (139, 148-50).²⁴ One consequence of this deal bolstered competition with the

²⁴ In 1946 the top 5 films by spectators included two American films: Disney’s *Pinocchio* (#1) and DeMille’s *The Story of Dr. Wassel* (#5). The second and fourth films were French films representing the Occupation: *Mission Spéciale* (#2) and *Le Père tranquille* (#4). The number 3 which typically is associated

American market and incidentally emphasized a type of collective market and purposive cinema in the framework of collective memory. The result was a representation of a perceived cultural difference or uniqueness, in other words, *francité*. Yet, the potential inhibitor of a postwar French film renaissance was not the foreign American market, but rather the homegrown problematic legal climate and the complex condition of rebuilding and restructuring *francité* after the Occupation. American cinema actually helped resuscitate the industry with a powerful booster shot.

Whether initiated by competition or by nostalgia, postwar representations of the Resistance and the Occupation during the Purge were evocative of a sentiment to promote *francité* through the cinema. As a result, *La Bataille du rail*, *Jéricho*, and *La Libération de Paris* define or rather create an aesthetic for national unity and identity.

Finally, Clément was not an active member of the Resistance. He was sympathetic to the cause but did not engage with the politics (Herpe 1). Nonetheless, he returned to the war and its representation throughout his career. Spear defines Clément's oeuvre succinctly by stating: "Clément's persistent representation of World War II subject matter in essence creates a memory of the tragic war for the French republic, a sort of memory capsule to document the everyday lives of French citizens and heroes throughout World War II (281). His work documents a mythology of France and its relationship to memory that will be dismantled later by Marcel Ophüls's *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (1969). Nonetheless, for Clément and his contemporaries during the Purge, a purposive "call to arms" perhaps was needed.

with the category of *La Tradition de qualité*, is the adaptation of Gide's novel *La Symphonie pastorale* by Delannoy. *La Bataille du rail* actually comes in at number 6 on the list (4) (Simsi, *Ciné-Passions*, 2000).

During the height of the Purge, representation of the Occupation was haphazard and not a genre per se but a theme consistent across generic lines. In 1946, we are still far from the Occupied France represented in Claude Autant-Lara's 1956 comedy *La Traversée de Paris* where a couple of bumbling smugglers cross Paris with bags of raw meat or the 1966 hilarious romp *La Grande vadrouille* which pairs the comedic talents of Louis de Funès and Bourvil. The backdrop of the adverse conditions of filmmaking demanded an effective response, meaning, the films were not intended solely for entertainment. Instead, the films gestured toward collectivity through their representation of *francité*. Clément's vision in *La Bataille du rail* occupies a similar function that corresponds to the ethical demand made on writers during this period. That is, it calls artists to be socially conscious in their creations. Nonetheless, there is more to say about the soviet influence evident in the film. In particular one can consider Vertov's newsreels and the genuine reality they represent (32). Such an investigation would perhaps allow us to address more deeply the conversation begun here on the effect of the film and its use of documentary footage with what it is that *La Bataille du rail* seeks to capture. Is it a "genuine reality?" If so, then what is that effect? Is the film trying to produce reality? Or is it simply an effect of quality? Or has more been made here of a modest aesthetic impulse? Despite the effect of national identity or the effect of a mediation with a particular sense of *francité*, one can still suggest a tradition of a type of quality that is quite effective.

Part II: Tracing the Purge

Chapter 3: *La Peste*: An Allegory of the Purge

In the Spring of 1944 Pierre Pucheu fled the crumbling infrastructure of the German Occupation and the Vichy regime. He arrived in Algeria where he was arrested, tried for treason, and executed by firing squad by the Free French Army. His execution is the first official execution of the Purge and signified the advent of French postwar politics of reconstruction. This politics of reconstruction finds its most notable and moralistic voice in Jean-Paul Sartre whose “committed literature,” or *littérature engagée* (*engagement*) resonated politically and aesthetically against the backdrop of the Purge to question a writer’s social responsibility. As Interior Minister Pucheu was accountable for ordering the execution of French citizens. The evidence held against Pucheu were official documents containing his signature. These documents were evidence of his *engagement* with Vichy and the Pétainist État Français which was complicit of collaborating with the German Army during the Occupation of France. For the Vichy government Pucheu was a dutiful citizen. Yet, Pucheu and by extension Le Maréchal Philippe Pétain, head of the Vichy government, exemplify one facet of a rotating conception of duty to France. General Charles de Gaulle represents the other. Both de Gaulle and Pétain and their respective visions of France exhibit a rotation of *francité* and of cultural codes which construct French identity.

Sartre developed his notion of *engagement* during the Purge and its executions of public individuals like Pucheu. As discussed in his text *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* (1948; *What is literature?*), *engagement* is one way to critique the status of literature (*littérature engagée*) during the Purge. As previously explored. *La Libération de Paris* (1944), *Jéricho* (1946) and *La Bataille du rail* (1946) also present a politics of

reconstruction. Conceived during the Purge, these films present a distinct response to the Occupation and exemplify through their composition both a type of “committed” text in the Sartrean vein of *engagement* and the problematic political climate while establishing novel postwar cultural codes.

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Albert Camus remarks that the writer is at the service of those who endure and suffer [*subir*] through history, and that writing is an obligation, or a commitment, “à porter...avec tous ceux qui vivaient la même histoire, le malheur et l’espérance qu[’ils] partag[aient]” [“to bear, together with all those who were living through the same history, the misery and the hope [they] shared”] (Banquet). Central to Camus’ concern is the role of representation for a generation marked by individuals growing up in the midst of what Camus calls the “times of catastrophe” [“temps de catastrophe”] or what Lawrence Langer has called “the age of atrocity.” The relevant texts that appeared after the Liberation of Paris in 1944 begins with the collective and anonymous film project *La Libération de Paris*. Camus suggests that this generation must forge an art of living against the “instinct of death” [“l’instinct de mort”] of the twentieth century. During the Occupation, Camus would begin writing *La Peste*. At its core *La Peste* engages with representation and the writing of a collective consciousness for a generation living in these “times of catastrophe”.

The impulse to document the Occupation and the Resistance through fact, fiction, or fact-flirting fiction was not just a byproduct of German censorship during the Occupation or resistance to Vichy ideology, but a standard in representation and a literary trope that is best exemplified during these years in Camus’ *La Peste* (1947).

Much like the films of the period, the writing during the Purge suggests an effort to document. Where film has recourse to stock footage, the literary text draws from the personal memory of the experiences documented or represented. Testimonial narratives grew in popularity during the Purge. The war or the camp experience provided significant material. David Rousset's *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, for example, published in 1946 represents his personal account of the camps while Jean Cayrol's œuvre, which includes the double novel *Je vivrai l'amour des autres* (1947), contain both personal and fictionalized accounts based on his experience during this period. In addition, Robert Antelme's *L'Espèce humaine* (1947) is noteworthy not just for its testimonial capacity and appeal to human sensitivity, but also for its value as a literary artifact and "companion" to Marguerite Duras' *La Douleur* (1985). Published years later, but drawn from notes she kept after the war, *La Douleur* documents the burden, or "pain," of those who, like Duras, waited for the return of *déportés* such as her then husband Robert Antelme. One also finds testimonial narratives of collaborators who were given the opportunity to compose their memoirs prior to execution, such as Pucheu's minimalist titled memoir, *Ma Vie*, or Jean-Pierre Abel's (pseudonym of René Chateau) insightful and moving account, *L'Age de Caïn*, where he provides a contrasting view to the celebrated Liberation and claims that deception by the Germans and his own pacifism led him to collaborate during the Occupation (11). However, Camus' *La Peste*, published in 1947 but whose composition spans the Occupation and some of the postwar Purge, demonstrates an explicit concern regarding the process of documentation and evokes the events of the Occupation and the struggle for unity against German ideology.

Unlike the films of the previous chapters, Camus' *La Peste* is an allegorical representation of France under the Occupation. However, I contend that its allegorical aspect extends beyond the Occupation and more specifically speaks to the politics of the Purge. Recall how a documentary-like aesthetic informs Clément's *La Bataille du rail* making it part fictional film and part documentary. The film suggests a double lens through which to view the memory of the events depicted. This melding of modes of representation reminds us of François Niney's indication which he explores in *Le Documentaire et ses faux-semblants* (2009) that a fictional film can act or pretend to be a documentary and vice versa (See chapter one). Clément's mixing of fiction and non-fiction into a cohesive narrative reconceptualizes the political events of the Purge in which the film was made. *La Peste* on the other hand opens by labeling the text as a chronique or "chronicle," thus positioning the narrative into a more objective framework than a traditional fictional text.

Early in the novel, the narrator describes his role as a *chroniqueur* that must document the authenticity of the events as they occurred. The narrative of a rat-infested Oran creates suggestive connections to the Occupation by means of a layered textual experience. The narrator presents himself as a *chroniqueur*, that is, as a figure who is engaged in the action of the novel, yet seeks objectivity. Ultimately, the narrator's perspective is complemented by Jean Tarrou, another character who writes his own narrative of the town. While the narrator wants to represent the events objectively, this other character focuses on details deemed secondary by the narrator. As a result, *La Peste* is a meta-critical examination of the nature of narration and representation which in many ways complements the nature and style of the films previously examined.

As a chronicle or “chronicle,” *La Peste* functions as a narrative put together to report the history of the fictional plague that overcomes the seaside town of Oran. In short, *La Peste* is a document of Oran’s survival during a time of plague. Yet Camus reminds us of the allegorical function of *La Peste* in a 1955 letter to Roland Barthes. Philip Thody points out that Barthes had “argued that [*La Peste*] was an inadequate transposition of the problems of the [French] Resistance movement” (338). Camus’ response to Barthes’ critique states:

[*La Peste*], which I wanted to be read on a number of levels, nevertheless has its obvious content the struggle of the European resistance movements against Nazism. The proof of this is that although the specific enemy is nowhere named, everyone in every European country recognized it. Let me add that a long extract from [*La Peste*] appeared during the Occupation, in a collection of underground texts, and that this fact alone would justify the transposition I made. In a sense, [*La Peste*] is more than a chronicle of the Resistance. But certainly it is nothing less. (339)

Camus explicitly acknowledges *La Peste*’s connections to this tempestuous period, but suggests that it can be more. Furthermore, Camus orients *La Peste* in a progression of his narratives that describe the action of revolt and which begins with *L’Étranger* (1942); Camus would ultimately explore this notion later in *L’Homme révolté* in 1951 (Rees 56).

Early in *La Peste*, Camus problematizes the tone of the novel with two distinct elements: setting and narration both of which come to frame the stakes of representation. First, the novel is set in Oran. Second Camus’ narrator further distinguishes the text with his definition of a *chroniqueur* and how this definition informs the work he is composing:

Mais, après tout, un chroniqueur ne peut tenir compte de ces contradictions. Sa tâche est seulement de dire: ‘Ceci est arrivé’, lorsqu’il sait que ceci est, en effet, arrivé, que ceci a intéressé la vie de tout un peuple, et qu’il y a donc des milliers de témoins qui estimeront dans leur cœur la vérité de ce qu’il dit. (*Peste* 16)

But, obviously, a narrator cannot take into account of these differences of outlook. His business is only to say: ‘This is what happened,’ when he knows that it

actually did happen, that it closely affected the life of a whole populace, and that there are thousands of eyewitnesses who can appraise in their hearts the truth of what he writes. (Plague 6)

The narrator defines the role of the *chroniqueur* as a figure involved, yet remains objective and seeks to represent the events of the experience with a degree of authenticity. Incidentally, the long-standing English translation of *La Peste* by Stuart Gilbert adopts the neutral word “narrator” for *chroniqueur*. In order to achieve his desired result, the *chroniqueur* must weigh the source of information. The narrator of *La Peste* describes this effort as follows:

Bien entendu, un historien, même s’il est un amateur, a toujours des documents. Le narrateur de cette histoire a donc les siens: son témoignage d’abord, celui des autres ensuite,...et, en dernier lieu les textes qui finirent par tomber entre ses mains. Il se propose d’y puiser quand il le jugera bon et de les utiliser comme il lui plaira. (Peste 17)

Naturally, a historian, even an amateur, always has data, personal or at second hand, to guide him. The present narrator has three kinds of data: first, what he saw himself; secondly, the accounts of other eyewitnesses;... and, lastly documents that subsequently came into his hands. He proposes to draw on these records whenever this seems desirable, and to employ them as he thinks best. (Plague 6)

The narrator describes himself as a historian and in doing so insists on a “real” or “rational” discourse. He differentiates his narrative in order to distinguish it from “imaginary” narrative. The narrator relies on testimony, his and of others (“son témoignage...[et] celui des autres”), as primary sources of his account. He further proposes to employ additional texts that have come into his possession. The result demonstrates what Barthes has called the “reality effect.”

Since the narrator considers himself to be a historian he presents various sources for his account yet limits the narration to a single focalizer: himself. Each form of datum is unique to the re-construction of the lived “experience.” The identity of the narrator

remains a mystery throughout the novel. At the end, Rieux, the town doctor reveals himself to be the narrator. His role as the local doctor provides him with a privileged position as he tends to a majority of the town's citizens. He is also the first witness of the plague finding dead rats outside his doorstep. Rieux will also reveal the identity of his additional source: The journal of Jean Tarrou. Tarrou's intimate and subjective observations complement the doctor's clinical observations of the plague in Oran. Rieux endorses Tarrou's interpretation of the events and underscores their importance just as an ethnologist would listen and report on his environment. With both Rieux and Tarrou's voices informing the narrative there is a conflation of differing perspectives. This suturing of perspectives reminds us of the layering of documentary stock footage seen in some of the cinematic representations of the Occupation during the Purge. The difference in representation between these films and *La Peste* is the allegorical nature of Camus' text which further distinguishes it from documentary representation. Yet in terms of generic distinctions, Barthes points out that certain narrative conventions are not exclusive to historical discourse. Literary discourse may also exercise reporting, as in *La Peste*, or the suppression of "I" to evoke objective storytelling as seen in the realist tradition. The films on the one hand are fictional films with visual elements to construct the real world represented. The visual markers consequently serve as codes of the memory evoked. *La Peste* on the other hand uses more symbolic elements to connote the history by layering the real within its allegorical framework.

While Rieux values verifiable data, Tarrou becomes a historian of secondary yet essential details. Tarrou records more prosaic events of Oran. Rather than approach the subject empirically, he takes on a distinct role from the narrator: "Dans le désarroi

général, il [Tarrou] s'appliquait, en somme, à se faire l'historien de ce qui n'a pas d'histoire[.]...une foule de détails secondaires qui ont cependant leur importance" (Peste 35) ["In those chaotic times he [Tarrou] set himself to recording the history of what the normal historian passes over....a host of seeming-trivial details which yet have their importance" (Plague 22-3).]. Extensive personal detail and description is not in Rieux's presentation of Oran; yet he signals their presence in Tarrou's journal: "On y [les notes prises par Tarrou] trouve la description détaillée des deux lions de bronze qui ornent la mairie, des considérations bienveillantes sur l'absence d'arbres, les maisons disgracieuses et le plan absurde de la ville" (Peste 35). ["We find in them [Tarrou's notes] a minute description of the two bronze lions adorning the Municipal Office, and appropriate comments on the lack of trees, the hideousness of the houses, and the absurd lay-out of the town" (Plague 23).] The minute descriptions and detail of the appearance of the town develop a more complex, or authentic description of Oran for the reader. Rieux's "historical" account is complete in itself, but the inclusion of Tarrou's "personal" narrative generates a "history" with greater dimensions.

Camus' exploration of the demands of historical documents and authenticity in *La Peste* are not exclusive to him, but are part of a condition of historiography and historical discourse. In his essay "The Discourse of History," Barthes offers a thorough rendering of the stakes of historical discourse against the demands of literary discourse in terms of producing a "reality effect" In particular, Barthes' essay explores the conditions of historical discourse that assures its authority as speech-act. For my purpose in examining the exchange between Rieux and Tarrou's discourse to chronicle the events of the plague in Oran, I will explore briefly various classical historians like those addressed by Barthes

in his essay: Herodotus (484?-425 B.C.), Thucydides (460-c400 B.C.), Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), and Jules Michelet (1798-1874).

One of the first accounts of history as an official record of the past is the writing of the Greek historian Herodotus. Herodotus wanted to preserve “from decay the remembrance of what men have done” (Herodotus 29), and to establish the truth of what happened through systematic inquiry to chronicle the actions of the Greeks. Herodotus achieves his result only after including various accounts handed down to him through an oral tradition. His enterprise is much like an ethnologist and is reminiscent of Rieux’s role in *La Peste*. However, the past that is explored by Rieux is not distant, instead it occupies the recent lived memory of the narrator and presumably the anticipated audience of the chronicle.

