NAPOLEON & DE GAULLE

HEROES AND HISTORY

PATRICE GUENIFFEY

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What has become of great-souled men? The individuals called by that name today—in them I see nothing more than people expending enormous amounts of energy play-acting in an attempt to impress themselves, keeping an almost inconceivably eager eye on the audience's reactions, because it is the audience that must provide, by applauding them, their faith in themselves. The effect they produce on others functions as a cordial for these people, who are always exhausted by their excessive efforts.

—NIETZSCHE, AUTUMN 1880

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Preface to the English-Language Edition

A comparison of Napoleon and General de Gaulle? Isn't that subject too *French* to be of interest to an English-speaking reader? It's as if one were to propose to a French audience a parallel between George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Granted, everyone knows Napoleon and the first president of the United States. Neither of them belongs exclusively to his native country. Napoleon, Hegel said, was the father of the modern state, whereas Washington founded the nation that was soon to embody the idea of democracy.

But what about Charles de Gaulle? Although he certainly influenced the history of France, and even enabled it to make a fresh start after the Second World War, it would be an exaggeration to say that he influenced the history of the world the way Napoleon did after the French Revolution. As for Abraham Lincoln, there is no doubt that he was, at a tragic time when the young republic still had to decide what its destiny would be, one of the greatest presidents in American history, perhaps even the greatest, but it cannot be said that his influence extended far beyond his country's borders. After all, Europe had already put an end to slavery before the American Civil War broke out.

If there is an obvious parallel to be drawn, it is certainly between Washington and Napoleon. It even has a long history. The French, their heads full of classical reminiscences, dreamed of a virtuous founder who, having learned the lessons of the French Revolution, created a solid, durable work, and having completed it, retired to private life just as Cincinnatus, according to Plutarch, returned to his plow after saving Rome. When the Revolution, having moved beyond the Terror, had to undertake the immense task of rebuilding the state and society, the French looked spontaneously to the United States, where a hero, after presiding over the baptism of a new nation, had been rewarded by election to the highest office in the country, and, his mission completed, retired to live out the rest of his life on his estate of Mount Vernon. Might Bonaparte, who had expropriated the Revolution's heritage, turn out to be a French Washington? Many people hoped he would; some believed he had, and Bonaparte let them believe it. He even went so far as to organize, in 1800, an imposing ceremony in memory of the former American president, who had just died. For a few weeks, Bonaparte was a French Washington, a new Cincinnatus invested with the dictatorship in order to heal the wounds inflicted by the Revolution. But he did not play this role for long. Very soon, he took a different path, the one that was ultimately to lead him to place on his own head the royal crown formerly worn by the Bourbons.

Washington went out of fashion. When the triumphant Emperor was asked what he thought of the founder of the American republic, his answer was hardly flattering. Washington's modest glory did not much impress him. He considered the American president a good patriot, a decent general, and a scrupulous head of state, but he thought Washington's success was explained less by his personal qualities than by circumstances that were easy to cope with: a rustic society composed of a small number of farmers, a country cut off from the rest of the world, and an enemy—Great Britain—that was finally not inclined to make the sacrifices necessary to keep its colony. Had he been in Washington's place, he said, he would certainly have been equally successful; but had Washington been in his place, would he have succeeded as he did in putting an end to the Revolution? In his view, there was no doubt regarding the answer to that question.[1] Napoleon now preferred Charlemagne to Washington, even if, down deep, he refused to be compared with anyone.

When the Empire collapsed, the figure of George Washington was rehabilitated. Why had Napoleon failed, if not because he lacked precisely the virtue that had given Washington the courage to withdraw in time and to entrust to institutions the task of defending the country? The liberal nineteenth century made Washington one of its heroes. Chateaubriand, Germaine de Stael, Benjamin Constant, and François Guizot all emphasized what the two men at first had in common and what later divided them.

In fact, Chateaubriand explains, if Napoleon ended up a kind of adventurer, he was initially the indispensable man, in short, a French Washington. Like the American, he began by wanting what he had to want, in accord with the interests and needs of his time. Then, mandated by the French people, one might even say "chosen" by them because of the consent that had surrounded the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire, he "established a regular, powerful government, a legal code adopted by various countries, a strong, active, intelligent administration." And in addition he had, as Chateaubriand goes on to say, "brought order out of chaos and forced raving demagogues to serve under him."[2] Napoleon is great because of what he achieved, an achievement that was destined to survive him, and even more because of the personal qualities that enabled him to succeed where no one had ever been able to succeed before, finding in his genius the supports that he found neither in laws nor in traditions. But if Bonaparte's genius enabled him to be the indispensable man, it was also through his genius that he very quickly freed himself from any kind of dependency on the interests of his time, putting his epoch in the service of his desires after having put himself in the service of his period's interests. Whereas George Washington, a "retired magistrate, tranquilly fell asleep under his own roof, much missed by his compatriots and venerated by all peoples,"[3] Napoleon "embarked upon a course different from that of the Revolution, in which the hazards of war recovered all their rights."[4] His prestigious history was already no longer entirely that of France. In the end, Napoleon was a "Washington manqué," bequeathing to France not a constitution, like the American president, but glorious and heroic memories that long prevented the French from agreeing about the form of their government.

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Whatever persons we choose when we engage in the exercise of drawing a parallel, whether the comparison is obvious or not, the exercise itself always takes us back to a way of conceiving and writing history that is today often criticized as too backward-looking and too focused on individuals.

"Bigger is better!" Our time now dreams only of global history, of broadening perspectives and scales, with the more or less avowed, even conscious, objective of attenuating, by mixing centuries, continents, and civilizations, the importance of the particularities that were long central to historians' work. In fact, from Thucydides, Herodotus, and Plutarch on, history was attached precisely to the study of the *particular,* of the countless differences and singularities that testify to the diversity of human experiences, but in the conviction that the universal importance of historical events was revealed exactly by what seems to be the most resistant to generalization: a war, a revolution, a destiny, a way of dying, of loving, or of living with one's fellow citizens. Today, fashion demands that the universal be directly accessible. Not to mention the difficulty, indeed the material impossibility, of mastering the immensity of the sources indispensable for writing—for example—a history of the world, the probability that one will obtain anything other than a picture, in some way average, banal, and ultimately impoverished, of overall realities whose essence and importance could be better grasped by starting from the observation of a particular fact. Global history reduces the diversity of experiences by depriving them of their richness and meaning. A French proverb tells us that often "Mountains give birth to mice," and there is no more exact definition of the currently fashionable global history. On the contrary, it is in the intricacies of the particular that we can find the universal element hidden in every human experience, whether it is individual or collective.

Comparing two "great men"—and I am well aware that this expression itself is polemical these days—necessarily involves a conception of historical change that grants a certain importance and efficacy to individual will. I do not think, by the way, that the expression refers to the masculine gender, because it can very well be said that the first "great man" in the history of France, and the one to whom we must even attribute a capital *G* and a capital *M,* was a woman—Joan of Arc—who established for all time the criteria by which a "great man" can be infallibly recognized. As Thomas Carlyle said, a hero is a man—or woman—who wants the best, can do the best, and knows the best.[5] Will, ability, and a clear awareness of the limits that must not be exceeded make true heroes, who always rise up against a wall of prejudices, habits, routine, and lazy conformism to impose a solution that no one else is capable of implementing or even, often, of imagining. Obviously, it is the last term in the equation—the knowledge, the awareness of the possible—that is often the problem. How many authentic heroes, carried away by the euphoria of success, have crossed the limit of what was then possible? Napoleon is a good example of this, and so is Joan of Arc, who, having led the king to Rheims to be crowned there, as she had vowed to do, believed that after driving the English out of Orléans she could liberate Paris and save the kingdom all by herself. There is also something literary in the figure of the hero that dooms him—or her—to a tragic end. Heroes seldom die in bed.

Carlyle wrote:

> As I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world.[6]

These lines have been seen as the expression of a proto-fascism that would make Carlyle a prominent precursor of the mystique of the leader in the twentieth century. The literary critic Herbert Grierson, invited in late 1930 to give a lecture at the University of Manchester, chose to speak on “Carlyle and the Hero.” Three years later, after Hitler’s election as chancellor, he published his lecture under a new title: *Carlyle and Hitler*. The parallel seemed to him so natural that he didn’t think it necessary to make more than incidental changes in the text. Didn’t the events that occurred in Germany during that year show in vivo what Carlyle meant by “hero,” and under what conditions the hero could reveal and assert himself?[7] In 1933, Grierson did not foresee the future of the German experiment, but it is not certain that Carlyle would have included Hitler among the true heroes. Although Carlyle saw in the hero an embodiment of the superman, being imbued with Hegel's philosophy of history, he was also convinced that the hero is ultimately the instrument of the spirit of an age, the one who, in a situation of blockage—Octavius at the end of the Roman republic, Hugh Capet after the collapse of the Carolingian Empire, Napoleon after the French Revolution—imposes through his will, determination, and audacity, a renewal that the majority of people secretly long for. Carlyle's hero is the diametrical opposite of an adventurer who subjects a country to his dreams, even if they are the ones most opposed to the genius of the age. Heroes often end badly, but they always begin well.

On one point at least, Grierson was right: the author of *Heroes and Hero-Worship* had little faith in democracy, and only a very moderate liking for it. Carlyle did not believe that historical change could result from collective action or from an impersonal process. However, the French Revolution—more than the English Revolution, which had its hero (Oliver Cromwell), or the American Revolution, which celebrated its "Founding Fathers"—illustrated this idea, asserting that it had only one hero, anonymous and legion: the People. Thus post-revolutionary France elaborated the belief in the effective sovereignty of the multitude, the very principle of democracy.

It was in the wake of this genuine change in civilization, from aristocracy to democracy, that the way of writing history changed:

> Historians who write in aristocratic ages generally attribute everything that happens to the will and character of particular men, and they will unhesitatingly suppose slight accidents to be the cause of the greatest revolutions. With great sagacity they trace the smallest causes and often leave the greatest unnoticed. Historians who live in democratic ages show contrary tendencies. Most of them attribute hardly any influence over the destinies of mankind to individuals, or over the fate of a people to the citizens. But they make great general causes responsible for the smallest particular events.[8]

The aristocratic mentality believes in individuals and invests them with great power, whereas democratic culture emphasizes the action of collective forces; the former gives priority to the will, the latter to historical inevitabilities.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Hegel to Marx, and later from psychoanalysis to structuralism, seem to have established a belief in the omnipotence of fate. But to this peculiar belief in the anonymity of historical change it could be objected that the nineteenth century produced two Napoleons, not to mention Bolivar, Garibaldi, Bismarck, and Lincoln, while the twentieth century produced a host of monsters without whom the century would certainly have taken on a very different character. Stalin gave Soviet communism a form it might not have had if Trotsky had won, and Hitler enveloped the authoritarian regime that the Germans could probably not have avoided in the early 1930s. To a certain extent, the resulting tragedy confirmed rather than disconfirmed the "aristocratic" representation of history.

The exercise of drawing a parallel tends to ratify, I admit, this representation, even though it would be absurd to attribute to the individual will, or even to the will of a single person, more power and efficacy than it actually has. After all, even if we assume the sovereignty of individuals, the latter is confronted by many obstacles. Tocqueville, who maintained that people are free, never failed to explain that they are free only within limits that are vast, to be sure, but nonetheless remain limits. However, it will be conceded that democracy overestimates the role of the masses or of the popular will, and that where we think we see the people, what we see is often only the stirrings of minuscule oligarchies. The great sociologists who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, were the first to study the functioning of the mass democracy that they saw being born before their eyes, sketched a picture of it that was far from enchanted.

Although the "individual hero" went out of fashion in the age of universal suffrage, the first political parties entrusted with supervising elections, and the first labor unions, almost everywhere, in both Europe and North America, democracy was controlled by more or less hidden, militant oligarchies for which, all too often, "the people" served as a screen. Sometimes, as in Great Britain, they were controlled by social elites who had succeeded in preserving their authority despite the broader exercise of political rights. In the 1930s, André Tardieu, who was one of the main actors in the French Third Republic, published a book titled *La Révolution à refaire* (*The Revolution to Be Remade*), whose first volume bore the subtitle "The Captive Sovereign."[9] Even if on both sides of the Atlantic the people was sovereign de jure, it would have been an exaggeration to say that it was sovereign de facto. Today, we can still read with profit Moisey Ostrogorsky, who dissected the functioning of American electoral machines, and Robert Michels, who formulated the "iron law of oligarchy," which he sees at work in all systems.[10] Their work is as relevant as ever. It is only the means that have changed. Crude, raw corruption has lost its utility; modern means of communication and the advent of the digital age have made manipulating people's brains more effective than rudimentary vote-buying and intimidation. Basically, little has changed: it is often the few, and even the very few, who are the real decision-makers.

So let us return to "great men," since whether they are really great or really mediocre, beneficial or malevolent, saints or monsters, front and center or hidden behind the curtain, they still dominate the stage of modern political theater.

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France has made itself a specialty. Its history is a little more embodied than others are. There are several reasons for this.

The historian Jules Michelet saw in this the sign of a kind of national immaturity: the people, too long accustomed to the guardianship of the king and the priest, is constantly in search of a substitute Father to act in its name and in its interest. France is the product of a singular triad—Louis XIV, Napoleon, and de Gaulle—whose equivalent is found nowhere else. "France, [finally] cured of individuals!"[11] Michelet cries in a preface to his *History of the French Revolution,* written to denounce this French inability to live in an adult, autonomous manner, an inability that had led the country from the "loquacious tyrant" (Robespierre) to the "military tyrant" (Napoleon), and from the latter to the "idiot" (Napoleon III). A collective pathology? That was close to what François Mitterrand had in mind when in 1965 he published *Le Coup d'État permanent* to denounce the election of the president by universal suffrage introduced by the constitutional reform of 1962:

> I know French people [. . .] who are not shocked to see their country reduced to the dimensions of a man, even if he is of great stature, and

> who are glad to have renounced the full exercise of their rights as responsible citizens. These people were bored without de Gaulle. [. . .] Were [France] to be deprived of General de Gaulle, [it] would hardly interest them at all. They would become once again what they were down deep: naturally unsuited to democracy. The history fabricated by great men, delimited by the dates of battles, the advent of a king, the marriage of a princess, the disgrace of a minister, reawakened by a coup d'état, shaped in the mold of a dynasty—that's how they like it. The slow maturation of a people, the anonymity of progress, class struggle, the masses' task of expelling from the stage actors who monopolize the public attention of their time by performing the same old tricks—all that isn't spicy enough for them. [. . .] They're in a hurry to see one head rise above the others, and to march to the old music of divine right drawn from the mythology of the moment.[12]

A whole tradition that goes back to Michelet and still further, to Germaine de Staël, is alive in these superb lines whose conclusion can be contested, but not the truth of the observation: the French are still mourning their kings.

Another explanation: the fragility of institutions, which was, to be sure, accentuated by the Revolution, but whose history goes back a long way. Although the monarchy was not challenged before the eighteenth century, the monarchs themselves very often were. From the Hundred Years' War to the Wars of Religion and from the Fronde to the *parlements'* struggle against the crown, the royalty often found itself in a difficult situation. The Republic fared no better. It will be said that from 1958 to 1962, General de Gaulle gave France, for the first time since the fall of the throne in 1792, a stable regime. Granted. But what remains of it half a century later? No one is really calling for the advent a Sixth Republic, even though the Fifth is clearly moribund. Since the early 1990s, it has no longer produced political legitimacy, governmental efficiency, or social cohesion. This situation might be compared with that of the restive Gauls, who were unable and probably unwilling to unite to confront the Roman peril. However, more fundamentally it has to do with the heterogeneity—in topography, language, customs, history—of a country, or rather countries, united in a common destiny only by persistent, tenacious action by the state, initially royal and later republican, without for all that dissolving its multiple components in a single melting pot. So that as soon as it encountered serious strains, the ancient centrifugal tendencies weakened the connecting tissues of this nation that was more artificial than any other because it had been born from an unparalleled effort of the will.

The "great men" of the history of France find in this their justification and utility: they bring together, sometimes very temporarily, what has been scattered by the winds of history. We rely on individuals equipped with extraordinary powers, because we cannot rely on political institutions or on a social cohesion that does not, in reality, exist.

History is different, of course, where society is very cohesive or where institutions are solid. One thinks, naturally, of Great Britain, which was long subject to the constantly renewed ascendancy of a "gentry" that held in its hands all kinds of powers and was protected by the deference shown it by the lower classes. Thus in 1865, Walter Bagehot opposed enlarging the electoral body because he feared that allowing the people to vote might diminish the respect that it showed, more or less voluntarily, toward the ruling class.[13] What country other than England could have survived the two revolutions of the seventeenth century? Admittedly, in certain tragic circumstances the English also relied on heroes. This was the case in 1940, when Winston Churchill, called to head the cabinet, was able to find the words to galvanize the will to resist at a time when Great Britain could have been defeated. But that is an exception in a history in which the large number of heroes is more the consequence of the close-knit nature of the oligarchy in power than of the country's lack of unity.

It is true that the history of the United States, whose constitution has been a model of solidity since 1787, has proven to be a seedbed of heroes whose profusion is quite comparable to the French pantheon, even if they do not play the same role. To tell the truth, in America there are fewer heroes in politics than there are in literature or especially in films. The latter made the "hero," generally solitary and doomed to a tragic end, an emblematic figure of the modern individual. When I look for American *political* heroes, I find hardly any, except at the beginning of American constitutional history, at the time of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitutional Convention, and later on, during the Civil War—that is, in the two periods in which will won out over institutions, which were still to be created in the first case, and contested and weakened in the second. The generation of the Founding Fathers was heroic in the strict sense. The same can be said of Lincoln at the time of the Civil War, and his assassination itself was not without consequences for the post-war period, which he would certainly have negotiated better than his successors did. In America, and in ordinary times, the Constitution restrains individual will too much to lend itself to the irruption of "heroes," whether good or bad. General Douglas MacArthur probably dreamed of being a hero, but he did not succeed in becoming one. Even those most indifferent to rules and laws are forced to bend to them, as Americans are seeing today. There is nothing above the Constitution. This is not the case in Europe, where, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, revolutions have sapped the association between constitution and political legitimacy. Here, the idea of the incarnation of power has been deeply ingrained by centuries of monarchical rule, and often authority is assigned less to the office than to the individual who holds it. If the president of the United States hogs the limelight—how many people know the names of the various cabinet members?—this light is relatively subdued. In this faint illumination, the president looms less large. Donald Trump has certainly succeeded in leaving a very different impression, that of existing independently of institutions, but this is a kind of illusion. The Constitution is still there, protecting him and constraining him at the same time. If Americans are able, in response to a universal need, to admire or hate heroes, it is on the screen. Moreover, European cinema has rather few heroes, and I recall that in my youth it was the American cinema that best quenched my thirst for heroes, not the French cinema.

The same can be said about European literature. Dumas's *Les Trois mousquetaires* is almost an exception in European literature, which is devoted to the tragic. The history of the Old World is heroic, but neither its literature nor its cinema is really heroic. The heroes not found in the works of novelists abound in politics, revolutions, and war. That is because in our countries, with weak political regimes whose legitimacy and authority remain doubtful, the soil is favorable for the flourishing of those rather bizarre plants in which peoples sometimes see the image of what they would like to be.

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From this point of view, the American and European political systems are very different. But in this respect globalization is also at work, dissolving singularities and breaking down barriers: today, the crisis of democracy is universal, and as deep in the old democracies as it is in more recent ones. Everywhere, this system based on the quest for the common good, pursued by means of deliberation, is crumbling. Where do political parties still enjoy people's confidence? Political and social cleavages have never been as deep in America as they are today, and the situation is no different in Europe, but on neither side of the Atlantic do they find political expression in the old parties. The individualism that is dissolving our societies or reducing them to more or less conflictual, Hobbesian aggregations of communities of all kinds—social, ethnic, racial, religious, and even sexual—must necessarily lead to the ruin of a system born in the eighteenth century that was founded on the belief that human beings naturally aspire to the common good and are capable, if they consider others and not solely their particular interest, of recognizing it and making it the basis of the social contract.

This political system, which is no doubt not ideal, and is certainly always approximate, full of disappointed hopes, and sometimes incapable of reducing inequalities or repairing injustices, is living its final moments. It no longer does the job. A study has shown this: in all democratic, economically advanced countries, the younger generations no longer have any taste for democracy.[14] They aspire to autonomy and demand civil liberty; political liberty means little to them.

That is probably also why politics has lost its earlier effectiveness. The world is more complex, and governments have fewer means for controlling phenomena that transcend the reassuring straitjacket of national borders. From this point of view, the fall of communism had immense effects. As long as the communist threat existed, politics retained, at least in the West, a significant supervisory power over the economy. It was a state of war, even if the war was "cold" or relegated to the periphery. As in any state of war, political imperatives took priority over economic or financial calculations. The collapse of liberal democracy's great rival in 1989–1991 led to the emancipation of the economy, which freed itself from any control or supervision. Capitalism, the revolutionary system par excellence, returned to its natural character: the dissolution of all checks on the pure logic of the market. It is too often forgotten that the alliance of capitalism and political conservatism was circumstantial, purely utilitarian, and motivated by the fear of revolution and its communist incarnation in the twentieth century. If the middle classes, whose weakening we deplore today, were so coddled after 1945, that was simply because they had to be turned away from communism—at least in Europe. When communism disappeared, and the enemy took the form of an Islamism that threatened lives but did not harm business, there was no longer any reason for special treatment. The middle class lost its influence. Capitalism reconnected with its originally revolutionary character and with its mission, or its spirit, which is to raze everything, to destroy everything until the world, as was prophesied by Adam Smith and Montesquieu, but also by Marx, is no longer anything but a homogeneous, standardized space open to the free action of the laws of the market.

Since then, politics has had only a limited influence on the course of things. Except in China, financial capitalism no longer obeys governmental injunctions. On the contrary, it is financial capitalism that issues the injunctions. It is natural for citizens to turn away from institutions that no longer have the means to respond to their concerns. The change is all the more profound because the outlook has darkened considerably, and very quickly. Who can believe, without exposing himself to ridicule, that a government, any government, can conduct a policy that would have even a minimal influence on the current climate change or population explosion? These concern everyone, and thus no one, since no sincere international consensus is seriously possible. The poet Dante would say that only universal monarchy could change the course of things, and he would be right. Politics thereby suffers further losses, and democracy loses more of its prestige. Its disputes, its debates, its search for compromise, which have for the past two centuries made it the most desirable system, now argue against it. Democracy is the system that sacrifices effectiveness to freedom and respect for individual rights. If the situation is as bad as people say, then democracy is no longer of any use.

We can only admire these lines written by Christopher Lasch in 1979:

> As the twentieth century approaches its end, the conviction grows that many other things are ending too. Storm warnings, portents, hints of catastrophe haunt our times. The "sense of an ending," which has given shape to so much of twentieth-century literature, now pervades the popular imagination as well. The Nazi holocaust, the threat of nuclear annihilation, the depletion of natural resources, well-founded predictions of ecological disaster have fulfilled poetic prophecy, giving concrete historical substance to the nightmare, or death wish, that avant-garde artists were the first to express. The question of whether the world will end in fire or ice, with a bang or a whimper, no longer interests artists alone. Impending disaster has become an everyday concern, so commonplace and familiar that nobody any longer gives much thought to how disaster might be averted. People busy themselves instead with survival strategies, measures designed to prolong their own lives, or programs guaranteed to ensure good health and peace of mind.[15]

One thing is sure: if the spectacle of politics still sometimes holds citizens' attention—notably when a "phenomenon" descends into the arena—no one assumes that politics has any effectiveness whatever.

On the humus of our fragmented societies, which have become a space where separate individuals frolic *without gravity,*[16] and, once again—because the phenomenon is not new—live in the diffuse fear of a faceless apocalypse, a different flower is growing, a poisonous one. The world is again filling up with strongmen, or would-be strongmen. From the United States to China, from Brazil to Argentina, from Russia to Italy, and soon to the rest of Europe, it is the "world of yesterday"[17] that is fading away once again.

As we know, the future guards its secrets jealously. But assuredly the illusion of "the end of history" that spread for a few years in the early 1990s has fizzled out. History is back, and the world of tomorrow, from this point of view, greatly resembles the world of yesterday, which we had thought gone forever. Thus to return to two of the heroes who put their stamp on the history of France is also, very modestly, to inquire into a phenomenon that today is no longer solely historical or the expression of an alleged "French immaturity," but belongs fully, for better and for worse, to our present.

NAPOLEON AND DE GAULLE

Introduction

Because I discuss in this book several of the great men who have marked the history of France, recent or ancient, I feel obliged to begin by issuing a caveat: any resemblance to living persons is purely coincidental. Even though saviors and heroes tend to appear and gain prominence unexpectedly, it has to be admitted that today the likelihood of such figures emerging is slim. Yet, the history of France has produced large numbers of great men, heroes, and saviors. So many, in fact, that the French have been able to nominate for this role candidates who were not up to the task.

Antoine Pinay, for example, has fallen into a largely well-deserved oblivion. People still remember, vaguely, the government bonds to which he gave his name, and his little gray hat. Nevertheless, when he became prime minister in 1952, commentators couldn't find words fulsome enough to celebrate this homunculus, who, to hear them tell it, was going to get France out of a rut and set it straight again: "He no longer belongs to himself," one observer wrote rapturously, "he belongs to us. He has become something more than a man, a sort of symbol in which countless French people have recognized what they hoped for France."

In the long lineage of saviors in the French style, Pinay, who was utterly without charisma, was the dullest and most insignificant. We cannot cite any original idea of his, any witticism, any notable feat. He fought in 1914, but all the men of his generation—he was born in 1891—had been in the trenches. In 1940, he was proud to have gone neither to Vichy, nor to Moscow, nor to London, and one journalist maintained that his greatest merit, in the end, was to have been born in the center of France, neither too far north nor too far south, neither too far west nor too far east, so that he was a kind of synthetic image of France itself. He took pride in managing the country as a housewife manages her shopping basket. He fulfilled the aspiration that now and then grips the French: to escape politics, its empty games and violent passions, its tragic and sometimes exhausting theater, in order to relax under a government whose only goal is the satisfactory management of everyday life. The Pinays of the world have never had a great political future in France. But the hope that they elicit shows that the figure of the providential man is so strong in the French tradition that it always finds *someone* to embody it. It is not without reason, or without humor, that Raoul Girardet chose the mediocre Pinay as the starting point for his study of the French myth of the savior.[1]

Saviors, heroes, great men. It can be difficult to define what distinguishes them; they are so diverse and so bound up with specific situations that they cannot easily be connected with a common type. Girardet distinguished four models that correspond, more or less, to providential men, leaders, guides, and saviors: Cincinnatus, who, having retired from public life, was called back to re-establish peace or concord in the city—as were Doumergue in 1934, Pétain in 1940, and de Gaulle in 1958; Alexander the Great, who did not so much correspond to a collective hope as create it by the power of his will and the energy of his action—like Bonaparte in 1800 and de Gaulle in 1940; Solon the law giver—again like de Gaulle; and finally, Moses, the prophet—like Napoleon on Saint Helena or de Gaulle as seen by Malraux.

We might also say that heroism is inseparable from the figure of the providential man, whether Cincinnatus or Solon. In every case, doesn't he have to break the fatal circle, collide with and upset deeply rooted habits, prejudices, and interests? He has to have courage, will, daring, even intrepidness. Finally, although it is possible to dissociate the idea of grandeur from any evaluation of the result by giving it a mainly aesthetic significance—there may be grandeur even in the enterprises that are the least useful and the least likely to succeed—it is nonetheless the result accomplished that judges the savior and inscribes him on the firmament of the collective memory. From this point of view, the indispensable heroic qualities find their full employment only when they are balanced by the qualities peculiar to political virtue: prudence, moderation, firmness. Machiavelli called it *virtù,* citing the example of Cesare Borgia, who, having required Messer Ramiro d'Orco, "a swift and cruel man," to restore order in Cesena, then had the same Ramiro cut in two with an axe, with the result that the people were "at the same time satisfied and dismayed."[2] As Carlyle put it:

> Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modelers, patterns, and in a wide sense, the creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these.[3]

Without going so far as to follow Carlyle's logic to its ultimate conclusions, we must recognize that we owe to heroes the principal changes that have altered, for better or for worse, the course of world history. We can go even further: heroes represent the enigmatic aspect of history, the motives hidden from reason in which minds less rational than ours might easily see the workings of Providence. Collective action is a myth invented in the nineteenth century, a myth that the tragic events of the twentieth century definitively refuted.

