



FIGURE 13.0 Montage.

Generation

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It is difficult to think of a notion that has become more commonplace yet at the same time more opaque than that of "generation." Or of a notion more ancient, one that draws on biological roots that stretch all the way back to the Bible, Herodotus, and Plutarch, yet takes its meaning exclusively from the more recent universe of democratic individualism. Wholly "epidermic," it clings to the surface of the young and to their times, and to fashion, yet no other notion strikes more directly to the vital core of our historical perception of the present. How much of this idea of "generation" belongs particularly to France? In precisely what sense is it a *lieu de mémoire*? And what sorts of distinctions does it permit us to make in the present context?

For twenty years there has been a spate of sociological, economic, demographic, and historical investigations centered on the idea of "generation."¹ The theme, a favorite of pollsters everywhere, has been harped on to the point of exhaustion. Yet none of this might have come to pass without May '68. And of course the "events" that occurred in France at that time must themselves be understood in the context of the international youth rebellion that Margaret Mead was the first to interpret as a symptom of the worldwide generation gap.² Long viewed, by historians at least, with skeptical indifference, the elusive idea of a generation suddenly became a focal point of countless studies, all haunted in one way or another by the specter of '68. This sudden surge of interest is all the more curious in that, concerning the explosion of '68 itself, a number of excellent observers have found it impossible not to deplore the paucity of serious historical research, as distinct from the unquenchable flood of (spontaneous or commissioned) reminiscence and self-celebratory observance by those who took part,³ as if one could somehow sum up a conflagration that

or less than the affirmation of a "generation."

The fabrication of the sacrosanct generation of '68 did not begin with the "events" themselves. At intervals of a decade, anniversary celebrations in 1978 and 1988 set the pace, albeit in markedly different historical contexts.⁴ The tenth anniversary of the "events" was an occasion for nostalgic stocktaking, for melancholy reassessment of the *gauchiste* adventure, of those doleful "orphan years"⁵ at the end of which one journalist went in quest of a "lost generation" and its memories.⁶ The twentieth anniversary came at the tense conclusion of a period of "cohabitation,"⁷ a period caught in a pincers between, on the one hand, what Serge July, a central figure in the saga, did not shrink from calling the "premature ejaculation" of the December 1986 student movement⁸ and, on the other, the already-launched campaigns for upcoming presidential and legislative elections and ongoing preparations for the Bicentennial of the French Revolution. What emerged, however, from those two anniversaries—crowned by the publication of Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman's *Génération*, the first work ever to bear that simple and majestic title—was more than anything else the capacity of a handful of ex-Trotskyite, ex-Maoist, ex-Gauche Prolétarienne activists and chroniclers, risen to positions of leadership, to set themselves up (or persuade others to set them up) as spokesmen for an entire generation, for whose commemoration they assumed sole responsibility.⁹

This mania for celebration is in itself significant. No historical event of substantive content has elicited anything of the kind: World War I, the Popular Front, the Resistance, the Liberation. It is profoundly revealing of the very nature of May '68: its capacity to serve as a looking glass, its symbolic malleability, its historical elasticity, and its characteristic tendency to ascribe greater importance to the subjective experience of the moment than to the objective substance of the facts. Memory was germinating even as the movement unfolded, for what was it, with its barricades as historical quotation and its theater of allusion, but an enactment of revolutionary memory without a revolutionary opportunity?

Generation, memory, symbol: May '68 was its own commemorative anniversary. The construction of a memory went hand in hand with the self-affirmation of a generation, two faces of a single phenomenon. The elimination of the historian as intermediary only highlighted the generational dynamic of 1968 and the uniquely symbolic content attached at the time to expression, culminating a vast historical cycle that began with nothing less than the French Revolution and ended in the events of May. The emergence of a "generation" in its pure, intransitive state revealed the sovereignty of the notion's retrospective explanatory power, thereby constituting it, from its inception and in a primary, purely temporal sense, as a *lieu de mémoire*.

Whether in an international context or a more specific French one, the culmination of the idea of "generation" in '68 can only be understood by returning directly to the root of the phenomenon, the French Revolution. I am by no means unaware that to telescope '68 and '89 may strike some readers as indecent or incongruous,⁹ as if the Event in its pure state, the advent of the modern event, were in any way commensurate with the later so-called events, about which it was immediately asked in what respect they could be said to constitute events at all. The short circuit is nevertheless enlightening. It reveals the existence of a sort of historical watershed and a gamut of definitions of generation from the properly historical to the essentially symbolic.

The event of '68 magnified the generational dimension, whereas '89 minimized it. Yet it was omnipresent. Restif de La Bretonne noted this at the time: "It was [Rousseau's] *Émile* that brought us this teasing, stubborn, insolent, impudent, headstrong generation, which speaks loudly, shuts the mouths of the elderly, and with equal audacity demonstrates now its innate folly, reinforced by education, now its immature wisdom, as raw and sharp as grapes pressed in mid-August."¹⁰ It had already made its appearance in the twenty years that preceded the revolutionary explosion, in the form of youth movements and demonstrations, which recent research has shown to have existed in both Paris and the provinces.¹¹ It erupted in the Tennis Court Oath, the first triumph of the principle of fraternal solidarity over paternal judgment.¹² It might have remained more in evidence, moreover, had it not been quickly overshadowed by the idea of faction. The generational concept found clear expression in revolutionary explorations of the link between the end of hereditary rule and the legitimacy of representative government, as can be seen in a curious pamphlet, *The First Principles of Government* (5 Messidor, Year III) by Thomas Paine, in which the Anglo-American propagandist, steeped in the Jeffersonian tradition,¹³ after some rather tricky calculations pertaining to the substitution of the young for the old delineated the precise rights of each:

Since every generation has equal rights, it follows that none has the slightest right to establish a hereditary government.... Every age, every generation is and should be (with respect to rights) as free to act for itself in all cases as were previous ages and generations.... If we have another gospel on this point, we behave as slaves or as tyrants; as slaves if we believe that some first generation had any right whatsoever to fetter us; as tyrants if we arrogate to ourselves the authority to bind the generations that shall follow us.¹⁴

The concept of generation can also be found, in the most solemn of terms, in the founding texts of the French Republic. The Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1793—Condorcet's text—goes so far as to proclaim that "a generation has no right

to subject any future generation to its laws" (Article 30).¹⁵ The same concept was already implicit in the Constitution of 1791, which at one stroke abolished both hereditary rights and corporate regulations, thus laying the groundwork for a society of free and equal individuals. It was also implicit in revolutionary measures concerning the family and paternal authority, particularly those that responded to the demands of youth, such as abolishing primogeniture, setting the age of majority at twenty-one, allowing marriage without paternal consent, and denying fathers the right to disinherit their children. Saint-Just, typical of the rising generation, summed up these measures: "You have therefore decided that one generation cannot place another in chains."¹⁶ The Revolution was intrinsically generational, nowhere more so than in its rhetoric, its ambition to be a historical, initiatory rite of passage from the night of despotism to the bright day of liberty. Generation-Regeneration: the two themes were closely associated in all their biological, psychological, moral, religious, and messianic connotations.¹⁷ In a more profound sense, the Revolution was generational in its pedagogical obsession and reversal of time, in its eschatology of rupture, in its instantaneous transition from the Old to the New. The twilight of legitimacy, the dawn of the notion of generation. The past is no longer the law: this is the very essence of the phenomenon.

The Revolution thus marked the absolute but invisible advent of the notion of generation. It has often been noted that the careers which the revolutionary adventure and the abolition of privileges opened to talent progressed rapidly, as evidenced by that of Bonaparte. But people were more struck by individual youthfulness, such as Saint-Just's, than by a general rejuvenation of history's *personae*. The care that Chateaubriand, for one, took to postdate his birth by one year—1769 rather than 1768—has generally been attributed to a wish to hitch his star to Napoleon's rather than to a desire to count himself among those who were "twenty years old in 1789." Only recently, in the light of our retrospective interest in the generational theme, have scholars (most of them English-speaking, by the way) thought to calculate the average age of assembly members.¹⁸ And so the sudden burst of youth onto the political scene stands revealed: if the average age of deputies in the Constituent Assembly was still forty, that of deputies in the Legislative Assembly was only twenty-six: a fantastic rejuvenation of the historical cast. This neglected aspect of the Revolution calls for a wholesale reinterpretation of the event. It emerges even more clearly when we look into the details of things: the Montagnards, for example, were far younger than their rivals, the Girondins. But the youthful dimension of the Revolution passed largely unnoticed, melted back into the Revolution itself. The dynamism of a particular group, youth, fused with the universality of the Revolution's principles to become not the extreme or radical form of revolutionary politics but its fundamental reality. From a historical point of view this is the deeper meaning of the Burke-Paine polemic, which with-

out exaggeration can be described as having marked the historical baptism of the notion of generation. Against Burke's *Reflections* on the merits of tradition, so full of irony toward the "usurpers," those "political novices," those "summer flies" that had "given themselves *carte blanche* to set themselves in business without a stock in trade" and to "refuse the government of examples," Thomas Paine, invoking novel inaugural formulas against the "usurped authority of the dead," championed each generation's right to set its own course: "Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow."¹⁹

Thus the Revolution established the notion of a generation, not only because it gave birth to one (a proposition whose proof would itself be an effect of retrospective genealogy) but because it cleared the way for, made possible, and accelerated the advent of a world of change, an egalitarian world in which "generational consciousness" was born. The phenomenon was not limited to France, although there the longevity of monarchical succession and the Oedipal brutality of the king's murder lent particular intensity to the French case. It was intrinsic to the Atlantic revolution and the principle of representative democracy. In the United States, however, the problem was resolved at one stroke, and so successfully that the issue of generational replacement has never arisen there in the political sphere as such, whereas in France the Revolution inaugurated an enduring conflict and infused into politics a rhythm with a perceptible generational pulse. French political history could indeed be written in terms of generations and generational themes: from Louis XVIII to Thiers, from Pétain to de Gaulle, that history could be read as a story of youth's revolt against the authority of the fathers. This narrative is the ground bass, the warp and woof of French political life; it forms the political backbone of French memory, and, in a country where political change has been rapid as well as rocky, it has made the seizure of power a central feature of the generational concept. For that reason alone, the word *generation* in French is almost invariably associated with the word *dominant*.

The two dates—'89 and '68—thus mark the ends of a broad spectrum of social representations. In 1789 the Event completely subsumed the generational symbolism by allowing it full expression, thereby masking its presence. In 1968, by contrast, the event owed its existence to its generational dimension, so that one may ask Ranke's question: *Wie es eigentlich gewesen?* or, What, apart from the individual experiences and effects on the lives of those involved, actually happened? And the answer, in Hegelian terms and in the eyes of that History which is written in letters of blood, is Nothing.

Precisely this historical vacuum was necessary, however, in order for the truth to bubble up: what happened in '68 was a symbolic rupture, and it is just this kind of rupture that is the key to the generational concept. A generation is a category of representative comprehension; it is a violent affirmation of horizontal identity that sud-

denly dominates and transcends all forms of vertical solidarity. Sixty-eight revealed the essence of the generational phenomenon: a dynamic of belonging, simple in some ways and complex in others. The "youth movement" developed throughout the world, yet it had no crucial shared experience on which to find common ground, unless it was the experience of having missed such traumatic engagements as the World War II resistance against fascism or the opposition to the Algerian War. The revolutionary mime of 1968 ran against the tide of the moment: it occurred at the peak of a period of rapid economic growth and in a time of full employment, as orthodox revolutionary ideologies were crumbling. Even the participants were surprised by the rapidity with which strategic population centers erupted in flames. A "demand to be heard" was of course part of the event itself, and would-be authoritative analyses appeared immediately in its wake, yet this purely generational explosion was so disconcerting that some commentators tried hard to shift the blame to other generations and events.²⁰ Demographers, for example, argued that the force of the eruption reflected the accumulated explosive potential of three distinct generations: the demobilized generation of the Algerian War (people born between 1935 and 1941), followed by a relatively small generation untouched by ideology (people born during World War II), both of which were ostensibly energized by the first wave of the post-World War II baby boom.²¹ For the cultural psychologists, attuned to the movement's romantic nostalgia and its analogies with the revolution of 1848, it was the very absence of historical events that served as the triggering trauma, a hypothesis confirmed by the utopian and narcissistic character of this adolescent and rather anarchical protest.²² For one journalist of sociological bent, the generation of 1968 was merely the shadow cast by the Algerian War generation, much influenced by de Gaulle's return to power ten years earlier.²³ And for one former *gauchiste* lately repentant of his youthful commitments, the '68 generation was rather the midwife of the 70s generation, marked by fading memories of the Algerian episode and liberated from the fascination that the Communist Party still exerted on its predecessor.²⁴ The pendulum has not stopped swinging.

