

indirectly further the process of deconstructing Anglo-American myths better than more aggressive critiques could. Her pioneering emphasis on England particularly will, I am sure, draw numerous followers in English and other languages. I am equally confident that Greenfeld's name will stand near the top of the list of those who have given the study of national identity a new start.

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HISTORY AND MEMORY. By Jacques Le Goff. Translated by Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Pp. xxiii, 265; ASSASSINS OF MEMORY: ESSAYS ON THE DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST. By Pierre Vidal-Naquet. Translated and with a foreword by Jeffrey Mehlman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Pp. xxv, 205.

Rising unobtrusively during the 1980s on the wings of an imposing scholarly discussion about the rhetoric of historical interpretation, the problem of memory's relationship to history has in the 1990s moved to the center of the historiographical stage. From the standpoint of the theory of history, the memory/history puzzle is conceivably today's most engaging topic. There have in the past few years been some fine contributions to this emerging genre of scholarly research. I would mention especially the historical studies of the role of collective memory in the making of national identity. Particularly noteworthy are Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984) on France; Charles Maier's *The Unmasterable Past* (1988) on Germany; Michael Kammen's *Mystic Chords of Memory* (1991) on the United States; and Yael Zerubavel's *Recovered Roots* (forthcoming) on Israel. There are a host of like studies that explore more discrete topics in this rapidly growing field.

In some measure, this turn in historiography reflects a deepening exploration of the issues raised by the deconstructionist tenor of contemporary scholarship. Taking their cue from the poststructuralist philosophers, particularly the pioneering studies by Michel Foucault, many historians are busy exploring the way in which the commemorative leavings of the past—the artifacts and icons in which the human imagination has been enshrined—constitute a layer of reality that intrudes between events as they were lived and as they have been remembered by posterity. While their predecessors devoted themselves to the consideration of the events themselves, these historians are as interested in the ways in which events were commemorated by those who witnessed them and in the ways in which such commemorative representations were revised and redeployed over time.

One might say that historians who began by analyzing the residue of the human imagination have discovered that it contains the record of an evolving

collective memory. The new historians of memory would have us turn our attention from historical events themselves to the material forms in which their memory has been preserved. Such are the materials that provide traditions with their places of memory, and today's historians of memory are inventorying them with a view to understanding how they came to constitute the structure of developing traditions over long periods of time.<sup>1</sup> Such commemorative representations, they contend, are monuments to the imagination of the past that may be observed and verified in a way that living memory cannot, and so provide more reliable evidence about the way in which the realities of the past were imaginatively conceived. One might put it another way. Once historians understood their task as one of exploding myths that obscure the historical reality of underlying events. These days, however, many prefer to show how historical events themselves are turned into myths that are used and reused in diverse and sometimes unconnected ways.

Despite the interest that the new history of commemorative forms has elicited, it is not the first setting in which historians have appreciated the role of memory in historical understanding. Nineteenth-century historicists from Jules Michelet to Benedetto Croce approached the problem from the opposite tack in their efforts to recover memory's inspiration. In their journeys into the past, they wanted to recollect the memory of lived experience. Their goal was to recreate the imagination of the past by reconstructing those thought processes that had once animated the actors of history. These historians wanted to make the past live again by awakening in the mind of the present the ideas, and even something of the passion, that historical actors had once displayed. Their view of the role of memory in enlivening history prevailed among professional historians well into the twentieth century, and even into our own times among historians writing for the general public.<sup>2</sup>

But it is precisely these living memories, once cherished by the historicists, whose requiem today's historians of commemorative representation would sing. They challenge the historicists' notion that connections with memory as lived experience may be reestablished. The representations of the past bequeathed by tradition, they would argue, provide a barrier beyond which we cannot go. We cannot rethink what historical actors once thought. Even when memory remains alive, they contend, it has been endlessly revised, for living memory continually updates the past to reflect present preoccupations. It is too malleable, therefore, to be a reliable guide to the past. Commemorative representations, by contrast, fix the past in images that historians may consider more objectively. Like watercourses that have run dry, these emptied forms provide testimony of the channels through which living memory once coursed, and so

1. The prototype for this kind of study was pioneered some fifty years ago by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in his *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1941). See the recent translation of portions of this work, together with commentary: *On Maurice Halbwachs*, ed. Lewis Coser (Chicago, 1992).