Although incarnation is functionally necessary in politics, there are nonetheless certain territories where the Hero has become a universal figure: the Greco-Roman and Christian West, where the conquerors and legislators of the ancient world were followed by the saints and martyrs of the first centuries of the Christian era. When, under rule by absolute monarchs, politics became secular, it did not break with the legendary, foundational figures of heroism. The heroization of the royal function, after all, reached its apogee under Louis XIV, during whose reign the temporal decisively emancipated itself from the tutelage of the spiritual, even though that tutelage was merely symbolic.

The decapitation of Louis XVI in 1793 no doubt struck at heart of the mystery of royalty, but contrary to what the members of the Convention hoped, it did not destroy the traditional figure of power. The Republic had dreamed of a power that, being vested in everyone, would no longer be incarnated in a single person, but it never ceased to see the emergence of heroes, expected or not, who, in the course of the travails endured, "gave it another head." First of all, there was Napoleon, who might have been thought to have elevated the role of the providential man to such a degree of power that no one after him would be able to raise it any higher. That proved not to be the case. Saviors—small or great, mediocre or talented, detested or adored—abounded. After Napoleon, there was, for a few weeks, Cavaignac, who put down the workers' insurrection of June 1848; and then Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte; and later still Gambetta and Thiers in 1870 and 1871, respectively; Clemenceau, Poincaré, and Gaston Doumergue, the latter after February 6, 1934; and finally Pétain and de Gaulle—the General, as we know, on two occasions.

All of them succeeded in reviving, successively and in different ways, and with varying degrees of completeness and clarity, the royal figure of power incarnate—as if the Republic could compensate for the fragility of its basis only by reconnecting with monarchical sacredness applied to the executive. De Gaulle institutionalized it in 1958–1962. The Fifth Republic is a royal head set upon a republican body. But because of the particular conditions of its birth—the return of "the man of June 18," who emerged from retirement to save France from disaster once again—the Fifth Republic, created by de Gaulle for de Gaulle, installed the figure of the providential man at the summit of the state. Just as Mexico bizarrely has an "Institutional Revolutionary Party" whose terms associate what cannot be associated—revolution and institutions—France sculpts in republican marble a great historical figure who is by nature poorly adapted to institutions. Every seven years, and now every five years, the French choose a president whom we expect not only to direct the government and guarantee national unity, but at the same time, following the example of the founder of the Fifth Republic, to don the garments of the savior.

"Candidats à la providentielle,"[4] read the title of a magazine article in 2012.[5] The expression is not only funny but accurate. Given that, it's hardly surprising that other powers, starting with the parliament, have been discredited. In the end, there is only one election that matters in France. We could get along very well without the others.

The problem lies elsewhere and is not without analogies, mutatis mutandis, with the history of the monarchy after Louis XIV. The Sun King had set the bar so high that none of his successors was capable of exercising the king's trade as he had exercised it. Neither Louis XV nor Louis XVI had the desire or the capacity to engage in a permanent representation of power, and, because neither was able to be a new Louis XIV—but who, in their place, would have been capable of that?—they involuntarily contributed to the monarchy's loss of legitimacy that began long before the revolution of 1789.

Much the same could be said about General de Gaulle's successors. The task is too difficult, the effort required too great. With the sole exception of François Mitterrand, they constantly sought to reduce the office to human proportions, and in doing so belied the lofty promises they had made before their election, because, doomed to present themselves as saviors, they had all campaigned on the theme of an advantageous upheaval, bright prospects, and a new era: Giscard claimed to give the history of France a new beginning, Mitterrand to change life, Chirac to reduce social tensions, Sarkozy to break with the past, Hollande, even Hollande, to make politics magical again, and Emmanuel Macron himself called for a "Revolution" (the title of the book he published before he ran for president in 2017) . . .

The repetition of this electoral tragicomedy ended up undermining the office of the president, its ability to incarnate symbolically the nation and the state. From Giscard onward, we have had Louis XVI instead of Louis XIV. The headlong rush into political communication has sought to mask the decline by making the image omnipresent. The resulting homogenization of language has exposed the growing vacuity of government. Eventually, the curtain rips and resentment increases. The damage done is all the greater because at the same time the other pillar of presidential legitimacy, political will and effectiveness exercised through the use of the main levers of sovereign action, has collapsed under the threefold impact of administrative decentralization, European integration, and economic globalization. The president of the Fifth Republic is increasingly exposed at the same time that he can do less and less. If we adopt Carlyle's definition of the Hero as the man who can do the most and the best,[6] we can measure the distance we have traveled, in the opposite direction, since the beginning of the Fifth Republic.

"At last!" cry those who see in this perpetual expectation of the providential man the proof, if not of a collective political immaturity, at least of a chronic democratic deficit, the symptom of a history that has never finished mourning its monarchical past.[7] The criticism cannot be ignored. It is heir to the republican spirit from which Michelet borrowed a famous formula when, faced with the spectacle of a French revolution that began with a national insurrection and ended up with Napoleon, he wrote: "France, get over individuals!" From this point of view, the Revolution had failed, and the nineteenth century stumbled from one revolution to another. The following century did no better, whereas the twenty-first century, which is intellectually comatose, is content merely to follow. Is France destined to be ruled by a father, preferably a severe one?

For those whose chief concern is not the republican aspiration to self-government and to the anonymity of power, it is the demand for realism that dooms providential men, the dream merchants par excellence. While it has been hard for some finicky republicans to resign themselves to Gaullism—I'm thinking here of Maurice Agulhon—others have never ceased to blame it for having put a blindfold on France that prevented it from gauging its actual decline or, worse yet, from understanding the ways in which the world has changed. It's "de Gaulle's fault" if the French so stubbornly refuse to give up the protective system implemented after the Second World War. Hence, it is said that the time has come to abandon the illusions nourished by the myth of the savior in order to finally accept a system in which economics is substituted for politics. De Gaulle? Into the ashcan of history with him, if we want France at long last to make the turn toward post-modern society.[8]

It is, in fact, politics that is at stake. In the end, the figure of the savior is nothing other than an exacerbated representation of the exercise of power as will's effective action on the course of things. The nation and sovereignty accompany the savior: the nation, without which no effective action is possible; sovereignty, without which the providential man resembles our lamentable "candidats à la providentielle." The savior is precisely the person "who can do the most and the best," and who, despite appearances and constraints, changes the face of history, restores what was thought to have been lost, or brings about what was thought impossible. From the monarchy to the Republic, this belief was considered one of the guiding principles of the history of France. Thus, Jacques Bainville said that France was, more than a people, and even more than a language, a nation,[9] both a heritage and a creation ever renewed and supported by a constant effort of the will.

Nothing is more certain than that we have left behind the age of "heroes" as metaphors for political action, and I cannot resist quoting here François Furet's very precise description of the drab period through which we are passing: "Here we are, imprisoned within the sole horizon of History, driven toward the standardization of the world and the alienation of individuals from the economy, doomed to slow its effects without controlling their causes."[10] However, the "end of history" hypothesis has fizzled out. A quarter of a century after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we are witnessing the return of politics almost everywhere in the world, in the form of a demand for the return of the protective state which, within its borders as well as outside them, is expected to perform once again its kingly functions. France and more generally Europe are still spared these developments. They will not be spared them much longer. The legend of grandeur and heroism still has a bright future. And, to reassure the followers of the religion of decline, I advise them to meditate on this letter Joseph de Maistre sent on December 1, 1814, to Louis de Bonald, who was always quick to believe that the apocalypse was imminent:

> All history attests to the fact that like individuals, nations die. The Greeks and Romans no longer exist, any more than Socrates and Scipio do. . . . Up to now, nations have been killed by conquest, that is, by being penetrated; but here a great question arises.—Can a nation die on its own soil, without either transplantation or penetration,

> solely by putrefaction, by allowing corruption to reach its central core, and even the original and constitutive principles that make it what it is? That is a great and redoubtable problem. If you have gotten to that point, there are no longer any French people, even in France; Rome is no longer in Rome, and all is lost. But I cannot bring myself to make that supposition. I see very clearly what shocks and distresses you; but I call to my aid one of my favorite maxims, which is of great use in practice: *The eye does not see what touches it.* Who knows whether this is your case, and if the deplorable state that makes you weep is something other than the inevitable slight difference that must separate the current state from the one we are expecting? We shall see; or rather we shall not see, because I am sixty years old, and so are you, and if the remedy is chronic, like the illness, we could very well not see the outcome. In any case, as we die we shall say: *Spem bonam certamque domum reporto* [I return, my heart full of hope (Horace)]. I shall never give up that hope.[11]

Although our pantheon is well stocked, three figures dominate it, head and shoulders above the rest: Louis XIV, Napoleon, and de Gaulle.

The comparison of these three figures is not self-evident. The exercise of the parallel is governed by its own rules. Only Lautréamont could find a meaning—the modern definition of the Beautiful—in "the fortuitous encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on a dissecting table." A comparison of King Dagobert and Gandhi would yield nothing. In Plutarch's *Parallel Lives,* Greeks and Romans are not paired up at random, even if sometimes the comparison is somewhat forced: that is because Plutarch did not always find, in Rome's first centuries, figures who measured up to their Greek counterparts. Camillus suffers from being placed alongside Themistocles, and Publicola alongside Solon. Plutarch did not seek simply to contrast the lives of Caesar and Alexander, but rather to answer "the question as to whether the figure of the Great Warrior or the Great Conqueror was better embodied by Caesar or by Alexander."[12] What are the *Parallel Lives*? A contest in which a conqueror faces off against a conqueror, a legislator against a legislator, an orator against an orator, a demagogue against a demagogue, a tyrant against a tyrant. Not being contemporary with one another, they represent a moral particularity, a role, a type of person or a dominant characteristic.

It's hard to say who would win a contest like this between the two monsters—Stalin and Hitler—about whom Alan Bullock wrote comparative biographies. They are separated by ten years—Stalin was born in 1879, Hitler in 1889; they were later called upon to be allies and then to fight in the name of two ideologies, communism and Nazism, that served as a basis for their monstrous power; their two destinies even merged because "one [Stalin] was able to create the empire the other dreamed about."[13] Only death was to separate them. From Stalin to Hitler, it was the same century, the same Europe devastated by war and revolution, the same criminal, totalitarian politics, pursued in one case in the name of class, in the other in the name of race. The comparison between the two tyrants is inevitable, even if it is not always discerning.

But Louis XIV and Napoleon, Napoleon and Charles de Gaulle? Where are the circumstances justifying a parallel? Everything seems different, as different as a sewing machine and an umbrella. More than a century separates de Gaulle from Napoleon; the former entered history at the age when the latter left it; de Gaulle was certainly a great head of state but never a great military leader; he did not seek to dominate the world and even avoided the absurdity of being anointed.

What relates our three principal national heroes, and particularly the two closest to us, is not biographical coincidence or the parallel course of their histories, but rather the fact that they embodied the grandeur of a nation. Domestically: the end of divisions, the refoundation of the state, harmony recovered (and imposed), union replacing discord, rare moments in a history that often takes the form of a more or less masked civil war. Louis XIV put an end to the Fronde through absolutism and Napoleon put an end to the French Revolution by the consular "dictatorship," whereas in 1944 de Gaulle put France in the camp of the victor, and in 1958 he gave it, for the first time since 1789, strong and stable institutions. Abroad: Louis XIV, Napoleon, and de Gaulle made France respected far and wide and combined glory with the aspiration to universality.

It might be objected that Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and persecuted the Jansenists, but he remains above all the builder of Versailles and the symbol of a French culture that was at that time synonymous with civilization; to be sure, when he fell, Napoleon left France smaller than he had found it, but France had perhaps never exercised such ascendancy or domination over the rest of Europe and beyond; de Gaulle certainly showed a pointless and unpardonable cruelty in the Algerian affair, but on two occasions he restored the country's dignity at the same time that he led it out of a dead end.

So the "minuses" on the balance sheet matter little; under the direction of these men, France became greater. That is why they deserve to be distinguished and admired. Moreover, de Gaulle himself put it very aptly before he himself became one of these heroes in our national pantheon: "Followed during their lifetimes by virtue of the suggestions made by grandeur, rather than by self-interest, their fame was later measured less by the usefulness of their work than by its scope. Whereas reason sometimes blames them, sentiment glorifies them. In the contest among great men, Napoleon always ranks before Parmentier."[14]

Grandeur was not their only claim to fame. Napoleon and de Gaulle—let us leave Louis XIV aside here[15]—both incarnated the providential man who, by force of will, extricated a whole country from the rut in which it was mired. Both represented a solution, a way out, at a time when no one could still imagine one; both disarmed irreconcilable parties, and, since they could not be reconciled, forced them to coexist; both built lasting structures on the ruins left by an uninterrupted series of political failures, transmitting a considerable heritage to their successors: an administration and a body of civil law in Napoleon's case, political institutions in the General's case.

Both of them, as I have said, restored the country's self-confidence and its respect abroad (admiration being mixed with fear in Napoleon's case).

Both of them also represented a government combining authority and effectiveness, a clear will put in the service of the common good. An old French aspiration, already powerful in the age of the Enlightenment, when the philosophes dreamed of combining a strong monarchy and an enlightened politics. Their dreams had been dashed; neither Louis XV nor Louis XVI had the will, the strength, or the ability to take on this role. Mirabeau and Condorcet, not finding a monarch capable of satisfying their hopes, had turned toward democracy. Bonaparte under the Consulate, and de Gaulle during the first years of the Fifth Republic, gave form to this very old aspiration to a government that would transcend partisan divisions and dedicate itself to the general good.

This book is therefore not an essay in comparative biography that seeks to draw a parallel between the formative years, the time in the army, the experience of power, and the bitterness of the last years that one of them spent in captivity and the other in "interior" exile, so to speak. That exercise would be not only rebarbative but also not very instructive. I have preferred to develop a line of thought centered on several themes that they share: the art of the return, the relation to history and to France, the exercise of power, war, the centrality of writing, and death, as so many ways of trying to understand why great men occupy in our history a place that has no equivalent elsewhere. Through them, my subject is France itself.

Chapter One

Two Comebacks

IF GREAT BOOKS are often more cited than read, they remain in our memories for their style, the pertinence of a commentary, or the profundity of a passage. This is the case for Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and its famous introduction:

> Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Caussidière for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the Montagne of 1848 to 1851 for the Montagne of 1793 to 1795, the nephew for the uncle.[1]

Was Bonaparte's 18 Brumaire a tragedy? Was the future Napoleon III's 2 December a farce? Marx is mistaken: in this case the farce preceded the tragedy. The operation so easily executed by the general upon his return from Egypt, which one hesitates to call a coup d'état, was followed by the far bloodier affair perpetrated by his nephew half a century later. The second time, more than three hundred died on the streets of Paris, 30,000 opponents were arrested throughout the country, and several hundred of them were deported, some to Cayenne, others to Algeria. The "crime" Victor Hugo denounced probably enjoyed wide support in rural France, which saw in Louis-Napoleon a bulwark against revolution, but twenty years later the inglorious end of the Second Empire seemed to those who had never pardoned the coup d'état of

2 December 1851 to be the foreseeable epilogue of a story which, having begun with a crime, concluded in shame.

Nothing of the kind occurred in 1799. It is true that the scenes that took place in Saint-Cloud, with the representatives driven out of the chateau's Orangerie where they had feigned resistance to the "usurper," and then fleeing across the grounds, finally going to eat dinner while laughing at the comedy they had just played out, were rather mediocre. A small end to the great event that had been the French Revolution. But this epilogue also marked a beginning. What followed, the glorious years from the Consulate to the imperial epic, erased the beginning's petty aspect, to the point of adding to the revolutionary legend a chapter that was not unworthy, far from it, of those that had already been written by the Constituent Assembly in 1789 and the National Convention in 1793. It was the violence of the coup d'état on 2 December 1851 that retrospectively darkened the memory of 18 Brumaire and repainted the comedy in tragic colors.

Marx's observation, which is inapplicable to this precise example, is nonetheless often applicable in politics. History seldom repeats itself. As people commonly say, it doesn't offer second helpings, especially to those who have already eaten. Resurrections are rare, and victorious returns are even rarer.

It will be said that the history of parliamentary democracy demonstrates the contrary. The career of Raymond Poincaré testifies to this: President of the Council of Ministers, President of the Republic, then senator, and then repeatedly named head of the government. . . . The parliamentary system did not favor people like Poincaré alone; it was equally favorable to those old warhorses who, independently of any evaluation of their record, of any accountability for failures as well as for successes, seem immobile, pass from one office to another, experiencing, of course, a few eclipses in the course of their careers, but only a few, and never lasting. It suffices to be patient, to master the art of discretion, to cultivate protectors, allies, and clients, and to wait for the right moment to re-enter the game. Nothing is ever lost, nothing is ever definitive. If politicians are not resuscitated, that is because they are never really dead.

It might be thought that the disaster of 1940 put an end to the career of Édouard Daladier, though he was not the only or even the principal one responsible for it. It is true that after the Liberation, he did not return to the limelight, but the career of the "bull of the Vaucluse"—of whom Neville Chamberlain said that he had "a snail's horns"—was not for all that over.[2] He sat in the Constituent Assembly in June 1946 and in the same year won a seat as a parliamentary representative that he retained until the fall of the Fourth Republic. Falsely good-humored, a sincere patriot, Daladier was certainly better than the prudent, dull politics to which he limited himself. But had he broken with it, he would soon have been brought to heel by the successive majorities that supported him: always composite, unstable, and ephemeral. He was their hostage as well as their representative. His successor as head of government in 1940, Paul Reynaud, assuredly possessed qualities that Daladier lacked. But he was no more successful. People often attack Reynaud's character, emphasizing how much this man, about whom Raymond Aron was to say that he had been "the most intelligent of our politicians during the inter-war period," seeing the conflict that was coming and the sacrifices that he was going to have to accept, proved, once he was in the breach, to be indecisive and weak, making compromises with the pacifism that he denounced in lengthy speeches and finally refusing the major role that his undersecretary for war, Charles de Gaulle, still hoped to see him play. Although Reynaud had been able to discern the man of the future in his protégé, he was utterly incapable of becoming de Gaulle himself. "The most intelligent of our politicians" failed in 1940, along with so many others who were his inferiors. But when the Fourth Republic succeeded the Third, Raynaud was still there, still a representative and even a minister. His opposition to the constitutional reform of 1962 regarding the election of the president of the Republic by universal suffrage finally did him in. De Gaulle turned his back on his former mentor. When Paul Reynaud died in 1965, the General did not allow him a national funeral. It is true that he had little claim to one.

Many other examples might be cited here from the history of the Third and the Fourth Republics after the 1930s alone, from Camille Chautemps to Guy Mollet. The electoral machinery, the parliamentary system reduced to a "profession," the fragility and limited longevity of governments, the insignificance of the office of president, the people reduced to the role of a "captive sovereign,"[3] everything conspired to perpetuate the reign of these colorless politicians who were omnipresent and, so to speak, immoveable, who were indistinguishable from one another, and none of whom left a distinctive mark on political affairs. Governments came and went at a frenetic pace, but the ministers changed hardly at all. Aristide Briand succeeded, in the space of a single generation, in being a minister twenty-five times and president of the Council eleven times. This regime without a head, in which the parliament, and not the president, represented the country, was also a regime without heads.

Whom do we remember from this short parliamentary century that ran from 1889 to 1960, in which there was, nonetheless, no lack of capable and talented people? A comparison with the current period would be cruel to the latter—and yet! The names of hardly a dozen leaders have escaped oblivion: Gambetta, who, in 1870, took up where Danton left off; Jules Ferry, for education more than for colonization; Clemenceau, forever associated with the First World War, Aristide Briand—a little—for the pacifist utopia. To these we may add Léon Blum, associated with the episode of the Popular Front; a few communist leaders, chiefly Maurice Thorez, who exercised influence outside the parliamentary system; Jacques Doriot and Pierre Laval, whose ultimate destiny we know; and finally, Antoine Pinay and Pierre Mendès France.

Pierre Mendès France was a singular figure, a defender of the parliamentary republic so intransigent that he ferociously resisted de Gaulle in both 1958 and 1962, but he nonetheless remains—along with Pinay—the only politician of his time who became a distinct personage, to the point of appearing in retrospect as the first expression of the political personalization and incarnation that had been rejected by republican tradition ever since the Revolution and the two Napoleons. However, with the Fourth Republic he was able to assert himself, overturning both the physiognomy of institutions and the order of political representations. He had not sought this role as a precursor; on the contrary, he preferred to give up power rather than conduct a policy that conflicted with his beliefs or that he lacked the means to carry out successfully.[4] He had more often resigned than he had held important offices. Fortune smiled on him in 1954. The eight months during which he governed France shaped his image—so rare on the left—as a providential man, and they still nourish that image today. But after his government fell, he never gained power again. Even if Mendès only rather vaguely adumbrated the identification of the office with its holder that was to emerge after 1958, he had briefly given a face to power. That is why he could not later return, falling victim to a logic that was to be that of the Fifth Republic. From that time on he played a role that was always marginal in the vast repertory of French politics: the role of a Cassandra,[5] or more precisely, of a moral conscience called upon to act as a living but powerless reproach directed against his contemporaries' turpitudes and compromises.

It is astonishing to note how much the semi-presidential system of the Fifth Republic took on the characteristics of two men who were, to say the least, ill-suited to make use of it: first those of the lackluster Pinay, and then those of Mendès, whose reputation far exceeded his merits and who ended up rather miserably playing a walk-on part in the demonstration at the Charléty stadium on 27 May 1968, as a witness who remained silent, to be sure, but who was prepared to be part of a national unity government along with the same communists whose votes he had earlier rejected.[6]

It remains that Pierre Mendès France, and he alone at that point, was invested for a time with the *pouvoir d'incarner* (power of embodiment) that the Fifth Republic was about to place at the heart of our institutions by making the president elected by universal suffrage the sole true representative of the nation's sovereignty and the guarantee of its unity, in conformity with the Gaullist conception of the state.

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The advent of the Fifth Republic shattered the conditions of a political comeback. The extent of the powers that its constitution conferred on the head of state has its flipside: the identification of the office with the individual who exercises it is so close, so intimate, that the play can be performed only once. Or rather, it cannot be interrupted and resumed later on. There can be no let-up at the summit of the state, because if there were, one would have to descend in order to hope to ascend again. How could a former head of state rejoin the herd of ordinary politicians, reconnect with the squabbles and pitfalls of partisan activity, debase his image or his status, cease to be the nation's moral conscience, and become once again a mere *candidate*? To descend would necessarily be to demean oneself.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing never for a moment imagined that he could be defeated in the election of 1981.[7] Sure that he would have a second term, he had not thought about what he would do in the event that he failed. He began with solemn farewells to the French, thinking that in that way he was punishing them for having refused not only to follow him, but also to listen to him, and then, his defeat remaining in his view "a strange phenomenon," in fact an incomprehensible one, and encouraged by his youth—he was only fifty-five—he thought he could make a comeback. He refused to withdraw into the obscurity of the Constitutional Council and, after a few months in retirement, he returned to the battle, a general starting over as an ordinary soldier. One cannot imagine François Mitterrand doing such a thing; he had understood the very special character of the office of president under the Fifth Republic and was to make masterly use of it after having so long deprecated it. Upon taking office in 1974, Giscard had on the contrary tried to make it more ordinary, to divest it of the Gaullist finery and trappings. Drinking coffee with the refuse collectors in the area around the Elysée Palace or playing the accordion at an ordinary citizen's home, he succeeded, once the first moment of fellow-feeling passed, only in wounding the French people's pride by trying too hard, and clumsily, to resemble them. However, never having abandoned the chimera of an ordinary presidency, he thought he could follow the same path that had taken him to the Elysée in 1974. The ex-president of the Republic, who during his seven-year term had been on familiar terms with world leaders, set out to win election to the departmental council in Chamalières, his home base, where defeat would be unlikely. "M. Giscard d'Éstaing: First Auvergne, then France," was *Le Monde*'s headline on 7 March 1985. But that day was never to come. Giscard's moment had passed, and in early 1987, he announced, by a laconic "I have already served," that he would not be a presidential candidate the following year. The time had come for him finally to move past his term as president, which he had thought unjustly interrupted in 1981. He joined the Constitutional Council wholeheartedly, and moving away from the French political scene and its ups and downs, he assumed a more elevated position, donning the garments of the sage, of the oracle, of the defender of the liberal Europe that had always been dear to his heart, and also taking pleasure in ridding himself of the armor of an alumnus of the prestigious

École Nationale d'Adminstration by now and then publishing a few novels in the style of Barbara Cartland. But all that is not what matters: he had avoided, by the skin of his teeth, the irremediable humiliation that would have resulted from a second defeat, which was probable, in 1988. Nicolas Sarkozy did not escape that humiliation—being eliminated in the first round of the right-wing primaries—because he, too, had believed he could win back his lost power.

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If we acknowledge that the Fifth Republic continued and renewed a tradition of the incarnation of power it inherited from the Old Regime and that, though rejected by the republic, this tradition nonetheless set its stamp on history from the first to the second Napoleon, and from them to certain leading lights of the republican regime, French political history since the end of the monarchy offers only two examples of successful comebacks. Napoleon regained power in 1815 after having abdicated it in 1814, and Charles de Gaulle regained it in 1958 after having resigned it in 1946. In reality, the case of 1958 is unique, because in 1815 the Emperor did not recover all the authority he had lost the preceding year, and he had to give it up after a hundred days that went down in legend, to be sure, but which weighed heavily on France's later destiny. The history of other nations does not abound in examples of this kind, either. Everyone knows the incredible reversal of fortune that allowed Richard Nixon, beaten by such a slim margin in 1960, to win the White House in 1968.[8] But his case is not comparable to those I am discussing here, because the Nixon who won in 1968 had lost in 1960. His story resembles more that of François Mitterrand, who, having been defeated in 1965 and then again in 1974, finally took his revenge in 1981, or to that of Jacques Chirac, whose tenacity ultimately paid off in 1995. What other examples can be cited? That of Juan Perón, to be sure; driven into exile by a coup d'état in 1955, he was re-elected president of the Argentine Republic almost twenty years later, in 1973. Then there is, perhaps, that of Indira Gandhi, though in a very peculiar democratic system that one author rightly describes as "dynastic democracy." Having held power from 1967 to 1977, Indira Gandhi returned to office in 1980 and remained there until she was assassinated on 31 October 1984.[9] Should we add to the list the case of Daniel Ortega, the Nicaraguan dictator who, driven out of office in 1990, was re-elected to it in 2006, despite the crimes of which he stood accused? It has to be admitted that an example drawn from the history of a failed, mafia-like state hardly seems convincing.

The "resurrections" of Napoleon, de Gaulle, and Perón have nothing to do with political longevity alone or with domination based on deception or force. There is no instruction manual for making a successful comeback.[10] Moreover, all comebacks are not equal. Even if the means by which these men reconquered power were perfectly irreproachable from a legal point of view—we know that Raymond Aron always refused to approve the means by which General de Gaulle returned to power in 1958—at least we can say that they believed they had a right to power that absolved in advance anything illegal about their acts, and that they were "called," or in any case what they did was at first widely approved. In this combination of self-proclamation, election—even if little in conformity with the rules of a regular election—and consent, we can discern, of course, some of the characteristics of "charismatic" domination as defined by Max Weber.