The difficulty of simply defining or even identifying the last and most visible of our generations mirrors the difficulty faced by a whole series of analysts since Auguste Comte the moment they try to move from the concrete, empirical description of a group of people of roughly the same age held together by some common set of experiences to a more theoretical definition.²⁵ It has been argued, in fact, that the notion has no operational or scientific interest unless clear and precise answers can be given to four key sets of questions: temporal, demographic, historical, and sociological. How long does a generation last? How quickly are generations replaced, given that sons are perpetually taking over from their fathers? What date defines a generation: the date of birth or the conventional benchmark of the twentieth year, which is assumed to mark the end of the adolescent's period of maximal

receptivity? Exactly what role do events play in the determination of a generation, where the term *events*, broadly construed, encompasses both ordinary experience and *the* traumatic event? Is generation a conscious or unconscious phenomenon? Is it something imposed from without or freely chosen? Is it a statistical or a psychological phenomenon? Or, to put it another way, who does and who does not belong to a given generation, and how does that belonging manifest itself, given that one or more different age cohorts may identify with a generation without taking part in the vicissitudes of its existence?

Bringing all these questions together in one place makes it clear that the notion of generation inevitably leads to insoluble contradictions and uncertainties. These are too obvious to dwell on here, and much ink has already been spilled in discussing them. Even the most innovative of the thinkers who have found the notion of generation interesting enough to explore have encountered these dilemmas. Take, for example, the sociologist Karl Mannheim, who in his classic 1928 essay saw generations as "one of the fundamental factors in the unfolding dynamic of history" yet found it difficult to distill a clear concept from an impure composite.²⁶ Most writers who use the notion have moved from a flexible, concrete, almost neutral definition to a rigid mathematism, or vice versa. After World War I, for example, François Mentré saw a generation as embodying "a new way of feeling and understanding life, opposed to or at least different from what went before."²⁷ And after World War II, the literary historian Henri Peyre defined a generation as "united initially by shared hostilities and by having been subjected to the same influences between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, if not earlier."²⁸ Yet neither writer had the slightest hesitation about drawing up endless, tedious tables demonstrating the march of generations from some arbitrarily chosen initial date: 1490 for one (Clouet, Du Bellay, Marguerite de Navarre, Rabelais, Marot), 1600 for the other (Descartes, Poussin, Mansart, Corneille, Claude Lorrain, Fermat). One of the most surprising examples of the kind can be found in the work of the Spanish writer Julián Marías, a disciple of Ortega y Gasset, who, in attempting to give a systematic demonstration of his teacher's ideas, came up with the following rather startling series of dates for the significant generations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: 1812, 1827, 1842, 1857, 1872, 1887, 1902, 1917, 1932, 1947.²⁹ In contrast, Yves Renouard, who in 1953 became one of the first historians to hail the idea of generation as "an illuminating beacon" which "alone could help to compose a dynamic portrait of a society," called for a more precise definition: "A collection of age cohorts, a group of men and women whose ideas, feelings, and lifestyles are the same, and who are shaped by the same physical, intellectual, and moral conditions as the major facts and events affecting the society of which they are a part." Yet he advocated caution and prudence in applying his narrow approach.³⁰

The problem is that all the writers who have ventured to treat the subject in terms of rather vague categories and approximate definitions invariably become prisoners of what might be called the "dialectic of the hard and the soft." The generational instrument seems scientific to them only if it is precise, but if it is applied precisely one runs up against life's inconsistencies. The attempt to escape from the impressionistic ends up being impressionistic. After so many brave attempts one is reminded of the fellow who discovered that rubber had every imaginable quality, its only problem being its lamentable elasticity. The generational concept would make a wonderfully precise instrument if only its precision didn't make it impossible to apply to the unclassifiable disorder of reality. As for the duration of a generation, any number of equally plausible answers have been given, from Albert Thibaudet's ambling thirty years (in *Histoire de la littérature française depuis 1789*, a book based entirely on the idea of generation³¹), to Ortega y Gasset's and Yves Renouard's quicker-paced fifteen to Henri Peyre's and François Mentré's blistering ten. One is left with a situation in which some authorities confidently see a dozen literary generations from 1789 to the present where others see only five. As for birth dates, not even the authorities are above a certain amount of juggling and finagling. Thibaudet, for example, is quite unhappy with the idea of including in the generation that led the assault on 1789 not only men born in the period 1766–1769 (such as Chateaubriand, Napoleon, Senancour, Benjamin Constant, and Maine de Biran) but also writers such as Rivarol and Joubert, who were fifteen years older than Napoleon and Chateaubriand. Nor does he hesitate to place Montherlant alongside Proust in the generation of World War I, even though thirty years separated the two men. What if we make major events our sole criterion? We must then differentiate between events endured and events freely chosen, between formative events and determinative events. All events are multigenerational, moreover, and the greater their magnitude (like World War I), the less simple it is to identify the groups most affected by them. Yves Renouard proposes four types of generational reactions to events: the indifference of the elderly, the unconsciousness of children, and, between the two, the reactions of those who wield power over events and of those who challenge that power. And what, finally, if we choose to rely on statistical criteria? On the one hand there is the clear and simple demographic definition: a generation is nothing but a cohort, a group of people born in a given year. Economists and statisticians have found this objective definition quite useful. On the other hand there is the undecidable question of generational representativity. In other words, what entitles us to say that people who knew nothing of Victor Hugo's famous play belonged to the "generation of *Hernani*," or that people who took no part in World War II belonged to the "generation of the Resistance?" Can we identify a generation with those who speak in its name, availing ourselves of a natural confusion that has proved particularly fruitful and

rewarding when applied to such articulate groups as artists, intellectuals, and men of letters?

Although each of these solutions offers its share of persuasive insights, in every attempt to hone a sharp analytic scalpel, the recalcitrance of the material has ended by blunting the instrument's cutting edge. Hence it will come as no surprise that the most careful historians, though by no means unaware of the unique light that the notion of generation can shed on the past, have generally rejected the concept as schematic, unworkable, crude, and in the end less enriching than reductive. In particular, the founders of the journal *Annales*, who in their desire to work with the most concrete social data inevitably encountered generational phenomena, were severe in their judgment, dismissing the idea of generation as an *artifact*, an illusion that people engaged in social action held about themselves. Marc Bloch somewhat grudgingly allowed it the virtue of "laying the preliminary groundwork."³² Lucien Febvre, however, had no doubt about the verdict: "Better forget it!"³³ Despite some successful recent attempts to breathe historical life into the phenomenon, to identify, with subtlety and tact, generational constellations in the political³⁴ and intellectual³⁵ realms, the fundamental judgment has not wavered.³⁶

The problem is that any attempt to give a precise definition of generation, or at any rate to provide as much precision as any definition requires, inevitably falls into a trap—or twin traps—inherent in the notion itself. First, a generation is by its very nature a purely individual phenomenon that only makes sense when seen collectively. And second, although the notion originated in a philosophical framework of continuity, it makes sense only in a framework of discontinuity and rupture.³⁷ Although the idea is based on a biological analogy, it thrives when time is chopped up into symbolic segments rather than treated as a continuous chronological quantity. We are all conscious of belonging to several generations, to which we feel connected in varying degrees. We do not necessarily feel that we belong to the generation to which the dates of our birth would consign us. What accounts for the special interest in this very distinctive type of periodization (the only type not somehow mathematically determined) is not the material and temporal determinism that it fatally entails but the dynamics of belonging that it authorizes. As for the notion of generation, there are two basic attitudes, not to say two radically contradictory philosophies. According to one view, a generation is essentially determined by a principle of inclusion, of assigned social membership and defined existential limits, hence it is a reinforcement of the notion of finitude that caused Heidegger, following the German romantic philosophers, to say that "the fact of living in and with one's generation concludes the drama of human existence."³⁸ The other view is that egalitarian democracy has unleashed an incredible potential for identification, which has been invested in identification with one's generation because such identification allows for freedom and self-amplification. Pure generational solidarity,

which is the whole essence of the phenomenon, is freedom, insofar as the horizontality that it assumes is in a sense the ideal and idealized image of egalitarian democracy. A generation embodies and epitomizes the principle of equality out of which it was born. Surely this is what endows it with its potential for radical simplification. At one stroke it abolishes all other differences. Or better still, the idea of generation completes the squaring of the circle that is the problem of all democracy: it converts the imposed into the willed, the simple fact of birth into an affirmation of existence. This is perhaps the only way to feel free nowadays while being bound to something.

"The generation" is the daughter of democracy and of the acceleration of history. Identification with events corresponded to an era of slow changes and clear tempi that impressed themselves on the minds of participants. The absence of an unmistakable reference point for truly collective memory, together with an increasingly rapid pace of change, has led to the opposite situation: the identification of temporal flow with the very notion of generation. Not that great events have vanished—quite the contrary. But events too have changed in nature: they are banalized by their very multiplicity, made unreal by the way in which they are received and experienced, and extended in their impact to a much broader population. The historical milieu in which events unfold has exploded to include the entire world. France, which long saw history as centered on itself, is increasingly bound to acknowledge that the center is elsewhere. The social upheavals of the past twenty-five years have reinforced this view, expanding the middle class and introducing a convergence of lifestyles and consumer habits.³⁹ The accent of novelty now falls on microevents, on technological or social innovation. Finally, demographic changes have accentuated the transformation of the phenomenon, with the aging of the population, a result of increased life expectancy and decreased birth rate, coupled with a relative increase in the number of the young owing to a delayed commencement of work life and the emergence of the new stage of "post-adolescence."⁴⁰ This simultaneous increase in the French population of the proportion of the young and of the old makes for a situation of ever more stark confrontation, since whatever is not "young" is immediately perceived as "old." History, society, and demography have thus powerfully conspired to democratize an essentially democratic phenomenon. The notion of generation has thus been subverted from within in much the same way as the modern "mediatized" event.⁴¹ There is no longer a "dominant generation" or total historical phenomenon; atomized, what the generational theme now conveys is social everydayness in all its aspects. People used to reckon three generations per century. Nowadays we count a new generation almost daily. As I write these lines in May of 1989, several of the month's periodicals have appeared with articles on generational topics: the weekly magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* has a feature on "Thirty-Year-Olds: Portrait of a Generation"; a major daily newspaper,

Libération, has a literary supplement entitled "The Vernant Generation," after Jean-Pierre Vernant, a retired scholar; the magazine *Infini* has baptized a group of young writers "The '89 Generation"; a special issue of the journal *Vingtième Siècle* is devoted to "Generations"; and two graduates of the prestigious *École Nationale d'Administration*, members of the group "Generation 1992," have published a book entitled *Generation Europe!* For journalists and ad agency copywriters "generation" is a notion that floats as freely as the franc in the European monetary system, drifting from the key of technology—Moulinex generation, Pampers generation—to that of psychology—Generation X, the rap generation, the singles generation. The latest in political advertising—call it a bluff or a stroke of genius as you will—is a poster touting the "Mitterrand Generation," and it is hard to say whether the noted adman who thought it up was motivated more by a propitiatory reflex or ironic loyalty. This destructive, obsessive inflation of the idea—what the Situationists used to call a *détournement*—has been described, quite understandably, as the premature obsolescence of a notion well-suited to the explanation of a long and arduous nineteenth century but inappropriate to a momentarily more frivolous age.⁴² The obsolescence of the notion is not obvious, however. Its atomization, not to say banalization, has done nothing to limit its sacralization, radicalization, and transgressive vocation—quite the contrary.

The real question raised by the contemporary transformation, use, and diffusion of the notion is this: As the pace of change increases, how and why has the horizontal identification of individuals of roughly the same age been able to supplant all forms of vertical identification? In the past, generations were identified by other categories, such as family, class (in both the social and scholastic senses), career, and nation, but nowadays the generational phenomenon is more powerful: the old categories have been blasted away to make room for the assertion of new identities. The generational idea took wing, as it were, even as it took on weight. It proved its strength by demonstrating its capacity to make and unmake social categories. This was possible only because the importance of traditional criteria of social classification diminished and traditional social identities proved inadequate. Earlier modes of filiation and affiliation did not disappear but did to some extent lose the power to create structures. The subsequent void strengthened the generational concept. As Paul Yonnet and other sociologists attuned to contemporary realities have shown,⁴³ the generational idea simultaneously simplified and complicated the network of social allegiances. Superimposed on older forms of solidarity, generational solidarities created a sturdy yet flexible new structure that defined new limits and new forms of transgression. It was the very plasticity of this new structure that made it so effective; the void that it filled ultimately became its content. Thus a vague, imprecise, supererogatory notion became an instrument with substantial, precise, and crucial consequences. In a curious reversal, the generation

affirmed its classificatory hegemony to the precise extent that its original historical function weakened.