The mnemonic space for the narrative draws on Jan Assman’s notion of “personal memory.” Assman offers three distinct chronological “periods” of memory: personal, collective, and cultural. Furthermore, Barthes identifies Herodotus as an historian-ethnologist through the various signs that interpolate his writing, which will also be the case for Michelet’s personal *History of France* (Discourse 128). Rieux explicitly invokes the presence of other accounts and offers his authority based on the condition in which he finds himself in relation to the events and the circumstances he describes in his chronicle to justify his role in the dissemination of a historical discourse:

Du reste, le narrateur...n’aurait guère de titre à faire valoir dans une entreprise de ce genre si le hasard ne l’avait mis à même de recevoir un certain nombre de dépositions et si la force des choses ne l’avait mêlé à tout ce qu’il prétend relater. C’est ce qui l’autorise à faire œuvre d’historien. (*Peste* 16-7)

In any case the narrator...would have little claim to competence for a task like this, had not chance put him in the way of gathering much information, and had

he not been, by the force of things, closely involved in all that he proposes to narrate. This is his justification for playing the part of a historian. (Plague 6)

A generation later, Thucydides aimed to write contemporary history free from romance: “Let the reader who wants romance go elsewhere...I am not writing for the applause of the moment, but for all time” (Finley, *Aspects* 48) and he insisted on fact-checking and strict chronology (Finley, *Introduction* 8). Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides relegated material that was not drawn from personal experience to myth feeling that the lack of documentation made the discourse less authentic, or real. In Herodotus, the oral tradition that is included oftentimes aligns itself with myth and legend. Although Herodotus is writing a history of the Greeks that occurred about 400 years prior to his own time, and Thucydides is attempting to document the events of the Peloponnesian War, an event in which he took part, both are engaged in historical discourse, and both, as Barthes suggests, employ strategies not exclusive to historical discourse alone. Barthes reminds us that historical discourse where the speaker/writer is also the participant presents a special case for the speech-act (Discourse 132). Thucydides concerned himself with facts and focused on contemporary events recalled within personal and lived memory. Yet just as Thucydides was not only a historian, but also a participant of the event, Rieux, who is both the protagonist and a participant in the events described in *La Peste* the historical discourse occupies a distinct role. On the one hand, Herodotus recorded events beyond his lived experience and of which he had knowledge through oral tradition. On the other hand, Herodotus used data that had been assembled, which he might have deemed as “research.” Nonetheless, without Herodotus’ “imaginary” historical discourse the events he documented would otherwise be unattainable. For Barthes the condition that both literary discourse and historical discourse employ similar

conventions leads him to the conclusion that both signify their content, that is, they signify a referent by asserting that “something happened.” The narrative structure as a result is both sign and proof of reality which Barthes designates as a “reality effect” and which is behind both literary and historical discourse (Discourse 138-39).

The condition of historical discourse currently being explored is not just an effect of classical antiquity, but a recurring condition of historiography as noted in two 19th century classical historians. French historian Jules Michelet’s historical accounts “were highly personal creations” (Stern 108). For example, in Michelet’s introduction “À M. Edgar Quinet” to his book *Le Peuple* (1846), Michelet writes: “Pour connaître la vie du peuple, ses travaux, ses souffrances, il me suffisait d’interroger mes souvenirs” (“To know the life of the people, their work, their suffering, it was enough for me to interrogate my memories”; my trans; 4). Michelet draws from his memories the life and history of the people. His objective is to explore the marginalized groups, that is, those who normally do not get their stories told. He contrasts his method to the conventional forms of data assemblage of the hegemonic narrative documentation and history at the time. For Michelet, a more authentic or accurate history lies beyond facts because facts are the official narratives formed by other historians. Michelet believes these official narratives to be inaccurate due to their general perspective of the dominant force. Michelet’s method would seem dubious by contemporary standards of historiography despite the value that Michelet places on communicating alternative and marginalized histories.

Classical German historian, Leopold von Ranke, on the other hand, encouraged archival research in the composition of historical discourse. Such a method effectively

constitutes what is considered collective memory. Ranke's idea of *Quellenkritik*, or "source critique," became an influential factor in the practice of history. History, he believed was supposed to be a "critical study of the sources" (Stern 54). In contrast, Michelet believed the truth of history to be attained through personal experience; Ranke believed the truth lay in the "strict presentation of the facts" as the "supreme law" (Stern 57).

Camus' *La Peste* is not directly an historical account. Nor is it specifically an examination of the dimensions of historical discourse. *La Peste* is an allegory of historical events which weighed heavily both on Camus personally and on France in general. *La Peste* demonstrates Camus' effort to document the universality of suffering through the specific trials of an isolated community. *La Peste* functions as a representation of an event within the fictional world of the novel that also demands a certain degree of authenticity from itself as an allegorical document of an historical event. It is Barthes' analysis, or more accurately, his proposed confluence of historical discourse with literary discourse that is the discursive function of *La Peste*. As an allegory *La Peste* frames a fictional witness as a writer, that is, Rieux, with a writer as a witness, Camus.

The post-Liberation politics of the Purge fostered a complicated environment for writers. Camus composed most of *La Peste* during the Occupation. But it was during the maelstrom of the Purge when Camus makes final revisions and writes a final portion of the novel. As Camus' first novel, *La Peste* demonstrates Camus' development as a literary writer and philosopher and offers a more complex examination of the psychological plight that he had previously explored in both *L'Étranger* and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. *La Peste* deepens the rhetoric of Camus' own philosophy that begins to differ at

this time from Sartre's existential precedent. By the time *La Peste* went to print, various writers, intellectuals, and public servants, like Pucheu, had been tried and executed as a result of the Purge. The circumstances of their executions was the result of collaboration as evidenced by their respective signed documents or published writings. Writing was not an endeavor taken lightly during this period as Sartre's call to "commitment" or *littérature engagée* demonstrates. Camus' *La Peste* however, approaches the politics of the Purge through allegory which facilitates the use of codes, or signs, that a French public would comprehend.

The novel begins casually and without any indication of the scale of the impending calamity that will reign on the town and its inhabitants. The opening sentence of *La Peste* provides four distinct details that orient the reader's tone and prepares the reader geographically and generically. Prior to the introduction of any characters and the "narrative proper" (Plague 6) ["*récit lui-même*" (Peste 17)], *La Peste* begins with a brief section, similar to a preface, describing Oran, the setting of the novel. In addition to its discursive signpost as a chronicle, the subtle adjective "*curieux*" (Peste 13) ["unusual" (Plague 3)] in the opening sentence to describe the events is vague yet generates intrigue. It suggests the "extraordinary (Plague 3)," which is further elaborated on in the subsequent sentence to indicate the awkward, or in other words, the uncomely nature of the events in the place in which they are happening, or have happened as in the case of the narrative style of the novel: "*ils [les événements] n'y étaient pas à leur place, sortant un peu de l'ordinaire*" (Peste 13) ["Considering their somewhat extraordinary character, they [the events described] were out of place there" (Plague 3).] Recall that the novel is described as a "*chronique*" (Peste 13) ["chronicle" (Plague 3)] which situates the text in a

different plane than of mere fiction, or entertainment. The condition here is underscored by the narrative's expository tone. Yet, the condition of the Occupation and the postwar presence of the novel frames the world in the context of a representation or as explored by Fellman and Laub as a work of testimony. Furthermore, the dating of the events as "194_" turns a contemporary reader's attention to the recent past, to a personal memory of events. The difference here for a Parisian audience is the setting that extends the unusual, the chronicling, and the year of forty something to Oran. The significance of Camus' use of Oran, "a large French port on the Algerian coast, headquarters of the Prefect of a French Department" (Plague 3) is the fact that the French government (France Libre) is currently placed in Algiers. The literary Oran is then a narrative supplement for the geographical and actual Algiers, a similar French port on the Algerian coast, and the actual headquarters of the provisional French government, France Libre.

The introduction of a peripheral setting that stands in for Paris and France in general under the Occupation recalls the troubling condition of nationalism (*La Patrie*) under the Pétain regime. Recall Pétain's revised motto of the *État français* from *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, to *Travail, Famille, Patrie*. Furthermore, the setting of Oran would also appeal to the leftist allegiance of *France Libre*. This appeal to leftist politics speaks more directly to the political intersection which one finds in Algeria after the Liberation. While a politics of reconstruction and national identity waged in the *metropole* and in particular Paris, Algeria was the site of a distinct politics of national identity, or *francité*. The arrival of de Gaulle's Provisional Government in Algiers provoked a renewed spirit among the Arab population with its "Ordinance of March 7, 1944" which effectively ended the *Code de l'indigénat* and granted Muslims civic rights and expanded

representation in local assemblies. Camus points out that the obstacle to this “political emancipation” within a split population in Algeria (French and native) was the French population itself (Combat 70).²⁵ Camus observes that “the French public [was] turning its attention away from Algeria,” that the situation was exaggerated (Combat 225) and directs his readers of *Combat* to “not avert our eyes away from Algeria” (Combat 233).

Camus draws attention to Algeria in *La Peste* as a site that despite its geographic isolation from mainland France is central to the identity politics of the nation in a post-Occupation climate. The crisis of Algeria was an essential component of the early postwar period and as the Purge complicated national and political identities. Camus’s use of an Algerian setting in *La Peste* redirects a reader’s gaze to a site of ongoing injustice and seeks to reorient the pressures of *francité* and national politics. John Fletcher provides a useful reading of the use of Oran in *La Peste*. He reminds us that *L’Étranger* (*The Stranger*), Camus’ first novel is set in Algiers with a realistic depiction of Arabs and Europeans together sharing the city and informs us that *La Peste* is the “reverse of naturalistic” (33). In *La Peste*, Fletcher states, “the characters are exclusively European” and that Oran had a large Arab population despite their absence from the novel (33-4). Fletcher argues that despite the name Oran, Paris is the real setting of *La Peste* – in a Paris where few Arabs lived and where one could find Germans, the “true ‘plague’” (37)²⁶.

²⁵ The “political emancipation” explored here was not necessarily a panacea to the social strife caused by colonialism in Algeria. In fact, Camus identifies in an article he wrote on Algeria in 1945 for *Combat* the strained conditions of the Arab spirit that effectively will remain as a current pathological condition into the 21st century: “Arab opinion, much dampened by all that has taken place, remains reserved and wary, however, despite all the good things in the new plan.... But the Arabs seem to have lost their faith in democracy, of which they were offered only a caricature” (“May 18, 1945;” Combat 207-210).

²⁶ John Fletcher’s article on *La Peste* humanizes a typically private Camus and highlights his affair with actress Maria Casarès while he was writing the novel in Occupied Paris and separated from his wife,

The use of Oran in *La Peste* occupies a contentious role in colonial discourse and is useful to consider its setting for the novel.²⁷ Oran is described as “ugly” (“laide”) both by the narrator immediately in the second paragraph of the novel and later by Jean Tarrou, the chronicling analogue to the narrator.²⁸ Oran is a city that is not picturesque, is without vegetation, and contains no soul: “treeless, glamourless, [and] soulless” (Plague 5) [“sans pittoresque, sans végétation, et sans âme” (Peste 16)]. Yet according to a 1938 study of Oran by René Lespès, Oran is considered a model city and is praised for its growth and success under colonialism. Lespès’ study, *Oran: étude de géographie et d’histoire urbaines* is an example of overt apologetic colonial discourse, and its perspective should be considered in this light.²⁹ However, for my purpose, the study is useful in that it presents a colonialist perspective of Oran which Camus contradicts in *La Peste* and represents a description of Oran to which a French citizen during the Occupation and Liberation period might have had access. Lespès suggests that the success of Oran is the result of the arrival of the French which, as David Carroll

Francine who was living in Oran. Fletcher argues that the Oran/Paris dichotomy that he describes is the result of this affair and that “Francine’s Oran was...unconsciously transformed into Maria’s Paris” (37).

²⁷ Much has been said about Camus’ position on colonial injustices and colonialism. Of particular interest to note is Conor Cruise O’Brien’s biography of Camus, *Camus* (1970), in which he argues that Camus held colonial sympathies and that Camus defends colonial injustices in *La peste* by his description of Oran. David Carroll in *Albert Camus the Algerian: colonialism, terrorism, justice* (2007) provides an apt critique of O’Brien and his interpretation of Camus’ *La peste* and Camus alleged defense of French colonialism.

²⁸ The narrator, who as we know at the end is revealed to be the doctor, Rieux, has a penchant for factual documentary historical discourse in the Rankean vein, and is contrasted by Tarrou’s notebook that, like Michelet, provides

a sort of chronicle...but an unusual type of chronicle, since the writer seems to make a point of understatement, and at first sight we might also imagine that [he] had a habit of observing events and people through the wrong end of the telescope. In those chaotic times he set himself to recording the history of what the normal historian passes over. (Plague 22)

The narrator adds that Tarrou’s diary is a sort of “discursive diary” that supplies “seeming-trivial details” such as a description of two bronze lions adorning the Municipal Office and the recurring observation of the elderly man who is feeding a group of stray cats from his balcony. The narrator presents contrasting methods of storytelling and favors historical discourse over fictional discourse, but acknowledges the necessity to utilize both discourses for representation as they create a more accurate depiction of the events.

²⁹ I am in debt, again, to David Carroll’s text where he engages thoroughly with the Lespès study to situate Camus own illustration of Oran (45-49).

paraphrases Lespès, has made it the “crowning achievement of French colonialism” and “the most European of all Algerian cities” (45). Carroll adds that, according to Lespès, Oran is not exclusively a French colonialist success story in that colonialist assimilation and cultural identity is blurred by the intersection of various thriving populations in Oran: French, Spanish, and Arab. Carroll identifies this complex nexus of cultural identity and explains that:

[T]he city of Oran is a space in which French cultural identity is constantly at risk, constantly transforming others but in the process being transformed at the same time. Oran is thus complicated by the very colonial structure that allows the French both to dominate and oppress the colonized and assimilate others into French culture and society—not just its Spanish population but eventually, at least in principle, its Muslim population as well. (48)

Carroll continues by stating that:

[t]he ‘success’ of Oran and colonialism in general is thus revealed to be based on the contradictory postulate of the nonindigenous status of the indigenous population, just as the invisibility of “the natives” is necessary to highlight the indigenous nature of the Spanish cultural presence in the city and thus paradoxically the presence and dominance of the French and the success of French colonialism. (48)

Although Camus’ writing during the Occupation and the Purge directs his readers’ attention to Algeria to draw attention from the civil division in the *métropole* to a space of civil injustice against the native population, Camus does not depict a vibrant and inviting Oran. Moreover, while Lespès praises the Oran for its colonial achievement, Camus’ Oran is bereft of this achievement and it is also absent of any indication of an Arab or indigenous population. Camus’ Oran is coincidentally a European Oran³⁰. I contend that the European presence of Oran appeals to an audience with potential favorable impressions of Oran, and of colonialism in general, as the Lespès study

³⁰ The purpose of which extends beyond Fletcher’s earlier assertion of the city as a surrogate Paris for Camus’ affair with Maria Casarès.

indicates. Camus' *La Peste* finds its readership in an ideologically divided Parisian landscape examining its own complicity with the Germans and questioning its own national identity during the Purge. For Camus, Oran is not simply an ugly Algerian city, it is a "completely modern" (Plague 4) ["tout à fait modern" (Peste 15)] city and stands in for Paris. Oran is a "lieu neutre" that is, it is neutral, meaning not specific and disengaged. It bears an implied negativity according to Stuart Gilbert.³¹ The indeterminacy suggested by this modifier for Oran extends the allegorical function of the novel. Oran's neutrality, makes it an "Anytown" ["n'importe où"]: "It will be said...that these habits are not peculiar to our town; really all our contemporaries are much the same" (Plague 4) ["On dira sans doute que cela n'est pas particulier à notre ville et qu'en somme tous nos contemporains sont ainsi" (Peste 14)]. Carroll elaborates on Oran's "neutrality." He states that Oran is "presented as being representative not of the colonial city as such but rather of the emptiness characteristic of modernity in general" (60). Oran is a space where a population sought to resist an oppressive plague. While *La Peste* is tethered first to its representation of the Occupation, its multi-referential allegorical form presents a struggle against oppression making *La Peste* very much also a text of the Purge.

Oran though is not only a politically charged location to a Parisian French audience, but a personally tethered reality of the Occupation for Camus. Camus begins writing the *La Peste* during a brief stay in Oran in 1941 with his wife, Francine, a native of Oran. The following year, after an eruption of tuberculosis, Camus returns to France with his wife but is subsequently separated from her when she returns to Oran preceding

³¹ The English translation by Stuart Gilbert (1948) of the phrase "lieu neutre" reads: a "negative place" (Plague 3).

the Allied landing in North Africa. This event would prevent either Camus or Francine from travelling and resulted in an enforced separation (Kellman xi, 4). Camus' personal situation mirrors the condition of many of his fellow French citizens and, in particular, of the characters in *La Peste*, like Rieux for example who is separated from his wife during the quarantine of Oran and who Fletcher describes as Camus' "surrogate" (21). Yet the use of Oran in *La Peste* is balanced by the presence of Raymond Rambert, a journalist commissioned by an unnamed prominent Parisian newspaper to report on the "living-conditions" and "sanitary conditions" of an Arab population (Plague 11). Against his wishes, Rambert is trapped in Oran when the quarantine is initiated. Rambert also experiences an enforced separation from his partner. As a method of coping with his forced exile from Paris, Rambert occupies himself for the remainder of the novel with arranging an escape from Oran. For a contemporary reader, Rambert, the journalist, becomes the Parisian eyes and voice of an urban, to not say civilized, individual, captured abroad. His contribution to the overall narration complements the tone that Camus establishes in the early paragraphs of *La Peste*. It is a chronicle of the events of a town with the obligation to report the "data" that guides the narration. The narrator states that he has three kinds of data: "First, what he saw himself; secondly, the accounts of other eyewitnesses...; and, lastly, documents that subsequently came into his hands" (Plague 6). Together the effort to represent as properly or as accurately as possible by Rieux's standards is achieved. Camus uses his personal experience to create a reflection about the conditions of his own situation, but casts a wider net with the allegorical for an inclusive audience. Camus further manages to avoid alienating a potential Parisian audience by

opening with a mundane description of Oran in the novel's "preface" and by including the compatriot Rambert.