2. The best late statement of the historicist view on memory was presented by the English philosopher and historian R. G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), 282–320.

serve as our most reliable means for reconstructing the traditions they have hewed out of the past. History is commemorative, not because it resurrects living memory, but rather because it is constructed out of these ruins of the imagination.

The newfound interest in the commemorative leavings of collective memory, of course, might never have come of age had it been based on developments within the lofty world of scholarship alone. But in this “postmodern” age, it is also tied to the historians’ more generalized, often deeply felt sense of loosening ties to so many of the “modern” traditions that once sustained their scholarship. In this respect, the new histories of memory would appear to signal that ours is an age of dissolving identities. Like icebergs moving into warmer waters, we have drifted free of the glacial historiographical traditions that once supported our historical scholarship. Whereas historians of an earlier day sought to explicate the traditions they honored with the authority of their scholarly research, their counterparts today would expose the tenuous foundations of these same traditions by showing that their pretensions to authority were usually based on rhetorical strategies of commemoration, often tied to political considerations.<sup>3</sup> The writings of the historians of commemorative representation, therefore, sometimes betray an elegiac quality – not for the traditions they would disassemble but for the capacity to believe in tradition at all. Like the madman’s lament for churches turned into tombs and monuments in Friedrich Nietzsche’s famous aphorism about the death of God, today’s historians of commemoration would expose the archaeological remains of those traditions that no longer inspire their passion.<sup>4</sup>

I have under review two books by eminent French historians about history and memory that stand somewhat apart in that they focus on the theoretical issues that this new history of memory raises. Their strategies for addressing the problem are quite removed from one another and they have different purposes in mind. Yet they occupy a common ground in that they explore in opposing ways the theoretical problem outlined above. Jacques Le Goff’s book is a broadly conceived meditation on memory’s place in the history of history. It helps us to appreciate the historiographical route by which historians today have come to consider the history of memory’s representations.<sup>5</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet’s study is a more sharply focused refutation of the revisionist scholars who would deny the reality of the Holocaust. It is a sensitive exploration of the enduring importance of the historicist perspective on memory in a domain beyond what commemorative representation can record.

3. An excellent example is *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, England, 1983).

4. See the pioneering essay by Pierre Nora, “Entre mémoire et histoire,” in *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1984), I, xvii–xlii.

5. For models of how the history of imaginative representation is done, one will with profit consult Le Goff’s own contributions to the field, notably *The Birth of Purgatory*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1984), and *The Medieval Imagination*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1988).

In considering how and why these historians gravitate to opposite extremes, we may see not only the new vistas opened upon the past by the history of commemorative forms, but also something of the older historicist perspective it has obscured. I would therefore present their arguments as a dialogue not yet held, but one that ought to be. Le Goff would show that history, though born of memory, has since emancipated itself from its perspectives. He warns us against memory's notorious unreliability as a guide to the realities of the past. For him, history is a science at last rescuing memory from its errant ways. Vidal-Naquet, by contrast, wishes to underscore the vital importance of memory for maintaining the integrity of history. He cautions us against the deceptive ways in which history may be misused so as to obliterate truths about the past that still survive in living memory. For him, living memory provides historical understanding with its existential link to reality.

Le Goff's *History and Memory* is a thoughtful survey of the current state of historiography. I would characterize it as a philosophical meditation on historiography in light of the memory/history puzzle. Loosely organized around four interrelated essays, the project coalesced out of a series of articles on a variety of historiographical topics that he wrote for a historical dictionary in the late 1970s. Gathering the most important of these together in a more expansive reflection on the history of history, his study is wide-ranging in the topics it considers and rich in its references to those scholars, ancient and modern, who have set the course of historical writing.<sup>6</sup> Still, as I read the work, I do find an underlying thesis that I would reconstruct as follows.