Such a reversal can be understood only in terms of an inversion of what one might call the age-prestige pyramid (by analogy with the "age pyramid" of the demographers). And that brings us to a thorny problem: the growing autonomy of that new continent, Youth, an autonomy that over the past twenty-five years has increased at a rapidly accelerating pace.⁴⁴ Youth has ceased to be a transitory stage of life; it has emancipated itself from the sociological reality of being a social minority and even freed itself from the symbolism of age to become an organizing principle for society as a whole, a mental image that guides the distribution of roles and positions, an end unto itself. Youth is not "merely a word."⁴⁵ A great deal of research suggests that its status has been transformed in three main stages. In the aftermath of the Revolution, which broke an age-old cycle and at the cost of deep upheaval opened up a new world, the young really did take on adult roles. They carried much of the burden of social and political transformation. A revealing detail is that the word *gérontocratie* first appeared in 1825 (was it Béranger who coined it or the pamphleteer J. J. Fazy?⁴⁶). In other words, the word came into use at the very beginning of the liberal assault on the Restoration's attempt to consolidate a return to the habits of the Ancien Régime. All the revolutions of the nineteenth century began as youth insurrections. The second stage in the transformation of youth occurred as the structure of the family evolved and other social changes initiated by the Revolution gradually took hold: wealth was redistributed as a result of new laws of inheritance, intensifying conflict between fathers and sons; careers were opened to talent, and the brightest young men sought to enter the *Grandes Écoles*. In the process of generational renewal youths can assume adult social responsibilities earlier in life or later, violently or peacefully, calmly or frenetically. Much of the literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew on this theme, from Balzac to Jules Romains, from Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* to Marcel Arland's *L'Ordre* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Sursis*.⁴⁷ More recently the subject has been taken up for scientific study by economists and sociologists, in whose literature it appears under the head of "generational cycles."⁴⁸ In this long process of stabilization, during which the generational concept also first crystallized, youth movements and organizations from the Scouts to various Catholic and Communist youth groups were essentially just structures for preparing young people for or integrating them into the structures, ideologies, and parties of adult society.⁴⁹ Then, suddenly, came the secession and democratization of the phenomenon. When precisely did this occur? There can be no doubt that it was sometime between 1959, when polls and social images suggest that the youth myth for the first time began to take on negative connotations (associated with the "black leather jacket" of the "rebel without a cause"), and 1965, when statisticians first noted a decline in the birth rate,

which within ten years fell below the level needed to sustain a stable population. In that same year Roger Daltrey with his blue-eyed Cockney look sang "My G-generation." Suddenly youth erupted into the public consciousness⁵⁰ as a world unto itself, with its own laws, clothing, vocabulary, recognition signs, idols—Jack Kerouac, Johnny Halliday—mythology (from *Planète* to *Salut les copains*), and its great celebratory occasions, the first of which, the memorable *Nuit des copains* (Buddies' Night), held in Paris on June 21, 1963, drew more than 150,000 young people and is still remembered as a revelation.⁵¹

The more important point to notice, however, is that the definition of youth now became exclusive and discriminatory: this fixation on age was precisely what enabled the generational idea to assert its hegemony over all ages and to explode in all directions. The triumph of the principal of horizontality, which offers no assurances and promises no future, may have established the independence of youth, but it did not guarantee young people any actual preeminence or promise them a monopoly of the generational idea. On the contrary, it merely laid the groundwork for all age groups to appropriate the notion and for society as a whole to internalize the phenomenon. The increase in life expectancy helped in this: as the spectrum of ages expanded, so did the number of possible generations, and it would not be difficult, for example, to demonstrate a subtle range of generational shadings from the young-old all the way to the old-old. This marks the end of the road and signals what the idea of generation has become: a purely psychological notion, private and individual, an identity for internal use only. In a world in the grip of democratic atomization, belonging to a generation is not simply a way to be free, it is also the only way not to be alone.

The Historical Construction of the Model

In every country, it seems, one generation has served as a model and pattern for all subsequent generations. In Russia it was the political and ideological generation of Chernyshevsky (early 1860s). In Spain it was the legendary generation of 1898, in which Unamuno spearheaded a literary reaction. In the United States it was not until after World War I that a secession from "the American way of life" gave rise to the "Lost Generation." But the truest parallel with France is to be found in Germany: the histories of the two countries have been closely intertwined since the Revolution, each influencing and reacting to the other.⁵² One can therefore ask what generation in Germany had the same fundamental, archetypal significance as the "romantic generation" in France? By general agreement the answer is not the generation of the *Aufklärung* or of *Sturm und Drang* but the generation of Prussian youth that from 1815 to 1820 fought for intellectual freedom and national unity.⁵³ In any case, the romantics, who "gave the nineteenth century its principal for-

mula"⁵⁴ and were hailed as "a sort of natural entelechy,"⁵⁵ left a blazing trail in history and myth.

In 1836, Musset belatedly gave the romantics a poetic name: *enfants du siècle*. This flight of lyricism, which wreathed its object in a "je ne sais quoi of fluctuation and drift,"⁵⁶ nevertheless points toward a very specific historical situation. First came the repression of student and *carbonari* demonstrations in 1819–20. Then, in 1823, the short-lived *Muse française*, the cradle of France's poetic revival, appeared for the first time. In 1825, the generation's flagship newspaper the *Globe* appeared. Finally, out of the eruption of 1830 came a generation that would reign for the next twenty years—brilliant enough to dazzle and all but overwhelm even the likes of Baudelaire and Flaubert. Call this the generation of 1820 or 1830, it makes no difference which. It had, according to the American historian Allan B. Spitzer, some 183 members, mostly born between 1795 and 1802: Thierry (1795), Vigny (1797), Thiers (1797), Michelet (1798), Comte (1798), Pierre Leroux (1797), Cournot (1801), Delacroix (1798), Balzac (1799), and Hugo (1802), to name a few. Spitzer was able to show what youthful connections existed among the members, what groups they formed, and what kinds of influence they exerted on one another. Taken as a whole, the generation formed a factual alliance in which young royalist writers engaged in literary insurrection joined forces with militant republican students involved in conspiratorial sects. They were quick to proclaim themselves a generation, moreover, most notably in a celebrated text by Théodore Jouffroy (born in 1796). Jouffroy, a *carbonaro* who lost his position as a professor at the École Normale, wrote his piece in 1823 but did not publish it in *Le Globe* until 1825. Though mediocre, it attracted a great deal of attention, and Sainte-Beuve would later recognize it as "the most explicit manifesto of the persecuted young elite."⁵⁷

A new generation is rising, a generation born in a skeptical age when two parties shared the podium. It listened and it understood. These children have already sensed the emptiness of their fathers' teachings and gone beyond them.... Superior to all that surrounds them, they will not accept either a rebirth of fanaticism or a faithless selfishness such as that which envelops today's society.... They have a sense of their mission and an understanding of their age. They understand what their fathers did not understand, what corrupt tyrants will never understand. They know what a revolution is, and they know it because they came on the scene at the right moment.⁵⁸

These gestational years left them with blessed, electrified memories of a kind of new dawn in the world. "What marvelous times!" Théophile Gautier put it later, describing the meetings of the first Cénacle in his *Histoire du romantisme*.⁵⁹ "How young it all was, how new, how full of strange colors and strong, intoxicating flavors! Our heads were turned. We seemed to be venturing into unknown worlds."

And a quarter of a century later, Alfred de Vigny, still under the charm of this early Eden, recalled how at *La Muse française* he found "a few very young men, strangers to one another, meditating on a new poetry. Each of them, in silence, had felt a mission in his heart."⁶⁰ What gave this group, or, as Thibaudet might call it, this "brood," this squadron of "recruits," its poetic or social or political mission was its historical situation: it was the revolutionary generation *deferred*. That is why it was immediately recognized and hailed by the very people whom it intended to replace: the baptism of the fathers is in fact the primary and crucial condition that a generation must meet if it is to be deemed legitimate. It was old Lafayette himself who, as early as 1820, spoke of "this new generation, enlightened and generous, above succumbing to the influence of Jacobinism and Bonapartism, which will, I'm sure, support the right to pure liberty."⁶¹ And it was Benjamin Constant, speaking from the podium of the Chamber of Deputies in 1822, who hailed "today's youth, less frivolous than the youth of the Ancien Régime, less impassioned than the youth of the Revolution, which stands out by dint of its thirst for knowledge, its love of hard work, and its devotion to truth."⁶² To these youths, born at the turn of the century, educated in the barracks-schools of the Empire, and familiar with Napoleon only through the saga of France's glory and humiliation, the Restoration entrusted the task of expressing in the form of generational consciousness the capital that the Revolution had invested in action. This was the source of its Herculean enthusiasm and of the juvenile belief that it constituted an army: "In the romantic army as in the Army of Italy," Gautier later wrote, "everyone was young."⁶³ It was also the source of its sense of responsibility, its cohesiveness, and its idea that an enemy front was there to be breached. If chronology laid the groundwork, the political and social situation consolidated it.⁶⁴ Although there were those among the bureaucratic and political personnel of the Restoration who were quick to climb or premature to reach the top of the ladder of success, those happy few were not numerous enough to counter the regime's reputation as a place for powdered old men, "screech owls afraid of the light and contemptuous of newcomers," as Balzac, indefatigable on the subject, once put it. The Restoration was the very image of political reaction, of a historical enfeeblement compounded by the partial failure of 1830, social retrenchment, provincial traditionalism, frenetic competition, and a career crisis, a shortage of opportunities, that gave rise to the Balzacian phrase, not to say myth, of "the vast graduating class of '89," whose way forward was blocked and barricaded, another crucial condition for the formation of a generational consciousness being precisely a sense of persecution.

The historical underpinning was not the whole story, however. What made the romantic generation a dominant model was not simply that it was a complete generation, by which I mean a cohort whose social, political, intellectual, and academic profile made it representative of *the* crucial moment in modern French history, a

cohort, moreover, whose contours had been sharpened by social evolution and which had witnessed the brutal clash of July 1830. What turned this generational panoply into a creative, formative pattern was the linking of all these features to the two dimensions that have always been central to the idea of a generation in France, namely, politics and literature, power and words (here construed as an active magical force, poetry, upon which the romantics bestowed truly miraculous powers).⁶⁵ Therein lies the core of French generational identity. Other countries may construct their patterns around other key factors: Russia, for example, around the triangle of state power, civil society, and public education; or the United States around the breakdown of a consensus concerning prosperity. In France, generations are identified by their relation to power on the one hand and to expression—literary, intellectual, or musical—on the other. Together these two ingredients are the yeast that makes the bread rise. No doubt there have been generations, such as the symbolists and surrealists, that were confined mainly to literary circles, although Mallarmé's involvement in the Dreyfus Affair and Breton's in revolutionary politics might suggest otherwise. And no doubt there have been generations such as that of the Resistance or of Cold War Communism, whose sensibility was exclusively political, though here, too, Éluard and Aragon run counter to the main current. But these are a historian's quibbles, unimportant compared with the primary factor, the distinctive mixture of the political and the literary that gives each French generation its unique stamp. Could there have been a "Dreyfus generation" without Péguy's visceral lyricism? Could there have been an "existentialist generation" without Sartre and his concept of "existence"? Since generation implies conflict and self-conscious self-proclamation, what better arenas for self-expression could any generation find than politics and literature? It was the yoking together of the political-historical and the literary-symbolic that gave the concept explanatory amplitude and enabled it to survive for two centuries—the period during which politics and literature have been linked. We rarely think of political generations in isolation from literary generations. Indeed, the related spheres of literature and politics overlap the concept of generation; that is why the concept has been so useful in writing the political history of France since the Revolution, and why it has proved so profitable to study first literary generations, then ideological generations, and now finally intellectual generations. It all goes back to 1820, that key moment in the history of the parliamentary monarchy, when the two Frances, one aesthetic, the other political, confronted each other. The Restoration and the beginnings of the July Monarchy intensified generational conflict of a type that the Revolution had originated but had not resolved, and at the same time made it more visible. A basic binary opposition thus left its indelible trace on the nation's collective memory, and this encouraged a whole series of binary splits: father-son, young-old, old-new. In

this light it can be seen that the question of generational representativity becomes a false problem.