La Peste offers a politically heterogeneous audience a tale that captures a collectivity of a national spirit and a continuity of a collective memory. Within weeks of its publication, *La Peste* sold 100,000 copies and won the Prix de Critiques the same year. These accomplishments suggest that the novel had a wide and positive reception and to a certain degree captured the anxious spirit of its post Liberation audience. While this reception would fluctuate during the remainder of the twentieth century, the initial public response to the novel was positive. Despite seeming to resonate with its contemporary public, *La Peste* continues to remain a popular selection of either French literature in general or of postwar French literature.

The novel's genesis intersects two distinct experiences of the Second World War for France – the Occupation and the postwar Purge. *La Peste* confronts both the agency and passivity of individuals who have come face to face with plague in search of justice. The result, as Kellman suggests, is a "document of moral anguish in the midtwentieth century" (7). Kellman furthers this idea with his observation that the "difficult moral choices posed by the Occupation and embodied by *La Peste* continued to echo throughout French culture in the war crime tribunals...[that] forced the nation to recall and confront the question of what to do and what not to do in a time of plague" (7). Like the Oranians of the novel, Camus wrote *La Peste* under a period of hardship and forced separation. It is a period of malaise – politically for France and personally for Camus – for which Camus provides a critique and assessment.

Insofar as *La Peste* connects with Camus' private life and his own assessment of the Occupation and Liberation, Camus effectively fosters a collective and impersonal tone within the narrative structure to communicate this period of malaise. Camus employs the personal pronoun "on" to narrate the story and incorporates passive constructions throughout the narrative. The pronoun "on" is an indefinite personal pronoun which is often used in place of the plural first person personal pronoun "nous." "On" can also evoke indeterminacy of gender and a distancing of the subject and often can be translated into English with passive constructions. The effect of these features of the pronoun "on" and the use of passive constructions within Camus' narration to some extent suggests how a large population of French citizens during the Occupation must have felt, that is, a condition where one's agency had been stripped. In addition, stylistically, the passive construction shows a subject that has something done to him instead of directly performing an action (Kellman 24). Furthermore, the use of "on" in *La Peste* emphasizes the collectivity of the experience being narrated, which is further suggested by one of the working titles of *La Peste*, "Les exilés." This notion of collectivity is further noted early in his notebooks during the composition of *La Peste*: "Peste. Impossible d'en sortir....La Peste, l'équivalence profonde des points de vue individuels en face du même absurde" (Carnets 36) ["Plague. Impossible to get away from it....The Plague, the basic equivalence of individual points of view facing the same absurd" (Notebooks 24)]. The collective suffering that is invoked by the working title is further denoted by the theme of separation of the novel itself. It is unclear when Camus opted for "La Peste" over "Les exilés" as the final title, but "La Peste" is found throughout most of his notebooks as the central subject and working title. During the

drafting of *La Peste*, Camus explicitly notes in late August / early September of 1943 that the title should not be “La Peste:” “Roman. Ne pas mettre ‘La Peste’ dans le titre. Mais quelque chose comme ‘Les Prisonniers.’” (Carnets 41) [“Novel. Don’t put ‘the plague’ in the title. But something like ‘The Prisoners’” [Notebooks 28]. Later in the early spring of 1943 Camus would publish an early treatment of *La Peste* as “Des Exilés de la peste” (Todd 165). The themes of separation, exile, and imprisonment are connoted by the various working titles of *La Peste*. Nonetheless, the final (and what seems to be original) choice of *La Peste* affirms the collective (and historical) experience against an inescapable entity that forces multiple individuals to confront it. It also raises the notion of collective resistance. In the postwar period of rebuilding and examining collectivity, the result of using *La Peste* as the title has been more effective than isolating a specific experiential marker such as “Prisoner” or Exile.”

The choice of the title is important to note here because it would ultimately direct a reader’s expectations for the novel and potentially focus the condition of reading for a reader. For example, one can think of Marguerite Duras’ novel *La Douleur* (1985) whose English translation *The War* (1986) is not a literal translation, which would be translated as “Pain” or “Grief,” or even “Suffering,” but a thematic translation which changes the condition of reading for the intended audience. Germaine Brée’s review of Barbara Bray’s translation of *La Douleur* provides a useful lens to think about the ramifications of a title’s respective resonance for an audience. In her review, she observes that “La Douleur” is the title for the first part of the novel by Duras and that although “in some measure all (parts of the book) speak indirectly of the pain of war,” the choice of *The War* is nonetheless a wise choice. The original title is limited by the fact that it is mostly

appropriate only for the first part of the novel and that *The War* speaks more generally to Duras' generation (58). Similarly, the title *La Peste* dictates the mindset of the reader with its more literary appeal.

The tone of *La Peste* resonates between the personal/private experience of the narrator, and by extension that of Camus. It also resonates with the experience of the public of Occupied France and of those who surround the principal players in the novel. The impersonal tone of the novel is further demonstrated by the mystery of the narrator. The narrator expresses his intention to remain unknown (6, [16]) and only reveals himself at the culmination of the novel. While the narrative technique here builds intrigue and the desire to know whose story is being told, or who is constructing the narrative which we are reading, the novel to some extent plays out like a mystery novel. The culprit is the plague, but it is the narrator's identity that is in question for the reader. It is not so much "whodunnit" but "whotoldit." This feature of *La Peste* emphasizes the agency of the storyteller despite a syntactical passive structure. The function of speech and the agency of one's voice recalls de Certeau's assertion regarding speech and agency or even Austin's speech acts. Camus remarks in his notebooks that *La Peste* was his "first attempt of shaping a collective passion" (137). This collectivity is underscored by his reflection on art in his Nobel Prize Speech. Furthermore, Kellman extrapolates an additional idea of the narrative structure of *La Peste*. He suggests that the novel is a novel that "offers no conclusion" and is a "self-begetting novel" that "recounts its own origins" by its design (31). In other words, the ending of the novel and the ending of the quarantine direct the reader to the beginning, that is, to the text that Rieux will write. As a result Kellman

concludes that *La Peste* demonstrates the Sisyphean labor of “pointless suffering.”³² If the novel does demonstrate such a reflection of suffering, its historical context of the Purge supports this reading.

The final pages of *La Peste* which were written during the height of the Purge offer a critical reflection on the relentless condition of blacklisting and hunting individuals to stand trial. The final somber notion offered by the narrator at the end of *La Peste* posits that perhaps the plague is never truly defeated but remains dormant until the appropriate conditions exist once again to divide a nation and to instill a civil unease:

And, indeed, as he listened to the cries of joy rising from the town, Rieux remembered that such joy is always imperiled. He knew what those jubilant crowds did not know but could have learned in books: that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years...and that perhaps the day would come when...it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city (Plague 278).

[Écoutant, en effet, les cries d'allégresse qui montaient de la ville, Rieux se souvenait que cette allégresse était toujours menace. Car il savait ce que cette foule en joie ignorait, et qu'on peut lire dans les livres, que le bacilli de la peste ne meurt ni ne disparaît jamais, qu'il peut rester pendant des dizaines d'années endormi...et que, peut-être, le jour viendrait où...la peste réveillerait ses rats et les enverrait mourir dans une cité heureuse (Peste 337).]

The condition of the novel's culmination is prescient. Camus' work as an artist was far-reaching and continues to resonate beyond its context of the Purge.

While published during the Purge, *La Peste* confronts the social disease of not just the Pétainist fascist ideology that imposed counter-republican ideals, but the social malaise or social disquiet of the postwar Purge. Camus first significant work of fiction was *L'Étranger* published in 1942 and during the Occupation. This novella explores

³² Camus published *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in 1942. Despite the elements of the absurd which form part of the framework of *La Peste*, Camus felt this novel to be part of a new cycle of work relating to revolt. Camus' next literary work after *La Peste* would be *La Chute* published in 1956.

numerous aspects of mid-century France. In particular its exploration of xenophobia and the ongoing tensions of French nationalism with the children of former colonies continues to make headlines in France.³³ As previously explored, the opening of *La Peste* echoes these aspects found in *L'Étranger*. In addition, the culmination of *La Peste* is no different. *La Peste* is published in the midst of the national paranoia and spirit of national reform of the Purge. The conditions of the Purge would soon subside with the elections of 1946 and the installation of the Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic would eventually dissolve in 1958 and lead to the Gaullist Fifth Republic which would ultimately endorse a spirit of unanimous resistance against the occupying Germans. It might be simplistic to assume the need for such a political gesture of unanimity, or unifying narrative, as in the early period of the Fifth Republic to bolster collective memory, but this gesture would eventually meet a critical juncture in the sixties as de Gaulle's grip on the public imaginary would weaken. Yet it is not until the late twentieth century with the passing of the Gayssot Law in 1990, and the subsequent similarly minded laws, with what would come to be known as the *lois mémorielles*, or the Memory Laws, does Camus' prescience at the end of *La Peste* come to fruition.

France is not currently divided in the same manner as it was during the Occupation with two governing parties or even socially as during the Purge, but I contend that the effects of the Purge and the Gayssot Law, which made it an offense to question or contest crimes against humanity as defined by the Nuremberg tribunal, have fostered a socially divided population. This division was further seen in the 2017 French

³³ Recent headlines include the February 2017 incident where two Parisian police officers were accused of "raping" an Arab man with their baton, the recurring discussions of Muslim and French national relations during the 2017 French presidential race, and the various attacks including the Bastille Day attack in Nice in 2016 where truck drove through a crowd striking 84 people resulting in anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Presidential election race which featured the problematic articulation of unity and populist politics, among other issues. After additional extensions to the law, the so-called Memory Laws would eventually incorporate the punishment of denial of both the Holocaust and of the Armenian genocide. In addition, the laws recognized slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity and instituted educational programs to teach the positive role of integration of France with its former colonies. The law ultimately sought to suppress racism and discrimination by criminalizing acts of racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

The culmination of *La Peste* is euphoric and the description of “cries of joy rising from the town” (Plague 278) [“les cries d’allégresse qui montaient de la ville” (Peste 337)] is reminiscent of those celebratory and triumphant scenes at the conclusion of *La Libération de Paris*. Instead, as *La Libération de Paris* promoted the joy that should come from liberation, Camus had become cynical about the Liberation during the composition of *La Peste*. This cynicism is seen in Rieux’s careful description of the “liberation” of Oran. By the time of *La Peste*’s publication, Camus had already denounced the execution of Pucheu and had distanced himself from both *Combat*, the Resistance journal where he was an editor, and the communist party. The narrator, Rieux, Camus’s surrogate, knows “that the tale he had to tell could not be of a final victory (Plague 278) [“que cette chronique ne pouvait pas être celle de la victoire définitive” (Peste 336)]. The Occupation had forced citizens to bear arms and to resist violently against the Germans. De Gaulle’s call to action in 1940 did not come without consequences, just as Rieux notes that the struggle against the plague was not an isolated victory. Instead, Rieux’s narrative is a record of “what had to be done again in the never ending fight against terror and its

relentless onslaughts, despite their personal affliction, by all who, while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilences, strive their utmost to be healers” (Plague 278) [“de ce qu’il avait fallu accomplir et que, sans doute, devraient accomplir encore, contre la terreur et son arme inlassable, malgré leurs déchirements personnels, tous les homes qui, ne pouvait être des saints et refusant d’admettre les fléaux, s’efforcent cependant être des médecins” (Peste 336-37)]³⁴. There had been consequences to the actions. After the Liberation, the nation had become divided and the Purge forced the introspection of those who had endured the Occupation to contend with their own action or inaction, that is, with resistance or complicity.

The anti-climactic culmination of *La Peste*, resonates with the post-Occupation climate of the Purge. Despite the celebration documented in *La Libération de Paris*, post-Occupation Paris fostered an ideological tension which echoes in Camus’ caution to his readers in the culminating lines of *La Peste*. French politics would further reflect this ideological rift for nearly fifty years until the passing of the Gayssot Law in 1990, the first of a series of laws that would begin to shift French cultural memory about the war and France’s experience with violent or difficult histories. Ideologically speaking, these laws were a hope to conclude the social rift between complicity and resistance since the Purge. Rieux observes that the joy of the town is “always imperiled” (Plague 278) [“toujours menacée” (Peste 337)], that is, that the bacteria of the plague “never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years...and that perhaps the day would come when...it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city” (Plague 278) [“ne meurt ni ne disparaît jamais, qu’il peut rester pendant des dizaines

³⁴ Camus explores more thoroughly in *L’Homme révolté* (1951) (*The Rebel*, 1951) individual agency and the troubled social condition which Rieux describes at the end of *La Peste*.

d'années endormi...et que, peut-être, le jour viendrait où,...la peste réveillerait ses rats et les enverrait mourir dans une cité heureuse" (Peste 337)]. The Purge functioned as a national cleansing and the Fourth Republic fostered the necessary ideological direction for a unified nation, but these efforts were fleeting as De Gaulle's regime fell out of favor in the sixties. It was ultimately de Gaulle's death in 1970 that would finally free France from its *résistancialiste* narrative. The purpose of the Memory Laws was to reestablish a collective mindset while concurrently establishing the legal conditions of unity and *francité*. The laws were highly contested, especially a 2005 law on colonialism which purported to promote France's positive contribution to colonialism. The interim government which dictated the Purge had a proverbial "convenience" to act between constitutions, and the subsequent 50 years after the Purge saw the dismantling of the colonies and the disruption of the perceived unity which the Purge sought to foster. The Memory Laws and their broad reach to marginalized groups and a heterogeneous culture crystalized a national discourse about the past. Beginning with the Gayssot Law of 1990 which criminalized Holocaust denial and sought to rehabilitate France's relationship to the Second World War, the laws embraced France's "guilt," and put forth an ideology of optimism for the future. However, the Purge was not about marginalized groups or a heterogeneous culture. It was about citizenship and *francité* during the Second World War. Although the Purge, like the Memory Laws years later, was national in its interest, the Purge was ideologically and ethically grounded in individual action.

Camus's œuvre generally consists of observations and analyses of the limits of the human condition and individual action. In particular, as Philip Thody suggests, a central question for Camus was: "What action can we take towards transforming the world in

which our fellow men suffer and die, which will not at the same time increase death and suffering” (Albert 27)? This question is critical to *La Peste* and is equally relevant to the condition of the Occupation and the fallout of the Purge during which *La Peste* was written. Central to Camus’ writing, especially writing during the Purge, is the problematic of innocence and guilt and how circumstances determine one’s actions.

Despite the agency of the characters in *La Peste*, Rieux observes that action is futile. For Rieux, preventative measures, quarantine, and sterilization did not ultimately dictate the eradication of the plague (Plague 242-43), [Peste 295]. Rieux states that the “victory” [“victoire”] (Plague 243), [Peste 295] is only perceived as such while the menace that has just been sedated remains dormant (Plague 278), [Peste 337]. Much in the same way that the concerted effort by the doctors of Oran and those involved in resisting the plague, *La Peste* ends without the confidence that the actions taken to prevent the spread of the epidemic actually played a role in its eradication. The ending of *La Peste* is not a victory for Rieux and the other doctors. Instead, the plague had declined mysteriously: “All that could be said was that the disease seemed to be leaving as unaccountably as it had come. Our strategy had not changed, but whereas yesterday it had obviously failed, today it seemed triumphant” (Plague 243), [“On était obligé seulement de constater que la maladie semblait partir comme elle était venue. La stratégie qu’on lui opposait n’avait pas changé, inefficace hier et, aujourd’hui, apparemment heureuse” Peste 295]. Recall that Camus states that *La Peste* is an allegory for life in France during the Occupation, if this is the case, how does the anti-climactic and relatively somber ending reflect this idea? There is no doubt of the Resistance’s presence during the Occupation, yet the Resistance did not become firmly rooted in the national cultural discourse until later. Rieux’s

observations suggest an ambivalence to action leaving Rieux doubting the extent to which resistance, here understood as action, contributed to the eradication of the plague. The agency of the individual or lack thereof intersects with the political climate of the Purge of which Camus was highly critical. Similar to his objection to the Pucheu execution, Camus expresses in a private letter in January 1948 to Jean Grenier, his mentor and lifelong friend, his abhorrence of the trials and connects his feeling with Rieux from *La Peste* which had already been published by this time:

After the Liberation I went to see one of those purge trials. The accused was guilty in my eyes. Yet I left the trial before the end because I was with him and I never again went back to a trial of this kind. In every guilty man, there is an innocent part. This is what makes any absolute condemnation revolting....

Man is not innocent and he is not guilty. How to get out of that? What Rieux (I) means is that we must cure everything we can cure while waiting to know, or see. It's a situation and Rieux says, 'I don't know.' (Correspondence 112)

[Après la libération, je suis allé voir un des procès d'épuration. L'accusé était coupable à mes yeux. J'ai quitté pourtant le procès avant la fin parce que j'étais avec lui et je ne suis jamais plus retourné à un procès de ce genre. Dans tout coupable, il y a une part d'innocence. C'est ce qui rend révoltante toute condamnation absolue....