These successful comebacks have also depended on a particular historical context: that of the nation-state, whose gradual fading over recent decades makes any comparison with possible contemporary examples hazardous. Both Bonaparte and de Gaulle won, exercised, lost or resigned and reconquered power in a framework that was still that of the sovereign state invented in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That framework no longer exists: national borders have more or less disappeared, the domain subject to the state's legislative action has shrunk considerably, while the adoption of a single European currency has deprived governments of their means of action and many of their former jurisdictions have been transferred to a supranational bureaucracy that is de facto beyond any control. Political action has not only lost its real effectiveness but has also been deprived of its prestige at the same time that it has been replaced by an "art" of pure illusion produced through the media and based on a rhetoric foreign to any desire to convince, to persuade, or to lead. This "art" is managerial and technocratic, and seeks to achieve an artificial effect by means of catchwords and makes use of recipes inspired by marketing implemented by "communications advisors." The growing mediocrity of the people holding public office, which is both the symptom and the consequence of its degradation, increases not only the often-lamented lack of legitimacy of elected officials but also the distance between ordinary citizens and those who are supposed to represent them, with the result that the latter are now incapable of establishing the relationships of identification or incarnation that some of their predecessors were able to achieve. The population's indifference to governments is the price to be paid for their insignificance. The good luck enjoyed by Silvio Berlusconi, who was reborn from his ashes so often between 1994 and 2011, bears witness to these changes more than it proves the persistence of the old dynamics of incarnation.[11]

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Napoleon and General de Gaulle were the protagonists of a very different story. One of them took power again after having lost it, while the other returned to power after having voluntarily given it up. In both cases, history repeated itself, but it was not that 1815 repeated 1799 or that 1958 repeated 1944; instead, in some ways 1944 recalls 1799, and 1958 recalls 1815.

Concerning the pages in Charles de Gaulle's *Mémoires de guerre* in which he refers to his return to France in August 1944, Henri Amouroux notes not only that are they "of an unforgettable perfection," and for that reason unsurpassable, but also that as he wrote them, their author knew that being "inimitable, they would always be plagiarized."[12] It is as if in fact these extraordinary times had had their main protagonist as their only witness. A reliable witness in this case, since contemporary images and films attest to the enthusiasm and fervor with which General de Gaulle was received between 20 August 1944, when the airplane that brought him to Paris from Gibraltar touched down near Saint-Lô, and 25 and 26 August, when he made his entrance into Paris, proceeding from the Hôtel de Ville to Notre-Dame by way of the Champs-Élysées. It was a striking revenge for the years of solitude in 1940, "a coronation without the Rheims cathedral, without the mantle studded with bees or *fleurs de lys,* without the sacramental formula or a secular mass."[13]

De Gaulle had hardly emerged from the airplane before the magic began:

> A great wave of enthusiasm and popular emotion gripped me when I entered Cherbourg and swept me as far as Rennes [. . .]. In the ruins of damaged and destroyed villages, the people crowded along the streets as I passed, breaking out in demonstrations. All that was left in the way of windows was festooned with flags and pennants. The bells that remained were ringing loudly. [. . .] The mayors gave martial speeches that ended with tears. I then made a few remarks expressing not pity, which no one would have wanted, but hope and pride, Finally, the crowd accompanied me in singing the Marseillaise.[14]

Similar scenes occurred in Rennes, Alençon, and Laval, in La Ferté-Bernard and Rambouillet, and finally in Paris, where the crowd around the Porte d'Orléans looked like "an exultant tide."[15] The same "deafening clamor" was heard at the Hôtel de Ville, where the vibrant speech addressed to the city of Paris—which de Gaulle claimed to have improvised—did not carry him away to the point that he allowed himself to be pushed into making an error by Georges Bidault, who asked him to proclaim the republic on the spot: hadn't it continued to live on in his person since 1940? Did he think the crowd was probably smaller but just as enthusiastic as the one that had, only four months earlier, welcomed Marshal Pétain when he came to pay homage to the victims of the bombardment of 20 April? The same masses, perhaps shaped by the same people, the same "La Marseillaise" and the same demonstrations of affection and fidelity, as firm as vows of everlasting love, and regarding which it has been claimed, in view of these changing loyalties, that they testified above all to the opportunism of a people who had moved in an instant from Pétain to de Gaulle and from collaboration to resistance.[16] An analysis as summary as those that seek to determine the number of demonstrators who participated in these events or to gauge their fervor; in one case as in the other, these acclamations were addressed to the person who there and then represented, in the literal sense of the word, the lost unity of a country that was still occupied, prey to a civil war and to the occupier's exactions, threatened with another invasion—a liberating one, but one that would necessarily be accompanied by uncertainties and sufferings, and not knowing what France's future would be, assuming that it had one. On 25 April, "La Marseillaise" had been sung in the streets of Paris for the first time since the beginning of the Occupation, the same "La Marseillaise" that on 26 August was to ring out on the Champs-Élysées when the liberator passed by. On the eve of de Gaulle's return to France, René Rémond rightly noted, "the movement by which a whole people transferred its allegiance from the Marshal to the General was almost complete:"[17] In his *War Memoirs,* de Gaulle wrote "Ah, it's the sea!":

> An immense crowd has gathered on both sides of the street. Perhaps two million people. The roofs are also covered with spectators. People in compact groups have piled up at all the windows, pell-mell with the flags. Clusters of people cling to ladders, poles, lampposts. As far as I can see, there is only a living tide, lit by the sun, under the French republican flag.[18]

The general savored this triumph without abandoning himself to it, and when Bidault—him again!—sped up to walk alongside him, de Gaulle rebuffed him: "A little further back, please!"[19] Wasn't it de Gaulle, he alone and not those who rallied to him at the eleventh hour, or even his companions in London and Africa, who, moved by "the instinct of the country," had responded in 1940 to "an appeal that came from the depth of History," and took it upon himself to preserve "French sovereignty," that "treasure in escheat"?[20] What did he really think on seeing the apparently united people that gave him ovations that day? He had no illusions concerning the duration of that fine unanimity. The divisions that had disappeared for a moment would reappear, sooner than people thought. And the applause that rose up toward "the first among us"?[21] What did that mean? The majestic scene described in the General's *War Memoirs* had as its counterpart the revelations he made at the very moment that he wrote these pages. The tone is bitter. No doubt the defeats suffered since August 1944 explain it. De Gaulle had slammed the provisional government's door without any of those who had cheered him having shown the slightest regret, and the experiment of the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF, Rally of the French People, a party founded by de Gaulle in 1947) was already running out of steam. The triumphal march down the Champs-Élysées already lay far behind. Besides, hadn't the fervor declined as soon as the parade was over?

"There were many cries of enthusiasm [on that day]," he confided to his aide-de-camp. "But, I ask you, from all those cries, how many committed volunteers do you think we were able to draw for the Second Armored Division? Well, I'm going to tell you: hardly three thousand. You heard me right: three thousand! [. . .] That was the French people in 1944."[22]

He attached such importance to this episode that he referred to it again several months later, when he admitted to Georges Pompidou that he had constantly lied to establish the idea that the French had re-entered the war with an enthusiasm and courage that justified France being considered a full-fledged victor. The First Army? "Blacks!" The Resistance? A myth, and in any case a phenomenon that had no influence on the course of events! And he returned to Leclerc and the Second Armored Division! "I saved face," he concluded, "but France didn't follow. [. . .] Let them die! I'm revealing the depths of my soul to you: all is lost. France is finished. I will have written the final page."[23] Terrible words. Was he already thinking that as he strode down the Champs-Élysées? It is impossible to know with certainty, but it is clear that he was thinking less about the inconstant crowd than about History, from which he drew his legitimacy. It is History, rather than the people climbing on lampposts, that he summons up when he recalls those feverish hours:

> At every step I take on the most famous thoroughfare in the world, it seems to me that the glories of the past are associating with today's. Under the Arch of Triumph built to honor us, the flame burns briskly. This avenue, which the triumphant army followed twenty-five years ago, opens out radiantly before us. On his pedestal, Clemenceau, whom I salute as I pass, looks like he is about to rush forth and join us. The chestnut trees along the Champs-Élysées, about which the captive Eaglet dreamed, [. . .] offer themselves as joyous viewing platforms for thousands of spectators. The Tuileries, which frame the majesty of the state under two emperors and under two royalties, the Place de la Concorde and the Place du Carrousel, which witnessed the outbursts of revolutionary enthusiasm and the reviews of

> victorious regiments; the streets and bridges bearing the names of battles won; on the other bank of the Seine, Les Invalides, its dome still sparkling with the splendor of the Sun King, the tomb of Turenne, Napoleon, and Foch; the Institute, which so many illustrious minds honored, are the benevolent witnesses of the human river that flows around them. And here, in turn: the Louvre, where the continuity of kings succeeded in constructing France; on their bases, the statues of Joan of Arc and Henry IV; the palace of Saint Louis, whose feast day was just yesterday; Notre-Dame, the prayer of Paris, and the Ile de la Cité, its cradle, take part in the event. History, collected in these stones and squares, seems to smile on us.[24]

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NAPOLEON WAS NOT as lyrical when he described his return from Egypt and the events of 18 Brumaire. When late in life he recalled that moment, he did so in the lapidary manner of the ancient authors he loved:

> When a deplorable weakness and an endless inconstancy are manifested in governmental councils; when, yielding by turns to the influence of opposing parties, and living from day to day without a settled plan, without a resolute movement forward, even the most moderate citizens have to concede that the state is no longer governed; when, finally, the administration adds to its internal nullity the most serious flaw it can have in the people's eyes, I refer to contempt for it abroad, while a vague uneasiness spreads through society, the need to preserve itself worries it, and turning its gaze toward itself, it seems to be searching for a man who can save it. A populous nation always contains this guardian angel in its breast; but sometimes he takes a long time to appear. In fact, it does not suffice that he exists, he must be known; he must know himself. [. . .] Let this impatiently awaited savior suddenly give a sign that he exists, the national instinct will divine it and call upon him, obstacles will melt before him, and a whole great people, hastening to see him pass, seems to say: "There he is!"[25]

"There he is!" In late 1789, no one was still waiting for him. The war with Austria and Russia had resumed, and the country was threatened by an invasion, as it had been in 1793. Bonaparte was said to be the prisoner of the Turks, or wounded, or dead; the most optimistic observers said he was fighting to clear a path through Turkey to reach the Balkans. But when on 9 October, the fleet that was bringing him back appeared in the bay of Saint-Raphaël, and it became known that he was on board these coconut shells, there was in fact a sole cry: "There he is!" He was no longer awaited, he was there, crowned with all the glory that people imagined he had won in the East, because they did not yet know the details of his exploits there, and drew on the memory of what he had already achieved: the conquest of Italy in less than a year and the glorious peace treaty imposed on Austria, a treaty that the Directory had subsequently proved incapable of maintaining.

Bonaparte's secretary Bourrienne tells us that when he disembarked he was literally "lifted up and carried to the shore."[26] "France's savior has arrived in our harbor,"[27] cried the port commander, and there was no need for long debates to exempt him from the quarantine travelers from the Levant were forced to endure. How could the returning hero be taken away to the lazaretto amid a crowd shouting: "We'd rather have the plague than the Austrians"?[28] There were speeches, a lunch at which the guests told him that he would be made king after he conquered Austria. Two hours later, fearing that he would arrive too late in Paris, he was on the road for a journey that certainly constituted one of the finest periods of his life. No historian has questioned the enthusiasm that accompanied Bonaparte as far as Lyon. He was probably preceded by a courier who announced his arrival all along the way, but the people responded to the call; there was no need to force it to gather along the road. In the Rhône valley, villagers who had come down from the mountains formed a double row of spectators so dense "that the carriages found it hard to move forward,"[29] and at night, for fear that the highwaymen who infested the region might attack the convoy, men carrying torches took turns escorting it. Fires burned on the mountains, and towns were decked with the French tricolor; the municipal authorities came to meet the general and garrisons presented arms.

By way of Aix-en-Provence and Avignon "mad with delight,"[30] Bonaparte reached Valence and finally Lyon, where he arrived on 13 October. The city was festive, its buildings festooned with flags and people's hats with tricolor ribbons: "All the houses were illuminated and decked out with flags," General Marbot was to recall, "people fired rifles, the crowd filled the streets to the point of preventing our carriage from moving; people were dancing on the public squares, and the air was full of cries: "Long live Bonaparte, who has just saved the country!"[31] A play in honor of the general, *Le héros de retour, ou Bonaparte à Lyon,* had been improvised. The crowd led him to the theater, and then back to his hotel, where, refusing to disperse, it forced him to appear several times at his balcony. The next day, he set out for Chalon. The triumphal march would have continued in this way as far as Paris if, wishing not to provoke members of the government who were, to say the least, uneasy to see him return, he had not decided to escape the applause by taking a detour and traveling as discreetly as possible. But in Paris, where Bonaparte's return had been learned the day that he entered Lyon, there were demonstrations of enthusiasm just like those in the Rhône valley, and the same happened in many other cities. Parades, torches, triumphal arches, fireworks. . . . We cannot conclude from this that the Emperor was, in the course of these days preceding the coup d'état, the "hero" of all the French. But what matters is that we cannot connect these demonstrations with the ordinary social cleavages or politics. The peasants of the Rhône valley acclaimed the conqueror of Egypt just as did the citizens of Lyon and the bourgeois audiences in Paris theaters, and the Jacobins were manifestly as satisfied with his return as the royalists were, though for opposite reasons. It is true that not *all* the Jacobins or *all* the royalists shouted "Long live Bonaparte!"—but it is because *some* Jacobins and *some* royalists, along with people from all social strata, joined together to applaud him that we can say that on his return from Egypt, France treated him as a hero the way it did Charles de Gaulle in 1944.

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FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, the play had gone stale. Not that the return from Elba was less astonishing or less spectacular than the return from Egypt. On the contrary. People were not expecting Bonaparte to arrive in 1799, but only because they thought that he was too far away to be able to return in time, or even that he had disappeared forever into the Syrian desert. They were not expecting him in 1815, either, because they thought that their epic adventure was over and that the Emperor finished. In 1799, all he had to do was to make an appearance; his domination over all potential competitors was taken for granted. Hardly had he reached Paris before the various parties and the government itself came to put their influence and their powers in his hands, so to speak, as if it was understood that the future belonged to him. Under these conditions, we can see that 18 Brumaire was in reality hardly a coup d'état; instead, it was a transfer of power to which the opposition of a minority of parliamentary representatives added a little suspense.

Nothing of the sort in 1815, when Napoleon had to carry out the coup d'état that had not been necessary in 1799.

We will never know exactly when he made the decision to leave the island of Elba.[32] Had he ever intended to stay there and limit himself to this "vegetable patch," as Chateaubriand called it, that the Allies had granted him in 1814?[33] When on a clear day he could see from his island the Italian coast on the one hand, and the mountains of Corsica on the other, could he have failed to be tempted to set out to reconquer France, if not his former empire? How could he have been satisfied with a territory so small that it could never satisfy his need for action? Traveling one day through his little kingdom, he could not help murmuring: "My island is very small . . ."[34] Could he imagine ending his career as the petty monarch of a miniature Corsica? The notion is not only ridiculous but insulting. His army consisted of 700 men, his fleet of five ships and 129 sailors.[35] Nevertheless, he claimed to be tired of power and glory, and said, wearily, "From now on I want to live like a justice of the peace. . . . The Emperor is dead, I am no longer anything. . . . I think of nothing outside my little island. I no longer exist for the world. All that interests me now is my family, my little house, my cows, and my mules."[36] He surely did not believe a word of that. On the other hand, Napoleon was not a hothead like Murat, who, a few months later, was blindly to set out to reconquer his kingdom of Naples and died in the attempt. Definitive resolutions were not part of Napoleon's mental repertoire. He adapted to everything, but only until an opportunity to do better presented itself. For him, what mattered was to play his role to the very end, and for that reason he was not very punctilious, his choices depending on the cards he had in his hand. To be sure, he preferred that they provide him with ways to shine, but if he had a mediocre hand he made the best of it until he was dealt a better one. This pragmatism tinged with fatalism was a character trait that allowed him to confront adversity with what was ultimately a sufficient degree of philosophical resignation.

Chateaubriand penned a profound page on this subject, in which he explained the reasons why Napoleon consented, when he departed for Elba in 1814, to humiliate himself in order to escape the people in the Rhône valley who insulted him and tried to lynch him. He did not emulate Pompey, who, when he was about to die, drew his toga over his face.[37] Instead, Napoleon took refuge in the backyard of an inn and donned an Austrian uniform so that he could go unnoticed. He was different from Marius, Caesar, or Hannibal, who knew only how to rise; he was also capable of rising, even higher than all of them put together, but he was also willing to descend much further than they would have. That was his bourgeois, modern side: "He could reduce his incommensurable stature and enclose it within a limited space; his malleability gave him the means of salvation and rebirth: with him, nothing was over when it seemed to be over. [. . .] Napoleon was fond of life for what it brought him; he had an instinct for what remained for him to paint, and he didn't want to run short of canvas before he had finished his pictures."[38] On the island of Elba, he was playing a comic opera king, seriously, not knowing how long the show would last, while at the same time trying to build up a network of informers who could tell him what was going on in Italy, France, and Vienna, where the victors of 1814 were still meeting to decide the outlines of the new Europe. There was activity behind the scenes. Napoleon was too intelligent not to understand that his presence so close to the French and Italian coasts constituted both an opportunity and a risk: an opportunity because it weakened the restored monarchy and made him appear to be a possible recourse; and a risk because he was so close to this Europe that was trying to free itself from his grip that its leaders might be tempted to send him farther away, to a place from which he could not return, finally leaving them in peace. It was Czar Alexander who, in a spirit of chivalry, had insisted on giving the fallen emperor the island of Elba. In London, perhaps in Vienna, and certainly in Paris, people were thinking about sending him farther away. He feared being assassinated or kidnapped. If his wife—who had given up hope of seeing him again, and no longer even answered his letters—and his son were being prevented from joining him in Portoferraio, might that not be because they were preparing to abduct him? In addition, the pension provided for in the treaty of Fontainebleau that he had signed with the Allies was not being paid. Fears for his life or his freedom, family matters, money problems—there was no lack of reasons for him to cross the Rubicon and attempt the impossible. Besides, he didn't believe that Louis XVIII could succeed in restoring the monarchy. By cutting off the king's head, the revolutionaries had irremediably destroyed the mystery of royalty. The graft would not take. Although Louis XVI's brother had also been acclaimed when he returned to France in 1814, that was because the French saw him as a protective rampart at a time when the country was occupied by Cossacks and Prussians. And then they were so tired of war. . . . But even if the king had obtained the departure of the foreign armies, advantageous conditions for a peace treaty, and the reintegration of France into the concert of nations, the new regime had been unable, as the months went by, to prevent its supporters from wounding the pride of the new France that was the Revolution's heir. These uncompromising "white Jacobins," as Prosper de Barante called them, who wanted a complete counterrevolution that would bring back Old Regime France, produced multiple demands, expiatory processions, and vexations, whereas the severe measures required by the dire state of the public finances affected former soldiers. This cumulative damage done to personal interest or self-respect canceled out the benefit of the moderation Louis XVIII had shown since his return to his ancestors' throne. Without the grousing of the most extreme royalists, who found the constitutional monarch too indulgent with revolutionary France, the throne would certainly have been less unstable. However, the monarchy could not have prevented the last contingent of the Emperor's supporters from conspiring to cause their hero's return, even though the repeated disappointments from the autumn of 1814 on did not suffice to make the French wish the return of Napoleon. The cheers that had saluted the accession to the throne of "Louis le Désiré" were already part of the past, but for all that, the fallen emperor was not welcome. Seven or eight months was a very short time for the people to have forgotten the years of military conscription and the disaster that had followed the Russian campaign. And then peace reigned, and a freedom such as France had never before known. With the help of the economy's recovery, things were not so bad. But the Emperor himself saw his return as implicit in the failure of Louis XVI's successor that he had foreseen in 1814: "Six months of fervor on the part of the French, followed by six months of lukewarm support, and after that, repulsion and hatred, even among those who welcomed him most warmly."[39]

When on 1 March 1815 Napoleon landed at Golfe-Juan after having escaped his "prison" on Elba, he was not received as he had been in Saint-Raphaël in 1799. There was another reason for that: in 1799 he was returning from Egypt to carry out the Revolution. His projects coincided with the wishes of the majority of the French people. But what was his goal in returning from Elba? Was he doing it out of a "spirit of sacrifice"?[40] Or, more plausibly, to take back the power that he had been forced to abdicate the preceding year, under conditions that might make him think that his defeat was due solely to betrayal and to a momentarily unfavorable balance of power? France had needed him in 1799, but in 1815 that was no longer the case. Returning—for once, we can only agree with Chateaubriand here—was proof of a "ferocious egotism" and a "dreadful lack of gratitude and generosity toward France."[41] When he returned from Egypt, he presented himself to the French as being above all parties, promising to disarm and reconcile them so as to put an end to ten years of troubles; in 1815, he claimed to be the revolution's rampart against reaction, thus helping reopen the fracture that Louis XVIII was trying, sometimes clumsily, to heal. The twenty days of "the eagle's flight," from Golfe-Juan to the towers of Notre-Dame, saw the conquest—or rather the re-conquest—of a country by a lone man who was returning to give the "romance of his life" an end that was worthy of it.

This time, there was no "warm current of public opinion, no gulf-stream of enthusiasm"[42] to carry him to Paris. It was the army that accompanied him, rallying to him as he advanced, but less because of its enthusiasm than because it refused to open fire on its former leader. There was no question of taking the route followed in 1799, that of the Rhône valley. He had bad memories of his departure for Elba: he had been booed, insulted, and threatened, in the very area where he had been acclaimed fifteen years earlier. After Aix, where he did not linger, he took the road through the mountains, toward Digne, Gap, and Sisteron. The route was difficult, but safe. Nowhere, except for Sisteron,[43] were there demonstrations of enthusiasm. On the contrary, everywhere there was surprise and concern regarding the consequences of this unforeseen return. The army did not join en masse, but in the end it did not oppose the little group's passage. It was at the narrow pass at Laffrey, where, on 7 March, the regiment sent there to bar Napoleon's way shouldered its weapons, and then in Grenoble, where his partisans had mobilized and were waiting for him to begin a movement of support, that the crucial events took place. "As far as Grenoble," he was to say later, "I was an adventurer; in Grenoble, I was a prince."[44] In Lyon, three days later, he finally experienced the same triumph as in 1799. He had become the Emperor again, and now he marched on toward Paris like a sovereign retaking possession of his kingdom. "When Napoleon crossed the Neman river at the head of four hundred thousand infantrymen and a hundred thousand horse to blow up the Czars' palace in Moscow," Chateaubriand admitted, "he was less astonishing than when, violating the ban and flaunting his swordsmen in the kings' faces, he came alone, from Cannes to Paris, to sleep peacefully in the Tuileries."[45] The story of Marshal Ney, who had promised the king to bring him the ex-emperor in an iron cage, is well known: "I'm doing my duty with Bonaparte," he announced in a martial tone. "We're going to attack the wild beast." A letter was waiting for him along the way. It was from Napoleon: "My cousin, [. . .] I will receive you as I did the day after the battle of Moscow." That was enough to make Ney change sides. But he was neither a coward nor an opportunist. "I was caught up in it," he explained during his trial; "I lost my head." He was seen to be so enthusiastic that he embraced the fife and drum players. He added "But with my bare hands I couldn't stop the sea water from rushing in."[46]

What happened afterward was, however, very different. The charm had been broken.[47] Louis XVIII had fled a few hours before Napoleon's return to the capital, but one year of the Restoration had sufficed to cause the emperor to no longer recognize the France that a sudden action had delivered into his hands. He accused the Bourbons of having "spoiled the French" for him, peace of having made his officers go soft, and liberal ideas of having contaminated people's brains, but said that he was prepared to take into account the changes that had been made in the past year, even if they were suited neither to his opinions nor to his temperament.

"The taste for constitutions, debates, and speeches seems to have returned," he admitted to Benjamin Constant, who had come to offer him his services after having called him, a few days earlier, a usurper and a scourge. Napoleon conceded that he was not very fond of these "caprices" and childish views, but finally, if that was what the French wanted, then he would give it to them. Hadn't he himself grown up on the ideas of the century of the Enlightenment? Didn't he belong to the generation that had carried out the Revolution? Wasn't he the "man of the people" and the most reliable rampart against the re-establishment of the Old Regime? Since his ambition was now limited to disarming the coalition of France's enemies and to reigning in peace, he no longer had any reason to reject freedom. "I'm getting old," he told Constant. "At forty-five one is no longer what one was a thirty. The tranquil life of a constitutional king may suit me."[48]

We should not imagine Napoleon allowing himself to be carried along by events or to be a simple spectator of his ultimate enterprise. That was not in his temperament. He knew the task was difficult; he was not unaware that if he failed, there would no longer be any revenge. But the victor of Marengo and Austerlitz was a gambler, and he knew that Fortune is a capricious goddess. Having long favored him, hadn't she turned away from him at Moscow? Could one swear that she had abandoned him once and for all? The chances of success were slim, but he had often confounded even apparently well-founded prognoses, seized an opportunity, and turned the situation around so dramatically that his enemies were stunned. So long as he still had a card in his hand, everything remained possible. He hadn't come back from Elba to be defeated, or killed, or to vegetate in the costume of the gouty king he had just driven out, but rather to overturn the course of history and add to his romance the most extraordinary of its chapters. He still wanted to believe that a single victory would suffice to deal new cards and create an entirely new situation not only in Europe, but also in France, where Benjamin Constant and all the rest of his ilk claimed that they would make of him "a muzzled bear."[49] The comedy would last only a short time. Napoleon pretended to put up with it only long enough to let war, which he knew was inevitable, settle the question: if he was defeated by the Allies, he would lose his throne and Louis XVIII would return to Paris; if he won a victory and succeeded in breaking the European powers' united front, then not only the Treaty of Paris of 30 May 1814, but also the conditions that people had thought they could impose on him since his return would be overthrown. When he left to join the army on 12 June 1815, he was departing not only to fight the Europe of the Congress of Vienna but also to complete the re-conquest of power that he had merely begun by returning from the island of Elba. Once again, he was going to tempt heaven.

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It would be unfair to compare this episode with General de Gaulle's return to public life in 1958. To be sure, the latter did not have the magic of the return from Elba; but neither did it have the latter's immorality, and it did not end in a tragedy comparable to that of Waterloo, even if tragedy also had its part to play in this moment of French history. Waterloo changed the destiny of Europe; the independence of Algeria, which was the ultimate outcome of the French military coup d'état that took place in Algiers on 13 May 1958, did not have such vast repercussions, though it did bring French history back to metropolitan France, and, not insignificantly, aggravated internal divisions between the French. Finally, the political surrender in 1962, added to the armistice of 1940, accentuated the feeling of collective decline. Victory in 1918 had wiped away the defeat of 1870; but the loss of the colonial empire redoubled the effects of the debacle of 1940. Without Waterloo, a different twentieth century is imaginable, whereas Algeria was already lost and the era of European colonialism was almost over when the terminal crisis of the Fourth Republic occurred. On this level at least, history would not have been very different had General de Gaulle remained in retirement at Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises in May 1958.

Shortly before these events, very few people wished "the man of 18 June" to return. A poll testifies to this fact. It dates from January 1956: only 2 percent of the French declared that they were in favor of the General's return.[50]

De Gaulle was certainly not forgotten, even if he made statements only from time to time and if some of his admirers deserted him after the RPF adventure, as did François Mauriac who, complaining that de Gaulle had become the leader of a party, henceforth preferred not to speak of him.[51] Nonetheless, he cast a shadow over the regime: the incontestable mediocrity of political life in the postwar years made him look greater, what he had accomplished in the past making present men and events seem still more mediocre by comparison. The Fourth Republic suffered from this. Its legitimacy would certainly have been somewhat more solid without the burdensome presence of the hero of Free France. During every governmental crisis—and they occurred with increasing frequency—the General's name came up, but he was not seen as a recourse in circumstances that seemed to arise more from the wasting disease from which French institutions were suffering than from an acute and terminal crisis. People like Pinay and Mendès France proved to be better suited to this situation: they were satisfied with less spicy fare, whereas de Gaulle needed storms, the "abyss," as Mauriac put it, "the void that creates a disaster."[52] The circumstances that would bring him back to power could be no less dramatic than those of 1940. Even the prodigious success of de Gaulle's *Mémoires de guerre,* whose first volume was published in late 1954, showed that de Gaulle was entering History. In retirement in Colombey, he was becoming one of those heroes who for a thousand years had been the pride of their homeland.