There is another aspect of the construction of the 1820 generation that should not be neglected: the importance that the generation itself attached to its engagement in history as well as to the inscription of that engagement in the historical record. It is striking to note that the same "generation" discovered both history and the concept of generation. Marcel Gauchet had occasion to point this out in an essay⁶⁶ in which he meticulously reconstructs the intellectual climate surrounding the inception of Augustin Thierry's *Lettres sur l'histoire de France* in 1820. "Historical reform," he noted, "smacked of the sudden emergence of a generation." Thierry was twenty-five when he formulated his program for a total revision of historical memory and a completely new approach to the past. He was among the younger of the group of historians responsible for the conception of history as a constitutive element of collective identity. He was born in 1795, Mignet in 1796, Thiers in 1797, Michelet in 1798, Quinet in 1803. He did not experience the Revolution as a child, unlike Guizot, born in 1787, or the Genevan Sismondi, a precursor who always remained on the margins yet who clearly set forth a basic framework for historical reform in the introduction to his *Histoire des Français*: "The Revolution, by putting an end to rights and privileges, arranged it so that all the centuries of the past are at virtually the same distance from us.... None governs us any longer through its institutions." The coincidence bears emphasizing, for it is fundamental: the same cohort simultaneously discovered what Gauchet rightly calls "the past as past" and therefore what can only be called "the present as present," a formula that could, if one absolutely must have a formula, be taken as the best historical definition of a generation. The two moments are inseparable. The advent of generational consciousness presupposes an idea of history. It was the historical radicality of the Revolution that made of generation a phenomenon initially national and French; but the revolutionaries did not conceive of their action as historical or insert it into history. On the contrary, they were intent on breaking with the past, on subverting it, on beginning history anew, free of the laws of filiation and the requirements of continuity. It was not until the next stage, in the vacuum created by inaction and under the full scourge of reaction, that a group united by age and dominated by the revolutionary event discovered not just history as man's production of his own existence but also the power of collective action and social germination and the role of time in the unfolding historical process. This deep immersion in history is absolutely inseparable from the emergence of an active generational consciousness: no rupture without a hypothesis of continuity, no selection of memory without resurrection of another memory. The importance attached to the reform of history and the romantics' new attitude toward the past, the Middle Ages, and its ruins

consummated their invention of the concept of generation. There could be no future history of generations had that particular generation not discovered a past history. Out of this came the whole dynamic of generational replacement.

The dynamic of generational replacement: this assumes to begin with the whole ponderous, stable framework of the great cycle that runs, as we have seen, from the Revolution to 1968, with an offshoot extending to the present day and an abrupt change of direction sometime during the period 1960–1965. No matter how one views the pace or form of generational replacement, its endless round would be difficult to interpret were it not for certain durable, constant elements, which form a fixed background against which a variety of patterns stand out. This stability is sometimes described in terms of the “solidity” of French society, only the barest outline of which can be attempted here. The exceptional continuity of French national unity is the source of that solidity, despite internal cleavages. The supreme symbol of that unity is still the simple phrase “Union Sacrée.” France has enjoyed exceptional demographic stability: with a population that stood steady at forty million from the end of the Second Empire to the government of Vichy, France achieved the miracle in Europe of zero population growth. Social mobility in France was slower than in any other industrialized country; peasants remained tenaciously rooted to the soil, with 50 percent of the active population still on the land in 1914 (and that percentage did not fall below ten percent until 1970). And the fourth and final source of French solidity has been the deep stability of political traditions and voting habits. What is distinctive about generational replacement in France, then, is not so much the quick pace of political life, as might at first appear to be the case, but the enduring features of the national, social, demographic, familial, and political context. These factors are crucial for understanding the potential force, in France, of the simple expression “a succession of generations” as well as the omnipresence of the generational theme in the definition of identity, in which it constitutes both the surface froth and the underlying current. They are also essential for understanding the intimate association between the overthrow of the fathers by the sons and such seemingly alien and unrelated notions as the nation, intellectuals, the future, and politics.

It is within this framework that the important natural mechanisms of generational replacement were able to operate. First—at the end of the Restoration and during the July Monarchy—came the bizarre and disparate coalition that suddenly gave rise to the generational phenomenon: a generation, Delecluze remarked, “which prior to the revolution of 1830 was said to be so well-behaved and studious and which immediately thereafter turned out to be sneeringly merciless and ungrateful toward people of previous generations.”⁶⁷ The generation that Balzac had called a “steam boiler” suddenly turned into a locomotive,⁶⁸ the force behind

the sudden upsurge of violent political rioting in the aftermath of 1830 and its disappointments. Caught up in the new violence were what Guizot called “transplants,” ambitious provincials drawn to the capital and suddenly liberated from family discipline; students from the first classes to attend the *Grandes Écoles*, “young scamps who,” in Musset’s words, “sow terror in the Faubourg Saint-Germain”;⁶⁹ and, for shock troops, apprentice physicians and lawyers competing for social advantage, young workingmen impatient with the corporative traditions of their trades, young peasants tired of village *charivaris*—the whole menagerie of those whom Balzac in 1833 described as “condemned by the new legality,” excluded from politics and the ballot box, and with whom we are so familiar from literature: the *Marcases*, Julien Sorel, the *Deslauriers* gang.

After this, and so long as the great institutions of Church, army, family, and above all school remained unshaken, came a second phase, during which generations were increasingly defined by the nineteenth century’s mechanisms of democratic advancement, by systems of civic and meritocratic selection that sifted through the whole of society, set “barriers and criteria,”⁷⁰ organized generations into more or less annual platoons by “class” and “graduation date,” and filled the yearbooks of the *Grandes Écoles* and the ranks of graduate organizations. Although these avenues of promotion have lost nothing of their operational efficacy even today, they have nevertheless begun to reek of obsolescence. Meanwhile, within the official institutions—obligatory stops on the road to advancement—associations of a more voluntary kind found room to flourish: youth groups and movements of various kinds in which age alone was sufficient to create networks, to establish hidden, informal, yet often powerful solidarities that could and did last a lifetime. These ranged from personal friendships to generational solidarity of the sort that young people derive from participation in demonstrations, music festivals, organizations, groups, clubs, or circles—the “concrete groups” that Karl Mannheim saw as the fountainhead of generational expression.

More recently, in the third phase of the evolution of the generational phenomenon, the regular succession of generation after generation has ceased to operate as in the past. This phase coincides with the advent of a civilization of the image, a growing consumer economy, advances in technology, the internationalization of youth (“We are all German Jews!” as the ’68 wall slogan had it), the crisis of traditional education, and a lowering if not complete elimination of the barriers that once separated middle-class and working-class youth.

The heart of the generational dynamic is not to be found in this mechanism of replacement, however. It is crucial to understand the inversion of the time vector: by this I mean the process whereby society invests that mythical age during which access to power is supposed to be possible—the twenties—with certain values, with an idea of what society itself could and should be, and in the light of which it passes

judgment on what it actually is. Earlier we saw this crucial mechanism at work under the Restoration, at the very inception of the generational split that bestowed upon the sons of the Revolution the task of making a still better revolution. This same mechanism reproduced itself at each stage. The older generation endlessly congratulates itself on (and through) the wonder of its progeny. Take, for example, the enthusiastic welcome that the nationalist and anti-Dreyfusard old guard accorded to the various youth surveys that preceded the outbreak of World War I, the best known of these being "The Young People of Today," published by Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde under the pseudonym Agathon in *L'Opinion* (1912).⁷¹ The elders had been obsessed with fears that the younger generation had been ruined by socialist schoolteachers: it turned out that young people were athletic, combative, patriotic, reasonable, and respectful toward tradition. "The new and rising generation promises to be one of the best our country has ever known," Maurice Barrès confided to his *Cahiers*. "Vive la jeunesse française!" And Paul Bourget had this to say in his response to Émile Boutroux's speech accepting a seat in the Académie Française:

So we see generations rising for which the heavens are once again filled with stars, generations whose best spokesmen tell us that, because they, too, turn to experience for the verification of thought, they have begun again to believe without ever having ceased to understand, generations that remain resolutely, consciously attached to the religious and philosophical tradition of old France.

A half century later and at the other end of the political spectrum, one is equally astonished to read, say, Edgar Morin's instant analysis of May '68 in *La Brèche* or Laurent Joffrin's of the 1986 demonstrations by high school students.⁷² Of all the problems that the notion of generation raises for historians, perhaps the most serious is to understand how and why adult society has gradually transformed youth into a repository, conservator, and projection screen for all that is best in itself. How did this occur? What malaise, what transference, made it possible? What secret acquiescence on the part of the older generation in its own failure, its own incompleteness, its members' own individual self-destruction, was required? What accounts for this drive for fulfillment by proxy? Without this initial investment of the fathers in the sons, without this summons to complete the fathers' work by killing them off, it would be impossible to understand how a phenomenon that is in essence one of rupture and negation could also incorporate aspects of continuity and revival of tradition.

Such is the model in basic outline, but historians have written the music of generations in many keys and endless variations. Often the political-historical and artistic-literary threads are intertwined.⁷³ But one can blend the basic elements in differ-

ent proportions. Some like to contrast "strong" generations (1800, 1820, 1840, etc.) with "weak" ones (1810, 1830, 1850, etc.). Others set "complete" generations, which explode in every direction, against "those relatively pallid intermediate cohorts" in which, for example, writers like Paul Thibaud and Claude Nicolet modestly place themselves on the grounds that, since their generation came of age between the Resistance and the Algerian War, it had only the Cold War with which to identify itself.⁷⁴ I know that generation, for it is my own, and I do not recognize myself in that description. And then there are writers who, being concerned more with the actual experience of "concrete groups," strive for more subtle forms of analysis. If, for example, you are interested in the Jews of France, you might single out the generation of the Holocaust, that of the awakening of Jewish consciousness following the Six-Day War (1967), that of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews from North Africa, and that of the disenchantment with Israel in the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. If you are interested in the women's liberation movement, you might distinguish between the pioneer generation (women in France obtained the right to vote in 1945; Simone de Beauvoir wrote *Le Deuxième Sexe* in 1947; and Brigitte Bardot starred in *God Created Woman* in 1956, the year that also saw the institution of France's first official family-planning agency) and the assertive generation that culminated in the legalization of abortion (Veil Law, 1975)—in short, the Beauvoir generation and the generation of the women's movement. Along the way you can take your pick of milestones: Françoise Sagan's novel *Bonjour tristesse* or the birth-control pill, the washing machine,⁷⁵ painless childbirth, a female student finishing at the top of her class at Polytechnique. The choice makes no difference unless you are concerned with its degree of representativity. The range of possibilities is in fact infinite, and the interest of any particular choice stems not from the available spectrum or the history that it enables you to reconstruct but solely from the rules governing the model, with its implicit hierarchy and invariant features. Beating beneath the history of France from the Revolution to the present one can indeed make out the generational pulse. Why?

One question remains: If generation is truly a *lieu de mémoire*, why has France been its promised land? The question is in fact inescapable, and I see three possible answers. The first invokes a kind of historical predisposition: France has always been divided and pitted against itself. Indeed, the present volume of *Les Lieux de mémoire* is based entirely on such internal cleavages, which one does not find in other countries to the same degree or on the same scale. France's consciousness of itself is therefore also divided, and these divisions have become bound up with and reinforced the simple yet fundamental father-son split that is at the root of the problem of generations. In spatial terms, there is the relation of center to periphery, of Paris to the provinces. In terms of statecraft, there is the relation of the central gov-

ernment to local governments. In historical terms, there is the relation of unity to diversity. In social terms, there is the relation of the majority to minorities. In national terms, the alien is defined in relation to some norm. In France the problem of power is therefore consubstantial with the problem of generations. In the final analysis it is always a question of maintaining or losing control. The very long period during which monarchical authority and divine right held sway over the French mind, together with the slow and far-reaching process of building a centralized state, surely contains part of the explanation for the ubiquity of conflict at the heart of France's relation to itself. The Revolution forced open that internal structure, yet—as Tocqueville pointed out—without altering the symbolic concentration of power. The whole national dramaturgy could mold itself around, pattern itself after, and adapt itself to the spontaneous dramaturgy of generational replacement, which in some ways still constitutes one of its basic dimensions. Now we can see why Freud always saw France as the country that would be most allergic to psychoanalysis. There, the conflict that he delineated in anthropological, psychological, and individual terms was already genetically inscribed in national, political, and collective ones. Geography, history, politics, and society all are imbued with a latent, persistent generational brew. For a proof by contradiction, note that the recent progress toward consensus that has been so much remarked on coincides exactly with the obvious disappearance of conflict between fathers and sons over the issue of generational autonomy.