L'homme n'est pas innocent et il n'est pas coupable. Comment sortir de là? Ce que Rieux (je) veut dire c'est qu'il faut guérir tout ce qu'on peut guérir – en attendant de savoir, ou de voir. C'est une position d'attente et Rieux dit "je ne sais pas." (Correspondance 141)]

Camus insists on a problematic convergence between action and inaction, and innocence and guilt. Just as Camus faulted Pucheu for his lack of imagination, that is, his inability to foresee the consequence of his actions. *La Peste* addresses the weight of action during a time of social and moral crisis.

Insofar as the Purge challenged public civility, Camus' sensibility to the trials and their inevitable consequent executions were a subject of a series of criticisms in 1946

published in *Combat* and subsequently collected and published separately as “Ni victimes ni bourreaux” (“Neither victims nor Executioners”). Here Camus reflects on, what he calls, legitimized murder in the name of justice plaguing not just France, but Europe and the world. The November 1946 articles offer an extension of Camus’ thoughts on ideology and capital punishment, or as he deemed it, as suggested by one of the titles of these articles, “Un nouveau contrat social” (“A New Social Contract”). A more direct critique of capital punishment can be found in his letters “Deux réponses à Emmanuel d’Astier de la Vigerie” (“Two responses to Emmanuel d’Astier de la Vigerie”), which were written as responses to an article D’Astier had written against Camus. The observations in “Ni victimes ni bourreaux” are the realization of ongoing concerns that Camus had with justice, a justice, as he remarks in his notebooks, that “cannot be reconciled with violence” (Notebooks 135) [“La justice ne peut aller avec la violence” (Carnets 173)], as he observed it being played out in postwar Europe. As early as September 1945, Camus made note that: “We are in a world in which we must choose between a victim or an executioner—and nothing else. Such a choice is not easy” (Notebooks 109), [“Nous sommes dans un monde où il faut choisir d’être victim ou bourreau – et rien d’autre. Ce choix n’est pas facile” (Carnets 141)]. This choice is the political antinomy in which the citizens of Oran are thrust as a result of the plague, and it is the reality of the postwar Purge.

“Ni victimes ni bourreaux” begins simply by defining the twentieth century as “Le siècle de la peur” (“The century of fear”). Camus characterizes this fear as coming from the absence of people’s eternal confidence, une “éternelle confiance de l’homme,” that “we could elicit human reactions from other humans beings by speaking to them in

the language of humanity” (*Combat* 257), [qu’“on pouvait tirer d’un autre homme des réactions humaines en lui parlant le langage de l’humanité” (*Actuelles* 118)]. In short, Camus argues that there is a loss of the human spirit of speaking out one’s discontent and, more significantly, that dialogue between people had ended (*Combat* 258), [*Actuelles* 118]. The result that Camus observed was a world of terror where people do not listen to one another. Additionally, he felt that this terror was also the result of those who act according to an ideology and cannot be persuaded to act otherwise.

Consequently, Camus posits that people find themselves in the absence of dialogue which then leads to a state of fear where people stop speaking. Camus feels that people see their effort to effect change as futile. Despite Camus’ assertive description of the mid-twentieth century, he was troubled by his own effort to compose these observations for *Combat*. He writes in his notebooks in October 1946: “My anguish at the idea of doing those articles for *Combat*” (Notebooks 143), [“Déchirement où je suis à l’idée de faire ces articles pour *Combat*” (*Carnets* 183)]. These articles marked a brief return by Camus to write for *Combat* which was experiencing financial trouble in the fall of 1946. With the return of party politics after the war, *Combat* began to lose its readership. Pascal Pia, editor-in-chief, considered ceasing production of *Combat*, but Camus, as co-stakeholder, insisted on reorganizing the journal and opted to write these articles in an effort to bring back the journal’s readership. In 1947 Camus and the other shareholders of *Combat*, including Pia, would hand over its reigns to a new editorial team (Ajchenbaum xxiii-xxiv). Yet, in these articles, Camus does not just portray a bleak reality, he offers a method of averting this “terror,” that is, the current crisis of silence of the world.

Camus initial suggestion to escape this “terror” is to “think and act on the basis of our thoughts” (Combat 259); [“réfléchir et agir suivant sa réflexion” (Actuelles 119)]. But his suggestion is not without its own set of complications. Camus reminds us that the problem with simply speaking out and beginning a dialogue is the reality of the terror in which people live. This “terror” as Camus describes it, effects no thinking, leading to the silence in which people have found themselves. The result is a system of blame. Camus challenges this reversion to blame by stating that people should try to remedy the situation. Camus’ prescription for remedy begins with a brief yet astute contradiction of the century of fear. According to Camus, the world of fear both signifies and rejects the same fact, thus creating a “political problem” [“problème politique”]. It is “a world in which murder is legitimate and human life is considered futile” (Combat 259) [“un monde où le meurtre est légitimé et où la vie humaine est considérée comme futile”] (Actuelles 120). Camus’ resolution then comes in the shape of action, that is, a choice: It is necessary to “take a position” [“prendre position”] on this political problem which fear fosters. The position comes in the form of two questions that leave anyone who answers in the affirmative in “a web of consequences” (Combat 259) [“une série de conséquences” (Actuelles 120)]: “ ‘Do you want to be killed or assaulted?’ ... ‘Do you want to kill or assault?’ ” [“ ‘Voulez-vous être tué ou violenté?’ ... ‘Voulez-vous tuer ou violenter?’ ”] Ultimately, Camus hopes that the choice would lead one to opt being neither a victim nor an executioner. By the Fall of 1946 when Camus is publishing the articles “Ni victimes ni bourreaux” for *Combat*, France was already shifting gears and moving towards a renewed political order. Political parties were the order of the day, and a new constitution had been adopted in October. As seen in these articles, Camus had matured as a thinker.

Despite an ongoing concern with individual rights and the rejection of ideologies or philosophical ideas that would limit or deny an individual's importance or right to judgment, after 1945 most of Camus' writing concerns the actions that one can take towards transforming a world where people suffer and die needlessly (Thody, Albert 27).

Camus composed a greater part of *La Peste* during this period of renewed contribution to *Combat*. His notebooks reflect part of this refocusing of his writing as he invokes the desire to write about "collective passion." *La Peste* is a novel about suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent. It stands as Camus' first fictional work to address his turn towards "humanist values" from the "nihilism of the absurd" of his earlier works (Thody, Albert 40) and marks the third work in this progression beginning with "Lettres à un ami allemand" (Letters to a German Friend) in 1944 and followed by the essay "La Remarque sur la Révolte" ("A Note on Revolt") in 1945. It is this latter work which enabled him to "philosophically transcend the absurd" (Thody, Albert 21). "La Remarque sur la Révolte" lays the framework for *La Peste*.

While *La Peste* is a product of the period as a philosophical treatment by Camus, it is also a product of the period in its engagement with the question of writing. This engagement with writing makes *La Peste* also a novel of writers, or a novel about writing. It is a meta-critical examination of the writing process both in terms of narrative development in the construction of a chronicle as testimony and as an observation of the contemporary polemic of writing and culpability of the Purge as articulated by Sartre's notion of *engagement*.

Outside of Pucheu who stands as the first execution of the Purge for his written death sentences of *résistants* and of political prisoners, Robert Brasillach's execution was

the most notorious. Brasillach, editor of “Je suis partout” a fascist and collaborationist journal during the Occupation, was executed in February 1945. Unlike Pucheu’s execution to which Camus strongly objected, the case of Brasillach was more demanding on Camus personally. Camus had taken a leave from *Combat* on January 18, 1945 for health reasons (Lottman, Albert 348), the following day on January 19 the trial for Brasillach had begun in which Brasillach would be found guilty of treason and sentenced to death by firing squad. A group of French intellectuals gathered to seek a pardon from De Gaulle for Brasillach. A request for support of this initiative would eventually come to Camus who had returned to writing *La Peste* since his departure from *Combat*. The decision to sign the petition forced Camus to re-examine his position on the punishment of those who had brought about the death of his friends and associates. He nonetheless agreed to support the petition, not as the result of a change in his feelings for Brasillach, but because “he opposed the death penalty in all circumstances” (Lottman 349). The petition which came to De Gaulle consisted of 59 signatures, and included those of Paul Valéry, François Mauriac, and Jean Cocteau.

The climate for these writers, including Camus, was a challenging philosophical crisis. As early as 1942, the clandestine Resistance journal, *Les Lettres françaises*, had called for the identification of suspected collaborators with the Germans. Each issue included names of collaborationist intellectuals and descriptions of their treason. During the Liberation in 1944 several tribunals were created to judge those suspected to have collaborated. The penal code clearly defined the act of treason under which the courts examined each case of collaboration; however the status of language distinguished the trials of collaboration for intellectuals. The central question regarding intellectuals being:

“Were the essays and articles that intellectuals had produced during the Occupation acts, or were they opinions (Watts 17). The response for the Resistance was simple: “To talk, to write, was to act” (Watts 17).

The responsibility of a writer is addressed famously by Jean-Paul Sartre. His “call” to writers can be found in his “Introduction” to *Les Lettres Modernes* and in his work *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* with the evocation of *engagement*. The question of what to do or not do as a writer, and more generally, as a responsible citizen, resonates with much of Camus’ writing at this time. As seen in his examination in *Combat* “Ni victimes ni bourreux,” a responsible citizen must choose a course of action that serves human dignity. The characters of *La Peste* each find themselves in such a situation. Each exiled individual is called to choose a response to the plague. While many of the characters’ path are portrayed in the effort to resist the plague and to find a cure or a means of limiting its death toll, the character Joseph Grand occupies a role worth exploring further: he neither joins Rieux whole-heartedly, but he also does not dismiss the effort of resistance either.

In many ways, *La Peste* is a novel about writing and writers. *La Peste* opens during an unspecified year, “194_” in Oran as a chronicle compiled by Rieux, the narrator and doctor, in coordination with Tarrou’s diary whose contribution is significant with its recourse to personal observation, or the Michelettian “history of the people.” Rambert, a journalist, arrives in Oran before the outbreak of the plague to write a story about the community for his Parisian newspaper. Joseph Grand is a clerk and an unfulfilled writer who for the duration of the novel never progresses beyond the first

sentence of his own novel. Among these writers, the narrator designates Grand, who offered part-time assistance to help fight the plague, as the hero of the story (Plague 126).

In a novel focused on collective suffering, Camus opts to indicate one character over all. Grand's role as a hero is announced two-thirds into the novel by the narrator for the sake of the reader:

Yes, if it is a fact that people like to have examples given them, men of the type they call heroic, and if it is absolutely necessary that this narrative should include a 'hero,' the narrator commends to his readers, with, to his thinking, perfect justice, this insignificant and obscure hero who had to his only credit only a little goodness of heart and a seemingly absurd ideal. (Plague 126)

Oui, s'il est vrai que les hommes tiennent à se proposer des exemples et des modèles qu'ils appellent héros, et s'il faut absolument qu'il y en ait un dans cette histoire, le narrateur propose justement ce héros insignifiant et effacé qui n'avait pour lui qu'un peu de bonté au cœur et un idéal apparemment ridicule. (Peste 156)

Isolating Grand heroically might undermine the collective spirit of the novel. However, the reader will discover that Grand does not reappear in the narrative for another 100 pages. Moreover, it is still Rieux's actions that are followed; it is his name which continues to resonate throughout the narrative. In fact Rieux is the first character, aside from the setting, Oran, that the reader encounters. The effect of Grand's selection as a hero is not immediate. It will take more than one hundred pages before Grand's arc in the novel is realized. Nevertheless, Grand's character is carefully described in case expectations are raised for Grand. There is nothing equivocal in his description. Grand is "insignificant" ["insignifiant"] and "obscure" ["effacé"] as a hero whose credit is "only a little goodness of heart and a seemingly absurd ideal" ["un peu de bonté au cœur et un idéal apparemment ridicule"]. If there is no question about his character, the only remaining question then may be the reason, whether narratological or philosophical, for his nomination as a hero.

The need for a hero speaks to a reader's expectations of a narrative, as stipulated above by the narrator. *La Peste*, as told by Rieux, is a story where a reader might hope to encounter a plot that follows the Aristotelian "rules" of a clear beginning, middle, and end. Rieux is equally aware of the demands on him as the storyteller of the account of the plague that temporarily crippled Oran. Rieux seeks to chronicle an event which can be appraised in the hearts of the thousands of eyewitness who know that it actually happened (Plague 6), [Peste 16-7]. His audience is primarily the citizens of Oran for which he claims to be a "historian" to the crisis of suffering and the human spirit that prevailed during the epidemic. As a historian Rieux seeks to tell his story objectively by using available testimony, yet consciously offers a hero to the narrative. This might simply be a case of misdirection for the astute reader who seeks to solve the mystery of the narrator, but this explanation seems too simple. Rieux adds that the addition of a hero will give the chronicle its "character" ["caractère,"] which, he adds, "is intended to be that of a narrative made with good feelings" (Plague 126) ["qui doit être celui d'une relation faite avec de bons sentiments" (Peste 157)]. This "character" of the chronicle draws on the sympathy of the non-quarantined world and of the reader. Grand's heroism is his resolution to suppress the adjectives from his perpetually rewritten opening sentence. This suppression of adjectives communicates the suppression of the idiosyncratic parts of speech that reveal the personality of the speaker (Kellman 42). Grand's final effort to create a literary masterpiece comes with the suppression of personality. In one respect this act by Grand demonstrates a turn toward precision in speech from which Camus draws his literary inspiration. But it also echoes the state of writing, personal expression, and the designation of complicity during the Purge.

While Grand's final report on his writing communicates the burden of personal expression, the next chapter will explore the beauty and legacy of personal expression with the letter written by Guy Môquet to his family prior to his execution. Written before the Purge, the letter will make a lasting impression through the Purge and into the 21st century.

Chapter 4: Guy Môquet and the Memory Laws: Tracing the Purge in the 21st century

On October 22, 1941, a bewildered yet resolute young man named Guy Môquet was brought before a firing squad for his activities as a member of the Communist Party and by extension, for a presumed affiliation with the anti-Vichy Resistance. His death was one of a series of executions approved by Pierre Pucheu, the Interior Minister of France under the Vichy regime. Pucheu would later be executed during the Purge trials for collaboration with the Germans during the Occupation. Documented execution orders of various fellow French citizens and members of the Résistance served as evidence of collaboration against Pucheu. Môquet would die with the staunch sense of purpose and fortitude that would come to signify the Resistance after the Liberation. Môquet was only 17 years old.

In the fall of 2007, on the anniversary of Môquet's execution, a tearful Nicholas Sarkozy, the newly elected President of France, would read the following letter composed by Môquet before his death:

Ma petite maman chérie,
mon tout petit frère adoré,
mon petit papa aimé,

Je vais mourir! Ce que je vous demande, toi, en particulier ma petite maman, c'est d'être courageuse. Je le suis et je veux l'être autant que ceux qui sont passés avant moi. Certes, j'aurais voulu vivre. Mais ce que je souhaite de tout mon coeur, c'est que ma mort serve à quelque chose. Je n'ai pas eu le temps d'embrasser Jean. J'ai embrassé mes deux frères Roger et Rino. Quant au véritable je ne peux le faire hélas!

J'espère que toutes mes affaires te seront renvoyées elles pourront servir à Serge, qui, je l'escompte, sera fier de les porter un jour. A toi petit papa, si je t'ai fait ainsi qu'à ma petite maman, bien des peines, je te salue une dernière fois. Sache que j'ai fait de mon mieux pour suivre la voie que tu m'as tracée.

Un dernier adieu à tous mes amis, à mon frère que j'aime beaucoup. Qu'il étudie bien pour être plus tard un homme.

17 ans et demi, ma vie a été courte, je n'ai aucun regret, si ce n'est de vous quitter tous. Je vais mourir avec Tintin, Michels. Maman, ce que je te demande, ce que je veux que tu me promettes, c'est d'être courageuse et de surmonter ta peine.

Je ne peux pas en mettre davantage. Je vous quitte tous, toutes, toi maman, Serge, papa, je vous embrasse de tout mon coeur d'enfant. Courage!
Votre Guy qui vous aime (Môquet)

My dear Mommy,
My adored little brother,
My beloved Daddy,

I am going to die! What I ask of you, and you in particular mommy, is to be brave. I am and I want to be as brave as those who have gone before me. Of course, I would have wanted to live. But what I wish with all my heart is that my death serves for something. I didn't have time to embrace Jean. I embraced my two brothers Roger and Rino. Alas, as for my true brother, I am unable to do it.

I hope that all my things will be sent back to you; they could be useful to Serge, who, I anticipate will be proud to wear them one day. To you, daddy, if I made you feel, like mommy, full of grief, I send you my regards one last time. Know that I did my best to follow the path that you modelled for me.

A final farewell to all my friends, to my brother that I love so much. May he study well to become a man later.

17 and a half years old, my life was short, I don't have any regrets, other than having to leave all of you. I am going to die with Tintin, Michels. Mom, what I ask of you, what I want you to promise me, is to be brave and to overcome your grief.

I cannot emphasize that enough. I am leaving all of you, everyone, Mommy, Serge, dad, I embrace you with all my young heart. Be strong!
Your Guy who loves you (my trans.,³⁵)

Sarkozy selected Môquet's letter during his presidential campaign for its youthful sincerity. Before examining the signification of Môquet's letter in the early 21st century and during Sarkozy's presidency, it will be useful to look closely at the letter itself to understand the impact and influence it would have on Sarkozy.