Le Goff's guiding proposition is that the possibility of historical thinking emerged historically out of a rising awareness of the differences between past and present realities. If today that seems a truism, making the distinction was not always so easy. It has come of the hard-won victory of distancing the past, of gaining a critical perspective on the present-mindedness inherent in living memory, which continually updates perceptions of the past so as to integrate them into present concerns. Historical thinking requires the past to stand still so that it may be observed. That was a nearly impossible task in societies of primary orality. Even in the manuscript cultures of late antiquity and the Middle Ages, the various arts of memory possessed limited resources for providing a critical perspective on the past. Historical thinking has since come of age because humankind has learned to exteriorize memory in ever more accurate and accessible ways—first as inscribed in manuscripts, then as disseminated more widely in printed books, eventually as classified in archives and libraries that insured its preservation, and today as entered into electronic information systems that permit its retrieval instantly and accurately. As this process proceeded, therefore, historians in their considerations of the past came to rely less on their

6. The book under review is composed out of four of the ten essays published in the *Enciclopedia* (Turin, 1977–1982), and separately as *Storia e memoria* (Turin, 1977).

internal recollections, more on these external representations, ever more accessibly displayed.

Le Goff presents his thesis about this emergence of a critical awareness of the past through his observations on the parallel evolution of a series of conceptual oppositions, and it is around these that his book is organized: past/present; ancient/modern; memory/history. His point is that the elements of these antinomies, closely conjoined in ancient times, have in modern times drifted apart. So wide did the distance between them eventually become that they ceased to be mutually referential, and the terms of their opposition were eventually forgotten. Freed of its ties to this binary frame of reference, historical understanding became more self-reflective about its resources, permitting history as a discipline in our own age to emerge as an autonomous science. The process, Le Goff remarks in an interesting grammatical aside, may be observed in the growing refinement of the distinctions between past, present, and future in verbal tenses beginning in the High Middle Ages: the imperfect being introduced between the eleventh and the thirteenth century; the future becoming a signature of bourgeois speech in the modern age.

In his opening essay on past/present, Le Goff notes the shift across the history of history from an approach that privileged the past to one that emphasizes the future. Traditional societies were beholden to past precedent. In the modern world, by contrast, history became closely intertwined with philosophies of progress. In our own age, however, this shift in mentality has created a new dilemma. For today's historians, the future does not seem to hold the promise it once did, and historians find themselves turning back to the past without the consoling hope of discovering there the wisdom their predecessors once believed it held. Accordingly, historians have redirected their interest in the past to the conceptual frameworks in which history has been presented. In the absence of historiographical traditions that provide them with guiding values on which they can rely, they are reflecting on the forms in which history has previously been written for clues about why, across the vast expanse of Western historiography, the past has been described according to the particular traditions that it has.

Le Goff's discussion of the ancient/modern antinomy offers further insight into how this distancing process developed. Initially the notion of "antiquity" was a meaningful reference for evaluating the nature and significance of innovation, for it intimated constancy in the habits of mind bequeathed across the generations from time immemorial. The authority of the past was in the remembrance of its ancient wisdom. But over time, the terms themselves were modified, and so the framework of the antinomy began to dissolve. The Renaissance concept of modern, defined against the reference point of classical antiquity, splintered into the variations of "modernism," "modernity" and "modernization" by the twentieth century. In the process, the notion of a dialectical tension with a value-sustaining past was lost, as these terms became identified with change for its own sake. The reassuring touchstone of an "ancient" past against

which one might measure “modern” departures was lost, as innovations were drawn into what Le Goff characterizes as the “vertiginous vortex of modernity,” which sets them spinning into a future that will not care about past points of reference (49).