The second answer has to do with the conservatism, backwardness, and traditionalism that led Raymond Aron to say that France was a country that could achieve reform only by means of revolution. This inertia, apparent in every sphere, has given rise to a particularly striking contrast between the universalism of French principles and the immobility of French realities. It was therefore relatively easy to superimpose an oppositional, generational model on the persistence of features of the old regime within the very heart of the new. This contrast and this persistence at the heart of French existence leapt to the eye of foreign observers of France, especially the group of researchers from Harvard who, taking up Michel Crozier and Stanley Hoffmann's ideas of "stalled society" and "republican synthesis," set out "in search of France"⁷⁶ in the early 1960s, at precisely the moment when modernity gripped a country they knew well yet no longer recognized. Without the aid of such detached ethnographic scrutiny the French might have failed to appreciate the degree to which age-old monarchical, Christian, and agrarian traditions had been reinvested in a democratic, secular, and capitalist society. Themselves alien to those traditions, the Harvard researchers were the first to emphasize the continuity of aristocratic values within bourgeois values; the incorporation of the idea of salvation in that of success; the shift of sacrality from church to state; the preservation, in a society that began with their abolition, of privileges of all kinds associated with

office and seniority;⁷⁷ passive resistance to the egalitarian procedures of democracy; and the preference for security over liberty. From Turgot to Mendès France, the lack of aptitude for reform and the tendency to cling to the past have made generational reaction central to the French collective identity.

The same sources feed into the third factor underlying the special importance of the generational phenomenon in France, which might be called "the rebelliousness of the French." Every country develops its own particular mode of contesting the established order. Russia forced its protesters into terrorism and, in the more recent past, into dissidence. The United States produced its California counterculture to follow up its Lost Generation. The English, thanks to their aristocratic tradition, have made eccentricity a natural right. France, owing to its history and its civilization, has developed a reflex of rebelliousness, a habit linked to the formalist, hierarchical style of authority inherited from the divine-right monarchy and perpetuated by governmental and bureaucratic centralization, and this style has insinuated itself into all French institutions from top to bottom, including the army, the school, and the factory, while at the same time affecting social relations down to the level of the couple and the family: *La France, terre de commandement* (France, land of command).⁷⁸ The upshot of this has been a latent anarchism, a dialectic of order and subversion that forms the background of intellectual as well as political history. This can be seen in men of genius as typically French as Paul Valéry, a paragon of conformism as well as the author of *Principes d'anarchie pure et appliquée*. It can also be seen in historical situations as typically French as the Dreyfus Affair, in which the writer Paul Léautaud could, with deep irony and disgust, send the Action Française a contribution toward a monument for Colonel Henry together with these words: "For order, against justice and truth." In what other country would such a gesture be conceivable? Indeed, the same reflex animates every crucial episode in French history (Pétain—de Gaulle, for example) to emerge as the crucial element in the students' May '68. It can also be felt at work setting the pace of all intellectual life, which is similarly imbued with an invisible hierarchy,⁷⁹ controlling the replacement of generations from the romantics to the surrealists to Michel Foucault. The "avant garde," a notion whose historical efficacy precisely parallels that of generation (to which it clings as shadow to object or, rather, as light to shadow), has long held out the promise of generational subversion in two associated spheres, the political and the intellectual.

The cult of authority gives rise to the culture of revolt and legitimates it in advance. Therein, perhaps, lies the final mystery surrounding the central role that the idea of generation has played in the historical cycle initiated by the French Revolution: in the reason why French society established and bestowed upon youth, its supreme hope and supreme thought, the mission of fulfilling a destiny with which it is prepared to identify itself fully. In its ultimate and sacred form, this mis-

sion requires individuals to sacrifice themselves in violence, whether of war, for which youth bears the brunt of the cost, or of revolution, in which youth serves as the spearhead. Ultimately, it is because youth bears this sacrificial responsibility that the legitimacy of its rebellion is secretly recognized. Thus the theme of a "sacrificed generation," which Barrès and Péguy successfully planted in the French collective consciousness around the beginning of the twentieth century, is intimately intertwined with the theme of generation itself. "People are always right to rebel," Sartre said,⁸⁰ but he proposed this formula for predestined radicalism at the very moment it was ceasing to be true, after two centuries during which the volume of blood shed in the Europe of nations and the France of revolutions was ultimately responsible for the density of memory in the national model of the generational phenomenon.

Immersed in Memory

Generations have always been mixtures of memory and history, but the amount and role of each in the mix appear to have shifted over time. The least abstract, most carnal, temporal, and biological historical notion—"from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations" (Matt. 1:17)—is also, from our standpoint, the least susceptible of historical explanation, a pure memory.

Yet it is also completely saturated in history, if only because it is concerned with a basically constructed phenomenon, a fabrication of hindsight. A generation is not something that emerges spontaneously from the heat of action: it is an observation, a summing up, a self-examination for the purpose of giving a firsthand historical account. However "generational" it may have been, the '68 generation defined itself as such only later, in the waning years of *gauchisme*. It was ten years after the Dreyfus Affair that Péguy looked back on *Notre jeunesse* (1910). By the time Musset baptized the *enfants du siècle*, they had become adults. The attempt at rejuvenation in fact added to their years. When a writer takes note of his date of birth, it is a sign of his years (in this case Victor Hugo's): "This century was two years old." A generation is a product of memory, an effect of remembering. It cannot conceive of itself except in terms of difference and opposition.

This very general phenomenon has never been more clear than it was in the crisis of the late nineteenth century, in which the generational theme was reshaped and took on new depth as its Dreyfusard and nationalist extremes came together through their representative spokesmen, Péguy and Barrès. Both men were able to express more clearly than anyone else the nature of their strong conviction of belonging to a generation, which was the same for both yet also different. For Péguy it was a generation that grew up together on the same schoolroom benches and in

the *thurnes* (dormitory studies) of the École Normale, a generation compounded of suffering and *amitié* ("friendship," a word that in his hands took on a very broad connotation). For Barrès it was a generation of "princes of youth" and entirely aesthetic in its affiliations. For both men, the sacralization of generation was equally intense and destined to serve their own consecration, but in each case the meaning of that sacralization and that consecration was different. With Péguy it was a sense of belonging to the "last generation to share the republican mystique," of having been a witness to the last defeat ("we are a defeated generation"), of being a unique repository of a moral experience incarnate. Such was the tenor of his 1909 text, "Aux amis, à nos abonnés," a veritable epitaph for his generation in which Péguy spoke in particular of the visit of a fine young man who came to interview him about the Dreyfus Affair:

He was quite docile. He held his hat in his hand. He listened to me, listened to me, and drank in my words. I have never understood as clearly as I did then, in a flash, an instant, what history was; and the unbridgeable gulf that exists, that opens up between the real event and the historical one; the absolute, total incompatibility; the total strangeness; the absence of communication; the incommensurability: literally, the absence of any possible common measure.... I narrated, I pronounced, I related, I passed on a certain Dreyfus Affair, the real Dreyfus Affair...in which we of this generation remain immersed.⁸¹

The Barrèsian and generally nationalist message of generation was quite different. Barrès of course attacked "the failure of our fathers," unable to shake off German intellectual hegemony or to understand the regenerative traditionalism of the Boulangist movement. He was highly conscious of his generation's distinctive qualities. But the traditionalism that he discovered and conquered immediately placed his generation in a long line of others (*La Marche montante d'une génération*) as a link in a chain that would continue to grow link by link from the Henri Massis of *Évocations* to Montherlant, Drieu La Rochelle, and even the Malraux of *D'une jeunesse européenne* (1927), to Thierry Maulnier and the Robert Brasillach of *Notre avant-guerre*, and on to the Roger Nimier of the postwar years, only to end up today with someone like Régis Debray. Here, then, we have two archetypal constructions of generations, two exemplary ways of inscribing them in history. Every generation is unique, but one is, as Péguy put it, "a front that rises and falls in the same instant," while the other, as for Barrès, is "a provisional link in the chain that is the Nation."

Generational memory is therefore historical, but not just by virtue of comparative hindsight or reflection on its own construction over time. It is historical above all because it is first imposed from without, then violently internalized. Generational self-proclamation is in fact the outcome of a solicitation from outside,

a response to an appeal, a reflection of external scrutiny by parents, "teachers," journalists, or public opinion, which has a cumulative or snowball effect. The Agathon survey concretized the image of a "1912 generation" that had no demographic or social counterpart other than a rapid increase in the number of students, a factor that the authors did not take into account.⁸² Nevertheless, the enormous response it received, the ten other surveys it spawned, the spate of books that seemed to confirm its findings, the fact that it appeared shortly before the outbreak of World War I—all these things helped to create out of whole cloth a mythical image that first captured the public imagination and then found its way into works of history and textbooks: the World War I era was indeed the period during which the generational idea reached its zenith. The phenomenon has repeated itself many times, although on a smaller scale: witness, for instance, the 1957 *Express* survey of the "New Wave" or the press campaign launched by the "Nouveaux Philosophes" in April 1978, both of which served to crystallize generational phenomena. Other attempts were less successful. On May 30, 1949, François Mauriac published an editorial in *Figaro* in which he called for a new survey similar to that of Agathon: "The other day, Gilbert Sigaux, a young writer and editor, suggested to me that perhaps the time had come for his generation to take stock of itself in much the same way as another generation did around 1910 with the publication of the Agathon survey." Two years later, Robert Kanters, an associate of Sigaux's, published the results of that survey under the title *Vingt ans en 1951* (Twenty Years Old in 1951). This was immediately emulated by *La Table ronde* and *Aspects de la France*, where Michel Braspart (alias Roland Laudenbach) for the first time linked the names of the writers Antoine Blondin, Jacques Laurent, and Roger Nimier for "their insolent attitude" toward "liberal idols."⁸³ But still not enough yeast had been added to make the dough rise. In those days the right wing was probably still too discredited and too isolated to focus the limelight on itself. It was not until three years later, when *Les Temps modernes* published a stinging attack from the left on the same group of writers, whom Bernard Frank referred to as "*hussards et grognards*," that this segment of a generation finally achieved public visibility.⁸⁴ Subsequent polling showed that the *hussard* attitude was not limited to a small circle of writers and gave the term a more sociological and scientific basis. Yet the principle of identifying a generation from outside remained the same. And since the product sells well, the principle has been abused. Contemporary society is as rife with generations that never really developed as the news is full of inconsequential events.

Last but not least, generational memory is also historical in another, infinitely more significant sense, in that it is imbued with history to its very core, not to say crushed by history's weight. The moments that loom largest in a generation's consciousness of itself are invariably moments of despair and helplessness in the face of history's overwhelming, inaccessible majesty, its penchant for denying those

who aspire to its tragic grandeur. The Revolution for the romantics; the entire nineteenth century for the "fin-de-siècle" generations; World War I for the generation that fought it as well as the Depression generation; World War II for postwar generations;⁸⁵ the Revolution again, together with all the wars they did not fight, for the generations of '68 and afterwards. This obsession with a history that is over and done with and leaves nothing but a void haunts the imagination of all so-called strong generations and a fortiori of intermediate generations; it controls the way their memory works. At the inception of a generation there is a sense of lack, something in the nature of a mourning. Generational memory is stocked with remembrances not so much of what its members have experienced as of what they have not experienced. It is these memories of what stands behind them that the members of a generation share in common, a painful, never-ending fantasy that holds them together far more than what stands in front of and divides them. This permanent antecedence structures the whole economy of generational memory, which therefore becomes an interminable discourse about origins, an endless saga. The whole literature of the 1920s and 1930s from Montherlant to Céline, from Aragon and Drieu to Malraux, transformed the memory of World War I veterans into hallucinatory images. May '68 immediately became its own commemoration: by October 1988, 124 books on the subject had been published. The history of romanticism began with romanticism itself. It is a sobering and striking thing to discover that Michelet, the greatest of romantic historians and a member of the very generation that invented the idea of generation so as to savor its experience under the sign of "genius," gave credit for that invention to the Revolution, for the simple reason that he was in the grip of a transference and consequently inclined to exalt his forebears' achievements. The passage is worth quoting:

If one were to seek the cause of this astonishing eruption of genius, one might of course say that men found in the Revolution the most powerful of stimuli, a new freedom of spirit, etc. In my view, however, there was an even more fundamental cause: these admirable children were conceived and delivered even as the century, morally uplifted by the genius of Rousseau, was rediscovering hope and faith. With that dawn of a new religion, women awoke. What resulted was a generation more than human.⁸⁶

It was this intrinsically mythological and commemorative historical celebration that moved the idea of generation out of history and into memory.