Môquet's delicate voice addresses his "petite maman chérie" ("dear Mommy") and his "petit papa aimé" ("loved Daddy") whom he respectively urges to "be brave"

³⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from French are mine.

(“être courageuse”) and informs that he “fait de [son] mieux pour suivre la voie que [son père l’a] tracée” (“did [his] best to follow the path that [his father] modelled for [him]”). Sarkozy would repeat M^oquet’s words of “petite maman” as a refrain in his address to French youth during his speech at the Zénith de Paris in March 2007. Furthermore, M^oquet expresses the desire that his younger brother “étudie bien pour être plus tard un homme” (“study well to become a man later”); “[U]n homme” (“[A] man”) which M^oquet recognizes he will not become. The subsequent lines evoke this sentiment. Towards the end of the letter M^oquet draws attention to his age: “17 ans et demi” (“17 and a half years old”). An age which M^oquet recognizes as a brief life: “ma vie a été courte” (“my life was short”). To some extent M^oquet seems to extend his brief life by indicating his half age (“et demi”) as if to bring himself closer to that age of majority which he hopes for his younger brother.³⁶ Despite the circumstances under which he is writing his letter, he has no regrets (“je n’ai aucun regrets”). He begins his letter without equivocation: “Je vais mourir” (“I am going to die”), and concludes the letter by reminding his audience, or addressees, about his youth: “Je vous embrasse de tout mon coeur d’enfant” (“I embrace you with all my young heart”). While we know the letter to be intended for his family, there is a diachronic effect by which this “young heart” interpellates a wider audience. The letter’s original political context has faded. What remains is a series of signs: youth, *résistant*, and *fraternité* in which a French citizen might find the letter to be simply the tragedy of a child during a dark period in French history. However, as Sarkozy shows us, such a simple rendering is not the case. Instead the letter resonates as a testimony of resistance and the embodiment of a certain national

³⁶ The legal age of majority in France in 1941 was 21. It was reduced to 18 in 1974 by President Valéry Giscard d’Éstaing.

identity and dutiful *francité*. The result is a composite of contexts, both historical and contemporary, tethered by *fraternité*. French historian Pierre Nora, known for his seminal work on French national memory and identity *Lieux de mémoire*, says of *fraternité* that: “La fraternité a un poids de mémoire qui la lie à la fois à l’idée nationale et aux thèmes révolutionnaires” (“[F]raternité bears a weight on memory that associates it with both the idea of the nation and to revolutionary themes”; my trans.; *Fraternité* 12). It is in this context of national unity and identity rendered by *fraternité* as, what Nora calls, a certain “consanguinité puissante” (“a consanguineous bond”; *Fraternité* 12) that Sarkozy, nearly 70 years after Môquet’s letter was written, would accept himself as Môquet’s addressee (“Je vous embrasse”; my emphasis) to evoke Môquet as a symbol of France on his first day in office.

Sarkozy’s reading of the letter was the fulfillment of his first official act as president. Five months earlier in May 2007, hours after his inauguration, Sarkozy decreed that Môquet’s letter should be read annually in France on the anniversary of his death. To designate Sarkozy’s act as evidence of the sustained cultural relevance of the Occupation and the Resistance in 21st century France is only partially accurate. In fact Sarkozy’s reading of the letter is more complicated than an act of remembrance or of representation.

Sarkozy’s motivation to evoke Môquet is political. Sarkozy’s connection with Môquet is not from a personal connection with either the Resistance or with the Occupation. Môquet was to some extent already a public figure. He had already served a symbolic function having been previously recognized first in 1944 during a commemoration ceremony of Môquet and the other political prisoners who were executed with him known as “le 27 de Châteaubriant” and in subsequent years during

other commemorations of the same group. Most notably, since 1946 “Guy Môquet” is the name of a Paris métro station along line 13 and situated in the 17th arrondissement thus occupying a space of recurring exposure to thousands of commuters daily. In short, Môquet was not an obscure historical figure, at least in Paris.

For Sarkozy, Môquet’s letter was to serve as a unifying symbol of France’s youth to signify the potential which the youth have in the future of France. The significance of French youth and Môquet’s connection to France, its youth, and French history is raised in Sarkozy’s speech at the Zénith de Paris in March 2007 where he also singles out Jeanne d’Arc and Rimbaud. In this speech Sarkozy says that Môquet is part of the history of France and the history of France belongs to all French people (“Môquet appartient à l’histoire de France et l’histoire de France appartient à tous les Français”; Zénith 2007). In addition, on 16 May 2007, Sarkozy delivered a speech at the Bois du Boulogne where 35 *résistants* were executed by the Germans on 16 August 1944 only a few days before the Liberation. He labeled these 35 executions as an act of vengeance and emphasized that the victims were young men who had said “no” to both submission and to dishonor. Sarkozy proposed that their refusal can still be heard today; their rejection is “le cri éternel que la liberté humaine oppose à tout ce qui menace de l’asservir (“the eternal cry that human liberty opposes everything that threatens to subjugate it”; Bois 2007) which he wanted the French youth to hear and to understand. Although Môquet was not among those who were executed at the Bois du Boulogne, Sarkozy evoked Môquet as a victim of the same type of barbarism of war and noted the additional aspect of Môquet’s youth – youth being the target audience of his speech.

Sarkozy, the former conservative candidate now elected president, wanted M^oquet to signify a “jeune français” (“french youth”; Guaino, Interview 2007) that is, he wanted to present M^oquet to contemporary French youth as someone who gave himself to a cause greater than himself (“se donne à une cause plus grande que lui”; Guaino, Interview 2007). Henri Guaino, Sarkozy’s chief political advisor and speechwriter, underscores the universal quality of M^oquet’s letter which he describes as full of love and courage and written without a trace of hatred (“une lettre d’amour et de courage, sans aucune trace de haine”; Interview 2007). In an interview with *liberation.fr* on 20 October 2007, two days before the anniversary of M^oquet’s execution and before Sarkozy would read M^oquet’s letter for the first time as part of his proposed annual reading, Guaino addresses the controversial decision by various teachers who were refusing to participate in the annual reading of M^oquet’s letter. Guaino asserts M^oquet’s importance as “l’un des plus beaux visages de France,” that is, as a figure who resisted in his way (“Il résiste à sa façon”) and who fell victim to Nazi barbarism (“la barbarie nazie”) (Interview 2007). In short, it was Sarkozy’s intention that M^oquet should represent the *résistant* par excellence for contemporary France and its youth during his presidency.

The circumstances of M^oquet’s execution, however, are not as simple as a German or Vichy campaign against a member of the Resistance. At the time of his execution, M^oquet was a political prisoner and represents a different kind of symbol of the Resistance than Jean Moulin, for example. In fact, Guaino, in the previously cited interview clarifies that M^oquet is not a major figure of the Resistance, but rather represents something universal in his magnificent image of youth. That is, in contrast to someone like Jean Moulin, M^oquet connotes the tragedy of the everyday during this

period (“un drame ordinaire de cette période”). Môquet was captured by the French *gendarmerie* for the offense of spreading Communist propaganda – an offense that was punishable by death since April of 1940³⁷. Môquet’s political motivation, one might say, was his own father who had been a deputy of the Communist party and had been arrested about one year earlier. With his father in prison, Môquet undertook the role of the *paterfamilias* and became more active within his father’s party. Yet, despite his Communist sympathies and their legal cause for death, Môquet’s execution was mere happenstance.

In August of 1941, on what would be noted as the first act of armed resistance against the Germans, a Nazi officer was shot and killed. The assassination of a German officer carried more weight than previous individual or localized acts of resistance. A separate attack the following week would fuel the response that was already in motion by the Germans – to execute political prisoners in order to quell further resistance. The decision was to execute 200 French political prisoners from various detainment camps, including 27 from the prisoner camp of Châteaubriant about 220 miles from Paris and where Môquet was held. Prisoners were selected for execution mostly due to their affiliation with the Communist party. The selection of prisoners was partly facilitated by the right wing sympathies of French officials and approved by Pucheu. Despite Môquet’s young age, his name remained on the list of those scheduled for execution. Meanwhile,

³⁷ In September of 1939 the Parti Communiste Français, or the PCF, was declared illegal and had to act clandestinely until August 1944. Having remained active as an underground organization, repression against the PCF increased, including having senators and deputies deprived of seats in the CGT (*Confédération générale du travail*, General Confederation of Labor), the labor and trade union for workers. Eventually, Albert Sérol, a deputy for the Socialist party, brought the anti-PCF movement to its climax by issuing an anti-PCF decree on 10 April 1940 making the dissemination of Communist propaganda punishable by death. (Adereth, M. (Maxwell). *The French Communist party, a critical history (1920-1984) from Comintern to ‘the colours of France.’* Manchester UP, 1984.

the perpetrators of the actual act of armed resistance against the German officer were never arrested (Aderenth 116).

Having a right-wing president, such as Sarkozy, embrace a communist *résistant* signifies the complicated legacy of remembering the Occupation and the Resistance in a post-Gaullist, that is to say, post-*résistancialiste* France. The Second World War and in particular the Resistance and the Occupation occupy a certain cultural legacy in France, as evidenced, among various other examples, by the celebrated television drama about the Occupation “Un village français” (2009-2017), which aired its seventh and final season in 2017.

The legacy of the Occupation and the Resistance correspond to Jan Assman’s conception of cultural memory. Assman’s expands Maurice Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory, which he feels is limited by its emphasis on the social and its exclusion of the cultural. Assman distinguishes three levels of memory – individual, communicative (i.e. collective), and cultural; he proposes that the cultural level relies more heavily on the embodiment of memory in outward symbols (not unlike Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*) (Communicative 111). That the final category of cultural memory resonates with Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* is exemplified by Môquet’s letter. That is, cultural memory through Môquet’s letter functions as a “symbolic form” that is “exteriorized” and “objectified” (Communicative 110). As Assman suggests, cultural memory exists in the generation of those who have no direct, that is personal, memory of the war. Sarkozy’s election, the first president to be born after the Second World War, in a way displays the post-*résistancialiste* intersection between memory and signification. Sarkozy took the office with the aspiration to bring “pride to being French” (“Je veux rendre aux Français

la fierté d'être Français"; Discours 2007) and to curtail the political *repentance* which he deemed as a form of self-hatred³⁸ ("Je veux en finir avec la repentance qui est une forme de haine de soi"; Discours 2007). Sarkozy's first act, of what I will consider as a "call for pride" against *repentance*, was the mandate to read Môtet's letter annually on the anniversary of his death. The result of Sarkozy's mandate represents a composite of cultural memories and their legacies in early 21st century France: a conservative president born after the war, who once held the same position of Interior Minister like Pucheu, the official who had approved Môtet's execution, insists on the annual reading of a communist testimony of French complicity with the Nazis. The historical coincidence and incongruity here might be best summarized by Marx's proposition in his essay "The 18th Brumaire de Louis Bonaparte" (1852) that history has a tendency to repeat itself, first as tragedy, second as farce. However, it is the French philosopher Alain Badiou who offers a more incisive analysis of the circumstances of Sarkozy's presidency. Badiou points out more critically the cultural conditions of a Sarkozy presidency. In his polemical work, *The Meaning of Sarkozy* (2008) [*De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?* (2007)], Badiou skewers both French democracy and the newly elected president by framing Sarkozy's policies and personality against the historical and the contemporary. One particular focus for Badiou is the Second World War and Pétainism. For Badiou, Sarkozy's election operates as a "disorientation" and a "mark of a new time" or, as he puts it more simply, "the advent of something disgusting" (27). Badiou conceptualizes Sarkozy's election as a condition which he names: "transcendental Pétainism," which

³⁸ Sarkozy won the French presidential election of 2007 overwhelmingly and boasted a 65% approval rating in his first couple of months in office. Sarkozy's popularity would soon slip and he would ultimately become the most unpopular president since de Gaulle at the end of his presidency. Later, François Hollande would be considered even more unpopular by the end of his presidency.

refers to a disorientation brought on by Sarkozy. In particular, “transcendental Pétainism” does not mean that contemporary circumstances resemble 1940 or that Sarkozy himself resembles Pétain. On the contrary Badiou is referring to the dynamics of political support that brought Sarkozy to power which he defines as an unconscious condition that was always already present and that Sarkozy helped to release.

The unconscious condition which Badiou feels Sarkozy brought forth is a condition of memory. In particular, the memory recalled here, which Badiou incidentally identifies as Pétainism – a condition which, according to Badiou, actually predates Pétain himself – refers to the vexed memory of the Occupation and the Resistance. However, the condition itself is more accurately understood as an extension of the Purge and the weight of the Memory Laws; that is, as an effect of representation and the codification of national identity and memory. Sarkozy’s 2007 Mûquet mandate was supposed to demonstrate a national identity, that is, *francité*, during Sarkozy’s presidency. He asked the youth of France to be proud of their elders who had given them so much and to be proud of France in whose name they died (“soyez fiers de vos aîn s qui vous ont tant donn , et soyez fiers de la France au nom de laquelle ils sont morts”; Boulogne 2007). Additionally, Sarkozy told the youth to love France because it was their country and that they had no other (“Aimez la France parce que c’est votre pays et que vous n’en avez pas d’autre”; Boulogne 2007). This appeal, or “call to pride,” also speaks to the necessity to turn away from *repentance* – the cultural by-product of Jacques Chirac’s 1995 official recognition of France’s involvement in the imprisonment and deportation of Jews during the Occupation and away from the subsequent Memory Laws, which Sarkozy felt promoted “self-hatred.” Sarkozy’s use of M quet’s letter is a reminder of the relevance of

the Second World War in contemporary French national identity and memory. In other words it is a history of which one must be proud and not in which one must submit to “self-hatred.” The Sarkozy/Môquet affair is one example of the ongoing relevance of defining national identity and memory in France. For this reason, the Memory Laws are vital to a discussion of the Purge because these laws aim to constitute, or at least give contour to, national identity.

Let us recall briefly Sarkozy’s political advisor Guaino who will serve as a starting figure to elaborate on the significance of national identity and memory for *francité*. In the same interview cited earlier, Guaino defends Sarkozy’s use of Môquet’s letter against those teachers who refused to fulfill Sarkozy’s mandate to read the letter. Guaino suggests that the letter contains no nationalism and no propaganda. Rather, he argues that the letter is simply the evocation of a human tragedy in a tragic moment in French history (“Juste l’évocation d’une tragédie humaine dans un moment tragique de notre histoire”; Interview 2007). He insists that Môquet belongs to the pantheon of French figures such as Jean Jaurès, De Gaulle, or even Jeanne d’Arc. When asked by the interviewer to respond directly to why there is such an emphasis on national identity in Sarkozy’s campaign, Guaino defends Sarkozy’s choice of Môquet as a relevant figure and the need to articulate a sense of *francité*. Guaino responds:

Dans un pays où [l’identité nationale] s’impose avec évidence, la nation n’est pas un sujet politique. Lors de l’élection de 1974, les Français ne s’intéressaient pas à ce que racontaient Malraux et les gaullistes sur la nation et la résistance. Mais aujourd’hui, avec l’immigration, la mondialisation, la désintégration du travail, il y a un problème identitaire. La nation est redevenue un sujet fondamental de la politique. (Interview 2007)

In a country where [national identity] is self-evident, the nation is not a political issue. During the 1974 election, the French public was no longer interested in what Malraux and the Gaullists had to say about the nation and the Résistance.

Today, however, with immigration, globalization, and the break-down of the work force, there is an identity problem. The nation has become once again a fundamental political issue.

As Guaino's response indicates, the nation for Sarkozy is a fundamental issue that needs to be part of politics. Guaino's association of politics and identity is the result of key social issues such as immigration which he perceives to be part of the current problem with national identity. However, Guaino fails to provide another factor that is paramount to a discussion of politics and identity and which binds them together – memory. In the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, memory has become central to the exploration of politics and national identity in France. This centrality of memory has been promulgated in the last 25 years by France's Memory Laws – the earliest of which dates to 1990, and which one can define as France's method of coming to terms with its past.

The Memory Laws constitute a body of measures that attempt to regulate the national and political consciousness of acceptable and unacceptable discourses within the greater historical discourse of France. The Memory Laws have been the subject of much criticism. Yet criticism of the Memory Laws is not a distinguishing factor. However, individual responses to the Memory Laws offer valuable perspectives which contribute meaningfully to the conversation of politics and identity. Pierre Nora is one, if not the most notable, critic of the laws. Nora opens his address in 2010 to the 21st International Committee of Historical Sciences by stating that: "History, memory, and the law have been in particularly intense association in France over the past twenty years or so" (History 2010). This cogent statement echoes Guaino's earlier sentiment regarding the condition between politics and national identity made during Sarkozy's nascent

presidency with its reimagining of national discourse and the Resistance around the figure of M^oquet. Nora points out the critical issue to which he, as a historian, objects in the Memory Laws. He objects to the conflation of history and the law which he feels are two separable fields which should function independently of each other. Nora's perception of national identity folds memory into the discussion of politics and identity. However, I would add that the "intense association" which Nora finds among history, memory, and the law has been an ongoing condition in postwar France since the Purge.