There is no lack of testimonies and stories describing the years of "exile" at "La Boisserie," his estate, the solitary walks through the austere countryside of this part of Champagne—which, he was to say one day, hardly reminded one of *la douce France* of the poets[53]—the Corona cigar smoked after lunch, the visits to the nearby abbey of Clairvaux, where he went regularly to make confession, the hours devoted to writing in the corner office from which he liked to contemplate "the earth's horizon or the sky's immensity,"[54] the strolls through the grounds, which he had walked around some fifteen thousand times,[55] tea with his wife and their little squabbles—"You reason like a child, Yvonne!"[56]—the games of solitaire or the gentle hiss of cards being turned over mixing with the clicking of the knitting needles swiftly manipulated by his wife,[57] the cigarettes lit one after another, and that he missed very soon when he tried to stop smoking,[58] the moments spent each evening with his daughter Anne, who was soon to die,[59] the moments of joy when, having descended from his Olympus, he laughed heartily, a few journeys, to the Antilles and around the Pacific in 1956, in North Africa the following year, where he wrote these touching words to Yvonne: "My dear little wife, I am sad to be far away from you for the first time in many years";[60] and finally the visitors, who were not as few as has been said, but not very numerous, either: first of all the family, then a few close friends who were rapidly transformed into listeners with whom he could allow himself to rail against the government, mock ferociously his companions at the time of the RPF, indulge in morose predictions regarding the future of France and the world, or call people "filthy animals" when, like Cyrano, he was in a foul mood.[61] Every time there was an election he said it would be the last, and the regime would soon collapse; he predicted the imminent beginning of the Third World War and a new occupation, this time by the Soviets, which would force him to do once again what he did in 1940. . . . Around him, the last of his faithful companions, from Olivier Guichard and Michel Debré to Edmond Michelet and André Malraux, took care not to contradict him, and some of them even egged him on by whispering in his ear that the time might have come to give the course of history a little nudge.[62] These generals without troops talked about a coup d'état and a dictatorship for national salvation. The General listened to them distractedly. He was certainly not going to compromise himself by issuing a "pronunciamento," to use the term that he was to popularize later on. When one has begun one's career as Joan of Arc, one cannot end it like Franco. So long as he was not "called back," he would do nothing.[63] Besides, he constantly repeated, it was very likely that everything would be done to avoid calling him back. There was bitterness in his words, and resentment as well, against the "politishuns,"[64] and even against his faithful companions, some of whom, tired of waiting, were yielding to the temptation to accept a ministerial portfolio; and finally against the French people who had not followed him in such great numbers as he had hoped they would. If the latter feared something, it was no doubt that his return would force them to emerge from their torpor: "They're fools. Nothing can be done with a supine people. The French are supine and, you see, the more supine they are, the happier they will be."[65]

He was the prisoner of his public image, of the duties, but also of the servitudes, that it imposed on him. It's not easy to retain one's freedom of action when one inhabits one's own statue.[66] The savior could not regain power under just any conditions. He required propitious circumstances that would allow him to return to the stage without demeaning himself. So he waited, taking the risk, of course, that such circumstances would not occur, or would occur too late. In that case the island of Elba would become Saint Helena, and his retreat would become an exile.[67] At times he despaired—"It's over" ("C'est foutu") was one of his favorite expressions—at others he still tried to believe, triumphal and melancholic by turns. Hadn't he always been like that? Speaking to journalists in 1953, he said:

> During the war, when we were being most severely tested, I sometimes allowed myself to think: *Perhaps my mission consists in going down in our History as the last effort to reach the summits. Perhaps I shall have written the last pages of the book of our grandeur.* But soon, feeling faith and hope being reborn in my soul, I said to myself, on the contrary: *Perhaps the path that I am showing the nation leads to a future where the state will be just and strong, where people will be free, where France will be France, that is, great and fraternal!* That is what I still think today.[68]

The period of time during which the General was head of state, after the Liberation, had been brief, lasting hardly longer than one of the ministries he scorned so much. The old parties, flanked by a Communist party that had grown up in the underground fighting of the Resistance, soon raised their heads and resumed their bad prewar habits.

Encountering difficulties regarding the defense budget, which the National Assembly deemed too high, and refusing to be overthrown like an ordinary Third Republic premier, de Gaulle preferred to take the initiative: on 21 January 1946, a laconic communiqué announced that he was resigning. More than the man who returned, like Napoleon—who, as Thierry Lentz judiciously remarked, returned again and again, from Egypt, Spain, Russia, and Elba—de Gaulle was, in 1940, 1953, 1968, and 1969, the man who departed.[69]

The news struck like a thunderbolt. The General had reflected at length before making his decision. So soon giving up what he had spent so long conquering was, to be sure, a dangerous gambit. "He has put his calling card in the hands of destiny,"[70] as the apt headline in the newspaper

Combat put it. Nonetheless, he was convinced that he was taking fewer risks than in 1940. When he flew off to London, he was staking his all, with no assurance that he would be heard, or a fortiori followed. He was leaving on an adventure, taking with him nothing more than the conviction that the war was just beginning. Six years later, based on what he had accomplished, he had no doubt that he would be supported by a majority of the French. Thus in leaving power so soon, he did not feel that he was taking a risk. Had he considered the fate of his old adversary and accomplice, Winston Churchill, whom British voters had sent home as soon as the German surrender was signed? When those close to him expressed their concern, he limited himself to telling them that he was going to show them what "the art of retreat"[71] was. Like a strategist with nerves of steel, he was waiting for the coming battle, that of the Constitution. He was confident: the French would not want a return to "government by parties."

As he had predicted, events turned to the disadvantage of the opposing camp, because an initial proposed constitution was flatly rejected by voters.[72] In Bayeux a few weeks later, and in Epinal in the early fall,[73] he set forth the principles that had in his opinion to be adopted in order to build sound institutions. His adversaries screamed that this was "sedition" and "dictatorship." Hardly emended, the proposed constitution was subjected to a further referendum and this time, on 13 October 1946, it was adopted. To be sure, the margin of victory remained slim: the new proposal was approved by only 53 percent of the voters, who themselves represented hardly more than a third of those registered to vote.[74] But the adoption of this constitution, which prolonged the existence of the parliamentary regime, was nonetheless a stinging rebuff to the General, who had proposed to constitute the republic on radically different bases. De Gaulle had lost. He was all the more wounded by this because he had not anticipated it.[75] The plebiscite had not taken place, and the momentum of 1944, if it ever existed, had been lost.

A few months later, the General thought he could provoke the upheaval that had not occurred. The experiment with the RPF, whose creation he announced in Strasbourg in April 1947, was, as we know, as brief as it was disappointing.

De Gaulle lowered his public image by descending into the political arena, even if, as he saw it, this "Rally" was supposed to transcend party cleavages and renew political life. During the first months, the General was able to nourish some hope: by the end of 1947 the RPF had established itself as the leading political force—it won nearly 40 percent of the vote in the municipal elections, its candidates seizing the country's main cities—but it soon had to lower its sights. Far from capitulating, its adversaries, who were less mediocre than de Gaulle had imagined, were doing more than hanging on. By refusing to advance the date of the legislative elections planned for 1951, President Auriol forced de Gaulle to wait until that time before he could hope to enter the Assembly with an absolute majority—as everything then indicated he would—that would allow him to do what he had not been able to undertake in 1946. But time was on the side of the RPF's enemies. The latter hoped to see the Gaullist movement fall apart because it could not gain power in a short time. They were right. The formation of a "Third Force" coalition intended to bar the way to both the communists and the Gaullists,[76] and an electoral reform that introduced the possibility of grouping electoral lists (called *apparentement*), did the rest:[77] even though the RPF remained France's largest party, it was able to win only 121 seats in the National Assembly, not enough to give it an absolute majority.[78] As in 1946, de Gaulle had failed.

In November 1953, he took a leave from an RPF that was ultimately so little in his nature that he had never felt at home in it, and soon became tired of political maneuvering and the "management questions" he detested. Perhaps he was also unhappy to see so many people who had been hostile to him during the Free France period constituting a non-negligible portion of his new supporters.[79] He was bored by these problems of investitures, financial difficulties, quarrels based on personal vanity. . . . The RPF was no different from other parties, and the "movement" he had wanted to be worthy of his own legend was turning into a commonplace "mutual aid society."[80] Almost from the outset, he conceived a certain resentment toward those whom he had dragged into this enterprise—beginning with Jacques Soustelle, who took over the actual direction of the movement—and who worked with all their strength to create the conditions for his return to power. The role they made him play did not please him. It has to be said that the part he assigned them did not please them, either: didn't he ask them to remain mobilized and be ready for the hypothetical moment when the regime would finally surrender? During this time, life went on, governments succeeded one another. The RPF's elected officials, who were expected to imitate the attitude of haughty rejection in which the General took pleasure, were on pins and needles. They were not de Gaulle, after all, and they didn't see why they should imitate him and also withdraw into an internal exile that was, to be sure, romantic, but procured no tangible satisfaction. In March 1953, twenty-seven of the RPF's representatives voted for Pinay. Others soon followed. It was the end. Even the voters were giving up on the RPF.[81] De Gaulle mocked the traitors who were "selling out," railed against the French as a whole, who preferred a "siesta" to action—"Ah! How beautiful France would be without the French!"[82]—and closed up shop.[83]

The master having left, the RPF slowly withered, then disappeared. In 1956, its avatar, the Social Republican group, had only 21 representatives: that was all that remained of the 121 seats the Gaullists held in 1951.[84] The wheel had turned.

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The General retired to Colombey. Anne died, Philippe and Elisabeth married; old age came. Time was no longer on his side. Henceforth, it was working against him.

Even the apparent decrepitude of the institutions could not comfort him, because the contemptible regime was still standing. Wobbling, but standing. No one, starting with its leaders, would have bet a franc on the institutions founded in 1946; and yet this disabled republic was getting along pretty well. To be sure, France was living with chronic political instability, but in the mid-1950s the social and economic situation wasn't so bad. The postwar period had been very difficult, but the country's reconstruction was basically complete and it was a time of relative prosperity. The inglorious end of the regime, in 1958, concealed the successes it had chalked up.[85] De Gaulle had gone to some lengths to discredit it, the better to draw attention to his own successes. Bonaparte had done the same with regard to the Directory. That was fair enough. It will be said that France had benefitted from American largesse. It remains that prosperity was there. Above all, people felt the movement of this society, which up to that point had, in fact, changed very little since the middle of the preceding century. The France of 1945 was not so different from that of 1850. In this old rural, Catholic society that was experiencing full employment, rising incomes, and modern comfort, changes were ripening that were going to completely change its physiognomy in just a few years: the end of the old countryside and a de-Christianization that was as abrupt as it was massive. France was entering, fifty years late, the twentieth century. Simple chronology shows this. From the birth of the Citroën DS in 1955 to the late, lamented *nouveau roman,* from *And God Created Woman* to *The Four Hundred Blows,* from the first broadcasts of "Salut les copains" to the opening of the first rock discotheque in Paris, these years from 1956 to 1959 witnessed the beginnings of an immense upheaval.[86]

In this country where neither age nor experience still conferred authority, where people started praising everything that was young and dynamic, from Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and Françoise Giroud to Françoise Sagan, what could Charles de Gaulle represent other than a past from which people sought to escape? It will be said that France was turning its back on the morality of effort and sacrifice that its liberator had been urging it to adopt since 1940.[87] That is no doubt true, but in that respect the French were like other peoples who, in the West, had suffered through the two great tragedies of the century. They looked backward only reluctantly and were little inclined to refer (except with the heroic pomp of *The Longest Day* or the comic self-mockery of *La Grande Vadrouille*)[88] to a history they no longer saw as their own. De Gaulle even suffered from an additional handicap: although he had delivered the French from remorse for the defeat and Collaboration by forging, through his deeds and words, a heroic antidote to these troubling years, at the same time he reminded the French of the alleged "indignity" of their behavior, since he alone, by refusing to accept defeat, had ultimately behaved the way everyone should have behaved. He was like a living reproach, a reminder of what people would rather forget. François Mauriac's immoderate but intermittent veneration of the General illustrates this aspect of things. In it we find feelings not only of admiration, but also of repentance: no doubt the author of the novel *Noeud de vipères* could not forget that his first love affair had taken him to Vichy rather than to London. De Gaulle was forever the witness to national turpitudes. In 1946, Mauriac wrote:

> He lives among us, and he need not raise his voice to make us remember what our state of mind is. [. . .] The French—whose fundamental error, whose sole error, was to despair of France when it was at its lowest point, and, in remarks heard everywhere, to condemn their humiliated mother—are judged, whether they wish it or not, by this solitary Leader, who sits on the sidelines and no longer plays a role in the state. [. . .] Those who were not loyal in the dark time will pretend in vain that they were, because this man will remind them, by his mere presence, of their wretchedness, the wretchedness that is common to us all, of course, and in which, as General de Gaulle himself recalled after the Liberation, almost all of us participated to some extent. No one can help it that each of our lives acquired, during those four years when the German tide flowed over us, a coloring that it will never lose. Those four years continue to condemn us. [. . .] We struggle in vain: from now on, we will all bear on our foreheads a mark, a sign, which destiny has given us, which no accommodation will erase, and which we will take with us even into death.[89]

A sublime but horrible statement. The France of the 1950s refused to continue doing penance for its sins, a penance to which it was condemned by the man who had saved its honor and perhaps even its existence. In this way de Gaulle elicited feelings close to those inspired by Joan of Arc: the king she saved would surely have preferred to relieve Orléans and travel to Rheims without her help, since what she had accomplished was forever to testify to the weakness or inadequacy of those for whom she had sacrificed her life. There are good deeds that are never pardoned.

That is, moreover, one of the great differences between Napoleon and de Gaulle. The former, climbing the ladder to glory and power to satisfy an ambition and dreams that were initially his own, nonetheless brought along all those who followed him. They rose with him, as soldiers of the Revolution, acquirers of national property, patriots intoxicated by the successes of the “Great Nation” and its armies, former revolutionaries tired of hardships. . . . He alone was going to mount the throne, but a little of his glory was reflected on all the French.[90] De Gaulle also rose, but he rose alone. No one accompanied him. On the contrary, because the higher he rose, the more the French moved downward, because, far from having been their supreme commander, the one who led them but could have done nothing without them, de Gaulle had done everything all by himself. If he had incarnated "France," a France re-created in the image of the love he had for it, it was not only without the help of the French people, but in spite of them, almost against them.

De Gaulle made this very clear in 1949, when he said "let them die!"[91] Given that, it is easy to understand why around 1955 or 1956, de Gaulle no longer represented much more than a past that people wished was really past, and that it took the colonial wasps' nest to put History once more within his grasp, almost miraculously.[92]

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There is no need to dilate on a well-known fact: the France which, at the end of the war, no longer had the means to be a great power, wanted to retain the appearance that it did.[93] The provisional government over which General de Gaulle presided sent the army to re-establish a foothold in Indochina, and although they had to give up the mandate over Syria and Lebanon, on 8 May 1945 French troops drowned the uprising in Sétif (Algeria) in blood. The British nourished the same ambition, but after two world wars, the old European powers no longer had the resources necessary to exercise hegemony, especially since the mobilization of soldiers throughout the empire and the promises made by the allied leaders had sounded the death knell for nineteenth-century-style colonialism. Although the British withdrew from part of their possessions, hoping to gain a foothold in regions that were now more interesting from a strategic or an economic point of view, the same was not true for the French, who were forced to abandon Indochina after a costly war, and then Morocco and Tunisia. The empire was disappearing in tatters. It was not that the French were so attached to these conquests, but losing the colonies after so many ordeals and defeats re-awakened their feeling of decline.

In the army, the humiliation was even greater. After the disaster in 1940, whose memory had in no way been erased by French troops' participation in the last phase of the war, came, one after the other, Indochina, the withdrawal from Tunisia and Morocco, and finally the Suez affair, where a military success had ended in a diplomatic fiasco: "Our pride, which is the soldier's epidermis, was hurt."[94] Military men felt they were sacrificing themselves for nothing, that they were being sent into combat without clear instructions by ephemeral governments that did not truly support them and were even prepared to abandon and betray them if necessary. They were not unaware, either, how much the battle they were waging to save the empire was disapproved not only abroad but in France itself, where people had heard enough talk about war and where they no longer understood very well why it was necessary to fight and make sacrifices for a handful of profiteers who were getting rich on the colonies or for the hordes of grubby people who lived there. The more the soldiers felt abandoned and unappreciated, the more they devoted themselves to their mission, convinced that they were serving the interests of both the local populations and France. They had the conviction that they were working to build a society in which everyone, both colonists and natives, would live in harmony. These military men's heads were full of dreams in which a fervent patriotism was often combined with a no less profound Catholicism. One has to have read Hélie de Saint Marc's *Mémoires* to understand how much the events of the war in Indochina and their tragic outcome were, for these patriotic officers imbued with their mission, more than a humiliation: it was a heartbreak. As Saint Marc put it, it was a "wrenching away," to the point that he subsequently felt that he was "living in exile," far from a country, Vietnam, where he had, however, not been born.[95]

The events in Indochina were then repeated in Algeria, almost without transition and in a worse form: an unpopular war, a dirty war fought against adversaries even dirtier than those in Indochina, waged under the aegis of weak governments that seemed to want neither independence nor integration, and that did not believe in the maintenance of the status quo, either, waging war and investing considerable sums only to immediately destroy the benefit through their indecisiveness.

It is true that Algeria was not Indochina, and neither was Tunisia, Morocco, or any of the colonies to which France had hived off small communities of expatriates on a scale entirely different from the million Europeans who had established themselves there over the preceding century. Algeria belonged to a different type of colony, the settlement. It was not the first of this type, the best known of which had given rise to the United States. In France, some people had dreamed of a destiny for Algeria that would be comparable to that of the British colonies in North America. For example, Thiers, who demanded in 1836 that France support the war effort:

> The glory we seek [in Algeria] is to create there a grand and magnificent establishment to which France will call all Europeans who would like to find justice alongside strength, who would like to find there, in the event of national misfortunes, and in times of proscription, one of those great and noble asylums that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were found in the north of America, and that created there a prosperous and powerful nation. If this future that I have glimpsed for my country were to be realized there, if I saw Africa become the cradle of a magnificent nation adjacent to our shores, I would not regret the loss of a few men and even the loss of a few of our fellow citizens.[96]

But a colonial settlement had never been established so close to the home country and within a country which, at the time of the conquest in 1830, was not a territory with no inhabitants and no history. The regency of Algiers was a former Ottoman province that was, to be sure, rougher and more rebellious than its neighbors, but it had long been under the yoke of Turkish administration and was backed by a religion that gave it an identity and a body of laws. Thus it was nothing like the native peoples of North America or, later, the aborigines of Australia, whom the conquerors, taking advantage of the dispersion of these peoples over vast territories, their divisions, and their low degree of technological development, were easily able to expropriate, relegate to inhospitable areas, and finally exterminate.[97] It is true that Algeria had only three million inhabitants in 1830: that was still too many. Even Bugeaud, who had been heavy-handed when he was commanding the troops assigned to the conquest, could not gain control over them. And then, the French were ambitious. Embarking on adventures abroad in which the appetite for profit was certainly not absent, they brought with them the universalist, emancipatory spirit of the French Revolution. The "brute" Bugeaud was necessarily succeeded by the "diplomatic" Lamoricière, just as a policy of all-out war was succeeded by measures intended to pacify and organize the relations between settlers and the indigenous peoples, so that an equilibrium could be established.[98]

In this story that was tragic from beginning to end, the opportunity, the only opportunity, was missed when the defeat of 1870, by putting an end to the Second Empire, also put an end to the policies regarding Algeria that Napoleon III had tried to promote, which were very different from the brutal colonization of the period of the July Monarchy and the spoliation that was to characterize the Third Republic's colonial policy.[99]

French Algeria was more or less like Boer South Africa, without segregation being written into the law, without apartheid, even if all historians have emphasized the immense hypocrisy that was concealed, in 1958, by the promises that both the European and the Muslim populations would be completely integrated into the French nation. The deluded officers of the army certainly believed that this integration would take place: they were convinced that they defended and loved Algeria "for itself," just as they were convinced that they had defended and loved Indochina for itself, and not in order to maintain the mother country's domination there or to protect the settlers' interests.[100] The watchword of integration even came from them, and if the French of Algeria now seized upon it, that was simply because they could not express the true motive for their revolt: the twofold fear of a military defeat and reforms that would put an end to the status quo they had defended against all the policies that, since Napoleon III, had sought to introduce a little more justice into the country.[101]

It was a unanimous chorus: "Algeria is France!"[102] How many officials really believed that, being aware of Paris's isolation on the international scene, the irresistible rise of ideas of self-determination, and the constantly growing demographic imbalance between the European and Arab populations,[103] which left hardly any doubt regarding the final outcome of the war that began in 1954? According to Raymond Aron, only three of them believed it: Georges Bidault, Jacques Soustelle, and Michel Debré.[104] Aron exaggerates, but there were not many more who believed, and General de Gaulle's name certainly was not on that list.

However, it was by virtue of that "intangible" principle in which no one, or almost no one believed,[105] that increasing numbers of troops were sent to put down the insurrection—half a million soldiers were in Algeria in 1958—an army that was quickly demoralized by the absence of support by public opinion in Metropolitan France, which was against this war from the outset and was, moreover, roiled by groups which, because they could not openly join the camp of the National Liberation Front's killers, denounced the "abuses" committed on the spot by soldiers.[106] In addition, it was demoralized by the silences, jibes, and allusions to negotiations that contradicted the martial professions of faith concerning the future of Algeria and made the most lucid of the soldiers fear an imminent betrayal. Among the pieds-noirs, it was also a time of mistrust and fear of being betrayed. It was early 1958.[107]

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THE BOMBARDMENT OF SAKHIET in Tunisian territory on 8 February, in reprisal for the protection granted the National Liberation Front's fighters, and the international protests that followed, marked the beginning of the crisis. The government headed by Félix Gaillard was overthrown on 16 April, and after three weeks of fruitless negotiations, the president of the Republic, René Coty, called upon Pierre Pflimlin, who had made several statements that had convinced the French of Algeria that he belonged to the party of "liquidators." Hadn't he come out in favor of negotiations and a political solution, on the condition that the power balance was first tipped toward France? These statements, made before the general council of the department of Bas-Rhin and reported by the press, had caused an uproar. When at that point it was learned that three French soldiers being held by the National Liberation Front as hostages had been executed, Algiers exploded.

In his *War Memoirs,* General de Gaulle asserts that he took no part in the events that brought him back to power:

> At that time, I was living in complete retirement at La Boisserie, whose door was open only to my family or to people from the village, and going only occasionally to Paris, where I agreed to receive only a few visitors. [. . .] [The grave crisis] that broke out in Algiers on 13 May did not surprise me at all. However, I had not been involved in it in any way, not in the local agitation, nor in the military movement, nor in the political project that brought it about, and I had no connection with any group in Algiers or with any ministry in Paris.[108]

This official version—Cincinnatus called back to office to get France out of a jam—was constructed at the time of these events, and speaking with Alain Peyrefitte in 1962, the General still insisted on this point: "I had nothing to do with the insurrection in Algiers. I knew nothing about what was being planned there before 13 May: I was informed about what was happening there the way everyone else was, by radio broadcasts."[109] When Peyrefitte reported this claim to Olivier Guichard, the latter commented: "He's got some nerve!"[110]

Although the hypothesis that there were "thirteen plots on May 13"[111] was launched soon after the events—the better to evade the question, as if all the intrigues that were troubling Algiers were genuine conspiracies—in May 1958 there was only one *true* conspiracy, that is, only one that had a realistic chance of success: it was fomented by a handful of Gaullists with at least the General's assent. One of de Gaulle's great qualities was always to have been, to use Machiavelli's terms, a "great simulator and dissimulator." Pierre-Louis Blanc, who became the head of his press office in 1967, wrote that his boss knew "the art of secrecy":

> Just as he took care to veil his image in mystery, he was able to work out his plans in secrecy. He organized operations in which he confided in a limited number of collaborators, without there being the slightest leak. [. . .] He was reproached for acting in this way. He was accused of cunning. The word has a pejorative resonance. For my part, I prefer to say that he knew how to use a stratagem.[112]

The isolation in which he had found himself after 1940 had strengthened this art of dissimulation in a man who had often been forced to don a mask in order to disarm opposition and distrust. "Evangelical perfection does not lead to empire,"[113] he had written before the war; and this was all the truer at a time when recourse to trickery was not without usefulness to compensate for the weakness of his means. He could hardly count on the support of the army, where he had few friends, on that of the French people, many of whom no longer thought about him, on that of the pieds-noirs, whom he had not pardoned for having preferred Giraud to him in 1943, or even on that of his former supporters in the RPF, most of whom had moved on.

For months, he had been following day by day the deterioration of the situation in Algeria and the decline of a regime that was obviously incapable of confronting a crisis which, this time, was proving too strong for it: "I'm holding my tongue, I'm listening, I'm waiting,"[114] he told a few close friends. In scarcely more than a year, no fewer than four governments had succeeded one another.[115] In addition to this game of musical chairs, there was the increasing difficulty of forging a majority united around a political project: hadn't Bidault and René Pleven thrown in the towel before Coty called upon Pfimlin? The storm the General so much desired was approaching: "It won't be long before they're obliged to come and get me,"[116] he confided to his brother-in-law Jacques Vendroux in late 1957. The regime was collapsing, to the point that a little nudge would suffice to overturn it in May. De Gaulle's name was beginning to appear again, and not only in the columns of the *Courrier de la colère,* the rag in which Michel Debré was demanding that French Algeria[117] be saved, and, for that reason, that "the regime of capitulation" be destroyed.[118] Following Georgette Elgey in *Paris-Presse,* it was François Mauriac who, in *L'Express,* described the General in tones that recalled his fervor in 1944,[119] and following Maurice Clavel in *Combat,* Maurice Duverger who, in *Le Monde* for 7 March 1958, entitled his column "When?," as if the matter were settled.[120] De Gaulle was emerging from the shadows. The 2 percent of the French who wanted him to return to power had become 10, then 11 percent. It was a beginning, a sign that things were imperceptibly changing, in step with the collapse of the regime.

The small group of faithful companions had come together again and begun to act under the guidance of lieutenants—Chaban-Delmas, Debré, Guichard, Foccart, Soustelle, and a few others—who, and this cannot be overemphasized, had come to politics through the war, in London or in the Resistance. They knew how to make sudden attacks, were at ease with illegalities, were not fussy about the means used, and were used to operating clandestinely and silently, so that all they needed to understand each other was a few words, a nod, or a smile. With such men, instructions and reports were pointless. Secrecy would be maintained.