With the idea of generation one indeed enters into the realm of pure memory—and that is why, in particular, that idea interests us here. Pure memory is memory that thumbs its nose at history, that ignores lapses of time and chains of cause and effect, that forgets the prose of the quotidian and the obstacles to progress. It advances in

"flashes," powerful images, jumping from one stalwart mooring to the next. It abolishes time's duration, leaving only an ahistorical present. In a national context, the most striking example of such an abolition of time is again to be found in the Revolution, whose sudden invention, in the late summer of 1789, of the dismissive expression *Ancien Régime* detemporalized six centuries of history in one fell swoop (see François Furet's essay in this volume). With each new stage the operation is repeated at every level from the most general to the most particular. One might even say that the generational rupture—at once a source of creative fecundity and of repetitive poverty—consists essentially in "immemorializing" the past the better to "memorialize" the present. In this sense generations are powerfully, perhaps even primarily, fabricators of *lieux de mémoire*, or mnemonic sites, which form the fabric of their provisional identities and stake out the boundaries of their generational memories. These mnemonic sites generate or become charged with unfathomable powers of symbolic evocation, passwords and mutual recognition signals, all endlessly revived by narrative, documents, firsthand accounts, and the magic of photography. The exploration of a generational memory begins with an inventory of these sites. That, in the end, is precisely the purpose of these volumes, for France and measured against my own generation. Some will protest that I am here merely harking back to the old distinction that Bergsonian psychologists like Janet made between affective memory and intellectual memory or to the work of Durkheimian sociologists such as Halbwachs on the social contexts of collective memory. But I am talking about something very different, because generational memory is not a matter of individual psychology. The sites in which it condenses and finds expression are public places, centers of collective participation which are nevertheless susceptible of immediate personal appropriation. For political generations these include meetings, newspapers, demonstrations, conventions, organizations, and mass symbols. For intellectual generations they include publishing houses and journals, cafés and salons, colloquia, bookstores, and preparatory schools. They do not include the private recollections of individuals who link their personal memories to important public events, nor do they include shared individual emotions. Generational memory grows out of social interactions that are in the first place historical and collective and are later internalized in a deeply visceral and unconscious way so as to dictate vital choices and control reflexes of loyalty—matters in which "I" is simultaneously "we."

At this level of incarnation and decantation, memory no longer has much to do with time. It is at this point, no doubt, that we come closest to the truth of the idea of generation. Closed in on itself and fixed in its identity, impervious by definition to history and its "lessons," the generational monad is perhaps most closely related to what the historian of science Thomas Kuhn calls "paradigms," which according to Kuhn determine the structure of scientific revolutions.⁸⁷ It is surprisingly easy to

take the behavior of Kuhn's communities of theorists and experimentalists, united as well as constrained by a shared explanatory model and held together by crucial reflexes born of intellectual consensus, a common educational background and working style, and a shared jargon, and to translate it into the terms used here to describe generations. And just as scientific communities define themselves by radical opposition even while sharing implicitly the bulk of the established scientific tradition, each generation shares with others at once almost nothing and almost everything. This comparison of generations with scientific communities, which Daniel Milo has pursued in detail,⁸⁸ is valuable for assigning a proper place, decisive yet marginal, to those historical markers of memory around which generations, those fleeting yet crucial phenomena, align themselves. The generational paradigm, which even though hermetically sealed is traversed by every conceivable temporal flow, persists without change until it is blotted out and replaced by subsequent generations, which nevertheless hold what they supplant in reserve for possible revival toward new ends. Thus, for example, what might be called the "paradigm of war and occupation," which is central to contemporary French consciousness and identity, has, after a long conspiracy of silence, lately become the object of a series of investments. The first wave came in the early 1960s and was limited to a small group of historians interested mainly in what went before, that is, the 1930s. It originated with men such as Jean Touchard and René Remond who had experienced that turbulent era as youths, and it raised, discreetly and scientifically, the central question of whether or not a French fascism existed.⁸⁹ But it was once again the '68 generation that made the war its touchstone. It began in 1968 with the publication of *La Place de l'Étoile*, the novel with which Patrick Modiano at age twenty began his hallucinatory reconstruction of the *lieux de mémoire* sites of the Occupation. It continued in 1971 with the release of the film *The Sorrow and the Pity*, a documentary that explored the Occupation years in the city of Clermont-Ferrand. What followed has been called *la mode rétro*, or "Forties Revival," a headlong plunge into the shadowy depths of those "four years to be expunged from our history," as Chief Prosecutor Mornet put it in 1949: those years of darkness were now lit from every possible angle, including works of history, fiction, social science, and film.⁹⁰ And no end is in sight.

We are now in a position to measure how far the idea of generation has come and how completely it has been transformed. We have in hand a fair sampling of empirical studies, covering the entire social sphere and based on a full spectrum of historical, demographic, and psychological theories. Clearly memory is today the linchpin of definitions of generation, and consequently a generation is now a purely symbolic unit of time, a favorite device for representing change whose acceptance reflects and consecrates the advent of the social actor. In any case, Tocqueville long ago called attention to the likelihood that age would become an increasingly impor-

tant organizing and classifying principle in a democratic era in which "the notion of the *similar* is less obscure" than in aristocratic times; yet by "inducing people to forget their ancestors and by concealing their offspring" democracy would also "distend and loosen the bonds of human affection."⁹¹ There is no better delineation of the place, central yet all in all modest, of this very special category of contemporary periodization. "Generation" lacks the anthropological amplitude of "age," the religiosity of "era," the historical dignity of "century," and the richness of color and dimension of "epoch" or "period." By instituting a *mélange* of the individual and the collective, the notion deprives the former of its psychological depth and the latter of its expressive potential. Yet surely it is an inexhaustible notion, like the unconscious, and just as fascinating, yet at the same time just as constricted, impoverished, and repetitious. In a world of constant change, in which every individual has occasion to become his or her own historian, the generation is the most instinctive way of converting memory into history. Ultimately that is what a generation is: the spontaneous horizon of individual historical objectification.

What makes the notion of generation so typical here and now and gives it its explanatory force, however, is the unique historical situation of France, which since World War II has suffered from a split historical personality. On the one hand it has invested too much in the heavy legacy of the past, in a history more burdensome than that of any other European country, while on the other hand it has gone through a profound process of disengagement from world history that has relegated it to memorial rumination on its own historical experience. The phenomenon is unique, complex, and so peculiar to France that we have no choice but to measure its extent and explore the various historical threads that find their point of intersection here.

Let us rapidly rehearse the major episodes of France's recent history. France was the only country to emerge from World War II half victor, half vanquished. England went united from mortal peril to ultimate victory. Germany of course went down to defeat, but complete catastrophe simplified the surgical removal of some of the complexities of its past, and it was not until precisely one generation had passed that it rediscovered, with the help of youthful Greens and a raucous *Historikerstreit* (historians' controversy) some of the dramas of conscience that have once again moved its history closer to that of France. Spain avoided the debacle altogether. The pain that followed the Liberation of France, by contrast, impelled the country, with help from the Resistance and de Gaulle, to seek solace among the victors while bearing the burden of the vanquished. Shattered, humiliated, and ravaged by internal division, France was all the more obsessed with recovering its "place" in the world because it no longer possessed the wherewithal of a world power. Just as it was beginning to get back on its feet, the Cold War broke out, com-

elling governments everywhere to choose sides. But once again France was different, because it had a powerful Communist Party and because it still had to contend with the thorny issue of decolonization, a problem it had been unable to resolve in 1945. Hence it was the only country in western Europe to internalize the clash between the Western and Soviet blocs, a dispute it was powerless to resolve; and the only country obliged to live with a divided conscience, politically impotent and institutionally paralyzed, to the point of ultimate collapse. This came with the Algerian War, comparable in its consequences to the American Civil War. The Algerian War became a means for settling old scores. It mired French history in a provincial struggle. More than that, the nation's conflict was complicated by a conflict within the left, which was the real reason for the war's interminable length and corrosive moral effects. And it revived Gaullism, which from the standpoint of historical escalation that concerns us here, was an ambiguous episode. On the one hand, de Gaulle, the champion of nationalism, was the man who disguised France's retreat into its metropolitan borders behind a partly rhetorical, partly real reinvigoration of foreign policy. On the other hand, he was instrumental in bringing about a new industrial revolution, an agent of the old Louis-Philippard dream of an industrialized France, who prosaically lived off the profits of growth.

In broad outline, then, this is the story of France's overzealous investment in history. That investment took place, however, at a time when France was withdrawing from history in a larger sense; having avoided the main thrust of twentieth-century history, France passively endured its side-effects. By degrees and with occasional hard knocks it declined from the status of a great power to that of a medium power. There were grinding adjustments in 1918, 1945, and 1962: each of these dates, which respectively mark the ends of World War I, World War II, and the Algerian War, brought its quota of mutilating reality and compensatory illusions. A country that previously prided itself on having been the first to know all the historical experiences that shaped the European identity from the Crusades to colonialism by way of the nation-state, absolute monarchy, dictatorship, and revolution, now knew only the consequences and aftershocks. France did not bear the full brunt of the socialist revolution or Nazi totalitarianism or the Depression or consumer society; it knew these things only by way of invasion, aftershock, or replay. We must grasp this overlapping of two different and contradictory registers of historical consciousness, this aptitude for becoming so bogged down in the past as to require painful disengagement, before we can understand why the past repeatedly and compulsively resurfaces in the present, why France is plagued with a tragic overinvestment in a national history that is nothing more than the local version of a neglected world history perceived by way of memory alone. What is more, France's historical memory is itself split and unbalanced: on one level the French celebrate their unanimity ("In lieu of a great present, we have a great past"), while on another they

cannot keep themselves from sifting through the past, especially the recent past, to find out whether it was really as great or as shameful as it has been made out to be. Ultimately the Bicentennial of the French Revolution thrived on this divided memory, which is why it will always be remembered as ambiguous. The Revolution may be over, or it may not be. It may have been a *bloc* (a monolithic whole), or it may not. The Vendée may have been a genocide, or it may not. Robespierre may have been a great man or a mass murderer. The Terror may have been a product of circumstances, or it may have set a pattern for French political culture. The Declaration of the Rights of Man may have set forth universal or universalizable principles, or it may have served strictly internal purposes. No matter: yes or no, it all happened in France, and all eyes were once again on the country of the Revolution. This was the gist of President Mitterrand's message: "The world still has its eye on us, and I am at center stage."

We thus come back to the explosive potential of the problem of generations and their interrogative succession, particularly as the pace of succession picks up, as upheaval becomes constant, and individual life expectancies increase. The past never passes; those who took part in it linger on the scene, even as newcomers crowd their way in. Together these three factors have made the generational phenomenon more important than ever, turning it into a vast echo chamber for the century's tragedies. In theoretical and practical terms this raises, in our two-dimensional model, the question of where the dividing line falls between that which belongs *exclusively* under the head of generational memory and that which belongs *exclusively* to historical memory, or, if you will, to memory and history. Note that this division itself has two dimensions. *Temporally*, there is the moment when memory passes from the generations that are its bearers to the historians who reconstitute a past they have not experienced. *Intellectually*, there is the transition from first-hand account to critical reconstruction. Neither of these transitions is one-to-one in generational terms: there can be, and are, excellent critics of their own generation's memory who become its historians, and there are generations of historians, no less distinguished, whose work is essentially to reexamine their subject from the standpoint of their own generational memory. The Bicentennial made it possible to verify this general truth in the particular case of the French Revolution. France's withdrawal from world history and entry into the historically empty era of pregnant memory both called attention to generational agency and broadened the issue to the scale of national history in the two most dramatically intense moments of French history: the Revolution and World War II.