In his following chapter on memory, Le Goff draws closer to concrete problems of historiography by recapitulating the historical process through which memory’s role as guardian of the past was undermined. He provides a deft summary of the way in which memory was gradually deprived of its authority to speak for the past to become in our own time the object of the historians’ scrutiny. Here he recapitulates the long-range historical process by which the protean imagery of living memory has been immobilized and preserved in systems of information stored for future consultation. Relying heavily on the five-stage model of the French anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan, he explains how the move was made from memory conceived as living images of the past to memory reconceived as inert representations inscribed in the commemorative imagery of works of art, manuscripts, books, and computer data banks.<sup>7</sup> These signatures of the past, not the living memories of which they were once expressions, provide historians with the tangible evidence upon which their reconstructions of the past will be based.

This process of exteriorization, Le Goff observes, is not without its own problems. As memory was externalized, its forms proliferated, especially from the nineteenth century, so that we have come to contend with “memory in expansion” (84). Memory, once perceived as the source of the historians’ inspiration, has become instead a burgeoning field for their investigation. In other words, the historians’ task has changed from how to remember to what to remember. Burdened by the possibilities of framing the past in light of memory’s myriad representations, many historians have turned to the issue of the politics of memory—to a consideration of those factors that prompted their predecessors to write the narrative political histories of the ascending fortunes of the nation-state that were long identified with historiography’s coming of age as a modern form of scholarship. The distinguishing feature of contemporary historiography, by contrast, is the way in which historians have abandoned what Le Goff in an earlier essay called the “political backbone of history” in favor of a range of new approaches, all of which frame their subjects in light of alternative social or cultural traditions.<sup>8</sup> The new approaches have introduced an element of relativism into historiography. Many would argue that today there is no single tree of historical knowledge, no consensus about how history ought to be framed. Accordingly the problem of memory comes to the fore. History becomes a politics of what we in the present want posterity to remember.

7. Leroi-Gourhan identifies these stages of collective memory with oral transmission, written tables, file cards, mechanical writing, and electronic sequencing. See his *Le Geste et la parole* (Paris, 1964), 65.

8. See Le Goff’s essay, “Is Politics Still the Backbone of History?” in *Historical Studies Today*, ed. Felix Gilbert and Stephen R. Graubard (New York, 1971), 337–358.

In the face of the flux that history reconceived as a politics of memory would seem to betoken, Le Goff nonetheless holds out for the scientific nature of the historians' enterprise. Far from raising doubts about history's foundations, he asserts, the historians' newfound interest in the representations of the past marks their entry into a virgin domain of scientific research. He traces this development well, exploring the recent shift in the topical interests of historians from politics to culture, to non-Western traditions, global issues and those of gender. In the face of those who claim that history is in thrall to a politics of memory, he points to the ways in which historians continue to provide advances in our knowledge of the past. Indeed, he believes that historical scholarship has arrived at a new level of maturity. Born an art of Mnemosyne's inspired imagination, he explains, history has since become a science of Clio's dispassionate analysis, one intent on learning how to analyze, not to recollect, the past. "At the outset," he notes, "I had to examine the relations between history and memory. Recent, naive trends seem virtually to identify history with memory." Le Goff shuns such an association as detracting from the historians' quest for objectivity. "To privilege memory excessively," he cautions, "is to sink into the unconquerable flow of time." It is better to understand memory for what it is, he advises, "the raw material of history. Whether mental, oral, or written, it is the living source from which historians draw. Because its workings are usually unconscious, it is a reality more dangerously subject to manipulation by time and by societies given to reflection than the discipline of history itself" (xi-xii).