The plot was probably finalized in March, between the bombardment of Sakhiet and Félix Gaillard's fall, in which Jacques Soustelle had a hand. Léon Delbecque—a resourceful, courageous man, as he had proven in the

Resistance, willing to take risks, enterprising, effective, and a die-hard Gaullist who was later at the heart of the conspiracy in Algiers[121]—told Odile Rudelle the substance of the interview that the General accorded him on 6 March 1958. In it we see how de Gaulle encouraged his interlocutors without compromising himself, going so far as to exclaim over the uselessness of their efforts. Delbecque floated the idea of an appeal made to the people of Algeria, the army, or both of them, and asked the General if in that event he would agree to return "as an arbitrator"? *As an arbitrator?* de Gaulle snorted. *Out of the question!* But if he were called upon to be "at the head of the country's affairs," then he would accept. The faithful old soldier had heard what he wanted to hear. Believing that he had been encouraged to go further, he tried to enter into the details of the conspiracy, but de Gaulle cut him off and advised him to keep in contact with Foccard. But before letting Delbecque go he told him what he would do once he had returned to power and, since he knew Delbecque well, he did not forget to assure him that he would do his best to "save Algeria."[122] Odile Rudelle is a little too prudent when she writes that de Gaulle took part in the conspiracy only indirectly: "If the *conspiracy* was not conceived and organized by the General, he let grow up around him an *operation* led by actors some of whom, and not the least important of them, could boast about the *tacit support* he knew so well how to lend."[123] Olivier Guichard, Jacques Foccart, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Roger Frey, Jacques Soustelle—that was the inner group that was in the van and pulled, clearly with the General's permission, the strings of the intrigues that were to lead to what happened in May 1958. He encouraged them in his own way, for example by writing to the faithful Pierre Lefranc on 1 January 1958:

> I despair of our country no more than you do. It is just that I doubt that under the current circumstances any message whatever could change the course of events. If the situation were to change, then, yes, we would have to act. This new situation, let those who can bring it about do so, right now![124]

Chaban-Delmas, who was then Defense minister in the Gaillard government, played a decisive role by sending the head of his cabinet—Léon

Delbecque, precisely—to Algiers. While the Gaullists were making themselves heard in Paris, mobilizing their supporters and covering walls with posters, in Algiers Delbecque was making contacts, talking with military men (Massu, one of the few officers who were Gaullists, the picturesque Colonel Thomazo, and others), journalists (Alain de Sérigny, who on 11 May published in *L'Echo d'Alger* the famous appeal: "Speak, speak now, general!"), and pandering to the "French Algeria" activists. Delbecque had brought together this whole collection of prominent people in a "Vigilance Committee" that he controlled and that allowed him to keep an eye on what was brewing in Algiers. This committee was, in fact, "a genuine Trojan Horse"[125] that in theory made it possible for the Gaullists to use the activists' skills without joining in their hazy projects. Even before the crisis broke out on 13 May, the day on which debate on Pierre Pflimlin's nomination was to begin, the Gaullists were ready to act. They had already been strong enough to organize on 26 April, in Algiers, a demonstration in favor of French Algeria that was a kind of dress rehearsal. For his part, de Gaulle continued to go about his business as if nothing were afoot. Celebrating, at Colombey, the anniversary of VE Day, he had laid a wreath at the foot of the war memorial, shaken hands. To an old man who told him things were "not going well" and asked whether he would be called back to power, the General replied: "I don't know whether things are going badly enough yet."[126] Two days later, the lid blew off the simmering pot.

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IT IS TRUE that from the outset, events deviated from the planned scenario. The invasion and occupation of the seat of the general government, at the Forum in Algiers, on the evening of 13 May, carried out by "hardcore" supporters of French Algeria who dreamed of dragging the army into a coup d'état, was not part of the plan. Instead, it was expected that confronted by this demonstration hostile to Pfimlin, which was supposed to be massive, the National Assembly would end up voting no confidence. In February 1956, mobilization of the people of Algiers against the replacement of Soustelle by Catroux in the office of governor general had sufficed to make Guy Mollet and the government yield. So, once the regime had played its last card, and lost, the Gaullists would enter the stage. But the seat of the general government having fallen into the rebels' hands, the protest demonstration that was intended to put pressure on Paris was transformed into a secession. The military officers had yielded to a crowd that was demanding the formation of a committee of public safety, and the radicalization of the movement led the National Assembly to harden its position. During the night, it confirmed the government of last resort. The Gaullists had been overwhelmed. What de Gaulle hoped to obtain from the collapse of a regime that had clearly run out of steam, he was now going to have to win by establishing himself as the arbitrator between the two camps, at the same time that one side was calling loudly for him to step in, and the other was rejecting him—rather mildly—but not for all that falling into dependence on those who, on 13 and 14 May, had begun to chant his name in Algiers.

It was then that the artist in full possession of his means was seen, more dazzling than he had been in 1945–1946, deceiving both his adversaries and his allies, covertly inflaming the latter and persuading the former that he alone could defend them against the latter, while at the same time laying his cards on the table at the opportune moment, because all support has to be paid for: not only his return to power, but on his conditions, via the recasting of institutions in accord with the principles developed in Bayeux in 1946. "In sum," Maurice Agulhon said, "it is as if de Gaulle simultaneously made use of the pressure exercised by the army in Africa and of his own aptitude for containing it, so that he would be called to power as a soldier by some people, and as a barricade against soldiers by others!"[127] It was high art.

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BONAPARTE LOOKS LIKE an amateur compared to de Gaulle. In his biography of the General, Jean Lacouture entitles the chapter on the crisis of May 1958 "Le 17 Brumaire," as if de Gaulle had been so clever that he didn't need an 18 Brumaire.[128] Eric Roussel is more exact when he gives the corresponding chapter in his book the title "Technique du coup d'Etat."[129] Although the question—was it a coup d'état or not?—is not without interest, its interest lies in the means, not the results. After 1958 de Gaulle consolidated republican institutions, whereas people are still debating the question as to whether Bonaparte, having also gained power through a "true-false" coup d'état, later dug the Revolution's grave or prolonged its life. So far as means are concerned, 13 May was a perfect 18 Brumaire, but an 18 Brumaire that did not require a 19, and thus avoided the hitches and blunders of Bonaparte's quick and dirty coup d'état. As we know, in 1799 the conspirators, who wanted to act as "civilly" as possible, had decided to spread the operation over two days: the first, 18 Brumaire, would be devoted to obtaining the resignations of the members of the Directory, while the second, the 19th, would see the joint meeting of the assemblies in Saint-Cloud to bury the regime, under the "protection" of the army, and to lay the foundations for a new Constitution. Delaying the operation in this way almost cost Bonaparte dear. His adversaries—he did have a few—took advantage of the additional night thus gained to organize themselves and try to thwart him. A priori, the danger was not very great, but Bonaparte lacked the extraordinary sangfroid shown by de Gaulle, who, during the feverish days of May 1958, imperturbably maintained his habitual behavior. Deciding that the republic founded by the Thermidorians was taking too long to die, the conqueror of the Pyramids wanted to hurry things along by intervening personally before the representatives meeting in Saint-Cloud. It was the wrong move; there was an outcry, he was manhandled; it is said that he was so surprised by this that he fainted, and that it was ultimately Murat's grenadiers who dealt with the situation by driving the representatives from their benches. Nothing comparable occurred in 1958, when de Gaulle did not emerge from his lair until the moment he had decided upon, and to do things which, each time, altered the course of events in a way that was, naturally, favorable to him.

Neither the boasting of Jules Moch, the minister of the Interior whom the police no longer obeyed, nor that of the minister of Defense, Chevigné, who said that he intended to put down the rebellion, even though not a single regiment was prepared to open fire on the mutineers,[130] nor the screeches of the press, nor those of the defenders of democracy, nor the declamations of the parliamentary representatives, nor the little parades organized by the French Communist Party, nor the failed work stoppages organized by the Confédération Générale du Travail—none of these caused de Gaulle to lose his sangfroid. The difference of opinion in Metropolitan France encouraged him in his determination. If it did not detest the regime enough to overthrow it, it did not love it enough to defend it. The brawls that broke out in Paris concerned only minorities and communists, on the one hand, and far-right activists, on the other. On the first days, kiosks had been attacked, stores looted. People were stocking up, just in case . . . , but on 25 May Parisians got in their cars and left the capital to take advantage of the Pentecost holiday weekend. Jules Moch later rightly referred to "the languor of the immense majority of the metropolitan population,"[131] which did not really believe the stories in the newspapers about the threat of paratroopers landing on the Palais-Bourbon.

De Gaulle emerged from his silence the first time on 15 May, the day after the famous declaration made by General Salan, on whom Félix Gaillard had conferred, during the night of May 13–14, the full military and civil powers that he was already exercising in Algiers. From the balcony of the General Government building, perhaps pushed to do so by Delbecque, Salan had cried: "Long live General de Gaulle!"[132] The General was waiting, with a communiqué in his pocket. He made it public the same evening, declaring himself ready "to assume the powers of the Republic." Astonishment ensued, even though everyone expected him to speak. Nonetheless, at the moment when the rebellion in Algiers was looking for political ways of escaping a confrontation with the government that would ultimately have turned to the latter's advantage, the General's message gave the movement a new impetus.

He did it again on 19 May, at the famous press conference at the Palais d'Orsay, where he overtly declared himself a candidate for power, while at the same time denying that he wanted to obtain it by violating constitutional legality. "A masterpiece of communication,"[133] people rightly said. To one journalist who had asked what he meant by "assume the powers of the Republic," he replied: "The powers of the Republic, when one assumes them, can be no others than the ones that it itself has delegated to us." He would not overthrow the regime, he would wait for its representatives to confer power on him. Henceforth, the glorious revenant found himself at the center of a debate in which the issue was no longer whether one was for or against Pfimlin, but for or against de Gaulle. Naturally, ulterior motives were suspected, and when guarantees were given—"Do you think that at the age of sixty-seven I am going to begin a career as a dictator?"—it was pointed out that he had refused to condemn the officers' rebellion in Algiers. We do not know to what extent de Gaulle was involved in the organization of "Operation Resurrection," which was intended to launch a military intervention in Metropolitan France in the event that persuasion did not suffice. Part of it was executed when paratroopers seized the prefecture in Ajaccio on 24 May. The General had no contact with the officers who came from Algiers on 17 May to confer with commanders in Paris, but it was he who demanded, on the day of the press conference, the operation's suspension, long enough to see what his declarations and the commitments he had made to politicians would produce. The extension of the insurrection from Algiers to Corsica, the capitulation of Pfimlin (who on 25 May flatly rejected a proposal made by some of his ministers to take back the island by force), and finally the offer of support that came to him in the form of a letter from Guy Mollet, led the General to cross the Rubicon. A retired military officer and former head of the government "summoning," through the intermediary of the prefect of Haute-Marne, the president of the Council of the Republic! That was unprecedented, even more unprecedented than Pierre Pfimlin reporting, at the General's invitation, in the middle of the night, for an interview which, obviously, came to nothing! But the following day the director of this orchestra undertook to give this meeting a consequence of his own invention by announcing publicly that he had "begun [. . .] the regular process necessary for the establishment of a republican government that is capable of ensuring the country's unity and independence," indulging even in the luxury of ordering the responsible military officers in Africa to hold back their troops. Pfimlin was flabbergasted. De Gaulle had played him. This time, there was a real coup d'état, and if the General sensed that the wind was turning in his favor, he had to protect himself against a probable reaction on the part of that "one-armed state,"[134] without either the police or the army, by relaunching "Operation Resurrection," which he had had suspended a few days earlier. On 28 May, he even received General Dulac, who had been sent by Salan, to be sure that in the event of a military intervention, Salan himself would take command of the operations. "I don't want to appear right away," de Gaulle explained, "so as not to seem to be returning because of that use of force alone." As he saw Dulac out, he bade him farewell: "We have to save face!"[135]

That very evening, de Gaulle received in Colombey the presidents of the two assemblies, Monnerville and Le Troquer, who had come to talk with him at the request of President Coty. Once again, nothing came of these discussions. A few hours later, Guichard called Salan, giving him a green light to launch a military overthrow. The counterorder soon followed: Coty had just announced that he was going to address a message to the Parliament. Asked by the head of state to come see him so that they could examine together "what, in the framework of republican legality, is immediately necessary for a government of national security and what might, in more or less short order, then be done for a profound reform of our institutions,"[136] de Gaulle had won.

The entrance on the stage of René Coty, "that good old Frenchman,"[137] who settled the crisis to the General's advantage, is another characteristic that relates 13 May to 18 Brumaire. Just as Bonaparte had overthrown the Directory with the support of two of the five Directors—Sieyès and Roger Ducos—de Gaulle overcame the Fourth Republic with the discreet support of Coty, who (probably having never believed in the perennial nature of institutions[138]—how could he have forgotten the calamitous circumstances that had surrounded his own election, in 1954, after thirteen rounds of voting?) hastened its fall. In particular, we may wonder what led the president to ask Pierre Pfimlin to form the new government. Had he sought to "drain the abscess" and play an unplayable last card before settling on de Gaulle and closing up shop?[139] On the evening of 19 Brumaire, Bonaparte, having returned home to Rue de la Victoire and looking like someone who had just won a victory, had said to his secretary: "Good evening, Bourrienne. . . . By the way, tomorrow we will sleep in the Luxembourg [Palace]."[140] General de Gaulle, returning on 1 June 1958 to the Hôtel La Pérouse after the investiture session at the Assembly, also had the feeling that he had checkmated his adversaries, and it was for the porter at the hotel that he reserved his first triumphal reaction: "Well, Albert, I won!"[141]

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But between 18 Brumaire and 13 May, there are not only resemblances, but also an essential, considerable difference: although Bonaparte was, in the execution, inferior to de Gaulle, he had over the latter the advantage of having been able to choose his allies.

On his return from Egypt, Bonaparte had adopted the rule of conduct he had already followed when he returned from Italy two years earlier: not to depart from a very republican discretion that, without keeping him from being the object of suspicions, sheltered him from any formal accusation. He remained at home, in the Rue de la Victoire, and avoided going out. But although he did not seek out the masses, the masses sought him out. There was an almost uninterrupted parade of visitors: old acquaintances, veterans of the Italian campaign, writers and artists eager to see the "hero," colleagues at the Institute and in the army, without forgetting the "lawyers," representatives, and journalists whom the general usually made the butt of his sarcasm. Political Paris, military Paris, and intellectual Paris had taken up residence in his home. Even the government seemed to have set up there, moving from the left bank to the right bank of the Seine, because the ministers came to talk to him about the day's business. Roederer aptly says that "everyone not only deferred to his superior authority, but also recognized that he had it really; he did not exercise it, but no one else exercised it without his assent."[142] Upon his return from Egypt, Bonaparte's legitimacy was so great that his mere appearance sufficed to paralyze the government. The latter no longer governed, the parties themselves were holding their breath and looking to this man who appeared to everyone, a witness said, to be "the rising sun." Everything seemed to depend on the steps he would take. It was tacitly accepted that he, and he alone, held the secret of the future.

All the parties wanted him. He had a very wide choice: Barras, who had for the past five years been presiding de facto over the Republic's destiny, wanted to ally himself with the man of whom he had been, as it were, the Pygmalion,[143] in order to reform, with his help, a constitution, that of 1795, which he knew by experience would not last. Sieyès, the other pillar of the government, would have preferred the coup d'état that he was planning with a less prominent military man, and the insignificant Joubert had seemed to him the ideal instrument. But Joubert had foolishly gotten himself killed in Italy, and Bonaparte's sudden return no longer allowed Sieyès to choose his "sword." The coup d'état would be made with Bonaparte, or not at all. As for those who were called the "neo-Jacobins," they would have liked the Robespierre brothers' former protégé to use his authority to support the policy of public security that they advocated. Bonaparte hesitated. He could not forget that Barras, one of the Directors, had always "shown him friendship." And then, he was a former soldier. They belonged to the same world, they understood one another. But on the other hand, Barras, who was called "the king of the Directory," had become the detested symbol of a discredited regime. Whereas the weight of habit spoke in favor of Barras, reason spoke against him. Always pragmatic, Bonaparte turned his back on him. Ultimately, he had known from the beginning that he would ally himself with Sieyès and the moderate republicans. The Jacobins? It is true that his own past argued in their favor. After all, hadn't he been, and remained, on Robespierre's side? But the Jacobins were unpopular for having taken steps during the summer of 1799 that reminded people of the bad old days of 1793: the arrest of hostages and taxes on the rich. . . . Above all, Bonaparte was aware, because he knew them, that they would be inconvenient allies: "After having won with them," he was to say, "I would have had to immediately win against them."[144] That was enough to eliminate them. Sieyès had none of these disadvantages; he even had some serious advantages. Although he was not popular, he had many supporters in the Assemblies, he had a plan for overthrowing the regime and a political project that would coincide in part with Bonaparte's own concerns. They were in agreement that the Revolution had to end, providing assurances to the interests to which it had given rise while at the same time repressing any attempt to extend it beyond what it had already achieved. Neither counterrevolution nor a new revolution, that was their common motto, even if this agreement regarding ends in no way guaranteed agreement regarding means: Sieyès wanted to reform republican institutions in order to improve them, Bonaparte wanted to capture the Revolution's heritage in order to use it for his own benefit. The depth of their disagreement would soon appear, but for the moment the two leading lights sought the same objectives. And then Sieyès and his peers, old revolutionaries who had grown wiser and wealthier, had lost much of the energy they had in 1789. The need for rest made them less dangerous and at the same time more malleable. Bonaparte knew that when the time came, he would find it easy to get rid of them.

General de Gaulle was not so fortunate. He would have found himself in a situation comparable to that of his illustrious predecessor only if

President Coty had transferred power to him with the agreement of a majority of the members of parliament, and Guy Mollet and Georges Bidault had helped him neutralize the communists, Mitterrand, and Mendès France. That was exactly how the crisis of May 1958 ended, between 29 May and 1 June. But to get there the General was forced to rely on forces, civilian and military supporters of French Algeria, regarding which he must have feared that *after having won with them, he would have to win against them.*

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People are still wondering, and will continue to do so for a long time yet, what the General thought about Algeria and its future on the eve of taking power.

Jean Lacouture formulates a hypothesis that de Gaulle did not rule out any solution except those of independence and integration.[145] As for the latter, he considered it an illusion, given the irreducible differences that existed between the Muslims and the French, and that had to do with history, customs, beliefs, and demographic prospects. Make nine million Muslims full-fledged French citizens? Everyone knows what he told Alain Peyrefitte when the latter asked him why he never uttered the word "integration," which since 1958 had been so dear to the pieds-noirs and even dearer to the military:

> Because they've tried to impose it on me, and because they want to make people think it's a panacea. We mustn't be content with words! It's fine that there are yellow Frenchmen, black Frenchmen, brown Frenchmen. They show that France is open to all races and that she has a universal vocation. But on the condition that they remain a small minority. Otherwise France would no longer be France. We are primarily a European people of the white race, with a Greek and Latin culture and the Christian religion. Let's not kid ourselves! The Muslims, have you gone to see them? Have you looked at them with their turbans and djellabas? It's clear that they're not French! People who advocate integration are birdbrains, even if they know a lot. Just try to integrate oil and vinegar. Shake the bottle. A second later they'll separate again. Arabs are Arabs,

> the French are French. Do you think France can absorb ten million Muslims, who will be twenty million tomorrow and forty the day after? If we integrated, if all the Arabs and Berbers of Algeria were considered French, how could we prevent them from coming to settle in Metropolitan France, where the standard of living is so much higher? My village would no longer be called Colombey-the-two-Churches but Colombey-the-two-Mosques.[146]

Today these remarks are considered shocking.[147] Put back in their context, they testify only to the fact that the General was, as Jean Daniel pointed out in one of the editorials he published in *L'Express* on the Algerian tragedy, by principle "respectful of the nationality of peoples";[148] he did not think, like some of his supporters—first of all, Debré and Soustelle—that there was "no difference between a peasant in the Cévennes and a peasant in Kabylia,"[149] and that they could therefore be given the same homeland. On the contrary, de Gaulle thought that the peasant in Kabylia had the right to live in accord with his beliefs and customs, and that he could not, without unjustifiable violence, be ripped out of his history and artificially given a different one that was not, and never would be, his own.[150] Soustelle saw himself as belonging to the tradition of universalist and emancipatory colonialism that had been incarnated by Jules Ferry;[151] de Gaulle belonged to a different lineage that had never subscribed to the religion of empire. This lineage was patriotic and nationalist, and could be traced back as far as the eighteenth-century physiocrats.[152] Foreign adventures had arisen from a defeat, that of 1815, which had put an end to France's hegemonic ambitions in Europe. The French has sought overseas the supremacy they were no longer capable of imposing on the Old Continent. Extending France's influence in Africa or in Asia amounted, according to certain figures from Maurras to Clemenceau, to making a mistake regarding priorities, to sacrificing what was essential—revenge against Germany and the reconquest of Alsace and Lorraine—in order to pursue a policy that cost more than it brought in.[153] The General knew North Africa and the Near East, where he had been assigned—in Beirut—from 1929 to 1931. Already at that time, he had seen how fragile the French presence in these foreign lands was, from every point of view: “My impression is that our penetration there is minimal,” he wrote in June 1930, “and that the people are as foreign to us (and we to them) as they ever were.” In his view, the choice was between resorting to force to maintain a domination that would never be accepted and leaving.[154] The time he spent in 1943 in Algiers—a city that was then largely inclined toward Vichy—did not change his opinion.

So what about independence? As the leader of Free France, and then of the provisional government in 1945, de Gaulle had adopted a different line of conduct that was also to be followed in the speeches of the RPF period: the maintenance of the integrity of the empire accompanied by reforms. Whereas he ordered the military commanders in the field to show firmness—the repression that followed the uprising in Sétif and in the Constantine region in May 1945 showed that these orders had been heard—on 15 May 1947 he promulgated another order that, after the speech in Constantine (12 December 1943) opened up the prospect of changes that would benefit the Muslim population. In Bordeaux, on 15 May 1947—he was no longer in power—he delivered a vibrant speech praising “France’s magnificent work overseas,” in which someone like Soustelle would not have changed a single word: in Algeria, Madagascar, sub-Saharan Africa, was “France tyrannical? [. . .] guilty?” No, France had been “generous, protective, liberal,” and had allowed “sixty million human beings to move rapidly toward the light”![155] A little later, in Algiers, he returned to the question, rejecting in advance any questioning of France’s rights to Algeria.[156] But he had already developed, starting with the famous speech given in Brazzaville in which he argued in favor of the colonies’ increased participation in managing their interests, another line of thought concerning the relations between the mother country and its colonies. After having stopped at the idea of a relative autonomy, this line of thought led to an ambition to carry out a deeper refoundation that would be not unlike what Napoleon III had wanted for Algeria: the replacement of the system of colonial domination inherited from the nineteenth century by a new system of “free and contractual association”[157] between communities that would have equal rights and retain their own personalities. Developed before his interlocutors frequently enough that it can be considered the expression of his true thinking, this became his view: if the empire was to subsist, it could do so only in the form of a kind of commonwealth based on mutual commitments that presupposed, by definition, that each of the contracting partners was recognized as an independent person. As time went on, his faith in the possibility of an association within a single political entity faded. Obviously, he avoided making any public avowal of this, but his admissions to those close to him are sufficiently numerous to testify to the fact that in 1956 or 1957 he was convinced that sooner or later Algeria would become independent, especially if a government invested with the necessary authority—that is, himself—did not take things in hand.[158] From that point on, the state's duty was to yield voluntarily what would ultimately be taken from it by force or obtained through its weakness; it was to scale down its ambitions and to establish a kind of confederation with Algeria, where a national feeling had taken root since the uprising in Sétif in 1945. And it had to do all this without pursuing illusions such as the policy of integration advocated by Soustelle and the military men, seeking to maintain colonial ties unchanged, or trying to create a kind of confederation whose time had probably already passed.[159] No doubt he did not have, as he was later to say, a "rigorously pre-established plan." He hesitated, pondered, and adapted himself, as was his wont, to changing circumstances. Nonetheless, he had determined "the main lines."[160] What he wrote to Soustelle in 1956 concerning the investments that would have to be made in order to turn Algeria away from the path to independence—remarks that were in any case not as clear as his interlocutor wanted to believe they were[161]—was of no importance whatever: de Gaulle knew how passionately Soustelle had fallen in love with Algeria. In 1957, the General was closer to Raymond Aron, who, in *La Tragédie algérienne,* predicted, to the dismay of politicians of all stripes, the end of French Algeria, than to the theses that his lieutenant had developed somewhat earlier in his book *Aimée et souffrante Algérie.*[162]

After May 1958, Lacouture writes, the supporters of French Algeria, and especially those who were Gaullists, felt betrayed, tricked, and abused, the victims of an "immense, patient, and infernal deception."[163] Debré had to acknowledge his mistake, and Soustelle did not pardon de Gaulle. The day before he left for Algiers and his famous declaration, "Je vous ai compris!" (*I have understood you!*), the General received Léon Delbecque.

When the latter brought up his favorite subject, de Gaulle said to him, with gentle irony, “Delbecque, integration has never been a viable solution.”[164] A terrible blow for a man who had seen in de Gaulle the savior of French Algeria.

And yet, a few days afterward, he spoke of Algeria as an “organically French” land, and, in Mostaganem, he uttered the “sacred cry,” as it was called: “Long live French Algeria!” His enemies deduced from this that he accorded no value to a promise, that he had used them to return to power—which was not false—and even that all this was of no importance to him, since he lacked any convictions except insofar as the accomplishment of his personal destiny was concerned. Jacques Laurent wrote:

> He was as inclined to proclaim that Algeria was forever French as to recognize that its vocation to independence had to be considered, [. . .] Algeria in itself did not interest him. His unbridled pride and his indefatigable ardor had suffered too much while he was pretending to be a general in retirement at Colombey. What interested him was staying in power. Gaullism is a practice. There is no Gaullist doctrine, no Gaullist convictions, no Gaullist line of conduct. In their place is, for the leader, the cult of himself, and for others, the cult of the leader.[165]

This neglects the fact that de Gaulle was not the “representative,” the “proxy,” or the “spokesman” of those who shouted “Long live de Gaulle!” in Algiers or Paris. He had taken care not to promise anything. Besides, if the Algerian tragedy was the springboard that brought him back to power, in his view the crisis that he was called upon to resolve was that of the regime, of institutions, of the state, whose inability to find a solution to the Algerian problem was a symptom: the consequence and not the cause. However, it cannot be said that he didn’t care about Algeria. The proof of this is that at first he tried to save his idea of an association whose form remained to be determined. In October 1958, after the famous but paradoxical “I have understood you!” of 4 June, which opened the way to self-determination by announcing a political equality that was, arithmetically, to tilt the balance toward the Muslim population,[166] de Gaulle launched a vast program of modernizing the colony at the same time that he held out his hand to the insurgents—"the peace of the brave"—and assigned General Challe the task of liquidating the insurrection militarily. This was politics on a grand scale. He probably only half believed in it, and deep down he felt, as he was to admit in his *Mémoires d'espoir,* that he had returned in order to "close a great history book,"[167] the saga of French colonialism. If he had to do it, he would, in the interest of France, and without worrying about his so-called "allies."

Just as after the Liberation in 1944 he had dealt very severely with the more or less authentic members of the Resistance who had not understood that the state's authority having been re-established in his person, their role was over, he quickly put in their place all those who imagined that he, General de Gaulle—in other words, France—had contracted the slightest debt to the insurgents in Algiers. He hastened, Jean Daniel tells us, to "break the slender connection with the conspirators who had raised him to power" and to erase "the invisible ink on the pact to which the rioters were trying to hold him."[168] Between him and the crowd at the Forum, there was nothing like the "contract signed between him and the nation after 13 May"[169] to which Soustelle referred later on. In 1962, de Gaulle called the movement of 13 May "an attempt at usurpation that proceeded from Algiers."[170] He never ceased to repeat that he had not responded to any call.[171] In taking in his hands the reins of government and investing the latter with his personal legitimacy, he was returning to his rightful position: those who had helped him did not come in along with him. They had no place there.

* * *

In late 1959, after having deceived both his supporters and his ministers—including even the first among them, Michel Debré—all of them more or less partisans of French Algeria, he abruptly changed directions, announcing the referendum on self-determination that was to lead, in March 1962, to the signature of the Evian Accords. He has been widely criticized for the way he put an end to the Algerian tragedy by negotiating[172] with the National Liberation Front (but who else could he have negotiated with?), abandoning the French of Algeria to their fate and, still more horribly, abandoning the disarmed Harkis[173] to their executioners. Giving up Algeria was a nasty business. De Gaulle might be endlessly reproached for going about it in a dirty way. He was in a hurry to have done with it. In Peyrefitte there are scenes that can sicken the reader.