We can now give clear answers to the questions we raised at the outset. There are indeed "French" generations. If, moreover, a generation is a *lieu de mémoire*, it is not at all in the simple sense that shared experiences imply shared memories. It is rather as a result of the simple yet subtle interplay of memory and history, of the eternally

reemerging dialectic of a past that remains present, of actors who become their own witnesses, and of new witnesses in turn transformed into actors. When all three of these elements are present, a mere spark can ignite a blaze. It is their presence in today's France, that tinderbox of memory, that fuels the "generational" blaze. In this time and this place. The play goes on, and it is up to each generation to rewrite its generational history. But how long will coming generations have to wait for such a combination of circumstances to reoccur and shed a comparably unsparing light?

CHAPTER 13 GENERATION

- 1 Here it will suffice to mention only a few key works with extensive bibliographical notes, starting with the article "Génération" in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* by Philippe Parrot and S. N. Eisenstadt, the latter being the author of the classic *From Generation to Generation* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1956), and Hans Jaeger, "Generations in History: Reflections on a Controversial Concept," *History and Theory*, 2 (1978): 273-292, which sheds light on the historiography of the notion. See also Alan B. Spitzer, "The Historical Problem of Generations," *American Historical Review*, 78 (December 1973): 1353-1385, which investigates some implications of the notion and surveys the abundant American sociological bibliography. Also Claudine Attias-Donfut, *Sociologie des générations* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), and Pierre Favre, "De la question sociologique des générations et de la difficulté à la résoudre dans le cas de la France," ch. 8 of *Génération et politique*, ed. Jean Crête and Pierre Favre (Paris: Economica, 1989), a revised version of a paper read to the colloquium "Génération et changements politiques" at the Université Laval in Quebec, June 1984, and his introduction, "Génération: Un concept pour les sciences sociales?" to the round table organized by Annick Percheron at the Paris convention of the Association Française de Science Politique, Génération et Politique, October 22-24, 1981. A bibliography of 277 books and articles was assembled for the occasion. Current interest in the topic in connection with the history of contemporary France is evident from the special issue "Les Générations" of *Vingtième siècle, revue d'histoire*, 22 (April-June 1989). The use of the notion in psychology, ethnology, economics, and demographics will be apparent from succeeding notes.
- 2 Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (London, 1970).
- 3 In particular, Antoine Prost, "Quoi de neuf sur le mai français?" *Le Mouvement social*, 143 (April-June 1988): 81-89, devoted to "memoirs and histories of 1968," surveys the topic.
- 4 Jean-Pierre Rioux, "A propos des célébrations décennales du Mai français," *Vingtième siècle, revue d'histoire*, 23 (July-September 1989): 49-58, a rich analysis that I follow closely here.
- 5 Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Les Années orphelines (1968-1978)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).
- 6 Jacques Paugam, *Génération perdue* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1977), which contains interviews with F. Lévy, J.-P. Dollé, C. Jambet, J.-M. Benoist, M. Lebris, J.-E. Hallier, M. Butel, J.-P. Faye, B. Kouchner, B.-H. Lévy, M. Halter, P. Sollers, A. de Gaudemar.
- 7 During which France was ruled by a rightist coalition government under a Socialist president—TRANS.
- 8 Serge July, "La Révolution en creux," *Libération* (May 27, 1988).
- 9 Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Génération*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987-1988).
- 10 The comparison is sketched out in *Espaces-Temps*, no. 38-39, 1988: "Concevoir la Révolution, 89, 68, confrontations."

- 10 Nicolas Restif de la Bretonne, *Les Nuits de Paris (1789-1794)*, ed. Patrice Boussel (Paris: Union Générale de l'Édition, 1963), 193.
- 11 As a result, in fact, of renewed interest in the subject of generations: see Jean Nicolas, "Génération 1789," *L'Histoire*, 123 (June 1989): 28-34.
- 12 See Mona Ozouf, article "Fraternité," in *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), 731-740; trans. by Arthur Goldhammer as *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and, subsequent to this, Antoine de Baecque, "La Révolution française et les âges de la vie," in *Age et politique*, by Annick Percheron and René Rémond (Paris: Economica, 1991), ch. 2, 39-59.
- 13 Jefferson gave the clearest formulation of the right of generations to determine their own fate: "The dead have no rights. They are nothing; and nothing cannot own something." Letter to Samuel Kerchevol, July 1816, *Writings* (New York: Literary Classics, 1984), 1402. And this: "We may consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of its majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation more than the inhabitants of another country." Letter to John Wayles Eppes, June 24, 1813, *ibid.*, 1280. See Patrick Thierry, "De la Révolution américaine à la Révolution française," *Critique* (June-July 1987). Jefferson came to the conclusion that all laws should be submitted to a fresh vote every nineteen years.
- 14 What is interesting about this little-known text, taken from a French edition, whose existence was pointed out to me by Marcel Gauchet, is its awareness of the practical consequences of the transition from a natural definition of generation to a social and political one, which "includes all individuals who are more than twenty years old at the time in question" and which will remain in power for fourteen to twenty-one years, "that is, until the number of minors coming of age is greater than the number of survivors of the first class."
- 15 Text in Marcel Gauchet, *La Révolution des droits de l'homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 328. On p. 193 he also cites a letter written by Condorcet on August 30, 1789, congratulating Comte Mathieu de Montmorency on having this idea. Montmorency was one of those political newcomers in whom Condorcet was amazed to discover "a young man bred for war giving the peaceful rights of man an extent that would have astonished philosophers twenty years ago." Condorcet, *Oeuvres*, vol. 9.
- 16 *Le Moniteur*, 16: 215.
- 17 See Mona Ozouf, article "Régénération," *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, 821-831, and *idem*, *L'Homme régénéré* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989). See also Antoine de Baecque, "Le Peuple briseur de chaînes, fracture historique et mutations de l'homme dans l'imaginaire politique au début de la Révolution française," *Révolte et société*, Actes du IV^e colloque d'histoire au présent, Paris, May 1988 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, February 1989), 1: 211-217; and *idem*, "L'Homme nouveau est arrivé: L'image de la régénération des Français dans la presse patriotique des débuts de la Révolution," *Dix-huitième Siècle* (1988).
- 18 Marie-Hélène Parinaud, "Membres des assemblées et volontaires nationaux (1789-1792): Contribution à l'étude de l'effet de génération dans la Révolution

- française" 2 vols. (thesis, École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1985; mimeograph).
- 19 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790; repr. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955); Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (2 parts, 1791, 1792; repr. in *Common Sense, the Rights of Man, and Other Essential Writings of Thomas Paine* [N.Y.: New American Library, 1984]). On the controversy, see Robert B. Dishman, *Burke and Paine, on Revolution and the Rights of Man* (New York, 1971), and, more recently, Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984; 2d ed., 1988). See also Judith Schlanger, "Les Débats sur la signification du passé à la fin du XVIII^e siècle," in *Le Prémantisme, hypothèse ou hypothèse?*, Colloquium at Clermont-Ferrand, June 29-30, 1972 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975).
- 20 See in particular "Le Mystère 68," proceedings of a round table organized by *Le Débat*, 50 and 51 (May-August and September-October 1988).
- 21 As Herve Le Bras maintains, for example. See *ibid.*
- 22 For example, Didier Anzieu, *Les Idées de mai* (Paris: Fayard, 1969); André Stéphane, *L'Univers contestationnaire* (Paris: Payot, 1969); Gérard Mendel, *La Crise de générations* (Paris: Payot, 1969).
- 23 Pierre Vianson-Ponté, "La Nouvelle Génération perdue," *Le Monde* (September 6, 1967; repr. in *Couleur du temps qui passe*, vol. 2 [Paris: Stock, 1979]), 247. This chronicle inspired the November-December 1976 television programs of Jacques Paugam, and Vianson-Ponté contributed the preface to Paugam's *Génération perdue*, a book with the subtitle "Ceux qui avaient vingt ans en 1968? Ceux qui avaient vingt ans à la fin de la guerre d'Algérie? Ou ni les uns ni les autres? [Twenty years old in 1968? Twenty years old at the end of the Algerian War? Or neither?]: "Let's not quibble about whether or not you form a generation. That is secondary. But lost you are! Lost with keys in your pockets: your identity, your credentials, your assurance."
- 24 Eric Vigne, "Des Générations 68?" *Le Débat*, 51 (September-October 1988): 157-161.
- 25 Auguste Comte was the first to reflect on the importance of the rhythm of generational replacement for the evolution of society and the progress of the human spirit. See his *Cours de philosophie positive* (Paris, 1839), vol. 4, 51st lesson.
- 26 Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 278-322, trans. of "Das Problem der Generationen" in *Kölner Viertel Jahrshefte für Soziologie*, 1928.
- 27 François Mentré, *Les Générations sociales* (Paris: Bossard, 1920).
- 28 Henri Peyre, *Les Générations littéraires* (Paris: Goivin et Cie, 1948).
- 29 Julián Mariás, *El método histórico de las generaciones* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1949).
- 30 Yves Renouard, "La Notion de génération en histoire," *Revue historique* (1953): 1-23, repr. in *Études d'histoire médiévale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Sevpén, 1968).
- 31 Albert Thibaudet, *Histoire de la littérature française de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Stock, 1936). Thibaudet devoted one of his columns to the criticism of François Mentré: see *La Nouvelle Revue française* (May 1, 1921), repr. in *Réflexions sur la littérature* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

- 32 Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1961), 94.
- 33 Lucien Febvre, "Génération," *Revue de synthèse historique* (June 1920).
- 34 See in particular Annie Kriegel's analyses of generations of Communists in *Les Communistes français, essai d'ethnographie politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968). And, most recently, Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, ed., *La Guerre d'Algérie et les intellectuels français*, Cahiers de l'IHTP, no. 10 (November 1988).
- 35 See especially Jean-François Sirinelli, *Génération intellectuelle: Khâgneux et normaliens dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), and *idem*, ed., *Génération intellectuelles*, Cahiers de l'IHTP, no. 6 (November 1987).
- 36 See, for example, Raoul Girardet, "Remarques perplexes sur le concept de génération et les virtualités de son bon usage," paper read to the First Congress of the Association Française de Science Politique, October 22-24, 1981, exp. and repr. in "Du concept de génération à la notion de contemporanéité," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 30 (April-June 1983): 257-270; and Jacques Le Goff: "I remain wary of the use of the notion of generation in history, for what is a generation and when can we speak of one?" in Pierre Nora, ed., *Essais d'ego-histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 238.
- 37 See the views of the semiotician Eric Landowski, "Continuité et discontinuité: Vivre la génération," paper read to First Congress of the Association Française de Science Politique, October 22-24, 1981, pr. in *La Société réfléchie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 57-73.
- 38 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, (1927); the quotation is from the French trans. by Jean-François Vezin, *Etre et temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 449. The passage is interesting in part because it refers to Wilhelm Dilthey, the first thinker to exploit the idea historically.
- 39 See Henri Mendras, *La Seconde Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).
- 40 See Hervé Le Bras, "L'Interminable Adolescence ou les ruses de la famille," and André Béjin, "De l'adolescence à la post-adolescence, les années indélices" both part of "Entrer dans la vie aujourd'hui," *Le Débat*, 25 (May 1983).
- 41 See Pierre Nora, "Le Retour de l'événement," in vol. 1 of *Faire de l'histoire*, ed. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).
- 42 This is the thesis of the important article by Annie Kriegel, "Le Concept politique de génération: Apogée et déclin," *Commentaire*, 7 (autumn 1979).
- 43 Paul Yonnet, "Faits de génération, effets de génération," unpublished.
- 44 Michel Philibert, *L'Échelle des âges* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968); Philippe Ariès, "Les Ages de la vie," *Contrepoint*, 1 (May 1970): 23-30, and *idem*, article "Generazioni" in the *Encyclopedia Einaudi*; John Gillis, *Youth and History* (New York, 1974); Kenneth Keniston, "Youth: A 'New' Stage of Life," *American Scholar*, 39 (autumn 1970); *Rapport au temps et fossés des générations*, proceedings of a colloquium, CNRS/Association des FED'ages, Gif-sur-Yvette, November 29-30, 1979. Nothing essential will be left out thanks to the Proceedings of the International Colloquium on the History of Childhood and Youth, Athens, October 1-5, 1984, *Archives historiques de la jeunesse grecque*, no. 6 (Athens, 1986), with a substantial bibliography. See also Olivier Galland, *Les Jeunes*