Inspired in its beginnings by the venerable legends of oral tradition, Le Goff argues, history in its reckoning with documentation deals with the past in a fundamentally different way. As he explains, memory evokes that which endures. History, by contrast, partitions time into discrete units, and so provides a method for a new science. As he proposes, ". . . as a science of time, history is an indispensable component of any activity in time. Rather than being so unconsciously, in the form of a manipulated or distorted memory, isn't it better that it should be so in the form of knowledge?" (214) History nourishes memory, he contends. It saves memory from launching into the flights of imagination that invariably distort the reality of the past.

Like the antinomies of past/present and ancient/modern, that of memory/history, Le Goff proposes, has today broken down in a way that frees historians to understand it from a critical perspective, and so for the first time to bring memory itself under historical scrutiny. For this reason, he suggests, there is rising interest in the history of history, tied as it is to the recognition that it is now possible to analyze the imaginative constructs out of which historiographical traditions have been fashioned. He tends, therefore, to focus on the memory/history problem as it presents itself at either end of the history of history. In ancient times, memory was understood intuitively as the source from which historical inquiry springs. In the contemporary age, memory is understood analytically as a new field for historians' clinical investigation. Setting aside

consideration of the residual ways in which memory continues to sustain historical thinking, he concentrates on modifications within the craft itself. His essay on history, therefore, while intelligent and insightful, has the look of any conventional account of the rise of historical writing. His discussion of historicism is telling in this respect. In his interpretation, he passes over the mnemonic purpose of historicism—its quest to recreate the imagination of the past—in favor of its interest in contextual relativism—its desire to evaluate the past in terms of its particular times and places. Accordingly he presents historicism as a nineteenth-century way-station in the rise of the science of history, lodged between a Renaissance historiography that teaches by edifying example and a modern one that explains how change actually transpired.

Le Goff is mindful that the interest in memory in contemporary historiography is in some measure tied to a shift in ideological allegiances. The traditions of the modern age, notably those relating to the nation-state as an instrument of progress, have lost their power of appeal. Alternative traditions, based upon the counter-memories of social, cultural, gender, and global issues are making claims for historiographical recognition that can no longer be denied. But his consideration of the topic pays less attention to the disintegrating frameworks of modern historiographical traditions, more to the new fields that the science of history may as a consequence be able to till. In scanning today's historical scholarship, he warns historians against the "stake of memory," charged as it is with ideological meanings. "If memory is a stake in the power game," he reaffirms, "history, like all sciences, takes truth as its norm" (114).

Still, there are those historians who claim that the stake of memory is vital to preserving knowledge of the historical truth. Historians of the Holocaust are today pressing that claim with a certain urgency. Herein lies the interest of Vidal-Naquet's book *Assassins of Memory*. Vidal-Naquet is a historian of classical antiquity. But he is also a survivor of the Holocaust. Its representation by historians, therefore, is for him more than a matter of academic interest. It is as well one of his own living memory.

In making his case, Vidal-Naquet wrestles with the phenomenon of "revisionism"—the proposition that the Holocaust was of lesser proportions than its memorialists have claimed. The term "revisionism" holds a cruel irony for him. Coined in the late nineteenth century to identify those who championed justice for French army captain Alfred Dreyfus, falsely accused and wrongfully convicted of treason amid a wave of anti-Semitic hysteria, it has in our time been appropriated by a group that tacitly apologizes for such a bias. The new revisionism, Vidal-Naquet explains, is an "exculpation of Hitler in the name of Dreyfusard values" (81).

Like Le Goff, Vidal-Naquet presents his argument in a series of loosely structured essays, composed over the course of the 1980s as the revisionist controversy took shape. Though deeply engaged in the controversy, he does not wish to dignify the revisionists' argument by entering into dialogue with them. But



he worries that others may do so. In this way, the revisionists may come to be tolerated by the scholarly community, even granted a measure of intellectual respectability, and an opportunity to advance in the name of historical research findings based on a politics of lies and deceptions. The principal obstacles to their goal, he contends, are the survivors of the Holocaust whose living memories provide subjective links with past realities. As he makes the point: “. . . we are observing a transformation of memory into history. . . . My generation, now fifty years old, is more or less the last for whom Hitler’s crime still remains a memory. That one must fight against the disappearance—or, worse yet, the debasement—of memory seems to me obvious” (57).