To illustrate this point let us consider the first Memory Law, the Gayssot Act, passed by France's congress in 1990, which makes denial of the Holocaust a criminal offense. This law was built on the 1972 Pleven law which was an extension of the 1881 Freedom of Press law that outlawed racist speech, including libel, slander, defamation, and writing against a group of people (Wartanian). While the Gayssot Act is the completion of the 1972 law against racial crimes and contours the law to include revisionism, or denial of the Holocaust and of genocide in general, I contend that it is an extension of the Purge insofar as it seeks to define the collective memory of the nation through legal discourse. At this stage, the laws are part of a synchronic social framework. Assman identifies this stage as the precursor to cultural memory. Insofar as the Gayssot Act and the subsequent Memory Laws seek to establish a homogeneous expression of national identity, or citizenship, they are an extension of the Purge which served to distinguish the identity of dutiful citizens who allied themselves with de Gaulle's Free France against those with either Nazi sympathies or with a history of collaboration with the Germans. Unlike the Memory Laws, the Purge belongs to the initial stage of cultural memory. The Purge was a response to a heightened disorientation of *francité* instigated

by conflicting perceptions of duty to the nation. Nevertheless, both the Memory Laws and the Purge are in the service of developing a cohesive sense of *francité*.

The idea of articulating civic homogeneity and *francité* can be seen more clearly in the subsequent Memory Laws that followed the Gayssot Act. In 2001 a law was passed that recognized the 1915 Armenian genocide and subsequently in 2011, under Sarkozy's presidency, denial of the Armenian genocide became a criminal offense. After the Gayssot Act, the next Memory Law was the Taubira Act passed in 2001. The Taubira Act condemns slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. This law was followed by a 2005 law on colonialism that dictated teaching the "positive role" of colonization in the educational system (Wartanian, Nora 2010). These laws codified a collective memory in the service of regulating French national identity and its history.

The Memory Laws dictated what could be said about problematic aspects of France's history. A legal condition such as this mandates a sort of definition or redefinition of the culture itself. The result of the Memory Laws is a collective framework that defined what it meant to be a responsible, or dutiful citizen of France in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first. As previously explored, the effect of the Purge trials similarly sought to distinguish citizens who remained loyal to Free France from those who exhibited complicity with the Germans under Vichy. Nora presents his disagreement and defines the separation that he makes between the political and the historical and between history and memory:

It is clear that political decision-making bodies have the right and indeed the duty to take an interest in the past in order to orientate and position the collective memory, this clearly lying within their province. Yet they do not have the right to make use of laws which qualify the facts of the past and dictate history. It is up to the politicians to commemorate, to pay homage and to organise compensation, it is up to them to honour the victims. It is up to the historians to do the rest, to

establish the facts and to propose interpretations of these facts, restricted by neither constraint nor taboo. (History 2010)

Nora observes a problematic relationship between policy and memory. Government intervention in the interest of producing, or at least providing, a collective discourse supersedes the role of the historian, who, according to Nora, has traditionally been responsible for expressing a unifying narrative of French identity, a “conscience historique imaginaire, mais réelle” (“an imagined, but real, historical conscience”; Pierre 2007). In short, for Nora the practice of the profession of historian has become stunted. But this is only part of Nora’s objection. His critique presents his objection as a historian. However, more broadly and still speaking as a historian, Nora says elsewhere regarding his objection to the laws: “Ce qui m’intéresse, c’est que l’histoire ne soit pas réécrite ni par les bourreaux ni par les victimes et qu’on n’applique pas au passé une incrimination rétroactive” (“What interests me is that history not be rewritten neither by perpetrators nor by the victims and that we do not apply retroactive incrimination”; Pourquoi 2008). Here, Nora emphasizes the ethics of historical discourse and the problematic condition of culpability, rewriting history, and by extension, collective memory. For Nora, when policy dictates collective memory a nation is at stake of losing its identity. Nora describes an Orwellian nation-state that is out of sync in a democracy where the state legislates the past, or as he states later in the same interview from 2008: “On ne connaît de loi créant une vérité officielle d’État dans aucune démocratie” (“There is no law in any democracy dictating the State’s official truth”; Pourquoi 2008). Personal memory of the Second World War is diminishing. The result is a practice of memory that is more general and accessible via sites – or *lieux*, as Nora would describe them – where particular signs become more prominent and more complex, or shift in their signification. One sees this

happen with M \hat{o} quet whose original role during the Occupation has been expanded and molded to fit a discursive effect that appeals to contemporary youth – an appeal to action in the face of a threatened national identity.

The Memory Laws and the demand they put on collective memory re-frame the representation of the Occupation and the Resistance by means of interpellation³⁹. In part, this re-framing is due to the Memory Laws' primary measure as a barometer for gauging and creating dutiful citizenship. In this way, the Memory Laws effect a crystallization of the Purge in their respective effort to define national identity and by extension *francité*. This act is further reflected by the temporal, or diachronic, progression from the individual and personal to the cultural as Assman points out in his conception of how cultural memory develops. The memory of the war and the perceived valor of the Resistance during the Occupation constitutes a subject identity without rejecting completely the interpellation produced by the Memory Laws. Sarkozy rejects being interpellated by the Memory Laws which involve, as he understood them, repenting for France's past. Guaino reminds us that this *repentance* calls for contemporary youth to atone for the faults of the previous generation which results in what Sarkozy considered a type of self-hatred (Interview 2007). *Francité* for Sarkozy involves recognizing the faults of the past, but also projecting a pride in those moments of subjectivity in which the Memory Laws seek to redefine. For instance, the collective national pride central to Sarkozy's campaign is codified in M \hat{o} quet and M \hat{o} quet's letter becomes the means by which Sarkozy would implement his concept of national identity. When Sarkozy appeals

³⁹ Or is interpellation a condition of the postwar era in light of representation? That is, the dominance of visual media and the shifting role of the historian (see Nora) from academic discipline to cultural practice like testimonies, journalism, etc.

to French youth, and the voting public in general, with the figure of Môquet, he invokes a signified hero. He calls for a particular coded subject – *résistant*, youth, patriot. Thus to read Môquet's letter, as Sarkozy did, involves adopting a postwar subject identity through a cultural artifact. Nonetheless, Môquet's letter creates its own condition for interpellation. If, as Lacan proposes, a letter always reaches its destination, then Sarkozy, and through him, the French public, are Môquet's addressees. Although Sarkozy isolated Môquet's letter as the document par excellence of the Resistance and the Occupation, his letter is not a unique document in itself. Môquet's letter belongs to a genre composed by political prisoners and *résistants* condemned to death by the Germans. Although Môquet's letter is addressed to his parents, his letter echoes beyond his immediate family and beyond the period of the Occupation. Or as the preface to a collection of letters by other executed *résistants* suggests: "Ces lettres s'adressent à nous... parce que les condamnés ont explicitement voulu que le sens de leur engagement, de leur vie, de leur mort nous soit connu" ("The letters are addressed to us... because those condemned men explicitly wanted that their commitment, their life, and their death be known to us"; Marcot 2003). The letters, like Môquet's, bear witness to the dutiful *résistant* who would become idealized after the Liberation – that is, the *résistant* who would be reframed from terrorist and traitor to patriot. However, despite the significance which Sarkozy places on the letter, it and other documents such as Camus' previously explored *La Peste* constitute a larger tradition of testimony which respond to the legal and cultural discourse within which they are written. While the Purge had its own examples, the Memory Laws interpellated a particular conception of fiction to effect a distinct cultural output. That is, the Memory Laws present a standard of representation whereas the Purge imposed a

conception of national unity. The Purge did not mandate memory as do the Memory Laws. Instead, the Purge mandated the contemporary perception of *francité* which meant anti-Vichy allegiance to a Gaullist Free France. The Memory Laws define *francité* by revisiting French history and reframing its perception in the present through a set of codes. For example, French complicity as defined and represented during the Purge was often elided in favor of expressions of patriotism against menacing German boots, planes, and trains. French complicity and thus the signification of *francité* would eventually be disrupted in the late sixties with Ophüls' *Le Chagrin et la pitié* – the film exemplifying the waning grip of *résistancialisme* on French collective memory.

Within the framework of a national discourse, memory and identity are inseparable and, according to Nora, are two parts of a tripartite: memory, identity, and patrimony. This tripartite Nora tells us is a break from the often cited conception formulated by Ernst Renan in the 19th century in which the past and the future fostered a sense of continuity. Instead, for Nora national discourse is in a state of a permanent present (“présent permanent”; Pierre 2007). Renan's sacrificial concept no longer exists. Or as Nora suggests: “On n'est plus prêt à mourir pour la France mais on en est amoureux” (“We are no longer ready to die for France but we still love it”; Pierre 2007). The relationship of the public to representations of the Occupation and the Resistance has shifted. For instance, a cultural shift has taken place as of the late twentieth century where an increased awareness of minority groups and their respective histories have become prominent. This condition, which is part of an evolution, or shifting, of *francité*, is assisted by legal and government initiatives such as the Memory Laws. One might even recall Chirac's apology in 1995 for the French State's involvement in the roundup

of Jewish citizens during the Vélodrome d'hiver (Vel' d'hiv) round-up. The admission of national guilt which took place destabilized a collective memory that France had maintained. The result was a renewed self-perception or a reconstitution of the collective memory into a revised image. These initiatives have broadened the field of national memory. The result of which has introduced other cultural aspects such as the Holocaust, French complicity, and representations of minority groups in French cultural memory. In short, *francité* no longer involves dying for one's love of the nation, or one's imagined nation. Instead, the influence on the fiction has pushed representation beyond the mid-forties where the primary issue was the perception of treason versus patriotism to a more diverse cadre of subjects.

One example worth exploring briefly for its rich narrative and complex crossroads of culture, identity, and memory is Michelle Mailet's 1990 novel *L'Étoile noire*. It is the story of Sidonie, a Martiniquaise who leaves in 1936 to study in Paris where she is eventually part of a round-up in 1943 and is subsequently deported to her death in a Nazi camp. *L'Étoile noire* represents the intersection of Holocaust literature and French Caribbean writing woven into the fabric of French collective memory – or as Christina Oppel has tried to frame the novel: the French-Caribbean Black Holocaust Novel⁴⁰. It is a fictional autobiography which, first, inscribes the novel into two familiar forms: the Holocaust memoir and the slave narrative (Larrier 279); and second, allows the protagonist's voice to echo beyond her death. Like Môquet's letter which continues to resonate, Sidonie's fictional memoir continues to communicate within the world of the

⁴⁰ Outside of the scope this chapter, but certainly worth a brief consideration, especially as a possibility of future exploration, is the investigation of whether *L'Étoile noire* would be an example of a literature of the Holocaust or rather is it a text that simply contains the Holocaust? What is the degree of difference separating these two potential classifications?

work as testament of her experience, but also as a reflection of difference and identity, especially as it relates to French citizenship. By extension, this fictional autobiography also speaks to us, the reader, as a reminder of the rarely noted experience of black women in the Nazi death camps.

L'Étoile noire communicates the legacy of the Holocaust and slavery in a postwar and proto-Memory Laws context. When *L'Étoile noire* was published in 1990 the Holocaust in France was not an unknown event. Instead, the Holocaust was already a public affair and rapidly establishing itself more firmly in the collective consciousness especially in terms of French complicity during the Occupation. The recent trial of Klaus Barbie had reached its verdict in 1987 and Maurice Papon's Vichy involvement had been an ongoing legal rollercoaster. Moreover, 1990 was the same year that the Gayssot Act criminalized Holocaust denial effectively launching the Memory Laws. There was no shortage of referents relating to the Holocaust available for public consumption. At this juncture in French history the Holocaust would soon become a more public affair and root itself more firmly in French national discourse⁴¹. For example, the next few years would see the murder of René Bousquet, the trial and conviction of Paul Touvier, the first French citizen to be convicted of crimes against humanity, and president Chirac's official acknowledgement of French complicity in the Holocaust, specifically during the roundup of Parisian Jews in the event known as the Vel d'Hiv round-up. In short, writing about the Holocaust for Maillet is not an exceptional matter at this time. Instead, what

⁴¹ As stated, the Holocaust was not a new experience in the French public imagination. One might even look at 1956 which saw the publication of Elie Wiesel's much celebrated memoir *La Nuit* and the release of Alain Renais' short film *Nuit et Brouillard*. One might even point out that this year could serve as a significant marker in the production of literature and film as these works come out in the midst of a cultural aesthetic shift. It is the period of a blossoming cinematic movement known as *La Nouvelle Vague* in addition to the literary experimental movements of *Le Nouveau Roman* and the more avant-garde *Oulipo* movement.

distinguishes *L'Étoile noire* is that it introduces an exceptional subject – black Caribbean female – into the discourse of the Occupation within a familiar context, the Holocaust memoir.

The Holocaust can serve as a unifying principle, but it can also be divisive. Jean-François Lyotard's *Le Différend* offers a notable exploration on the polemic of Holocaust representation. Here, Lyotard presents Faurisson's famous argument against the evidence for gas chambers. Faurisson argues that only a victim can attest to the existence of a gas chamber yet because there is no victim who can testify 'with his own eyes' to have seen that a gas chamber was used to kill then there is no proof of a gas chamber (3). Daniel Schwarz traces an additional polemic in contemporary Holocaust representation in his introduction to his book *Imagining the Holocaust* (1999). Schwarz considers contemporary representations in which writers who are born after the Second World War incorporate events from the war such as the Holocaust. Schwarz contextualizes such a growth of representation as a "return of the repressed" (18). He finds this experience to be more prominent in the United States where there has been an increased awareness of, or sensitivity to, ethnic minorities and in particular, Jews. Schwarz describes what one might call a "re-enchantment" with Jews, and a re-enchantment by Jews themselves. However, the limit of representation is challenged by what can be knowable or representable about the Holocaust, such as Faurisson's genuine victim. In the case of France, on the other hand, the Holocaust and the Jewish population have a different history than those explored by Schwarz. Nevertheless, *L'Étoile noire* to a certain degree reflects this condition of re-enchantment and the exploration of the ineffable. Maillet achieves this effect through the narrative structure: the novel is a memoir written

clandestinely by the protagonist narrator Sidonie. Furthermore, Maillet avails herself of this cultural relevance of the Holocaust to stipulate a broader spectrum of social and ethical conditions. Early in the novel Sidonie observes: “Pourtant, j’en suis sûre, nous avons tous tellement besoin les uns des autres” (ch. 1) [“Yet, I’m certain of it, we are each one of us in need of one another”.] Sidonie’s reflection speaks to a universality of suffering rather than a hierarchy of suffering. Her reflection is the result of her encounter with her own problematics of identity and collectivity. The protagonist’s reflection mirrors the social strains on collectivity and identity in the late twentieth century. Sidonie encounters social and ethical conditions which would be the catalyst for the Memory Laws and the beginning of a shift in the representation of the Occupation and the Resistance which takes place at the end of the twentieth century.

Maillet situates Sidonie at a crossroads of collective memories. For example, French collective memory has yet to come to terms with both the Holocaust and slavery at the time of *L’Étoile noire*’s publication. That is not to say that the Memory Laws have been a panacea for collective memory. Rather, the Memory Laws have standardized a particular aspect of collective memory in the service of defining *francité* and collectivity.

Although the Holocaust is a critical element of the novel, it is not the sole subject matter explored; of particular interest to note is the exploration of cultural identity especially as a work published in 1990. Early in the novel during her transport to the camp, Sidonie grasps for meaning of the experience. That is, she tries to understand the events happening to her by revisiting the discourse of slavery. The result is two discourses confronting each other, the discourse of the Holocaust and the discourse of slavery. *L’Étoile noire* portrays a non-Jewish perspective about the Holocaust while

evoking post-colonial memories about the former slave experience – a history of collective suffering with which Sidonie is more familiar. Yet, synthesizing the two experiences is not her goal. Nor is it her goal to create equivalence between black slavery and a Jewish Holocaust. Instead, she is working through the signified content of experience and memory: “Les images s’entrechoquent: la neige, le brouillard, le soleil de chez moi, le visage de mon père, le visage des enfants” (239) [“The images clash: snow, fog, the sunshine from my homeland, the face of my father, the face of my children”]. In this respect, Maillet’s *L’Étoile noire* is the paradigmatic novel of the Memory Laws, *avant la lettre*, as it intersects with the Holocaust, slavery, colonialism all in the service of the protagonist’s recurring struggle to grasp her own *francité*. Unlike Môquet whose signification is reimagined, Sidonie seeks to affirm her own positive subjectivity in French memory. The novel presents both slavery and the Holocaust as part of the general history of France, thus making the two historical events constitutive elements of France’s identity. Maillet is not Jewish; yet she utilizes the alienation and racial injustice of the Holocaust to orient France’s colonial past with its post-colonial present. Maillet implies that more is at stake than Jewish identity during the Holocaust and that the Holocaust belongs to a wider European experience.