- (Paris: La Découverte, 1985), and the results of two colloquia held in 1985, the International Year of Youth: Classes d'âge et sociétés de jeunesse, Le Creusot, May 30–June 1, 1985, synopsis in *Bulletin de la Société française d'ethnologie*, 12 (1986), and *Proceedings of the Colloquium Les Jeunes et les autres*, contribution des sciences de l'homme à la question des jeunes, Ministère de la Recherche et de la Technologie, December 9–10, 1985, introduction by Michelle Perrot and Annick Percheron, 2 vols. (Vauresson: CRIV, 1986). See also Gérard Mauger, *Tableau des recherches sur les jeunes en France* (report PIRTTEM-CNRS, 1988).
- 45 See Pierre Bourdieu, "La 'jeunesse' n'est qu'un mot," in *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 143–154.
- 46 Robert's dictionary attributes the word to Béranger in 1825, but Fazy, *De la gérontocratie ou abus de la sagesse des vieillards dans le gouvernement de la France* (Paris, 1928), writes of "this new word, which I have put together out of the language of the Greeks."
- 47 Jean-Yves Tadié, "Le Roman de génération," in *Le Roman au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Belfond, 1990), 99–102.
- 48 See Dominique Strauss-Kahn, *Économie de la famille et accumulation patrimoniale* (Paris: Éditions Cujas, 1977); *Accumulation et répartition des patrimoines*, Proceedings of the International Colloquium of the CNRS, July 5–7, 1978 (Paris: Economica, 1982); Claude Thelot, *Tel père, tel fils? Position sociale et origine familiale* (Paris: Dunod, 1982); and Denis Kessler and André Masson, ed., *Cycles de vie et générations* (Paris: Economica, 1985). See also Xavier Gaullier, "La Mutation des âges," *Le Débat*, 61 (September–October 1990).
- 49 See in particular Antoine Prost, "Jeunesse et société dans l'entre-deux-guerres," *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, 13 (January–March 1987): 35–43.
- 50 The phenomenon was immediately reflected in the work of economists and demographers: Alfred Sauvy, *La Montée des jeunes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1959); historians: Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960); sociologists: Edgar Morin, *L'Esprit du temps* (Paris: Plon, 1962); "Salut les copains," *Le Monde* (July 6–8, 1963); Georges Lapassade, *L'Entrée dans la vie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963). A chronology of "the adventure of ideas" prepared for *Le Débat*, 50 (May–August 1988), by Anne Simonin and published in expanded book form as *Les Idées en France, 1945–1988, une chronologie* (Paris: Folio-Histoire, 1989), offers a rich series of convergent landmarks for this period.
- 51 See Paul Yonnet, "Rock, pop, punk, masques et vertiges du peuple adolescent," and "L'Esthétique rock," *Le Débat*, 25 and 40, repr. in *Jeux, modes et masses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).
- 52 Witness this note by a historian of the period, Capefigue, in *Le Gouvernement de juillet, les partis et les hommes politiques, 1830–1835* (Paris, 1835), 1: 22: "It was in 1818 that the effect of Germany was first felt in France: bold thoughts of German unity resounded, and the youth of our schools fraternized with the ardent generation that Schiller had favored with so many of his plays and which had been organized as a military government by mass conscription in 1812 and 1813."

- 53 On the romantic generation the most important recent book is Alan B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). The conclusion contains a comparison with contemporary German student movements, in particular the Burschenschaften, and there is a bibliography (p. 267). Spitzer's judgment indirectly corroborates the temperate views of Henri Brunschwig, *La Crise de l'état prussien à la fin du XVIII^e siècle et la genèse de la mentalité romantique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), 104 and 270.

Certain aspects of the generational comparison of the two countries that deserve systematic treatment can be found in Claude Digeon, *La Crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870–1914* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), which is based on a generational analysis, and Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), with successive chapters on France and Germany. Published after this article was written is Jean-Claude Caron, *Généralisations romantiques: Les étudiants de Paris et le quartier Latin (1814–1851)* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1991).

- 54 Augustin Challamel, *Souvenirs d'un hugolâtre, portrait d'une génération* (Paris, 1885): "For the past twenty years or more orators have been likely to utter these words over the grave of this or that illustrious personage: 'He belonged to the vibrant, valiant generation of 1830...' No one will deny it: in politics, in literature, in science, in art, the generation of 1830, including all or nearly all the French alive at that time, has done splendid work from the beginning of this century and into its second half."
- 55 Sébastien Charlety, *La Monarchie de juillet*, vol. 5 of *L'Histoire de France contemporaine*, ed. Ernest Lavisse (1921), 47.
- 56 The formula deserves to be put back in its context: "Three ingredients went to make up the life that was open to young people at the time: behind them, a past forever destroyed, still squirming on its ruins, with all the fossils of centuries of absolutism; before them, the dawn along a vast horizon, the first glimmers of the future; and between those two worlds...something like the ocean that separates the old continent from the young America, a *je ne sais quoi* of fluctuation and drift, a stormy sea in which many a ship went down and across which, in the distance, passed from time to time a white sail or a ship spewing thick clouds of steam; in a word, the present century, standing between the past and the future, neither the one nor the other yet resembling both, so that with every step you never knew whether you were walking on new growth or old debris." Alfred de Musset, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*. Remember that Musset, who was born in 1810, was ten years younger than most of the romantic generation.
- 57 Sainte-Beuve, born in 1804, made several attempts to arrange his portraits by generation. Severe toward his contemporaries, he noted everything that linked him to them by their twentieth year: "Every literary generation dates from itself.... For the generation that is twenty today, the melancholy of Olympio will produce the effect of Lamartine's 'lake.' It takes a good deal of firmness and breadth of mind for judgment to triumph over such impressions" (*Notes et pensées*, no. 187). For additional references, see the short chapter on Sainte-Beuve in Peyre, *Les Généralisations littéraires*, 53–58.
- 58 Théodore Jouffroy, *Comment les dogmes finissent*, quoted in S. Charlety, *La Restauration*, vol. 4 of *L'Histoire de France contemporaine*, ed. Ernest Lavisse, ch. 3, p. 197.

- 59 Théophile Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme* (Paris, 1872), 11. Recall that Gautier, born in 1811, represents, like Musset, the disillusionment of the post-romantics. See Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l'écrivain* (Paris: José Corti, 1973), 452–462, and *Les Mages romantiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).
- 60 Alfred de Vigny, *Discours de réception à l'Académie française*, January 26, 1864, in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 1: 968. See Bénichou, *Le Sacre*, 288 ff.
- 61 Letter from Lafayette to James Monroe, July 20, 1820, in Gilbert de La Fayette, *Mémoires, correspondance et manuscrits du général La Fayette* (Paris, 1837–1838), 1: 93, quoted in Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820*, 4.
- 62 *Archives parlementaires*, 2d series, 35: 466.
- 63 Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme*, 9.
- 64 See the enlightening article by Louis Mazoyer, "Catégories d'âge et groupes sociaux, les jeunes générations françaises de 1830," *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 53 (September 1938): 385–419.
- 65 Yves Vadé, *L'Enchantement littéraire: Écriture et magie de Chateaubriand à Rimbaud* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).
- 66 Marcel Gauchet, "Les Lettres sur l'histoire de France d'Augustin Thierry," in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, part 2, *La Nation*, 1: 266.
- 67 Delecluze, "De la politesse en 1832," in *Le Livre des Cent-un* (Paris, no date), 13: 107.
- 68 Honoré de Balzac: "Youth will explode like the boiler of a steam engine," *Z. Marcas*, in *La Comédie humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 8: 847.
- 69 Alfred de Musset, *Mélanges de littérature et de critique* (May 23, 1831).
- 70 See Edmond Goblot, *La Barrière et le niveau, étude sociale sur la bourgeoisie française moderne* (Paris: Alcan, 1925).
- 71 See the extensive analysis of the Agathon survey in Philippe Bénéton, "La Génération de 1912–1914: Image, mythe et réalité?" *Revue française de science politique*, 21 (1971): 981–1009.
- 72 Edgar Morin, Claude Lefort, Jean-Marc Coudray, *Mai 1968: La brèche* (Paris: Fayard, 1968); Laurent Joffrin, *Un Coup de jeune, portrait d'une génération morale* (Paris: Grasset, 1987).
- 73 Michel Winock did just this in a subtle reconstitution of the eight intellectual generations which, in his view, succeeded one another from the Dreyfus Affair to 1968. See *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, 22 (April–June 1989): 17–39.
- 74 Paul Thibaud: "This generation was conformist. It followed the model of the elder generation and—what is rarer—of the younger." See "Les Décrocheurs," *Esprit* (July 1985). Claude Nicolet: "We were, in short, a generation abandoned by history." See *Pierre Mendès France ou le métier de Cassandre* (Paris: Julliard, 1959), 37. Quoted in Jean-Pierre Azéma, "La Clef générationnelle," *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, 22 (April–June 1989).
- 75 Yves Stourdzé, in "Autopsie d'une machine à laver, la société française face à l'innovation grand public," *Le Débat*, 17 (December 1981): 15–35, pointed out how reluctant women were from 1965 to 1970 to buy a machine that would free them from a difficult but traditional household chore.

- 76 S. Hoffmann, ed., *In Search of France* (pub data??). See in particular the article by Jesse Pitts.
- 77 François de Closets, *Toujours plus!* (Paris: Grasset, 1982), and Alain Minc, *La Machine égalitaire* (Paris: Grasset, 1987).
- 78 "La France, terre de commandement," was the title of an article by Michel Crozier in a special issue of *Esprit* (December 1957): 779–797.
- 79 See Marc Fumaroli, "La Coupole," in Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, part 2, *La Nation*, vol. 3.
- 80 Jean-Paul Sartre, *On a toujours raison de se révolter* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1974).
- 81 Charles Péguy, *Oeuvres en prose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 2: 1309. It is significant of the process of generational remembrance that this—striking—passage should have reemerged in the work of a Jewish essayist of the 1968 generation, Alain Finkielkraut, who uses it to begin his reflection on the trial of Lyons Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie: *La Mémoire vaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).
- 82 Bénéton, "La Génération de 1912–1914," also shows how the survey results were biased either by the choice of questions or by the elimination of inconsistent answers such as that of Emmanuel Berl, *A contretemps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 155. He lists other surveys, the best known of which, after the Agathon, is Émile Henriot's in *Le Temps* (April–June 1912), published in 1913 under the title *A quoi revient les jeunes gens?* Also published at the same time were Étienne Rey, *La Renaissance de l'orgueil français*, Gaston Riou, *Aux écoutes de la France*, and Ernest Psichari, *L'Appel des armes*. The chapter on France in Robert Wohl's *The Generation of 1914* relies entirely on such expressions of opinion, which it takes for coin of the realm.
- 83 See Marc Dambre, *Roger Nimier, hussard du demi-siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), 253.
- 84 Bernard Frank, "Hussards et grognards," *Les Temps modernes*, repr. in bound edition (Paris, 1988).
- 85 A curious illustration can be found in an editorial in the journal *Courrier* which Armand Petitjean addressed to the "mobilizable" youths of 1939, reprinted in *Combats préliminaires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941). Two examples related to Communist commitments in the Cold War period: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Paris-Montpellier P.C.—P.S.U. 1945–1963* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), and Maurice Agulhon, "Vu des coulisses," in Nora, *Essais d'ego-histoire*, 20 ff. And, from a slightly later period, Philippe Robrieux, *Notre génération communiste, 1953–1968* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1977).
- 86 Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), book 4, ch. 1.
- 87 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
- 88 See Daniel Milo, "Neutraliser la chronologie: 'Génération' comme paradigme scientifique," ch. 9 of *Trahir le temps (Histoire)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990).
- 89 The essay by Jean Touchard, "L'Esprit des années 1930," published in *Tendances politiques dans la vie française depuis 1789*, ed. Guy Michaud (Paris: Hachette, 1960), directly inspired the classic by Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années 30* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969). The question had been broached as early as 1954 with the publication of René Rémond's *La Droite en France* (Paris: Aubier-

- Montaigne, 1954), which, with the publication of the 4th ed. in 1982, became *Les Droites en France*, of which ch. 10 begins with the question "Is there a French fascism?" The question has engendered a good deal of commentary since then, including the work of Zeev Sternhell and the polemic surrounding it.
- 90 See in particular Pascal Ory, "Comme de l'an quarante: Dix années de retro-satanas," *Le Débat*, 16 (November 1981): 109-117, which includes a useful chronology for the period 1968-1981.
- 91 Alexis de Tocqueville, "De l'individualisme dans les pays démocratiques," ch. 2 of vol. 2, part 2 of *De la démocratie en Amérique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 106.

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