What places memory in jeopardy, Vidal-Naquet argues, is the deconstructionist line of thinking—that appearances are all we can know of reality, that reality is constituted by imaginative discourse, and that accordingly words and reality are indistinguishable. His position, therefore, emerges as a counterpoint to that of Le Goff and other historians who have focused on the history of memory as enshrined in its commemorative representations. In other words, the revisionists have taken advantage of the line of thinking that the historians of commemorative representation have pursued. They present the Holocaust itself as a remembered legend, an exaggerated and distorted memory that they are disassembling with scientific care.

Much of Vidal-Naquet’s discussion concerns how the revisionist science of deception proceeds. Presenting themselves as practitioners of an old science of history, the revisionists are in fact masters of a new science of publicity in which appearances count for more than realities. To the commemorative images presented by the memorialists of the Holocaust, they offer counter-images that they hope scholars and the public will come to accept.

Vidal-Naquet reviews the twofold strategy they have devised in their efforts to attain scholarly respectability. On the level of argumentation, they present data calculated to sow doubt about the nature and extent of the heinousness of the Nazi crime, to wit: the scope of the use of gas chambers as instruments of execution, the technological impossibility of gassing victims in mass lots, and consequently the numbers actually sent to their deaths. Raising arguments about the overriding significance of political opportunism and the exigencies of war in the strategies of Nazi leaders, they would minimize the importance of the “Final Solution” in their overall scheme, and so exculpate them from charges of genocide. On the level of organization, they proffer their academic credentials. Among their spokesmen are professors with doctorates (though never in history); they have a journal that follows the protocols of scholarly publication; they have enlisted the support of liberal professors who, while not subscribing to their views, are nonetheless willing in the name of libertarian principles to defend their right to advance their argument for a respectful hearing in the councils of learning.<sup>9</sup> For Vidal-Naquet, this facade of academic

9. The *Journal of Historical Review*, its editorial board staffed by some of the revisionist spokesmen that Vidal-Naquet identifies, is published in Newport Beach, California, and appears to be alive and well. While preparing this review, I happened to receive a publicity flier seeking subscriptions in what must have been a mass mailing.

respectability masks the ulterior motives of those who have rallied to this cause. Their “scholarly” work, he suggests, amounts to nothing more than a publicity campaign in behalf of an ideological amalgam of German nationalism, neo-Nazism, anticommunism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Semitism that is “depriving, ideologically, a community of what represents its historical memory” (20). Their ultimate objective is to dissolve the anti-fascist consensus of World War II brought into being by the Nazi genocide of Jews and other unwanted people.

To the revisionists’ contention that one representation of the past is as good as another (in that all are politically motivated), Vidal-Naquet replies that living memory has a claim upon history that transcends the forms in which the past has been represented. As he writes in his preface: “A historian myself, I am as aware as anyone else that memory is not history. . . . Between memory and history, there can be tension and even opposition. But a history of the Nazi crime which did not integrate memory—or rather, diverse memories—and which failed to account for the transformation of memories would be a poor history indeed. The assassins of memory chose their target well” (xxiii). Herein Vidal-Naquet speaks for what might be characterized as the existential awareness of reality that living memory confides. He is concerned with what may be lost from the interpretation of memory in its inert representations, which can never substitute completely for memory as the recollection of lived experience, whatever its distortions.