However, for Maillet there is more at stake than the correspondence between suffering and racial injustice. Her work certainly traces Sidonie’s experience of deportation and internment while Sidonie herself reflects on a haunting legacy of slavery and the experience of her Antillean ancestors. Her indignation reflects the incomprehensibility of such an experience during the mid-twentieth century. The effect suggests, just as Aimé Césaire did, that the experience of racial alienation and

exploitation of the Nazis points to the colonial experience. Yet, Maillet pushes through this context to reflect the problematic relationship of race and identity of both the mid-twentieth century and her contemporary political world of France in the late eighties. When Sidonie is captured her immediate reaction is to signal her difference, that is, the fact that she is French and not Jewish: “‘Moi, pas juive, catholique. Française, martiniquaise. Martinique...’ Ils n’ont qu’une réponse: ‘Negerin’, et ils rient, me faisait signe de rassembler mes affaires et de me dépêcher” (17) [“‘Me, not Jewish, Catholic. French. Martinican. Martinique...’ They have only one response: ‘Black,’ and they laugh and signal to me to hurry and gather my belongings”]. Her attempt at self-definition fails and she realizes that it is not faith or religion that defines an individual but race (14). Maillet complicates the *francité* prevalent during the Occupation which was dictated by the fascist French State. Despite Sidonie’s appeal to citizenship she is implicated by the color of her skin complicating her presumed identity. She is a citizen of France, but she is reminded that citizenship and identity signify a complicated juncture, especially through Nazi eyes. The Holocaust for Maillet serves to portray racial inequality while at the same time functioning as an equalizing event; despite Sidonie’s struggles for general acceptance as a French citizen, her deportation and internment interpellate her into a collective European experience. On the train transport to the camps, Sidonie points out that all the passengers share the same voyage and the same fate (51); an idea which is further underscored when on the same initial French transport the passengers begin to sing *La Marseillaise*. Yet, as previously seen with Nora, memory is critical to *francité*. The unity and identity that Sidonie perceives merits further exploration through the lens of cultural memory. For instance, *L’Étoile noire*, the novel,

is a cultural artifact and consequently a *lieu de mémoire* like the letter of Môtquet. Yet an analysis can also be made within the work itself about its represented content.

The degree to which memory and cultural identity are explored in *L'Étoile noire* can best be understood by revisiting the conception of cultural memory as put forth by Assman. In an article titled "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," Assman suggests: "The specific character that a person derives from belonging to a distinct society and culture is not seen to maintain itself for generations as a result of phylogenetic evolution, but rather as a result of *socialization and customs*" (my emphasis, 125). The concepts of socialization and customs are at the core of the Memory Laws. Recall Nora's objection to the condition of having the law dictate memory; the effect is governance over traditionally organic elements, or at least elements which construct a national identity, and which Nora sees as a historian's job is to interpret (Pierre 2007). Effectively, the Memory Laws define, that is, provide a standard for socialization and customs. One might argue that this is in fact an important role of policy that without which fosters a more ambiguous conception of national identity. As Nora points out, customs change, as do identities:

La France a connu plusieurs identités nationales. Après l'identité royale féodale, l'identité monarchique. Viennent ensuite l'identité révolutionnaire et enfin l'identité républicaine, qui a essayé de faire la synthèse entre les précédentes. C'est le socle sur lequel nous avons vécu et qui a débouché sur l'identité démocratique qui est à l'ordre du jour. (Pierre 2007)

France has known several national identities. After its royal feudal identity, the monarchical identity. Next would come the revolutionary identity and finally the republican identity, which tried to synthesize the previous identities. It's the foundation upon which we have lived and which has led to today's democratic identity.

According to Nora there are particular aspects that define the national identity which consequently are also always changing. Accordingly, the problematic of memory and identity in Assman's conception noted above is rooted in representation and the active appropriation of an object. In other words, one's identity is largely determined by drawing from the public imagination and collective memory.

Nora postulates that a *lieu de mémoire* constitutes places, cultural practices, or objects "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Between 7). For Maillet, the Holocaust operates as a reference point – a *lieu de mémoire*. Engaging in the production or appropriation of *lieux de mémoire*, Maillet evokes a willingness to remember through specific objects like the memoir which the novel turns out to be. Similarly, Môquet's letter can also apply here. Môquet's letter and Maillet's novel do not represent the event itself, but rather operate as *lieux de mémoire*.

Memory and cultural identity develop spatially and temporally while always drawing from referents, thus retaining a trace of the past. In particular, as Assman proposes: "in cultural formation, a collective experience crystallizes, whose meaning, when touched upon, may suddenly become accessible again across millennia" (Collective 129). Here Assman presents a temporal distinction, which for Maillet and for Sarkozy is more of what is at stake. The diachronicity of memories enables the exegesis of an event while synchronicity contains its spatial crystallization.

Historian Annette Wieviorka contextualizes this temporal and spatial process of memory and cultural identity further in her book *The Era of the Witness* (2006). Here she historicizes survivor testimonies and suggests their uniqueness given their respective emergence in different postwar periods and locations. Wieviorka states that:

“Testimonies, particularly when they are produced as part of a larger cultural movement, express the discourse or discourses valued by society at the moment the witnesses tell their stories as much as they render an individual experience” (xii). The effect which Wieviorka describes without naming it is signification. Although her commentary specifically addresses testimonies by survivors, I consider her scope could extend to include those testimonial narratives expressed by individuals who did not experience the event, such as Maillet’s novel, *L’Étoile noire*. Testimonial narratives like Maillet’s are inflected by their own discourse that is distinct from the event narrated. The result then is to consider what the author both might be saying and not be saying about the event as in *L’Étoile noire* where a reader encounters the Holocaust, but also a layering of socialization and customs, or *francité*.

The discursive layering for Maillet is inflected by traces of the Purge in a post-*résistancialiste* proto-Memory Laws social context. On the other hand Môquet’s letter is inflected not by the author, the young historical Guy Môquet, but by the addressee, Sarkozy, who signifies an implied “Guy Môquet” as author. The layering observed in *L’Étoile noire* and Môquet’s letter reflects Derrida’s assertion expressed in his essay on writing and representation, “Signature Event Context” (1972), that signified content is not bound spatially or temporally. While the textual medium, like a novel or a letter, bears the capacity to foster a collective national discourse of *francité*, as Anderson reminds us in *Imagined Communities* about print-language, I will add that the medium of film also bears the same phenomenon as its literary counterpart. In other words, representations of the Occupation and the Resistance as explored in this chapter also recur in film. Film, as Alan Williams suggests, has “a place of pride on the cultural and

technological battleground” (Introduction 4). Maillet’s *L’Étoile noire* and Sarkozy’s signification of both Môquet and his letter demonstrate temporal and spatial migrations of the Occupation and the Resistance. Contemporary cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance are equally affected by the discourse of the Memory Laws. Although film offers much to explore in this particular area, I will only offer brief concluding remarks on contemporary film with special attention to Rachid Bouchareb’s *Indigènes* from 2006. These remarks will illustrate the after-effects of the Purge in all media, film and literature, of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and how a more thorough discussion of film would be apropos.

To begin an analysis of film it is useful to note two specific factors. The first which is specific to film itself is that film introduces an additional and self-evident consideration which the written medium lacks, that is, the visual. This self-evidence is taken for granted; however, the visual element of film facilitates the transmission of key motifs in the service of national discourse which also problematizes representation since certain films seek commercial viability. Consider that films receive greater public traction depending on particular schemas such as production (e.g. sets and locations) and stars, thus creating a condition of presumed value based on apparent “quality.”⁴² The second

⁴²Filmmaker René Clément is a good example of a case where schemas and presumed value did not necessarily result in commercial viability. While Clément’s first film *La Bataille du rail* in 1946 helped to establish Clément as a reputable and bankable filmmaker it is the critical failure of his final feature film to explore the Occupation and the Resistance *Paris brûle-t-il?* (1966) that demonstrates an inutility of the schema of star power. The social conditions in 1946 were eagerly receptive to a feature film that eschewed heroes and stars; however, the social conditions in 1966 demonstrate shifting social factors and a redirection of postwar politics. *Paris brûle-t-il?* was a Franco-American production that consisted of a budget that was 10 to 20 times the norm for that era (Lindeperg 158). In addition, it boasted a marketing campaign that touted an all-star cast. Despite these schemas for commercial success, the film did not achieve critical acclaim for Clément. In short, 1966 was not the appropriate time for a patriotic film about the liberation of Paris. The subject matter of the Occupation and the Resistance as seen in *Paris brûle-t-il?* was past its prime. As French film historian Sylvie Lindeperg point out:

By 1966 the unifying image of a population rising up against the Germans no longer required proof, prompting Clément to turn away from documenting events whose physical and emotional

factor is the vacillation of memory. Cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance during the immediate postwar years, as explored in chapters one and two, drew from personal memory. Contemporary cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance, on the other hand, draw more and more from cultural memory – memory which derives from the interpellation of signified content. These representations illustrate the temporal gap between the event, in this case the Second World War, and its representation by and for a generation with no direct (i.e. personal) memory of the event. As such, a film like *Indigènes* emerges opportunely in a new paradigm of public consciousness, that is, in the post-*résistancialiste* legal era of the Memory laws – the signified content of identity politics.

When *La Libération de Paris* debuted in 1944 it was the only film available in a newly liberated Paris. Because of its relevance, *La Libération de Paris* framed contemporary public consciousness in its conceptualization of a resistancialist *francité*. Since the debut of *La Libération de Paris*, the Second World War in France has seen much treatment on film. These representations range from the glorious Resistance in *La Bataille du rail* (René Clément, 1946) to the problematic complicity of the French government in *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (Marcel Ophüls, 1969) to the celebrated television drama *Un village français* (2009-2017). Yet, contemporary cinema offers additional folds to the representation of the Occupation and the Resistance, in particular with

traces were still palpable, to reenacting truth (the liberation of Paris) by using artifice (famous actors, constructed sets, and so on). (159-160)

Clément makes *Paris brûle-t-il?* during a complicated period where the notion of the nation was about to be contested. In the wake of the events of May 1968, Clément finds himself aesthetically adrift within the vogue of the New Wave and at odds politically with a generation of children born after the war who would soon confront the troubled dark memory of collaboration. Despite the star power and big budget schemas that would otherwise be factors for success, social conditions can determine a film's acclaim regardless how commercial it might be.

representation of the overlooked, some might say repressed, yet valiant and underappreciated contributions of peripheral figures to *francité*, such as the North African troops seen in *Indigènes* or the immigrant *résistants* in *L'Armée du crime* (2009). Of the films noted, both *La Bataille du rail* and *Indigènes* were commercial successes while *Le Chagrin et la pitié* had a more difficult trajectory achieving its eventual notoriety.

L'Armée du crime was received with positive reviews yet does not have the same enduring critical legacy as the other films. My recourse to the commercial viability, or success, of these films is motivated by how the visual element of film contributes to the general effort to effect market appeal. "Success" here constitutes two different notions. First, success can be defined as commercial; that is, measured by box office revenue; and second, success can be notable, that is recognized for its cultural significance and impact. The market appeal of *La Libération de Paris* is negligible in that it was a singular film with no competition within its target Parisian audience; but contemporary representations of the Occupation and the Resistance of the late 20th and early 21st century market pose additional competition and complications. In particular, there are two factors to consider with contemporary film 1) the subject matter and 2) the actors. These considerations coincide with the social context and the consequent discursive layering discussed earlier to dictate the cultural output.

The potential financial success or notoriety of a contemporary film about the Occupation or the Resistance is the result of shifting cultural perceptions. For instance, the representation of minority troops in the French military, or the representation of immigrants as *résistants* as seen respectively in *Indigènes* and *L'Armée du crime* exemplify the cultural output of this shift in perception. Previously, details like these

were left in the margins. Consider for example, Georges Dukson, a Gabon native who rose in the ranks in the Resistance and participated in the Liberation of Paris only to be snubbed by de Gaulle. He can be seen in various shots in the footage of the Paris insurrection as seen in *La Libération de Paris*, yet despite his popularity he has never been fully represented from beyond the margins. Nonetheless, the Memory Laws have renewed attention to France's colonial past as well as the Armenian genocide resulting in cinematic representations like *Indigènes* and *L'Armée du crime*, the main characters of which are of Armenian descent. Two additional films to note are *Elle s'appelait Sarah* [Sarah's Key] (2010) directed by Gilles Paquet-Brenner and *La Rafle* also from 2010 and directed by Rose Bosch for their explicit portrayal of French complicity with the Germans. In these cases, the Memory Laws have reframed, or broadened, the context of representation while coincidentally reframing public expectations of a film about the Occupation and the Resistance. The result is a condition of luring audiences to pay to see a film and consequently "witness" its subject matter. While the shifting perception is an ideological factor, the visual aspect of film facilitates the reliance on the previously mentioned schemas of production and stars. These schemas determine audience appeal and perceived success. For example, it is Jean Reno in *La Rafle* or Kristin Scott Thomas in *Elle s'appelait Sarah* who will lure viewers to "witness" French complicity with the Germans or it even might be Jamel Debbouze who will motivate viewers to "witness" the struggle of French minorities. In the case of the films just noted, I want to draw additional attention to *Indigènes* and its discursive layering of *francité*.

Indigènes has yet to experience the longevity of *La Bataille du rail* or *Le Chagrin et la pitié* but it has found a place among French cinematic representations of the Second

World War. Regardless, *Indigènes* was an official selection at the 2006 Cannes film festival where it won for “Best Male Actor.” In addition, the film also garnered various other notable awards that year including a nomination for the Academy Award’s “Best Foreign Language Film” as well as winning the César for the “Best Screenplay” (*Indigènes*, IMDb). However, these achievements and the film’s success raise questions of its schemas. In particular, it seems to draw heavily on its stars and recurring motifs that reflect key politics of certain war films. The film stars a variety of known actors, but in particular it stars Jamel Debbouze as the young and naïve Saïd who eagerly enlists to fight for France. Debbouze undoubtedly managed to appeal to a target audience despite the unrealistic participation of a soldier with an immobile right arm with which Debbouze, the actor, was afflicted at a young age. Debbouze’s real handicap is neither hidden nor accounted for in the film. Nevertheless, Saïd is a soldier who carries a rifle awkwardly and fights on the front lines for the sake of the films’ commercial viability. It is hard to imagine that any regiment of the military would retain such an incapacitated soldier, but Debbouze grants a perceived value to the film. His celebrity status guarantees a particular demographic and/or age group that would come watch him blow up Nazis as a grenadier in the French army during the Second World War. Another factor is also the apparent attention of the film to demonstrate that a French national identity is not homogeneous, but includes North African subjects. Debbouze himself accentuates this idea. In an interview with TF1 News, he states: “Alors ce film, c’était une manière pour moi de dire que j’étais français, fier de l’être, et rendre de cette façon hommage à ces tirailleurs algériens, c’était pour moi merveilleux” (Debbouze) [“So this film, it was a way for me to say that I was French, proud to be it, and in this way pay homage to these

Algerian infantrymen, it was a remarkable experience for me”]. Debbouze, who was born in Paris but spent his early childhood in Morocco, represents the colonial “haunting” which Fiona Barclay says informs contemporary France.

In her book, *Writing Postcolonial France* (2011), Barclay delineates a binary of “lived experience,” that is, “historical and social realities” versus “imaginative representations” (xii) of the legacy of France’s history with North Africa. *Indigènes* is an example of how this haunting functions in contemporary France. Barclay posits that literature “operates as a privileged site in which the phenomena latent in contemporary society emerge and can be explored” (xii). By extension this definition applies to film as well. Consequently, *Indigènes* is not just a film about the valor of North African troops during the Second World War and the bigotry they endured; but it is also about the persistent bigotry against North Africans in the *métropole*. In other words, *Indigènes* explores the national discourse surrounding the Memory Laws and *francité*. Barclay reminds us of the two French teens of North African descent who were killed by police officers in a Parisian suburb in October 2005. Their deaths prompted a massive civil disorder, the greatest since May 1968, and lasted nearly one month until November 2005. The result of which was the installation of a state of emergency. The riots and the consequent state of emergency, Barclay suggests, is “one of many possible examples” of influence of French colonial past on the present especially since it resonates with the civil unrest during the Algerian War. *Indigènes*, released in 2006, revisits the underlying tension of the legacy of North Africa in France that was dismissed by public officials, like the then-president Jacques Chirac, who maintained that all parties involved were “sons and daughters of the Republic” (xiii). In many ways I agree with Barclay’s position

that France's legacy of its history with North Africa informs contemporary France, or as she insists, how this history "haunts" contemporary France. However, while France's colonial past certainly does influence the present, I see a deeper link to the postwar Purge articulation of citizenship, duty, and identity through which the legacy of France's history with North Africa is channeled. In particular, it is not a "haunting" per se of the colonial past but a refocalization on the Republican model of citizenship around which the post-Liberation Purge trials formed – that is, around a certain notion of *francité*. In short, France has sought and continues to reform its ideal citizen.