For example, the one that occurred on 26 September 1962, when the General refused to admit that the number of repatriations was much larger than predicted. With Pompidou's permission, Peyrefitte showed de Gaulle the reports that proved that out of a million Europeans in Algeria in 1960, 800,000 had already taken refuge in Metropolitan France, not counting 15,000 Harkis. An embarrassed silence ensued around the ministerial Council table. "The General," Peyrefitte recalled, "let me speak without taking his eyes off me. But he clearly wasn't taking any pleasure in it." The Evian Accords having been signed six months earlier, the matter was closed. When de Gaulle finally spoke up, it was to say: "I wonder whether you aren't exaggerating a little." Pompidou gave Peyrefitte a signal not to object. However, he spoke again several times without eliciting any further reaction on the General's part. It was, after all, November, and he couldn't resist telling de Gaulle about the refugee camps he had just visited, with their haggard and despairing occupants. The young minister sensed that he was annoying his interlocutor, who suddenly exploded:

> None of that would have happened had the OAS[174] not felt completely comfortable with them! They were involved in twenty attacks per day! [. . .] They sabotaged the Evian Accords, which had been intended to protect them! They unleashed violence, and afterward they were surprised when it came back to bite them! Then they rushed to the boats and planes like Panurge's sheep. Don't try to make me pity them! This page was as painful for me as for anyone. But we've moved on. That was necessary for the country's salvation.[175]

That was not only unfair, it was false. It makes us think of Bonaparte refusing to pardon the Duke of Enghien. It is understandable that many French of Algeria have never pardoned the way in which they were sacrificed on the altar of the *raison d'État.* In conclusion, Peyrefitte attributes to de Gaulle a hidden, suppressed suffering that on that day he felt more personally than the General did.[176] Did the General harbor a resentment against the pieds-noirs, who had not received him very warmly in Algiers in 1943?[177] Was he indifferent to the Harkis, who in his view were not

French? Did he resent the military men, many of whom had always looked down on him and did not consider him one of their own? He probably felt all of these things to some extent. Maurice Druon agreed on this—while at the same time suggesting that the love of France so deeply rooted in the General's heart amounted to an absolution: de Gaulle sometimes lacked magnanimity.[178] To put it another way, even he was not free of pettiness: he was incapable of pardoning people, and he felt about the pieds-noirs the way he later felt about the participants in the Algiers putsch of 1961 or about Bastien-Thiry.[179]

Ultimately, the explanation does not reside solely in the General's temperament. In his view, Algeria was only a piece on the chessboard of French grandeur. It had ended up compromising that grandeur. Getting rid of it was not a great disaster, especially since the most important thing had been preserved. If the interests of the French of Algeria had been sacrificed, if the lives of the Harkis had counted for nothing, France had retained, through the Evian Accords, control over oil production and the possibility of testing its nuclear weapons in the Sahara.[180] That is what explains the General's harshness and indifference. He had returned to power on the shoulders of people who adhered to an outdated conception of power, which identified the latter with the extent of the territory and the size of the population. When it developed an atom bomb—the first test took place on 13 February 1960—France acquired a new lever that no colonial possession could henceforth provide. Compared with that, how important were the interests of the pieds-noirs and the lives of the Harkis? Since we began this chapter with a reference to Hegel, let us close it by citing a few more lines by the German philosopher concerning "World-historical individuals": "such men may treat other great, even sacred interests, inconsiderately; conduct which is indeed obnoxious to moral reprehension. But so mighty a form must trample down many an innocent flower—crush to pieces many an object in its path."[181]

Chapter Two

The Place of Great Men

IN THE GREAT COMPETITION of French posterity, Napoleon and Charles de Gaulle are in the forefront. Polls testify to this.[1] They have no rivals, no one challenges their position. They seem to have opened a lead that cannot soon be closed. But the group following them is nonetheless numerous. From Vercingetorix to Clemenceau and from Louis XIV to Gambetta, there is a long, very long list of heroes magnified or controversial in the history of France.

Other nations have, it is true, collections of the same kind in which we find, pell-mell, emblematic figures and heroes, founders of the nation and law-givers, soldiers and martyrs, heads of state and revolutionaries, defenders or saviors of the country, sometimes improbable, often unexpected, to which tragic circumstances have given a destiny and whom the collective memory has consecrated. Great Britain can take pride in having William the Conqueror, Elizabeth I, Cromwell, and Churchill; Germany has Frederick Barbarossa, Frederick II, and Bismarck; Russia has Peter the Great; Italy has Lorenzo de Medici, Garibaldi, and Cavour; the United States has Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt. To the list of historical figures we can add that of the artists, composers, philosophers, writers, and poets, without forgetting the legendary figures that surround the misty origins of many nations: *The Song of Roland* in France, the epics of Beowulf and the counterfeit epics of Ossian in Great Britain, the cycle of the Nibelungen in Germany, the *Romancero del Cid* in Spain, the legend of William Tell in Switzerland, and so on. Lamartine pointed out that in America George Washington was both a real and a legendary figure:

> Thus Providence seems to take pleasure in giving each free people, as the founder of its independence, a fabulous or real hero who is in conformity with the sites, the manners, and the character of those peoples: for a rustic and pastoral people like the Swiss, a heroic peasant; for a proud and insurgent people like the Americans, an honorable soldier; two symbols stand by the cradle of the two modern liberties to personify their two natures: here, Tell with his arrow and his apple; there, Washington with his sword and his laws.[2]

All of them, as sons of their own genius or of circumstances, are indissolubly linked to, and even indispensable for, both the history and the identity of each people. We cannot in fact conceive of a nation without the aid of these founding or exemplary figures who narrate its origins, illustrate its vicissitudes, and embody its values. If the nation is more than an association of interests or the simple expression of a preexisting nature—linguistic or ethnic—, if it consists above all, to echo a famous text by Renan, in "a soul, a spiritual principle," a reality composed of both "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" and "the desire to live together, the will to continue to develop a heritage that has been received intact,"[3] then heroes, whether historical or mythical, occupy a prominent place in it. Renan writes:

> A heroic past of great men, of glory [. . .] that is the social capital on which a national idea is based. Having common glories in the past, a common will in the present; having done great things together, wanting to do more of them—those are the essential conditions for being a people.[4]

From this point of view, Europe offered an extraordinary spectacle after the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989–1991. On the one hand, in the West, a corresponding crisis of heroic national figures that is still going on: it nourishes "a sort inverse millenarianism, [. . .] an apocalypse without brilliance, without hope, and without a messiah, that carries off even the idea of grandeur" and, along with the latter, the idea that a human will can be strong enough to dominate events, alter the course of things, "embody an ideal creator, convey innovative values to the point that everyone can recognize himself in him [. . .] and choose him as an inspiration."[5] Western societies have a shortage of great men, we hear that said every day, and with a few exceptions, the general mediocrity of the directing personnel offers sufficient proof that this assertion is true. At the time when the West was ceasing to be a "hero factory," in the East the choice of new emblematic figures, revived from the pre-communist period or promoted for the occasion, accompanied the birth of new nations and the rebirth of those which, after 1945, had fallen under the control of the USSR. Whereas in the West the old democracies, freed from an enemy that had long terrified them and now imagining themselves to be sheltered from any serious threat, laid down the burden of their history, while in the East the rejuvenated nations asserted their identity through "charismatic figures, genuine 'national heroes'":

> In their wake, the whole of History is rewritten as that of a nation that is suffering, and thus as an uninterrupted sequence of martyrs and founders [. . .], a heroic pantheon that manifests the temporal continuity of the "collectivity of peers." Thus nations, whether new or renewed, still need their heroes.[6]

St. Stephen and Kossuth in Hungary, Kośiuszko and Pulaski in Poland, and Lāčplēsis in Latvia thus rub shoulders with Kalevipoeg in Estonia and Vytautas the Great in Lithuania. Moreover, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the European "construction" consists in the absence of a common pantheon that would have given it a face and taught what it was, and especially what it was not. But precisely, the new Europe, conceived as the antithesis and transcendence of the old nations, had to be without a face, undefined in its limits as it is indeterminate in its history, so as to remain in perpetual development, destined to expand endlessly and to welcome all the people who chose, simply by joining it, a peaceful and fraternal future, even if they had no roots in European history and culture. Lacking a common gallery of illustrious individuals, Europe, without either a face or a past, has nothing but bank notes without images of people.

At the end of the 1990s, a survey was organized in six European countries in order to draw up a list of the continent's great men. It was no surprise that the French voted for de Gaulle, the British for Churchill and Shakespeare, the Spanish for Cervantes and Picasso, and the Italians for Leonardo da Vinci and Garibaldi, whereas the Poles voted in favor of Copernicus and Marie Curie, one of whose merits, in their eyes, was that she was born in Warsaw. But only 3 percent of the French mentioned Winston Churchill among the great Europeans, while no more than 2 percent of the British mentioned Charles de Gaulle.[7] For each of the peoples consulted, Europe had only one face, that of its own history, providing eloquent proof of its absence of a "soul" and of a "spiritual principle," that is, proof of its political nonexistence.

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ITS HISTORY GIVES France not one but countless faces. Paul Valéry even said that it offered "the most beautiful collection of phenomena in the fairground sense of the term" that one could imagine.[8]

> Napoleon, Clovis, Joan of Arc, Richelieu, Robespierre, etcetera. We have the history with the largest number of stars. A wax museum. We could make it into a gala performance at the [Théâtre] Français. And another for men of letters, Pascal, Rabelais, and others. The whole troupe would be involved in it.[9]

There is something unexpected, even incongruous in the "phenomenon"—the great man, hero, or firebrand. He is not in his right place. He clashes. He is hard to imagine at the place and time where he appears. Can a "phenomenon" more singular than Joan of Arc be conceived? In that "simple country girl," Michelet said, was embodied not only an idea cultivated all through the Middle Ages, that of the "Virgin who provides aid in battles," but also a reality, France, which had almost been destroyed by the civil war between the Armagnacs and the Burgundians over the spoils of a mad king in a territory half-occupied by the English enemy. "What legend is more beautiful than this incontestable history," Michelet asked. What enigma is more complex?[10] And, to remain with Michelet, how can we fail to think of Robespierre—concerning whom the great historian subtly remarked that he was in many respects the personification of the Jacobin bourgeois, there was in him something peculiar that did not fit into any known framework, something extraordinary in the literal sense. Thus this "comic" subject—Michelet considered "the Incorruptible" to be a genuine "political Tartuffe"—was at the same time "the most tragic"[11] subject. His most recent biographer, Clément Martin, is determined to prove that Robespierre was ultimately very ordinary and became a myth only after a process of memorial construction on which he neither had nor could have had any influence. However, he cannot help admitting, at the end of his book, that the mystery remains unsolved.[12] The "phenomena" do not give up their secrets so easily. We might better say that their enigmatic aspect is constitutive of their myth, and hence of their place in History.

Napoleon and General de Gaulle assuredly offer us two remarkable specimens for examination. De Gaulle? His singularity was immediately expressed in his physical appearance, his height, which was further increased by his kepi when he was wearing his uniform, the long, ill-proportioned body of which he seemed embarrassed, the face, with a large nose and a receding chin, the small mouth, the eyes surrounded by folds of skin like those of an elephant, and his way of expressing himself, the rather high-pitched voice, "astonishingly reedy and insolent,"[13] speaking slowly, with long pauses. Everyone who approached or heard him was struck by this, and if one wants to understand the man's exceptional aura, one has only to recall the images of him striding down the Champs-Elysées on 26 August 1944, when, tall and made even more imposing by the legitimacy that he henceforth possessed, he seemed so different from all those who were following him in that triumphal march.

And what about Napoleon? His contemporaries, and later many others, were at a loss to explain what kind of "phenomenon" he was. Unable to say with even minimal precision, they emphasized what, in their view, he was not. Taine wrote:

> [He is] immoderate in everything, but what is stranger still is that he is not only out of line but outside the frame; by his temperament, his instincts, his faculties, his imagination, his passions, his morality, he

> seems to have been cast in a different mold, composed of a different metal than his fellow citizens and his contemporaries. Obviously, he is neither a Frenchman nor a man of the eighteenth century; he belongs to another race and another age, at first glance one discerned in him the foreigner, the Italian and something else in addition, beyond that, beyond any similitude or analogy.[14]

Italian? Not clear. But it matters little, because the "something else" was dominant in any case. However different General de Gaulle might have been from Napoleon, wasn't it this same "something beyond all similitude or analogy" that struck the contemporaries of the last hero in our history? As Jean Guitton said after talking with him at the Elysée Palace, "he doesn't adhere to the landscape";[15] he traverses it, puts his mark on it, but is beyond it, he does not belong to it. There is even something incredible about the saga of the two men. The archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, who could not understand how the Napoleonic adventure had been possible, in Europe and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, wrote these lines: "Wherever we turn to seek for circumstances that may help to account for the events of this incredible story, we only meet with such as aggravate its improbability.[16] The French Revolution certainly made Napoleon possible; but it does not explain him, and it could be unanimously agreed that the defeat in 1940 made de Gaulle possible, though it did not explain him.[17] Had these upheavals not occurred, neither of the two men would have left the slightest trace behind them, but the appearance of both of them on the scene of History exceeds, in its significance, these events alone, at the same time that it changes their course. Let us imagine the French Revolution without Napoleon and the Second World War without de Gaulle: what would have happened to France had the Bourbons returned in 1800 rather than in 1814, whereas the king in exile was still very far from willing to come to terms with the Revolution and was persisting in his goal of "punishing" those who had brought it about? And, a century and a half later, what would have happened had de Gaulle not made it possible for France to be counted among the victors?

A French National Portrait Gallery would have a hard time fitting inside the walls of the museum in Trafalgar Square. After the number of political systems and constitutions, this is another "French exception." Besides, the two are inseparable, "great men" usually being children of times of troubles and at home where institutions are fragile and constitutions ephemeral. Stable countries and peaceful eras do not need saviors. France, about which Guizot said in 1821 that it was "neither settled nor constituted," could not, for that very reason, do without heroes whose vocation was to confer on it, by means of great and glorious memories, the unity whose elements it did not find in the present.[18]

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FRANCE HAS PRODUCED so many "phenomena" and the need for emblematic figures is so great that the various parties were long able to draw on this pool to stock their lists of heroes. Christian Amalvi wrote a fascinating study of the quarrels of remembrance.[19] In the nineteenth century, and still at the beginning of the twentieth, Catholics had their pantheon, both religious and royalist, and their "Hell," to which were assigned most of the great men of the opposing camp, that of the Revolution and the Republic. On the good side were found St. Vincent de Paul, the curé of Ars, St. Bernard and St. Blandine, preceding the kings, from Clovis the founder to Louis XVI the martyr; on the bad side, most of those whom the secular and republican side venerated, precursors of the Revolution (or thought to be such)—from Etienne Marcel and Coligny to, of course, Voltaire and Rousseau; heroes of 1789 and 1793, except for the terrorists; heirs of the Revolution, from Lamartine to Victor Hugo. In the republican pantheon there were no saints, and few kings—with the exception of Louis XII and Henry IV—but lots of soldiers, Old Regime generals from the Revolution or the Empire, who defended the fatherland in danger. A forgotten novel by Gabriel Chevallier, *Sainte-Colline,* describes, through the bedlam and nasty tricks of middle-school boys, some of them pupils of the clergy, others of the Republic, those two Frances that confronted one another until about 1914, the Catholic religion against the secular religion, history against history, hero against hero.

The Third Republic had nonetheless tried to bring the two traditions, royalist and republican, together in a vast synthesis of the nation's history. Of this attempt, the principal monument was the enormous *Histoire de France* edited by Ernest Lavisse in the early twentieth century

(1901–1911), which had been preceded by the "Petit Lavisse," a manual intended for use in elementary schools (1884; definitive edition 1913). Just as the Republic, by crushing the Paris Commune in 1871, had proven that it could defend the social order as well as the monarchy or the Empire had, its historians tried to give it an older pedigree than the French Revolution and the philosophical heritage of the Enlightenment to which the men of 1789 had appealed. They sought to show that the Revolution marked the culmination of the whole of the nation's history and not solely the revolt of one half of France against the other. Lavisse was, before Albert Malet and Jules Isaac, the first "teacher of the Republic."[20] But he was a paradoxical teacher whose belated conversion to the Republican cause—only the fall of Napoleon III had turned him away from Bonapartism—may explain his success. According to Pierre Nora, if no historian before Lavisse had "made such an effort to weld the monarchical past to the Republican present" and "to give the national adventure its coherence and exemplary import,"[21] he did so in terms that were those of the conservative tradition, simply turned around to the advantage of the Republic as the culmination of the history of France. His teaching, Nora adds, "is presented as a simple but decisive inversion of the meaning and the values of neo-monarchism" that is ultimately closer to Bainville's *Histoire de France* than to Michelet's:

> The same obsession with the weakness of national feeling, the same rootedness in the French tradition, the same cult of the earth, the sky, and the dead, invoked as his highest loyalties, the same religious sense of unity and duty—Lavisse transposed, in the secular and republican mode, the justifications for monarchy. The Republic became France's Providence; it *calls* its citizens to national *unity* for the *salvation* of the country, just as the king, in Bossuet, gathers his subjects together to bring about their salvation.[22]

The two Frances—which everything, or almost everything, separated, starting with the religious question—could thus finally commune around a history told by both camps with the same words, or almost the same. The pantheon of the great men celebrated by Lavisse and by Jules Ferry's schools did not go so far as to annex the champions of the Catholic Church, but in the end the idea of a certain national historic continuity led to a rebalancing of memory toward the Old Regime. Augustine Fouillée accords only a small place to kings in his *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants* (1877), that other monument of post-1870 France, but the Republic's schools enriched the list of national glories with valiant warriors—Du Guesclin, Bayard, and Turenne—devoted ministers—Sully, Colbert, and Vauban—generous philanthropists and beneficial scientists—from Parmentier and Lavoisier to Pasteur. Some figures were, of course, excluded or used as negative examples: Louis XI, who personified both the abuses of royalty and cruelty—"Louis XI! Oh, the wicked man," Georges Montorgueil has a little girl say at the beginning of Job's magnificent picture book;[23] Richelieu, whom readers of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* could not admire without reservations; Robespierre, who reeked too much of the blood on the guillotine and whom many Republicans did not like because they saw in the cult of the Supreme Being proof of a dubious bigotry; Napoleon, finally, who evoked the despot crushing Europe after betraying the Republic. . . . At a time when the desire to avenge the loss of Alsace and Lorraine[24] was strong, it was not easy to celebrate someone who, although he had added to France's glory, had also lost most of the Revolution's conquests and, in the end, bequeathed to his successors a territory smaller than he had found it when he took power. In addition, Napoleon III's inglorious fall in 1870 had revived the memory of the bloody coup d'état by means of which the prince-president of 1848 had paved the way to the Empire, and the opprobrium that was now attached to the nephew's memory inevitably spilled over to stain that of the uncle. Napoleon was entering one of those periods of discredit that mark his posthumous history.

Around 1900, the Republican gallery of famous men, finally constituted even if not considered legitimate by all French people, was almost complete. When in 1906 *Le Petit Parisien* newspaper organized a "great men game," several hundred thousand readers responded, placing at the head of the list Pasteur, Hugo, and Gambetta, followed immediately by . . . Napoleon.[25] This was the conclusion of a historical narrative established at the time of the Restoration, which after 1880 became "the common property of the French"[26] until the 1960s.

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When I was a child, large, colored geographical plates hung from classroom walls. They were attached with big grommets that made it possible to change them at will. The geological map of France included all the colors of the rainbow: yellow was dominant around Paris, green in Normandy, brown in Brittany, pink in the Massif Central, sky blue in the Jura mountains, and in the Alps, all these colors were fragmented and associated. There was a map of the watercourses and canals on which blue was dominant, another of the railroads, whose lines were represented by a red line that varied in thickness depending on their importance. Other maps showed France's departments and its provinces before 1789, both of which were so harmonious; agricultural products: sugar beets in the North, forests in the East, wine in Burgundy and the Bordeaux area, sheep in Berry, and beef cattle in the Charolaisland; industrial products: fabrics in Brittany, silks in Lyon, and textiles in the North, mines and steel mills, machinery in Le Creusot, and paper products in Angoulême,[27] and so on. They inspired in me a lifelong love of atlases. These maps of France taught us the variety of its topography, the diversity of its landscapes and climates. We felt that France was rich and strong. It was still rich, though already not as strong as before, but there were still, overseas, patches of orange color that indicated France's distant possessions, not as many as there had been a decade earlier, but still sufficiently numerous to attest to our presence all over the globe and to allow us to conclude that France would always shine in the firmament of nations, and that if it was no longer, as Mauriac put it, "the great nation," it remained "the irreplaceable nation."[28]

One of my first teachers was M. Lévy. Like his pupils, he wore a smock. His was gray. He taught, among other things, morals. When we had been well-behaved, he lifted the sleeve of his smock and showed us the number tattooed on his forearm. He had been deported to Auschwitz. I remember drawing, in his class, concentration camps, with watchtowers and barbed wire. In his own way, he inculcated in his pupils a love for their country, its history, and its values. For a child, all adults are old. To me, M. Lévy seemed old. I have since learned that he was not yet fifty.[29] He was one of the last representatives of the Republic's *hussards noirs*.[30] The teaching of morality disappeared after 1968, replaced by insipid civics courses; the geographical maps were removed from the walls and the history professor no longer used the marvelous colored plates in which one saw a Gallic village, Vercingetorix paying homage to Caesar, a Gallo-Roman town, Charlemagne at work, a medieval knight kneeling to pay homage to his overlord, the six burghers of Calais with nooses around their necks, Joan of Arc below the walls of Orléans, the château of Versailles, the Tennis Court Oath and the celebration of the Federation, citizens hurrying to volunteer to defend the country in danger, Napoleon's coronation, the barricades in 1830, a locomotive puffing steam, the trenches at Verdun, General de Gaulle coming down the Champs-Elysées in 1944, and the same avenue filled with a crowd of elegant strollers, representing the peaceful, prosperous France of the 1960s, that of the ocean liner *France* and the supersonic airliner *Le Concorde.* In my day, the same engravings were found in history textbooks, such as the one by Léon Brossolette and Marianne Ozouf, intended for elementary schools and entitled *Mon premier livre d'histoire de France,* which had been frequently reprinted since it appeared before the war,[31] or Danton and Baudin's *Livret-guide d'histoire pour le cours élémentaire 1re et 2me année,*[32] which commented on a collection of sixty illustrations summing up French history from Vercingetorix to de Gaulle.

It was in a manual of this kind that I learned history, unless it was in Malet-Isaac, which was republished for the last time in 1961, the year I started school. The list of heroes celebrated in these books was still the one established in the time of Jules Ferry, to which the twentieth century had, in the end, added little. The First World War led to the elevation of a few new figures both civilian—Clemenceau—and military—Foch, Joffre—while the next war added de Gaulle, Leclerc, and Jean Moulin. It is often said that the 1960s saw the old society fly to pieces, but that is not true: May 1968 and "flower power" concerned only a tiny part of a society most of whose members continued to live in accord with the codes of the preceding decade. Its effects were deferred, like those of the French Revolution. It has to be said that the Revolution was produced by people who had grown up under the Old Regime, who spoke its language and had learned its ways. Under the Directory, and still under the Empire, people were seeking less to invent a new society than to restore whatever could be restored of the old one, and it was only after the middle of the nineteenth century, and no sooner, that the old world completely disappeared.

At the time I am talking about, Napoleon was everywhere. A visit to his tomb in *Les Invalides* was, along with visits to the *Musée de la Marine* and the much-loved *Musée de l'Homme,* one of the Thursday afternoon field trips. It was the time when André Castelot was winning plaudits for his two-volume biography of Napoleon (*Bonaparte* and *Napoléon,* 1967–1968), General de Gaulle had just been re-elected by universal suffrage and, despite the violence of the passions he aroused, he was presiding over one of the—rare—moments when the French seemed to be proud of themselves. The preceding one dated from 1918. That was in the distant past. It was strange to be governed by a man who we sensed would enter into legend, but who already belonged to it: "As I returned home," Léon Noël said after having seen de Gaulle in the fall of 1944, "as strange as it may seem, it occurred to me that I would hardly have been more moved and scarcely more astonished had I suddenly seen Henry IV, Louis XIV, or Napoleon rise up before my eyes."[33] How could one talk about such a man? When he was writing the opening pages of his *De Gaulle* (1964), François Mauriac, feeling that he had neither the strength nor the inclination to become an amateur historian, said he wanted less to recount the General's history than to continue to measure himself against the "certain idea of General de Gaulle" that he had created for himself, and into which myth and reality entered in equal portions: "What should I do, then? Nothing but observe my model, continue to devour him with my eyes as I have been doing since 1944, and dream out loud about him, as I did during the Occupation—because an element of dreaming remains in the relationships we entertain with him. The myth that he was for us during the four years of the resistance has never completely dissipated."[34] These lines, written by a Mauriac fascinated by his model, have been roundly mocked—they inspired Jacques Laurent to write a droll pamphlet: "Struck down by the idol, Mauriac fainted"[35]—but they express rather well the devotion that some French people felt to the man of 18 June and 13 May.

Like the Emperor, de Gaulle was even present in series intended for children. I recall having read, at the age of ten or eleven, *War and Peace* in the *Bibliothèque verte* collection (1965), an almost unabridged edition that omitted only the tedious chapters in which Tolstoy sets forth his philosophy of history, and it was in the same collection, which has now disappeared, that I read my first book about Charles de Gaulle.[36] The author was Jean d'Esme, whose real name was Jean-Marie d'Esménard, the prolific author of travel books and exotic romances—from *Thi-Bâ fille d'Annam* (1920) to *Compagnons de brousse* (1965). He also wrote biographies of famous military men such as Foch, Joffre, Gallieni, de Lattre, and Leclerc. Rereading today this little book which, after rapidly describing the General's life before the war, is concerned primarily with the history of Free France, from the appeal on 18 June to the march down the Champs-Elysées, it occurs to me that the French school system did its work well, because this book intended for children was not written in a style and a language that aped those of children. It taught the most important things while at the same time exciting the imagination of its young readers. Jean d'Esme left de Gaulle in his office at the ministry of Defense, after the visit to Notre-Dame and the gunfire crackling all around the great man, and concluded with these words that summed up the book's message:

> The ceremony over, Charles de Gaulle returned to the ministry of National Defense. And while Leclerc resumed his march toward Strasbourg; while de Lattre rapidly advanced from the South, while the British and the Americans continued their victorious progress, driving the Germans before them; while, in a word, the liberation of the fatherland was being achieved—Charles de Gaulle pursued his destiny. A destiny with which the grandeur of France is indissolubly connected.[37]

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It is useless to consult the school textbooks of the century now beginning: they are full of holes, entire aspects of history have disappeared, as have, even more certainly, those who made or incarnated history. Just as learning geography no longer involves knowing the nomenclature of departments or nations, in locating rivers, mountain ranges, capitals, or major deposits of natural resources—in short, in knowing where the source of the Seine is—but rather in "helping pupils think about the world," allowing them "to have and to analyze spatial experiences and to become aware of the geographical dimension of their lives," all that so that they can "construct themselves" "as inhabitants"—as the most recent reform of the curricula puts it[38]—in the same way the teaching of history has long since overflowed the borders of Metropolitan France and approached the shores of Europe and the planet as a whole—"opening to the world," in the educationists' jargon—and freeing itself from chronology.[39]

In reality, the quarrel over curricula is not new. In 1979, nearly forty years ago, Alain Decaux published an op-ed piece that attracted a great deal of attention: "Parents, on n'apprend plus l'histoire à vos enfants!" ("Parents, your children are no longer being taught history!").[40] Decaux saw in this the consequence less of ignorance or incompetence than of a deliberate intention. That was true, even more than it is today. The 1970s were not favorable to the teaching of history. It has to be admitted that the governments that succeeded de Gaulle's, under Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, were in such a hurry to rid themselves of the Gaullist heritage that History, which imbued so strongly the General's "certain idea of France," had to pay the price. Georges Pompidou was a curious man whose love of French literature and poetry did not extend to the history of his country, which he nonetheless embodied, even by his features, as no other president has been able to do. With a cigarette glued to his lips and his dark eyes beneath bushy eyebrows, he looked like a literate coal delivery man. But the history of France, which he knew the way people knew it in his time, that is, perfectly, meant for him first of all the "enormous storehouse of resentment" that Bernanos talked about, an "arsenal of arguments [with which the French] assail one another"[41] that was so obsessional that it prevented the nation from moving forward and modernizing itself. The General's successor had not taken part in the Resistance, and the quarrels about France's past were alien to him. His pragmatic and positive way of thinking looked toward the future. He was more concerned with contemporary art, futuristic museums, cities given over to automobile traffic, and triumphal industry than with controversies regarding things of the past. One could not, he thought, ruminate forever on old tragedies. The war was over, the colonies had been emancipated, now we have to turn over a new leaf, look resolutely toward the future and take advantage of a present that was still under the sign of the *Trente Glorieuses.*[42] Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, for his part, saw France as a palimpsest on which his task was to write the first chapters of an entirely new history. He said this with a disarming naïveté shortly after he was elected president: "Now the book of time is opening, and its blank pages are vertiginous. Together, as a great, united, and fraternal people, let us begin the new era of French politics."[43] The "old" history, with its tragedies and partisan rifts, was over. The new president claimed that he could rally the French, or at least a majority of them—two out of three, he said—behind reforms that he intended to undertake. The projects guided by the ministers of National Education of the period, Joseph Fontanet in 1973 and René Haby in 1977, bore the mark of this indifference to history, one by eliminating it from the secondary school curricula leading to a degree in the sciences, the other by reducing it to an option. Priority was given to the sciences, economics, "useful" disciplines best suited to prepare students to enter the labor market. The humanities seemed to be depreciated because they were linked to a past that was now dead and gone.