To adduce his argument, Vidal-Naquet turns to an example from his own field. He draws an analogy between the fate of the Messenians, subjected to Sparta during the Peloponnesian war, and that of the Jews under Nazi Germany. Like the Jews, the Messenians were pariahs, and like them, they were “selected” for extermination in great numbers. What we know of the death of the Messenians is derived from the briefest of narratives by Thucydides. Our knowledge of that atrocity has thereby been saved from oblivion. But as Vidal-Naquet emphasizes, “each victim had his own history, and we will never know how death was administered, individually, collectively, or in small groups” (102). His point is that the reality of the past has an integrity whatever our representations of it. It seems a simple proposition, but it is one that is in jeopardy, given the power of publicity in our age to manipulate reality. “It remains the case nonetheless,” he contends, “that if historical discourse is not connected . . . to what may be called, for lack of a better term, reality, we may still be immersed in discourse, but such discourse would no longer be historical” (110–111). For Vidal-Naquet, historians have a responsibility not merely to reconstruct the past as it has been recorded in the range of its representations, but rather to ferret out those that lie closest to the truth.

One wishes that he had elaborated more directly on this point. His larger concern, however, seems clear. As he remarks, “It is a fundamental practice of revisionism to refuse to distinguish between words and reality” (88). He suggests that our extraordinary capacity to create, disseminate, and manipulate the imagery of representation in our electronic age has created new dangers

for the integrity of historical scholarship. In an age in which the line between fiction and reality can be so easily blurred, the past may just as easily be reinvented. Under such circumstances, the honest translation of memory into history becomes all the more critical, for the tenure of living memory is short and yet, emanating from the life world, it is our surest resource for warding off the relativizing claims of poststructuralist discourse. Hence we may appreciate Vidal-Naquet's insistence on the prominent place of the issue of memory in the current debate about the Holocaust. The Nazis used weapons of modern technology to assassinate their Jewish victims. For Vidal-Naquet, the revisionists would use those of publicity to assassinate their memory. It is so easy, he points out, to make of Adolf Eichmann, the evil genius of the Final Solution, a paper figure, to reduce gas chambers into imaginary contraptions, to trivialize genocide by quarreling about statistics that turn deaths individually suffered into a calculus of homogenized abstractions.

Poignant, therefore, is the question that Vidal-Naquet poses: how can historians reply to those who would dissolve the line between truth and fiction by reducing the past to its rhetorical forms? He thereby raises what other historians of the Holocaust have identified as the problem of the limits of representation.<sup>10</sup> How will the Holocaust be remembered, these historians ask, as the experience passes from living memory into recorded history? If Le Goff worries about how memory may be manipulated, Vidal-Naquet worries about how history may be revised in pernicious ways. The implication of Vidal-Naquet's argument is that historical interpretation cannot escape the politics of memory quite as easily as Le Goff has supposed. Unlike Le Goff, he is not convinced that history as science will prevail over history as ideology if those who would bend the truth of the past to their own views have their way. At issue is the power of publicity in contemporary culture to create fictitious imagery that is appealing enough to displace those representations that lie closer to the experience of the past as it was actually lived.

To coin a metaphor, we might say that Le Goff and Vidal-Naquet have led us to the well of history that draws upon memory's spring. Think of history as the framing well stones, memory as the waters they contain. Our authors would draw different meanings from this image. Le Goff would have us survey the representations of the past as if they were watermarks on the exposed stones from which the waters of memory have retreated. His study enables us to see the shapes of timeworn and discarded traditions. Vidal-Naquet would direct our attention to the life, not the artifacts, of memory, and so sets his gaze upon the water line at which historians test the depths of memories that can never be completely plumbed.

Considered in this way, one may appreciate the limits of each approach to the memory/history puzzle. Le Goff acknowledges that memory is the deep

10. See *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

source of history. But he is more interested in the ways in which history has moved beyond memory's claims. One wonders, though, about the ongoing, dynamic interplay between collective memory and historical understanding in the long march of the history of history between its beginnings and its present concerns. In privileging history as a science of time, Le Goff may be underestimating the tug that collective memory continues to exercise on historical interpretation into our own times. Far from distinguishing itself from memory, one might contend, history continues to mimic memory's operations. The two moments of memory—repetition and recollection—remain ever present in historical thinking. The former evokes the presence of the past, whereas the latter reconstructs it from a temporal distance. In minimizing the importance of the former, one dismisses the influence of that past that continually inspires the historians' inquiry.