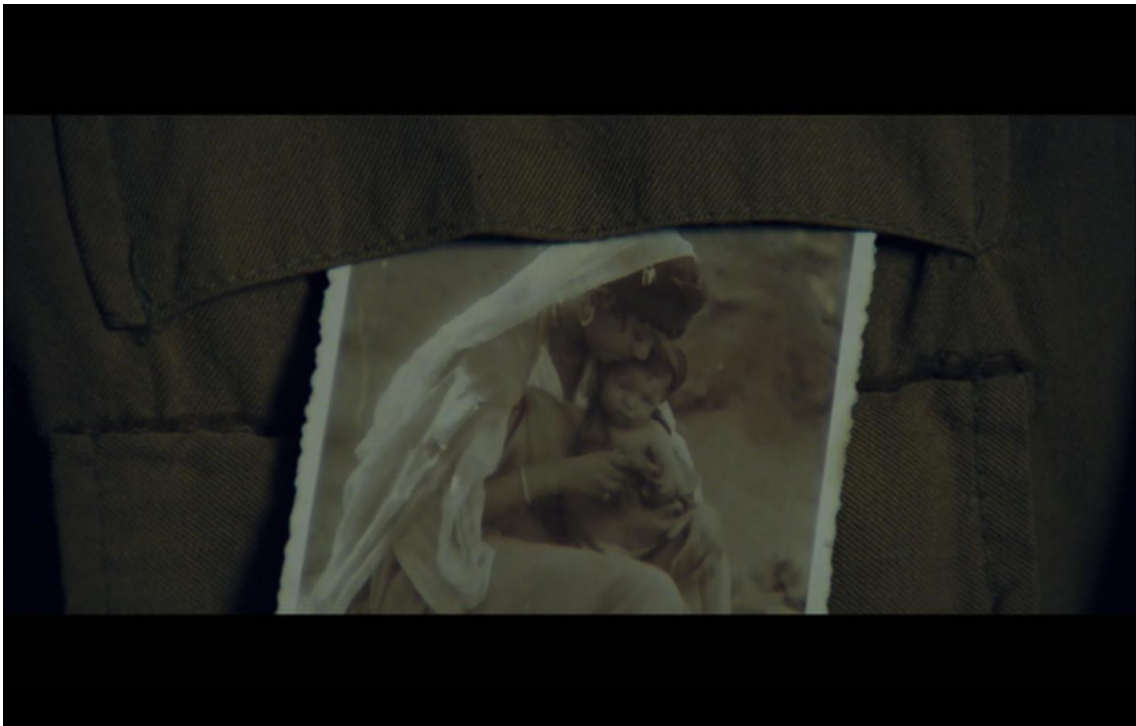


Figure 33. From *Indigènes* (2006)

The relationship between Saïd, Debbouze's character, and Sergeant Martinez, played by Bernard Blancan, illustrates the problematic of *francité* currently being addressed. A critical moment in the film comes after Martinez adopts Saïd as his personal assistant suggesting a stronger comradeship between them. One night Saïd and Martinez

are sharing a drink when Martinez states: “On libera le pays [France] et rentre chez nous” [“We will liberate the country and go home”]; (Bouchareb). Saïd responds quizzically in his broken French to Martinez: “Mais Sergent, ici c’est aussi chez nous. C’est la France. On fait la bagarre pour la France...pour la mère patrie. Ici, chez nous” [“But Sergeant, here, it’s also our home. It’s France. We’re fighting for France...for the motherland. Here, home”]; (Bouchareb). Despite what appears to be a moment of shared likeness, the scene ends abruptly as Saïd attempts to demonstrate a deeper fellowship between him and his ranking superior. Saïd draws attention to an old photograph he had discovered in Martinez’s jacket of a woman dressed in traditional North African clothing and a child by stating to Martinez: “[E]t je sais que vous êtes comme nous – un Arabe” [“[A]nd I know that you’re like us – an Arab”]; (Bouchareb). [Figure 33.]. The woman and child turn out to be Martinez and his mother. Martinez, a liminal figure now, is a *pied-noir* passing as “French.” A fact which he has kept hidden from the rest of the company and which undoubtedly has afforded him his military rank. Despite his apparent social success, Martinez remains conflicted between his allegiance to France and his allegiance to his origins. He quickly and forcibly sends Saïd from the room ordering his silence. This moment of disrupted identity between an ethnic North African who feels allegiance to “la mère patrie” and a *pied-noir* who dutifully fights for “le pays” but is eager to return home highlights the problematics of *francité* vis-à-vis French identity politics.

The film illustrates Nora’s assertion of the shifting signifier that is *francité*. This scene represents Martinez’s anxiety of belonging and Saïd’s anxiety of not belonging, while suggesting Saïd’s and the rest of the Algerian troops’ sense of serving France with the hope of “becoming,” or at least being recognized as, “French.” In the previously

mentioned interview Debbouze comments on the relationship between his character and Sergeant Martinez. Debbouze adds that this social anxiety is not isolated to the period within the film, but also to the youth of France today who can trace their roots back to North Africa: “En ce sens le film de Rachid [Bouchareb] est très important, il va pouvoir rappeler à tous ces gamins qu’ils existent, qu’il y a eu des héros qui avaient leur tronche, qui sont morts ensemble, pour la France. Il faut qu’ils soient fier d’être français” [“In this sense Rachid [Bouchareb]’s film is very important, it will be able to remind these kids that they exist, that there were heroes who looked like them, who died together, for France. They need to be proud of being French”]; (Debbouze). Recall that Maillet’s *L’Étoile noire*, despite its social relevance in 1990, is confined by its pre-Memory Laws context which relegates the Caribbean context of citizenship and identity as a function of remembered experience by the protagonist. While on the other hand, *Indigènes* whose genesis is within the social context of the Memory Laws manages to shift the focalization to North Africa with distinct North African sets (at least in the opening before the European campaign) and actors. Similarly, as explored in the previous chapter, Camus draws attention to North Africa as a viable site for “French” experience through the allegory of the Occupation and the Resistance in *La Peste*. However, *La Peste* still presents a limitation despite being set in North Africa in that none of the characters are ethnic North Africans. For Camus it might have been enough to point to North Africa, in this case Oran, as a viable site of exploration, but *Indigènes* manages to communicate North African sites, people, and *francité*. *Indigènes* insists on a heterogeneous national identity and presents *francité* as more inclusive, but not more innocent, than it has been in the past.

I would like to end by returning briefly to Charles de Gaulle and the stakes of postwar *francité*. It is worth noting that there is no pomp and ceremony at the end of *Indigènes*. The culminating battle in the film, the Liberation of Alsace by the North African troops, does not merit the De Gaullian celebration as seen in *La Libération de Paris*. The battle was won by soldiers and not by the Resistance. The film is not about the grandeur of the French army. Instead, it reminds us of the problematic relationship of France with its identity politics which has persisted since the Liberation and the Purge. Charles de Gaulle defined postwar *francité* and by association *résistancialisme*. Nevertheless, de Gaulle whose singular status reigned over France, *francité*, and representations of the Occupation and the Resistance is absent from the film. De Gaulle in *Indigènes* is a referent to remind viewers of the period in the film, that is, not just of the Second World War but of the baggage of *résistancialisme*. Perhaps contemporary *francité* has other stories to tell instead of De Gaulle's. Benedict Anderson reminds us of the importance of print-language in the constitution of nationalism in that print-language codified a concept of the nation. Film performs a similar function. However, the concept of the nation is not simply constituted, instead it is a process that shifts over time and needs to be maintained (Williams, Introduction 3-4) or reassured. Just as the Polish mother in *L'Armée du crime* reassures her son: "C'est la France. Le pays du droits d'homme." It is easy to ascribe *Indigènes* the label of French cinema, yet the question of national cinema arises here only in so far as the discussion points to conflicting ideologies in terms of constituting or negotiating allegiance to France, that is "le pays," and "la mère patrie." We are reminded nonetheless of the difference between

representations of de Gaulle and Pétain as seen in chapter one and how these two conflicting mythologies purported to represent two separate “Frances.”

The degree to which these texts, both film and literature, respond to a national film or literature will not be answered within the limits of this chapter. Instead, we have seen how cinema and literature effect and are influenced by a conceptualization of the nation: *francité*. The nation here being understood as the intersection between popular memory and official discourses of national memory. Alan Williams concludes succinctly, that French cinema is “whatever you need it to be to make a point in the ongoing struggle to conceptualize France and the cinema” (Introduction 5) and by extension Williams’ conclusion on film applies aptly to literature. The point to be made, as Williams puts it, is more volatile though when exploring the Purge – a period that is still elided in both French popular memory and national discourse.

Conclusion

Thirty-one years after his execution, Pierre Pucheu would once again exercise his power as Minister of the Interior condemning *résistants* and other political prisoners. Pucheu's postwar "after-life" is represented in Costa-Gavras' political fiction film *Section Speciale* (1975). The film is an early example of a post-*résistantialiste* representation of the Occupation and the Resistance and like Louis Malle's *Lacombe, Lucien* from the previous year in 1974, does not dissimulate French complicity with the Germans. Unlike *Lacombe, Lucien*, the film documents the legal shortcoming of the Vichy justice system and problematizes dutiful citizenship. The film challenges French cultural memory and *francité* of the seventies by drawing attention to circumstances around which the Purge is based and which is the context of my dissertation. In my dissertation, I traced the development of *francité* in French postwar cultural memory as seen in literary and cinematic representations of the Occupation and the Resistance during the Purge and under the Memory Laws.

Although I did not address *Section Speciale* in the body of my dissertation, I want to discuss briefly the film's screen-writer, Jorge Semprún, whose collaboration with Costa-Gavras presents a distinct moment in the spatial and temporal migration of the cultural memory of the Occupation and the Resistance and the evolution of *francité*. In this dissertation, I have shown how the Purge created an aesthetic and political shift in French cultural memory and how this impact of the Purge has continued to resonate in contemporary discourse of French cultural memory such as through the implementation of the Memory Laws. I conclude that there has been an interplay between the political and the popular that manifests in the representations of the Occupation and the

Resistance. In short, I drew attention to shifting signifieds like patriotism and nationalism which form the contours of a more diverse and heterogeneous *francité* as seen in chapter four. For this reason, a brief discussion of Jorge Semprún is apropos at the moment – in addition to the fact that he embodies the spirit of this dissertation both by his biography and by his work in both film and literature.

On June 7, 2011, Jorge Semprún who had dedicated much of his literary career to exploring French cultural memory died in his home in Paris where he had lived for most of his adult life. His family moved to France in 1939 fleeing the Franco government in Spain. In 1941, he studied Philosophy at the Sorbonne and in 1943 he was arrested and deported to Buchenwald for his association with the Resistance. He returned to Paris in 1945. He is a figure of postwar French literature and film whose career includes notable achievements – he was the first non-French citizen elected to the Académie Goncourt. His oeuvre stands among other postwar writer/philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus whose texts are marked by having lived through the war, the Occupation, and the Purge. Yet, his body of work differs from other writers like the polarizing Michel Houellebecq, a contemporary writer whose work is often a critical examination of contemporary France⁴³. Despite Semprún's cultivation of *francité*, which included impeccable French, he died as a Spanish citizen. He was one of the last remaining creative minds who lived through the war. My advisor suggested that Semprún's death essentially marked the end of postwar French literature. At the time I agreed, yet with a certain hesitation, because I felt that it was too soon for the postwar period to end. It was

⁴³ For example, his most recent novel *Soumission* (2015) which incidentally was published the same the same day as the Charlie Hebdo shooting, imagines a future France in which a Muslim party is ruling the country.

either that or I felt the trepidation that my work was now something historical rather than current and relevant, that is, part of living memory.

Nevertheless, in my dissertation I showed how the Purge and representations of the Occupation and the Resistance are not just historical events but part of a living experience that continues to shape and be shaped by French cultural memory. However, on November 13, 2015 the relevance of the Purge and of the Second World War in general in contemporary French cultural memory encountered another critical crossroad – a crossroad which challenges the living memory of the Second World War.

On that date Paris was tragically attacked by an armed individual resulting in the death of nearly 150 people, leaving France in a state of emergency (“état d’urgence”) which lasted until November of 2017. The shootings led to subsequent closures of mosques and the seizure of private property by the French government. It was then that it occurred to me that the living memory of the Second World War, or the postwar period, had ended. The attack and the consequent state of emergency had refocalized French national consciousness. The Second World War and the Holocaust put ethnicity in the balance, yet it was a largely ethnically homogenous war and the main division which the Purge sought to discern was of dutiful citizenship. After the November 2017 attack, the focus now appears more ethnically and religiously divided. The enemies no longer look the same as the heroes and we can turn to representations of the Occupation and the Resistance to witness an aesthetic shift.

One of the points that I argued in my dissertation is that the Gayssot Act and the Memory Laws allowed France to reimagine its history. This reimagining can be observed within the work of a single filmmaker. For example, René Clément’s films *La Bataille du*

rail and *Paris brûle-t-il?* reimagine the Occupation and the Resistance in a new cultural lens within a span of 20 years (1946 and 1966). The heroes of the film move from the heroic anonymity portrayed in *La Bataille du rail* which creates an “everyman” condition to highlighting the notable figures of the Occupation and the Resistance in *Paris brûle-t-il?*. Between these two films there is a movement from representing the ground level battle and the role of the general patriot to the elevated plane of pivotal players against the German Occupation. This distinction is further expanded in the late 20th century where heroes become more ethnically diverse. One can observe this reimagining when comparing the heroes portrayed in *La Bataille du rail* and *Jéricho* (see chapter two) from 1946 to those in the 21st century as seen in *Indigènes* (see chapter four). This reimagining is found in literary works as well. For example, consider Albert Camus *La Peste* from 1947 (see chapter three) and Boualem Sansal’s novel from 2008, *Le Village de l’Allemand ou le journal des frères Schiller* (*The German Mujahid*, 2009). The protagonists in Camus’ *La Peste* are French while Arabs or ethnic Algerians in general are absent despite the setting of the novel in Algeria; whereas the protagonists in Sansal’s *Le Village de l’Allemand*, Rachel and Malrich, are brothers raised in a Parisian ghetto whose father is a former Nazi who flees to North Africa and marries an Algerian woman. Sansal’s novel takes into account the cultural diversity of contemporary France which by no means is a contemporary phenomenon in France. As Camus points out, ethnic representation and cultural identity have been at the core of *francité* even during Purge.

I want to conclude by drawing attention to another aspect of the civil division which the Purge fostered and which would benefit from a greater exploration as it suggests a new wrinkle to postwar French cultural memory and *francité*. In 1947 Camus

wrote an article titled “La contagion” for the journal *Combat* in which he reproaches, what he called, the “stupid and criminal malady” [“maladie stupide et criminelle” (Actuelles 106)] of racism that had taken over Liberated France. “Three years after being subjected to a policy of terror themselves,” Camus remarks, “Frenchmen are reacting to this latest news [of torture against Algerians] with the indifference of people who have seen too much” (Combat 291) [“Trois ans après avoir éprouvé les effets d’une politique de terreur, des Français enregistrent ces nouvelles avec l’indifférence des gens qui en ont trop vu” (Actuelles 107)]. Camus summarizes his point in the same article, “[W]e are doing what we reproached the Germans for doing” (Combat 291) [“[N]ous faisons, dans ces cas-là, ce que nous avons reproché aux Allemands de faire” (Actuelles 107)]. The polemic that Camus raises for his postwar French readership is the condition which a liberated nation finds itself after gaining its independence, that is, with the opportunity to define the contours of national unity and identity. Camus suggests that Europe struggled against the Nazi atrocities and racial terror during the war and the Occupation of France because of a unified European awareness that “all Europeans were equal in rights and dignity” (Combat 291) [“tous les Européens étaient égaux en droit et en dignité” (Actuelles 108)]. He rebuked the response to not react to French mandated injustice against Algerians which he attributed to an unconscious sense of superiority by the French over Algerians: “[I]t is because they are unconsciously certain that we are in some way superior to those people and that it makes little difference what means we choose to demonstrate that superiority” (Combat 291) [“c’est qu’ils vivent, de manière inconsciente, sur la certitude que nous sommes supérieurs en quelque manière à ces

peoples et que le choix des moyens propres à illustrer cette supériorité importe peu” (Actuelles 108)].

While Camus was completing his work on *La Peste* in the midst of the civil disorder of the Purge, his journalistic attention turned toward his disillusionment with France’s post-Occupation policies both domestic and colonial. Camus describes a recent growth in racist policies and traces a series of what he calls, signs (*signes*) to demonstrate the fact. Insofar as *La Peste* bears witness, as an allegory of the Occupation, to the suffering and the separation of a generation of citizens subject to an invasive contagion, the setting of this chronicle of suffering is Oran, a coastal town in Algeria, a French colony which will gain its independence in 1962 that would see an initial bloody insurrection as early as 1954. While the setting of Oran contains personal attachments for Camus – it is the birthplace of his wife, Francine – it strategically thrusts a relatively foreign location into mainland France, the *métropole*, and tethers it to a collective national suffering. One might say that this strategy of raising awareness of Algeria worked for Camus being that *La Peste* immediately won the *Prix de Critiques* upon its publication. Nevertheless, Germaine Brée in her biography of Camus, reminds us that “Camus’ childhood was typically Algerian” and that Oran, or North Africa in general, furnishes for him the “décor” and plays a role in all of his work. In short, Algeria gives Camus an “individuality” and “differentiated style” as a writer (Camus 14).

My dissertation does not explicitly address the racial aspects of the Post-Occupation period. Instead, I investigated the manner in which the fictional works of the period were being shaped by the legal and political policies of the day and vice versa. I explored the manner in which memory (personal and collective) contributed to a nation

recovering from a fractured national identity and the role that popular fiction, both literature and film, played in the construction of a collective and eventual cultural memory. The racial aspects of French post-war policies that I did explore, appear by way of conclusions as I articulate the manner in which the Purge was dormant during the Fourth Republic and emerged during the Fifth Republic in the form of the Gayssot Act and the Memory Laws which sought to mitigate the increasing public tensions by constituting a collective narrative, or a national memory, that addressed France's history of slavery, colonialism, and the Holocaust.

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