At the time that Alain Decaux sounded his alarm, the teaching of history was in fact in danger. History was no longer the cement that held the nation together, as a set of shared memories in which children learned to recognize the grandeur of their country and the excellence of its values, but only, as official statements made clear in October 1968, an "introductory" discipline. This amounted to a genuine demotion.[44] Paradoxically, history had never been in better shape, which explained, for many people, why Decaux's warning aroused such a strong response. In books, films, television, and radio programs, history was booming. The *Trente Glorieuses,* which were oriented toward indefinite growth, had abruptly ended after the first oil crisis in 1973. The reaction against the spirit of 1968 had begun. The time had come to rediscover the past and roots: the reader may remember the immense success of *Cheval d'orgueil,* the novels of Henri Vincenot and Antonine Maillet, or again, in a very different genre, of *Montaillou, village occitan.*[45] The "Annales School" of historians was then enjoying its greatest influence; it had even changed the way history was taught, and it was also one of the targets of Alain Decaux's criticism. He did not contest what it had contributed to historical knowledge, but he did deny that the results of its research could serve as the basis for educating children. It was too complex, giving priority to the large scale—civilizations, long-term developments in history—putting the social and cultural above politics and relegating chronology and the role of human will in historical change to the cemetery of past illusions. In short, it sought less to study abrupt, unexpected bifurcations than the action of the silent or subterranean forces—interests, mentalities, even language—that had made them possible, or, on the contrary, had been an obstacle to possible developments. Here, history lost its points of reference, its familiar faces, it was fragmented into a myriad of objects without connections to one another, at the same time that it broke out of the straitjacket of dates and national borders—which did not happen as often in past teaching as one might think. The catastrophe was such that it led, starting in the late 1970s, to a reaction of which Alain Decaux was in fact, by his notoriety, the spearhead. The "restoration" of history, with its chronology and its great men, was at that point an issue for the left. Ministers, first Alain Savary and then Jean-Pierre Chevènement, and historians, following the lead of Max Gallo, supported the re-introduction of the teaching of history in the curricula. There was a logic in all that. As much as Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had been the heralds of a religion of modernity whose credo was growth, prosperity, technological progress and material well-being, François Mitterrand based his legitimacy not only on his election by the French people, but also on History. Wasn't his first act to go to the Pantheon to lay a rose on the tombs of Victor Schoelcher, Victor Hugo, and Jean-Jaurès? Naturally, the left saw in his election a new start, the beginning of a new era that would "change people's lives," to use the slogan of the period, but also as a conclusion: that of a long march that had begun in 1789, had been marked by the disappointed hopes of 1848, the tragedy of the Commune, the Dreyfus affair, the Popular Front, the Resistance, and May 1968. Representing "the people of the left," for his partisans Mitterrand incarnated a history and at the same time a hope, and he himself laid claim to it; his predecessors had dreamed, on the contrary, of escaping from History, in which they saw chiefly a curse.[46]

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Later on, the teaching of history really did go under, after the major turning point symbolically represented by the new millennium. This time, it was no longer a philosophy of modernism that was at work, but rather the conviction that the necessary opening up to the world required a complete renewal of education. In 2002 extra-European civilizations entered school programs on a large scale, to the point of occupying a quarter of the time devoted to the subject. In order to "live together," room had to be made for other histories, deemed as important as the history traditionally taught. The Christian Middle Ages on the same level as the kingdom of the Monomotapa, the rich and the insignificant mixed together, the essential and the accessory equally distinguished, histories "provided with [such] a mediocre activity," said Joseph de Maistre, that they have "hardly left a trace on the itinerary of the centuries" raised to the same rank as those of nations that have counted for the most in world history.[47]

Jacques Julliard recently deemed these programs "depressing": "They breathe embarrassment at being French, even the shame of being French; the conviction that we are ourselves only in relation to the Other, and that in ourselves we are nothing more than the void."[48] It could not be said better. It is in fact an attack on the "national romance" that inspires most of the projects of reform. This romance is supposed to be the "invention" of nineteenth-century historians, from Michelet to Lavisse, driven by the two-fold will to annex to the Republic the long past that the Revolution had described as the "Old Regime," and to indicate that the advent and taking root of Republican institutions marked not only the end of the French Revolution but especially that of the history itself of a nation that was finally endowed with the regime best suited to defend and promote the values of liberty, equality, progress, and justice that were those of the Republican system. A lie, people said afterward; even an "ideology," which emphasized so much the emancipation of the people as the leading thread of French history the better to conceal how many injustices and crimes had to be committed to pay for it. Slave trades and colonialism, the oppression of religious minorities, nationalism, misogyny, xenophobia, and racism, the exploitation of the weakest—all this is supposed to be the detestable flipside of the "golden legend" in which the influence attributed to alleged "great men" also dispossessed of their role all those, men and women, known or anonymous, who really made France.[49] Thus the time seemed to have come to allow those who had been excluded from history to make their entry into it: the mass of the obscure, the nobodies, the forgotten, and the innumerable victims. A history without heroes—the latter have the disadvantage of often being on the positive side—a history in black and white, Manichean, compassionate, and whiny; a history of suffering worn on its sleeve and of resentment; a history torn away from History—tragic, always tragic[50]—and reduced to a moral lesson taught to the descendants of the alleged torturers of alleged victims, asked to repent and to make up for the crimes of their ancestors: that is, the deeply racist and fascist France of *The Sorrow and the Pity,* of which Robert Paxton, Zeev Sternhell, and Bernard-Henri Lévy were, forty years ago now, the main evangelists.[51]

Relativism, self-hatred, self-denigration, repentance, and a desire for expiation—aren't those the long-standing "tears of the white man"[52] whose supposed "sins" have caught up with him[53] and which recently presided—in late 2013—over the writing of a report, immediately filed away, on the *Refoundation of the policy of integration*? According to this report, the history of France has to be "(re)cast anew" to include "everyone in a common history," notably by recognizing France's "Arab-Oriental dimension" and by revising the list of "incarnated figures" in French history, which is too exclusively composed of male, white, and heterosexual "great men." What the partisans of a re-writing of French history have to say is not always so violently polemical and grotesque. Some of them are moved by a concern that will not be described as mediocre: the desire to forge a common historical narrative in a society that is increasingly marked by the diversity of its population's origins and cultures, a civic desire for inclusiveness thus also explains the impoverishment, the emptying out, of the history taught. There is a great temptation to cleanse the national past of everything that is particular, specific to it, everything that makes it unique, whether events or actors, in order to retain only what "speaks" to everyone. Then a common narrative would be replaced by a history reduced to episodes with a strong moral content—persecutions, genocides—that are supposed to deliver a message that is collectively acceptable and to contribute to the birth of a renewed identity that would refer, beyond each individual's origins, to our common membership in humanity—a history that would then inevitably become confused with a moral lesson, because it is hard to see how, for example, the program sketched out by Dominique Borne could carried out:

> Today, many French people no longer recognize themselves in the dialogue between the providential narrative [Bossuet] and the republican narrative [Lavisse]. Citizens—this is clear in the schoolyard—are not all *Gauls.* The new narrative has to bring into history all those who up to now have felt excluded from it. To try once again *to make France together,* to allow all those who have not found their place in the integrative narrative to enter into it, to construct a history that crosses the history of France with membership in Europe and the whole world, and thus to try to conceive the history of France not as an isolated object but as a fabric whose interlacing threads symbolize all its interdependencies, to dare to envisage the future on the basis of the past, that is, to reinvent politics, we need French history, we need a *different* French history.[54]

This would be a laudable project if we were free to change history at will, to attribute to it a different starting point, to make it take paths that it has not followed and to give it a different direction. But it is impossible to play around with the facts. This famous "national romance" that is currently so reviled is not an invention, an imaginary construct, an ideology. The fashionable "deconstructive" approach—the deconstruction of history, traditions, beliefs, ideas, or institutions—bears within it the notion that ultimately France does not exist, that it is simply a name, an "invention," a memorial scaffolding without real basis that could just as well be disassembled piece by piece, a space in which history could be rewritten in order to change the future.

Such an approach is full of fables of all kinds, of "romances," precisely. Does it not allow us, for example, to assign to the prehistory, if not to the history, of France a beginning different from the one generally accepted, by replacing the druids and hirsute warriors of the old books by . . . the foundation of the Greek colony in Marseilles in 600 BCE?[55] That the arrival of the Greeks from Phocea, in Asia Minor, constituted an important event, no one will deny. But from that to choosing that date as the "symbolic beginning" of the history of France before France—of the France that existed before the year 1000—is a step we will avoid taking. After all, the Gauls, Celts, or Iberians had already been living there for a long time when the Greeks landed. Their fortified villages and their warrior aristocracies testify to an ancient presence[56] and the establishment of a Greek colony on the shores of the Mediterranean had hardly any influence on the way in which the native peoples lived, unless it was that it made them develop a taste for wine. An important innovation, to be sure, but it resulted from commercial exchanges—iron and slaves traded for amphoras of wine—rather than from a political will or a fusion of populations. Michelet already said it: the Greeks of Massilia looked toward the sea, which they colonized from Nice to Málaga, not toward the land.[57]

If the history of France was the product of a hybridization, it is not to the Greeks that we must turn, but rather to Rome, which conquered and "Romanized" the Gauls. Forgetting the requirement of truth is one of the great problems of our time. We see it at work in all domains, and among historians as well. The French Revolution was long the victim of ideologues who made it say what they wanted to hear. They saw a proletariat where there were only bourgeois and the will of the majority where factions reigned. These wild imaginings are a little out of fashion, but they have spread to most of the other historical questions re-viewed through the prism of the present and of the dominant ideology. Provided that it has some relation, even a vague one, to current affairs, any of these questions is liable to be subjected to the newspeak of political correctness. Haven't we seen an episode as distant as the great invasions of the fifth century become the object of a re-evaluation so complete that its meaning is radically changed?

For a long time it was believed that Rome had been overthrown by these "myriads of savages who marched to the sack of Rome," by the Huns who "built their wooden palaces across from the Coliseum," and by Alaric's hordes, who "crossed the Danube in 376 to overthrow the civilized Greek empire."[58] It is true that this traditional view has been challenged for a long time. Fustel de Coulanges already no longer believed it. The Barbarians were far too few to have been able to bring down the Empire. Fustel said that the thesis of the sudden fall of Rome was only two centuries old; it went back, he claimed, to the disputes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerning the respective origins of the nobility and the Third Estate. He himself had a different idea. If, as the author of *La Cité antique,* Fustel tried so hard to minimize the scope and consequences of the "great invasions," that was because, opposing the "Germanist" thesis that maintained that royalty and feudalism were Frankish in origin, he held that they were of Roman origin, claiming that the Franks had destroyed Rome less than they had succeeded the emperors.[59] Consequently, if Rome was at the origin of the French monarchy, continuity should win out over rupture in the transition from one epoch to the other.[60]

In their refutation of the classic thesis, Fustel's modern equivalents are more radical than their teacher. For the traditional distinction between Antiquity and the High Middle Ages, which suggests a break, a fracture, a sudden change, they substitute, between the classical and medieval epochs, a "Late Antiquity" that is supposed to extend from the second or third century to the seventh or eighth. These five or six centuries are supposed to have seen the world gradually transform itself as all its structures evolved. With this hypothesis, which replaces the idea of a "fall" by that of a "transformation," the salutary hybridization makes us forget the reality of the violence.[61] Gentle invasions, if one can put it that way. The Empire and Roman civilization did not collapse, they entered into a process of "transition" and "adaptation"; the Barbarians did not destroy the Empire, they transformed it, even as they adopted "Romanness and Christianity."[62] The historian and archeologist Bryan Ward-Perkins reminds this school, today dominant, which seeks to include the Barbarians in the nasty brew of contemporary "living together," that, concerning infrastructures, the comfort of the houses, craftsmen's skill, the coinage of money, or the production and trade of tiles, the "transition" looked a lot like a cataclysm.[63] Here, there is no gentle adaptation, but instead the disconcerting ruin—spread over time, no doubt—of a superior civilization. "A fantastic *collapsus* of the ancient world," Pierre Chaunu already wrote, "an enormous breakdown," political, social, demographic, cultural, and technological, that had seen disappear in a few decades "cities, roads, the communication network, the reproduction of knowledge, of culture, and first of all of reading and writing."[64] Don't the testimonies that have come down to us speak of an age of iron, a time of terror and destruction?

The thinning out of history has no motive other than ideology, and the erasure of "great men" from the historical narrative is only an additional manifestation of this. Don't they give a face to this history that many people now consider to be over? Numerous heroes whose tribulations were taught not so long ago have disappeared from school textbooks. Where have Clovis and Charles Martel gone? And St. Louis? And Francis I? And Louis XIII? And Louis XIV, whom only Versailles saves from oblivion? And Napoleon himself, none of whose wars is any longer mentioned? This depersonalization is all the more peculiar in that if there is a history that was always presented through its main characters, even by those who found that objectionable, it is precisely the history of France. There is nothing less anonymous than the national romance: "The Forty Kings who made France" was the title of a series that had a great success, not always deserved, some thirty years ago, and which continued a genre so old that these works would not have seemed strange to a cultivated Frenchman of the time of Louis XIV.[65]

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Since this history needed a few founders, pre-Revolutionary historians sought them very far in the past, in centuries so misty that it was impossible to determine with certainty whether these first kings were authentic. The borderline between history and fable always becomes a bit vague when we approach origins. Opening his *Histoire de France* (1642–1651) with the reign of the mysterious Pharamond, François Mézeray, a contemporary of Louis XIII, could not help expressing a few doubts, recognizing that he was conforming to a tradition that a completely scrupulous historian might not have followed as easily.[66] It is true that these kings contemporary with the last Roman emperors, these pagan warriors whose contours are indeterminate, whose names remain uncertain, and whose history is conjectural, were brought in only to prepare the entrance onto the scene of Clovis, whose conversion truly marked, according to our old chroniclers, the providential beginning of French history. Everything was said in the first pages, once the Gallic and Gallo-Roman prolegomena had been dispatched: "King I," was the title of the chapter devoted to Pharamond. It should have been adorned by a portrait. In its place, an empty medallion with this caption: "Here we do not see the natural image of this king who founded the empire of the French, but we can note that he had the advantage of being the first to combine arms and laws."[67] Legend credited him with the paternity of several rules that were later to govern royal succession. The existence of Pharamond's successors, Clodio and Merovech, was no better attested, to the point that the engravers dared not attempt to give them a face, any more than they did "King IV"—Childeric, Clovis's father—even though the latter was not a legendary figure, since in 1653 his tomb had been found in Tournai.

This way of writing history, reign by reign, might have been boring had it not benefited from Mézeray's lively style. Can we reproach a historian who puts in the mouth of his characters speeches of his own invention because he fears seeing his readers tire of "always following an army through ruined and deserted countries?" Or when he admits—candidly or casually—numerous errors, giving as his sole excuse: "And in truth it is not in the power of a mortal man to run a twelve-century-long race without stumbling."[68] He was long considered France's greatest historian. The young Louis XIV's valet read him a few pages of Mézeray each evening.[69] Posterity proved very severe. However, Sainte-Beuve admitted that he read Mézeray with pleasure; he judged him to be "straightforward and sensible, careless and free, irregular, inconsistent perhaps, but above all truthful," and endowed with the talent to tell the story of "old France in its own language," with its words, its images, and its ideas."[70] The compliment is not slight; and it is deserved.

Granted, there are tedious passages. After all, the history of France also has its slack periods. But this pioneer tried to render all these monarchs their due, convinced, moreover, that France had arisen from their more or less free and voluntary action and that with varying degrees of success they had contributed, one after the other, to building the edifice. Thus by way of the Merovingians and Carolingians, Mézeray—and after him, his imitators—led his readers to the centerpiece, and the king, of his *Histoire:* the Capetians, through whom the *Rex francorum*—the king of the Franks—of earlier centuries gradually became the *Rex franciae*—the king of France—and the history of France really began, around the year 1000, to take off.[71]

The tenth century was assuredly one of those periods when one feels the power of the will. An "atrocious" time, according to Jacques Bainville, when "everything that had been seen at the fall of Rome and during the agony of the Merovingians was outdone."[72] Bainville was the last great representative of the old school of history. He said that if France, having so to speak ceased to exist in the great wreck of the last Carolingians, did not disappear, it owed its survival to the action of a handful of individuals of great ability and will, or rather to a lineage of remarkable men: the Capetians. When he had to name the founding fathers of the nation, it was not to Pharamond that Bainville went back, and hardly to Clovis, even if the latter had had the merit of being the first to seal the alliance with the Church that was to weigh so heavily on France's destiny; as for Charlemagne, his main claim to glory had been to revive the ideas of unity, authority, and grandeur that had fallen into escheat since the fall of the Roman Empire. No, it was to an obscure royal servant that Bainville turned, Robert the Strong, and toward his son, Odo. They had patiently carved out a fief for themselves in the shadow of the Carolingians, whom they served, and with perseverance and tenacity, they had collected the means necessary for receiving, when the time came, their masters' heritage. The year 987 saw the beginning of the national romance.

"For a hundred years," Bainville goes on, "this royal family cut a mediocre figure."[73] The king, whose prestige was primarily moral, was far from being the most powerful lord in his kingdom. Pondering the heirs of the "king of little"[74] that Hugh Capet had been, Bainville noted how[75] much luck and effort had been required to found a monarchy without which France might not even have existed. The luck consisted in the existence of male heirs in direct line who, during three hundred and thirty years, spared this fragile royal family the trial of a succession crisis, helping, on the contrary, to accredit the idea, which had long been contested, that kings succeeded one another from father to son. This luck does not suffice to explain the Capetians' good fortune. None of them squandered the legacy he had received from his predecessors, seeking instead to increase it in order to bequeath it, still larger and more solid, to his own successor. It was a family that was concerned, in a very bourgeois way, and ahead of its time, with property and good marriages. Under the direction of this family, which was more diligent than brilliant, France took form between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries.

Bainville moves more rapidly than Mézeray. He strides from one reign to the next, served by a style that combines a journalist's verbal skill and way of synthesizing with a historian's knowledge. The titles of his chapters are not as monotonous as those of his distant predecessor, but like the latter, when he arrives at the modern period he could have titled it "Henry IV the Great, King XLII."

When Bainville published his *Histoire de France* in 1924, it had already been almost a century since the Romantic rebels had started castigating this "old-fashioned" history in which kings and their servants occupied the limelight alone or almost alone.[76] Augustin Thierry summed up the program he had adopted in the 1820s this way: "War on Mézeray, Velly, their continuers and disciples."[77] The French Revolution had to do with this. It had filled History with the countless multitude of the common people, and at the same time, it had turned the way of writing it upside down. Tocqueville observed that when democracy replaced aristocracy, the respective shares attributed to particular causes and general causes had to change: whereas in aristocratic times, particular causes tend to be given priority by explaining history by "the will and temperament of certain men," in democratic times people are so convinced that change is necessarily the effect of a collective effort that "great general causes" are sought for all events, even, Tocqueville added, for "small particular facts." Aristocracy believes in individuals, democracy in social forces; the former believes in the power of the will, the latter in historical fatalities; the former envisages History from the point of view of its actors, the latter in accord with its results; the former believes that actors know—more or less—what history they are making, the latter that human beings make history without knowing what history they are really making.[78] It is curious to note how much a political philosophy of freedom—that of the French Revolution—was to give rise to a philosophy of history that assigns so little importance to freedom.

The years following the Restoration of 1814–1815 witnessed the triumph, among historians, of the ideas of necessity and fatality, when the defenders of the Revolution's heritage—Guizot, Thierry, Sismondi, and Barante—undertook to go back to the sources of the history of France.[79] Their goal was to demonstrate the irreversibility of the Revolution by connecting it with a past so ancient that it would receive from this historical ballast an additional legitimacy.[80] Thus Guizot set out to present the Revolution of 1789 as the necessary outcome of the emancipation of the communes that had begun in the twelfth century, while the Thierry brothers, Amédée and Augustin, went back to the Merovingians, and to Gaul before the latter, to retrace the origins of the struggle between two peoples—the descendants of the conquered Gallo-Romans and the conquering Germans, the Third Estate on the one hand, and the nobles on the other—a struggle that, according to the Thierry brothers, filled the dark ages with its tumult. A class struggle without any doubt, but also a confrontation between "races" that had retained their original characters throughout the vicissitudes of fourteen centuries. Having gone back from the French Revolution to "the immense disorder that had followed, in the sixth century, for a large part of Europe, Roman civilization," Augustin Thierry adds:

> I thought I could glimpse, in this upheaval so far distant from us, the root of a few of modern society's ills: it seemed to me that despite the distance in time, something of the Barbarians' conquest still weighed on our country, and that, from our present sufferings we could go back, step by step, to a foreign race's intrusion into Gaul, and its violent domination over the indigenous race.[81]

This debate was not new. In the preceding century, the stake had been the legitimacy, or on the contrary, the illegitimacy, of the privileges of the nobility, which claimed to be the descendants of the Frankish conquerors. The dispute had inspired the Abbé Sieyès in a famous passage of his pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?* ("What Is the Third Estate?"), in which he proposed to simply send the nobles back to the forests on the other side of the Rhine from which they claimed to have come.[82] By opposing the Gallo-Roman Third Estate to the French nobility, Guizot and the Thierry brothers, more than thirty years after the Revolution, were continuing to follow Sieyès's line of thought at a time when the political context suggested that the confrontation begun in 1789 was far from over. Shortly after the assassination of the Duke of Berry, Guizot wrote:

> The Revolution, which has witnessed the reawakening of the ultra-royalist party, was a war, a real war, the kind that is seen between foreign peoples. For more than thirteen centuries, France had two of them, a conquering people and a conquered people. For more than thirteen centuries the vanquished people had been struggling to throw off the yoke of the conquering people. Our history is the history of this struggle. In our times a decisive battle was fought. It is called the Revolution.[83]

Thus France was provided with a history so predictable that it had, ultimately, to experience the end called for by its beginning: the return to independence of a people that had suffered so much only because it had not been able, or known how, to realize its unity when it had to repel the invader, first Roman, then Barbarian. It was a history almost without heroes, the history of a people, always the same, the chronicle of its temperament, its instincts, and the "race" that speaks in it. It was far distant from the colorful heroes, good or evil, compassionate or cruel, brave or cowardly, gifted or mediocre, adroit or clumsy, who people Mézeray's *Histoire.* According to Thierry or Guizot, history speaks, even in its destitution, the language of the Revolution; it testifies to what had been one of the Revolution's great passions: the quest for impersonality.