If history has become a science of time, as Le Goff contends, there is no reason that it cannot simultaneously remain an art of memory. Consider, for example, the enduring influence of the mythic sources of our formulations of historical time. Le Goff draws a sharp distinction between myth and history: myth pushes time back toward origins, history reorients time toward the future. But myth is a primordial method of time factoring. It structures time through its narrative. While we may cease to believe in the myth, its narrative structure may continue to play a mnemonic function in our understanding of the past. We do not simply abandon such legends, for they have bequeathed to us the temporal frameworks that continue to shape our chronologies.

This was a point made by Giambattista Vico, the eighteenth-century philosopher who first dubbed history a new science. Vico showed how conceptions of time in antiquity emerged out of mythic narratives. Myth gave to history the narrative form as a mode of punctuating time. Memory not only inspires an interest in the past; it sustains it. Vico's point is that even as time factoring escapes its mythic origins, it remains an act of the imagination.<sup>11</sup> Chronologies are elaborated as imaginative constructs, whose practical, flexible, and ultimately arbitrary nature historians have recently begun to appreciate.<sup>12</sup> Timelines are to the historian what places are to the mnemonist. Both perform a commemorative function in locating memorable moments in readily intelligible frameworks. History may be a science of time. But it is problematic whether its chronologies may ever be completely detached from memory's placements. However conceived, chronologies body forth places of memory that localize the issues of historical interpretation.

Correspondingly, Vidal-Naquet prompts us to reconsider the historicists' insight into the truths conveyed by living memory. His argument may not restore to its former stature the historicists' claim about re-creating the imagination

11. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, [1744], 3d ed., transl. and ed. Thomas G. Bergin and Max H. Fisch (Ithaca, 1968), paras. 732–740.

12. See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, transl. Siân Reynolds (New York, 1972), I, 17–22.

of the past. But he has directed our attention to the enduring relevance of this issue at that critical juncture at which memory passes into history. To return to the grammatical analogy raised by Le Goff, Vidal-Naquet's mode is that of the future perfect. Historians might like to think of themselves as dispassionate observers of the past. But they ought not to forget that their present is the future's past, and they must undertake some responsibility for how their representations of it will later be recognized as testimony of their own age. The human condition is a timeful one whose deepest meanings defy the historians' efforts to reduce them to scientific description.

The memory/history puzzle, therefore, challenges us to consider the encounter between representationalists and historicists in a more profound way. Michel Foucault provocatively dubbed the practice of the former an "archaeology" of the discarded forms of the imagination. But archaeology for all its professed dispassion cannot help but incite interest in the passions that once inspired the historical actors of the past to invent the forms that they have bequeathed to us.<sup>13</sup> Memory is more than the raw stuff out of which we compose our histories, just as time is more than the chronologies in which it has been encapsulated. It is not only the source but also the animating element of historical thinking. It continues to provide our temporal and spatial imagery in ways of which we are not always aware. Its consideration today challenges us to reconsider how the empowering imagination that historians once sought to recreate remains an issue for a present-day historiography that believed it had moved beyond its claims.

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Does there exist any coherent collection of ideas that can exclusively be termed "post-modernism"? The tradition of Western thought, after all, offers us Hume's skepticism of causal certainty, Burke's emphasis upon prescription and pragmatism, and Nietzsche's suspicion of rationality. So what, if anything, is novel or unique about post-modernism?

"*Postmoderne*," wrote Jean-François Lyotard, "serait à comprendre selon le paradoxe du futur . . . antérieur. . ." <sup>1</sup> Understanding this paradox, for most post-modernists, entails a pointed critique of "modernity"; of any faith

13. Recent biographical studies of Foucault himself are pointed illustrations. See esp. James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York, 1993).

1. J. F. Lyotard, *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (Paris, 1988), 31.