Convinced that they were only the spokesmen for the sovereign people, the revolutionaries had reserved their homage for this great collective being existing, so to speak, independently of them, and which they believed to be endowed with feeling, reason, and will. The "leaders" of the Revolution, its heroes, could be, at most, only spokesmen, representatives, instruments. They believed that. Otherwise, would they have agreed so readily to mount the scaffold as soon as failure showed them that they had lost the support of the popular divinity whose omnipotence they revered? True, they had made an exception when they decreed a national Pantheon in which the fatherland would express its gratitude to its great men, but they reserved this homage for the dead. In the world of the living, they had feverishly sought to give form to the ideal of a community of equal citizens governing itself by means of a power as anonymous as possible: elective offices held for one or two years, without the possibility of reelection to prevent the formation of an oligarchy, a vacant throne placed at the center of the National Assembly to give material form to the principle of the anonymity of a power that, since it belonged to everyone, was not to belong to anyone; they had tried everything. Weary, the dream had fizzled out. Since 1789, events had constantly produced "heroes," even if these idols did not reign long and ended abruptly. The result was that the dreamed-of society, so perfectly egalitarian that in it no one would be admired, remained in limbo. And was to stay there. Two years after Robespierre's death, Bonaparte appeared on the scene, and three years and a number of exploits later, it was his turn to "give France a new head,"[84] to borrow a contemporary's expression. Really? Give France a new king, even in a form more compatible with republican principles? The prospect was far from winning unanimous support, and there was no lack of Cassandras pointing out that the people had a penchant for "individual idolatry."[85]

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More than half a century later, Michelet was to issue the same warning in his *Histoire de la Révolution française,* where he quotes as an epigraph this passage from Anarchis Cloots, who was guillotined in 1794: "France or Gaul, you will be happy when you have gotten over individuals."[86] Cloots was referring to Robespierre, but Michelet was thinking about another *individual,* another usurper of the people's sovereignty, Napoleon III. Wasn't he the successor of his uncle, Napoleon I, and wasn't the latter Robespierre's heir? The Incorruptible had been, in advance, a civilian Napoleon, and the Emperor, to adopt Mme de Staël's expression, was "Robespierre on a horse." From one to the other, and from them to Napoleon III, it was the same French disease, the same pathology which, no matter what the form of the institutions, always brought back the monarchy and its conception of incarnated power. The hope for a world that had "gotten over individuals," whose purest expression Michelet saw in the festival of the Federation on 14 July 1790, had turned out to last as long as dreams last. The principle of separation had won out over a unified rush of energy. The reign of the "voluble tyrant," Robespierre, that had emerged from these internal struggles, had ultimately led to that of the "military tyrant," Napoleon. Regarding the latter's reign, Michelet says that it represented the acme of this pathology, even if it did not mark its end. When Bonaparte burst noisily onto the stage of history, the French, suffering from a kind of "mental alienation" were prepared to welcome him and submit to him:

> The nightmare of the Terror and world war had troubled people's minds, driving them beyond reason and balance, and especially making them eager for strong feelings. [. . .] The striking entrance of an unfamiliar actor on the stage [delighted] the spectators and [drove] them mad. And it is not only the masses who were ecstatic about this Bonaparte. Artists, who are children, clap their hands. "What a boon! A change of scene! . . . What a marvelous show, inexplicable!" Suddenly, humanity no longer counts in human affairs. What a simplification in the theater! A single actor! Ah! Now that's real classical drama, true history painting.[87]

The play had later been revived, for better and for worse, in 1815, at the time of the Hundred Days, in 1830, and again in 1851 . . . "Our Federations of 1790," Michelet wrote, "that burst of energy, the most unanimous that has been seen among men, which united France, the world, are nothing less than a Gospel. France has had that, and no other people, so far as I know. And did it have it only once? Haven't we seen the same energy in the admirable beginnings of July [1830] and February [1848]?"[88] But 1851 had destroyed the dream of 1848, just as 1794 and then 1799 had pulverized the great fraternal movement of 1790. France, a heterogeneous nation, divided like no other, had always been in search of its unity. After having long sought it, and sometimes been subjected to it, in the Church or in the person of its kings, it was now trying, Michelet assures us, to realize it by itself. From this point of view, the Revolution was quite different from a mere event, even an immense one, in the history of France: it was the latter's apogee and a kind of summation of its spirit; more than an annunciation, it was a fulfillment. It shed light on everything that had preceded it. The year 1789 conferred a meaning on the millennium-long history of France. But, on the other hand, if the Revolution had illuminated the past, it made the events that followed it incomprehensible. How could the end of history have a future? And yet, as 1830, 1848, and 1851 proved, History continued, and France had not yet gotten over its "great men." As Roland Barthes noted in his study on Michelet,

> the nineteenth century is very awkward; why did it continue, since it no longer had a place in the battle for liberty? And yet it exists. What is it, then? Nothing more than a reprieve, a time of grace or abomination, but in any case, a supernumerary time, like the Time of the Patience of God granted Christians between the death of Christ and the Last Judgment. The Revolution being the religious advent of the Just [. . .], everything that separates the Revolution from the future City is a time that is incomprehensible, that is, withdrawn from History, no longer participating in its meaning.[89]

The history of France stammers after 1790. However, Michelet wanted to hope, to believe that it would resume its course, in other words, that it would end up finding its natural end: "Time moves on," he wrote in 1869. We are little less imbecilic. The manias for incarnations, carefully inculcated by Christian education, messianism, is passing. We finally understand Anarcharsis Cloots's opinion.[90]

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MICHELET WAS SO DEEPLY imbued with the spirit of the French Revolution that he wrote its history "from the inside"; drawing on the "kind of intimacy" he maintained with the event, he understood better than anyone "what had set in movement, during these famous years, all its actors, known or anonymous, and first of all the greatest among them: the people."[91] He relived the saga by recounting it, it was reborn through him and in him: didn't his nose bleed when he was writing down on paper the bloody scenes of the September massacres?[92] He was so close to his subject that when he finished his magnum opus, this *Histoire de France,* of which the *Histoire de la Révolution* was intended to be the culmination, he was no longer sure whether he had created it or it had created him: "My book created me. It is I who was its work. This son has made his father."[93] The paradoxes of the period came to life in his work. In what other history, completely devoted to depicting the popular, collective advent of a new era—that in which Humanity rises from the ruins of

Christianity—do we find such a probing study of the motives that governed the discourses and actions of the Revolution's principal actors? Michelet is not boasting when he says, in a postface that he decided not to publish, that he had "above all sought to *specify,* to rediscover the [Revolution's] personality, to penetrate it in itself, to follow its variations, and to note it down, day by day."[94] This history whose protagonist is the people is also, and perhaps especially, a history of the individuals who make it up it, and who, in many circumstances, steal the scene:

> In this whole history, which was for ten years my life and my inner world, I formed, along the way, cherished friendships with some of these reborn and recreated dead men. And then, when they were mine, [. . .] I had to break them, tear them away from myself. Does anyone think it was easy for me to sacrifice Mirabeau? How much more I loved the Gironde, its glorious crusade for the liberties of the land! [. . .] I nonetheless judged and condemned it. But my most wrenching farewell was to Danton. [. . .] Will the reader believe it? The greatest vacancy at this plain wood table, from which my book is now to depart and where I shall remain alone, is no longer seeing there my pale companion, the most faithful of all, who, from '89 to Thermidor, has never left me; the man of great will, hard-working like me and poor like me, with whom, every morning, I had so many bitter disputes. The greatest achievement of my moral and physiological study is precisely this dispute, it is to have seriously anatomized Robespierre.[95]

Michelet could have repeated these lines word for word when he finished his *Histoire de France* in 1867. Forty years had passed since he had written the first page of it. He had "crossed and re-crossed the river of the dead so many times," he said, that in this "ardent pursuit" he more than once lost himself from view: "I absented myself from myself," he confessed. He had been thirty-three years old when he began this long labor, and he was now seventy: "I have missed out on the world, and I have taken history for life," he admitted with a little melancholy. The time had come to say farewell to his work:

> Dear France, with whom I have lived, and whom I leave with such great regret! How many passionate, noble, austere hours we have

> spent together [. . .]! How many days of labor and study in the depths of the Archives! I was working for you, I was going, coming, seeking, writing. I gave everything I had, and perhaps even more. The following morning, finding you at my writing table, I believed I was the same, drawing on your powerful life and your eternal youth.[96]

These words recall those addressed to his "pale companion" of the French Revolution; but in the *Histoire de France* Michelet had seldom lost his heart to the characters, except for the "naïve heroes" who rise up from time to time, and of whom Joan of Arc will forever remain the sublime figure. And there was a reason for that. Writing the history of the nation necessarily implied, he complained, "making once again a long journey filled with misery, cruel adventures, and countless morbid and fatal things": "I had swallowed too many scourges, too many vipers, and too many kings," to the point that, emerging from the dark Middle Ages, he had felt obliged, before taking up the centuries of absolute monarchy, "to dip back into the people" to restore his courage, by writing without further delay, the history of the Revolution.[97]

It was after the revolution of July 1830, when so many well-disposed people believed that the promises of 1789 had finally been fulfilled, that Michelet had decided it was time to give France a history which, according to him, it had lacked up to that point. It had annals, he explained, "but not a history"; it had been studied in many ways, from many angles, but never in its totality and in its different aspects: "I was the first to see it as a soul and a person."[98] In saying that France had only annals, he was thinking, of course, of the early historians, Mézeray, the abbé Velly, and Anquetil, the first of whom was still so well known that the July government had just subsidized a reprinting of his *Histoire de France* to provide work for unemployed printshop workers.[99] That proves that the new historical school had not yet thrown off the yoke of old habits. Michelet was convinced that neither Guizot nor Augustin Thierry had been equal to the task. Guizot was interested primarily in institutions. As for Thierry, whose *Histoire de la conquête d'Angleterre par les Normands* Michelet nonetheless considered a masterpiece, he persisted in seeing in the extremely varied circumstances of French history the effect of a unique principle—race—which not only left out nine-tenths of reality, but also subjected French destiny to a fatality of temperament and cultural encumberments that seemed to run counter to what struck Michelet in the tumultuous course of the history of the nation: freedom, the incessant work on itself through which France had become France, constituted not once and for all, but constantly making and renewing itself from generation to generation and in accord with continually changing circumstances. Seeing in the French people descendants of the Gauls or the Gallo-Romans and trying to use this ancestry to explain the course of a thousand-year history seemed to Michelet far too reductive. Thierry's history lacked flesh and blood, it was too abstract, too determined, too dry. It lacked life. It lacked first of all a setting, a soil, rivers and mountains, lands and cities; in short, it lacked the geography without which history is half-blind. But this should not lead us to see Michelet as a precursor of Lavisse, who entrusted Vidal de La Blache with the task of devoting the first volume of his *Histoire de France* to geography. By placing this *Tableau géographique* at the beginning of his work, Lavisse suggested that France had existed for all eternity, at least potentially, even before history had unveiled its contours. Significantly, Michelet places his poetic "Tableau de la France" at the beginning of the second volume, after discussing, in the first volume, the Gallic, Roman, Merovingian, and Carolingian past that for him is not yet France. For France to become France, it had to free itself from the nostalgia for the Empire of which Charlemagne had been the last expression, it had to reject any Germanic element, and finally, very late, it had to become aware of its individuality, of its personality, by endowing itself with a language peculiar to it. Then began the homeland's true romance, whose first episode coincided for Michelet, as for the old historians and as for Bainville, with the advent of the Capetians, and more precisely with the long reign of Robert the Pious (996–1031). Nonetheless, Michelet did not follow in Mézeray's footsteps. For the latter, as later for Bainville, the Capetians had literally *made* France. For Michelet, the Church had *made* the Capetians, inaugurating an alliance that was to last until the formation of the absolute monarchy; as for France, it had *made* itself all by itself. He did not conceive his history as a dynastic history of the Capetians, and then of the Valois, and then of the Bourbons, but rather as the restitution of the "great work of nations" on themselves, "each people making itself, engendering itself, grinding up and amalgamating elements that remain in it, no doubt in an obscure and muddled state, but are unimportant compared with what the long labor of the great soul [makes]." A history of nation's self-engenderment, a history of freedom: "France made France [. . .], it is the daughter of its freedom. In human progress, the essential component is the living force that we call Man. *Man is his own Prometheus.*"[100]

Man, not *men; Man,* not individuals, or else all of them together, the leading roles being nothing, in fact, but the masks of a period, the vignettes of the great collective and anonymous labor of the nation constantly inventing and reinventing itself on the basis of the infinite variety of its constitutive elements—material, political, and spiritual. We are not surprised that there is no Pharamond to begin Michelet's history. Even Clovis hardly appears in it as the leader of a barbarous, cruel tribe; only his conversion to Christianity is worth mentioning, because through it the Church "solemnly took possession of the Barbarians,"[101] just as later on it was to reign in the shadow of the Capetians. The most striking example of the curse Michelet reserves for great men is surely that of Charlemagne. Lavisse's history paints the emperor's portrait in majesty.[102] Michelet's portrait of him is hardly flattering: the man is mediocre, and so is his achievement. "People have given the dimensions of the empire to the emperor," Michelet added in a note, "and concluded that the man who reigned from the Elbe to the Ebro must be a giant."[103] Precisely the contrary was the case,[104] and the achievement itself was nothing more than a restoration of the Western Roman Empire so artificial that it hardly survived its founder. In reality, Charlemagne "played at Empire as well as he could,"[105] he aped it. Nothing solid or durable could come from Charlemagne. Michelet was not the only one of his time who sought to expel him from the history of France. Augustin Thierry had preceded him in that attempt. They both had a good reason for doing so: under Napoleon, Charlemagne had frequently been used, first of all to legitimate the reestablishment, in 1804, of a hereditary monarchy. Hostility to the Napoleonic regime tainted "the emperor with the flowing white beard."[106]

But Michelet had another reason for disdaining the supposed founders of the history of France, from Clovis to Hugh Capet via Charlemagne. On the one hand, Michelet, who belonged to a generation in which the French Revolution had inculcated the idea that all history is primarily collective, that individual will played a very limited role in it, and that change is less dependent on certain people's initiatives than on the energy of the masses. Paul Viallaneix has shown how much the young Michelet was at that time under the influence of Vico, whose *New Science* (to which Michelet added the subtitle *Principles of the Philosophy of History*) he had translated in 1827. The Neapolitan philosopher's *Scienza nuova* was in tune with Michelet's "plebeian love of equality"; it encouraged him to "overthrow the idols."[107] In his *Roman History,* published in 1831, Michelet repeated his debt to Vico, notably regarding the role of great individuals in history:

> *Humanity is its own work.* [. . .] Humanity is divine, but no one man is divine. Those mythic heroes, the Hercules whose arms burst asunder mountains, the Lycurguses and Romuluses, those swift legislators who, in the space of one man's life, accomplished the tardy work of ages, are the creations of the thought of nations. [. . .] The miracles of the individual genius are ranged under the common law; the equalizing hand of criticism passes over the human race. This historical radicalism does not go the length of suppressing the great men; there doubtless remain some who rise above the crowd to the height of the head or the waist, but their foreheads are no longer lost in the clouds; they are no longer of another species; humanity may recognize itself in all its history, one and identical.[108]

The same year, in an *Introduction à l'histoire universelle,* Michelet explained why the revolution of 1830 had elicited such enthusiasm in him. It was as if Vico's ideas about the interpretation of myths and symbols had emerged from the pages of his work to shape reality:

> It is the great singularity of the July Revolution to be the original model of a revolution without heroes, without proper names, no individual in whom the glory might have lodged. Society did it all. [. . .] Not one proper name; no one prepared, no one led; no one eclipsed the others. After the victory, one went in search of the hero—and found an entire people.[109]

The disappointment, which was not slow in coming, proved proportional to the illusion. Far from presiding over the birth of a new brotherhood, the revolution of 1830 had bogged down in the reign of petty calculation and mediocre self-interest described by Stendhal in *Lucien Leuwen;* it was an era of "the tedium of time and base souls."[110] As for a new dawn, it was far off. In one paragraph Michelet noted a French specificity that did not fit at all with his cherished theory of the "annihilation of great historical individualities":[111]

> France acts and reasons, decrees and does battle, she shakes the world, makes history and recounts it. History is the recounting of action, nowhere else will you find memoirs, individual histories, not in England, not in Germany, nor in Italy. [. . .] In medieval Italy, the life of a man was the life of the city. English hauteur is such that no personality will condescend to render an account of itself. The modest nature of the German does not permit him to attach that much importance to what he has been able to do. [. . .] Germany is more fit for epic than for history; she reserves glory for her ancient heroes and happily disdains the present. For France the present is everything. She seizes upon it with an alacrity all her own. As soon as someone has done something, seen something—quick—he writes it down. Often he exaggerates. One should see what-all *our men* do in the ancient chronicles.[112]

To be sure, he hastened to add, in France "the individual derives his glory from his voluntary participation in the whole; he, too, can say: *My name is legion,*"[113] and Michelet was confident of the well-foundedness of Vico's argument when he began the study of the origins of our history in which, over a period of five or six hundred years, there were in fact very few historical figures to whom even a relative influence could be attributed.

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TEN YEARS LATER, Michelet's *Histoire de France* adopted a very different tone. Long before Henry IV and especially Louis XIV come onto the scene, two individual figures dominate the last volumes—the fifth and sixth—on the Middle Ages: Joan of Arc, who announces the exit from the "theological age," and Louis XI, whose reign brought France into the Modern Age. A change comparable to that seen in the *Histoire de la*

Révolution française: the individual hero appearing in a history that had initially repudiated him. A few weeks after publishing volume V, in 1841, Michelet wrote in his *Journal:* "This morning I started reviewing my old *Vico.* The principle is the one already mentioned: humanity is its own work. It is just that in this preface I was wrong to connect this principle too closely to the annihilation of great historical individualities."[114] A more complete denial of the principles set forth in 1827 and 1831 can hardly be imagined.[115]

Michelet was truly the "inventor"—in the sense of a person who finds a treasure—of Joan of Arc. The eighteenth century no longer knew her except through Voltaire's mockeries, and was not fond of her; the liberal nineteenth century had rehabilitated her, but only as a spokesperson for the people, whereas the clerical nineteenth century was wary of this saint somewhat redolent of sulfur.[116] Michelet rehabilitated the figure of the Hero through the life of this popular heroine, restituted as she had never before been and was never again to be. She gave a face to the innumerable people. "What legend is more beautiful than this incontestable history? But we must take care not to make it into a legend,"[117] Michelet added. What deeper puzzle than the history of "this mysterious creature whom everyone thought supernatural, this angel or demon who, according to some people, would one morning fly away, who turned out to be a young woman, a girl, with no wings, who was, like us, attached to a mortal body, and so had to suffer and die, and die such a terrible death?"[118] Joan of Arc is the first figure with truly pronounced features in Michelet's epic, the heroine whose destiny he explores and whose mysteries he seeks to unveil the better to understand the mission with which she felt she had been entrusted and the enthusiasm she elicited. No psychology in the study of Charlemagne or in that of the first Capetians: that is because they belong to an age still wholly in God's hand, where the hope of eternal life won out over concern about life on Earth. On the contrary, Michelet "anatomizes" Joan, as he was later to "anatomize" Robespierre. Both of them are genuine phenomena, both were invested with the power of incarnating, at a certain point, something greater than themselves: France in Joan's case, and the Revolution in Robespierre's. Joan, the first appearance of the "savior" in French history, also marks the emergence of modern consciousness: the individual rising up in opposition to what seems fated.

Joan was not a simple creation of those who were waiting for her and who followed her. She did not respond to the call of the crowd, even if it was vaguely expressed. She made a commitment and, following the path she had laid out, she took along with her all those who had, for the most part, already given up all hope. She was not borne, it was she who bore France at the moment when the latter found itself, as happened so often in the course of its history, in a period of "universal prostration of mind" that culminated, according to Thomas de Quincey, in "the madness of the poor king Charles VI," which "trebled the awfulness of the time."[119] By her spiritual strength and her inflexible will, "she regenerated failing hearts";[120] she did not represent them.

The secret of this power to draw people to follow her was located first of all in the recesses of her personality; and secondly in her popular origin, her "simple heart," her candor, her naïveté mixed with "subtlety" and even ruse, her unshakeable will supported by the voices she heard; and finally, in the nature of the heroism that characterized her and that consisted in giving herself over heart and soul to the mission that she had assigned herself—forcing the English to lift the siege of Orleans and then leading Charles VII to Rheims, so that he could be crowned there. Patriotic, popular, and a woman, Joan is the anti-Napoleon, if we see the latter through the eyes of Taine. Even as he recognized that Napoleon had, at least initially, performed a few services to the country, if only by putting an end to revolutionary violence, Taine accused him of having soon gone beyond the kind of mandate granted him to use the resources of France—and to sacrifice it—to satisfy his insatiable ambition. Joan gave herself without demanding anything in return. It was from this sacrifice that she drew the extraordinary power that, from Orleans to Rheims, aroused such devotion and allowed her to surmount all obstacles, winning the trust, for a time, of even the most timorous and the most skeptical: "Every day, people arrived from all the provinces who had heard about the Maid's miracles, believed only in her and, like her, were eager to take the king to Rheims. They felt an irresistible urge to make a pilgrimage and a crusade. The indolent young king ended up allowing himself to be carried away by this popular wave, by this great tide that rose and pushed toward the north."[121] Paule Petitier aptly writes that Joan of Arc's appearance played the same role as the "Tableau de la France" placed at the beginning of the second volume. It depicts France after the end of the Carolingian Empire, when the nation, freed from the "vast and vague" Germanic world that had been mixed with it at the time of the barbarian invasions,[122] gained self-awareness and came into existence.[123] The heroic story of Joan of Arc is more than a turning point in the history of France, it is a "new beginning."[124]

Michelet conferred particular importance on *The Imitation of Christ.* The ideas developed in this book written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century had begun to spread through Europe shortly before the siege of Orleans and Joan of Arc's entrance on the scene. Since the German monk who had written it put great emphasis on the direct relationship between the believer and the holy Word and on the interiorization of religious feeling, Michelet saw in it the expression of an "early Renaissance," an initial Reformation that was as important in its consequences as the Reformation of the sixteenth century. "There is no doubt that starting in the twelfth century all the factors were leading toward greater individualization within the framework of a society that was less uncultivated and less fragile," Pierre Chaunu wrote about *The Imitation.* "Judgment day is imminent, taking responsibility for one's works is more urgent, and the demand is precise and personal."[125] Michelet was not entirely wrong to see in this the sign of a slow exit from the ancient world, from the world that lived in the expectation of God. People were at the dawn of a new era that Joan's extraordinary destiny illustrated: didn't the little peasant girl from Domremy do what her conscience told her to do by rising to the call of the voices, of the saints and the angels that visited her? It was the spirit of *The Imitation of Christ* that lived in her, a phenomenon so new that people who still did not know about the new theology could easily see in this girl a madwoman or a witch.[126]

Contemporary with a change in the relationship to the sacred, Joan of Arc turned the page of a world, whereas in the political domain, the journey to Rheims opened a new chapter: that of a monarchy that had for the first time become, thanks to her and to the conflict with England, "national," in which the king was no longer simply the representative in this world of higher powers, but the pastor of the community for which he is responsible and whose terrestrial interests he must defend. With Joan of Arc, Heaven moves a little farther away from Earth. Michelet insists on this in the preface he wrote for his completed *Histoire de France:*

> The innocent heroine did, without realizing it, far more than rescue France, she rescued its future by exemplifying the new type, contrary to Christian passivity. The modern hero *is the hero of action.* The disastrous doctrine of [. . .] passive, interior freedom, concerned with its own salvation, which hands the world over to Evil, abandons it to the Tyrant—that doctrine died at the stake in Rouen.[127]

There is no hero without a genius of his own; hence no hero without a legitimacy that resides above all in the mission he has assigned himself; no hero, of course, without recognition, even if it is never the simple trust of those who will respond to his call; no hero who is not the instrument or catalyst of a turning point in history or of the advent of a new epoch; and no hero, finally, without the passion that ultimately caps the saga with martyrdom. When Charles VII was crowned by the archbishop of Rheims, Joan threw herself at his feet and said to him: "O gentle king, now God's will is done. He wanted me to lift the siege of Orléans and to take you to your city of Rheims to receive your holy coronation, showing that you are a true king and that the kingdom of France must belong to you." "The Maid was right," Michelet comments; "she had done and finished what she had to do. Thus even in the joy of this triumphal solemnity, she had the idea, the premonition perhaps, of her impending demise."[128] France saved, Joan had to disappear. It is said that on this point—for once—Michelet shared the opinion of royalist historians, who maintained that she had received the mission to restore the royalty, not to continue on her own initiative the war against the English. He does not really judge Joan's disobedience, her obstinacy, her refusal to see that many of those who had followed her were now turning away from her, because tragedy is a chapter necessary to complete the heroine's Assumption: She knew in advance that it had to happen this way; this cruel thing was infallible, let us say, necessary. She had to suffer. If she had not undergone the trial and the supreme purification, doubtful shadows would have remained on this holy figure alongside the rays of light; she would not have been, among humans, *The Maid of Orléans.*"[129]

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Michelet had "lost his heart" to Jeanne *Darc* (as he wrote the family name to emphasize her popular origins).[130] In this life so full, so short, so tragic, he saw the very image of a "supreme poetry."[131] The tone is very different, to be sure, when he comes to speak, in the following volume, about the reign of Louis XI. It is true that the latter's royal status did not incline the young Michelet to look on him with favor. In addition, the reputation of this nasty, devious sovereign, whose appearance was unattractive and even stupid, was already so bad—Walter Scott and Victor Hugo had helped denigrate him[132]—that it was pointless to try to rehabilitate him. Michelet made no attempt to do so. As he reconstitutes it, the history of this monarch whose reign, Michelet said, marked " the sudden reawakening of the royalty,"[133] is valuable less for the actual analysis of the reign—the triumph of the reason of state that broke the feudal lords and enslaved the people—than for its literary presentation: the confrontation between Louis XI and Charles the Bold. It is valuable, above all, for a very unusual feature if we recall the principal of the "annihilation of the great historical individualities" Michelet had adopted and from which the story of Joan of Arc had already forced him to depart: the complete eclipse of the people and even of any actor other than the king and those whom he combats and breaks. If at the end of the fifteenth century France takes a new turn toward the modern state based on the reason of state, it was at the instigation of a man who did violence to his time and who dominated the stage all the more easily because he succeeded kings—Charles VI the Mad and his son, Charles VII—about whom the least one can say is that they were so colorless that they were, so to speak, doomed to occupy only the second rank.[134] With the advent of the "Great Spider" (Louis XI) in 1461, the monarchy occupied the limelight. It remained there until the French Revolution, except during the troubles of the sixteenth century and Louis XIV's minority.

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Passing time is not indulgent. It causes history books to age like everything else. It is not so much history that grows old as the way of recounting it. Michelet was not yet dead—he bowed out in 1874—before his work was already considered more that of a writer and poet than that of a historian. The nineteenth century, having passed its zenith, henceforth swore solely by Science. Today, the work of an author like Taine is even more out of fashion than that of Michelet, whose freshness it never had, though for about half a century it impressed people by its rigor and seriousness. From Michelet, Taine contracted the taste for archives. Like his old teacher, Taine loved manuscripts and parchments, but whereas Michelet found in them an opportunity to breathe the air of the past and to bring back to life forgotten facts and people who had died centuries earlier, Taine was looking for proof. He resembled butterfly collectors; he had their maniacal side. Like them, he tracked the rare specimen, in this case the facts that could support his demonstration; having identified and isolated it, he pinned it to his tally, and then, engaging in comparisons, in mysterious parallels, he composed families from which he finally drew the "master faculty" which, according to him, sums up and explains a whole epoch. To those who accused his method of depriving history of all poetry and lacking a soul, he appealed to Science, which, thanks to him, put history on a par with physiology and geology:

> I have done what zoologists do when, concerning fish and mammals for instance, they extract from the whole class and its countless species an ideal type, an abstract form common to all of them, persisting in all, all of whose traits are connected, in order then to show how the unique type, combined with special circumstances, must produce species. That is a scientific construction similar to my own.[135]

There are mountains that give birth to mice; Taine explained the world on the basis of a pinhead or a character trait. Sometimes his demonstrations were a little heavy-handed, but they were incomparable in their rigor and precision. "Not a weak or missing link in this fabric of an impeccable texture,"[136] said Emile Boutmy. Whereas Michelet strolls through the past following his whims and without always caring about truth, Taine digs, analyzes, dissects. Taine is modern. He wants at all costs to prove his point and to crush his adversary under the weight of his argumentation. Let us not be too severe; he belongs to a family that is not very numerous in France, that of the conservative liberals. He loved freedom too much to feel the slightest fondness for the Old Regime, and he detested equality too much to admire the Revolution. His principles made him a historian more lucid than many others, starting with Michelet. His *Origines de la France contemporaine* is full of portraits that will necessarily be found superior to those of his illustrious predecessor. He is less naïve, less easily impressed, and he does not let himself be deceived by the grand principles that Michelet eagerly gobbled up. Taine has a sharp eye and a trenchant style. His contempt for the French Revolution saved him from falling into many a trap. And yet I find Michelet superior. Compared to him, Taine is dry and graceless; above all, his portraits of his "heroes" always lack fluidity and nuances. None of those who had the honor of being described by him remained just as he painted them from the beginning to the end of their career. Robespierre began better than he finished, and Danton finished better than he began. Whereas Michelet seeks to grasp his heroes in their successive metamorphoses, Taine paints them as a whole and once and for all, at the risk, Sainte-Beuve said, of missing "what is most alive in the man."[137] Thus Marat appears as the "type" of the madman, Danton as the type of the buccaneer, Robespierre as the type of the provincial prig, and Napoleon as the type of the *condottiere,* the combination of these four figures helping explain, if not the Revolution, at least the revolutionary mentality. In its time, this explanation was innovative, original, even stimulating, but too systematic and absolute to understand a period characterized by its complexity and the diversity of its manifestations. A literary critic of the time gently mocked Taine's systematic spirit. Referring to the last part of the *Origines,* which is devoted to the "Modern Regime," he wrote:

> It is a triumph of literary construction. Everything is based on a definition of Napoleon's character. Just admit that Napoleon was an Italian *condottiere,* and you will immediately see rise up before you, brilliantly illuminated, the whole history of the nineteenth century, you will understand why France has so many prefects and subprefects, why priests are so blindly subservient to bishops and

> bishops to the pope, why French schools, from the primary schools to the universities, prove so inept at educating men. One will seek in vain, in these two large volumes, an exception, the shadow of an argument that contradicts the thesis. Ah! How one would like reality to have this fine coherence, this harmonious unity, so clear and so reasonable![138]

For Taine, people were a negligible quantity. He accorded no importance to what they had wanted to do, and often failed, to their enthusiasms, or to their evil passions. He was too convinced that there were forces that made people act unwittingly. In his opinion, there were no superior men. Even the greatest are only the external manifestation of what moves them internally. They are marionettes whose strings remain invisible.

However, if Taine has more or less fallen into oblivion, that is less because of his method than because of his all-out attacks on the Revolution.[139] So far as method is concerned, he had a great many successors, all of them infatuated with science and all convinced that the notion that an individual acts freely is a myth, an illusion, a lie. The twentieth century concurred. From the most radical right to the revolutionary left, from Action française to communism, the same religion was practiced, that of the direction of history and of inevitability. It has been a hard time for great men.

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Of all countries, France is the one in which great men have had it hardest. A strange, relentless hostility, if we recall Paul Valéry's remark concerning the impressive number of our "phenomena." From this point of view, the twentieth century amplified the nineteenth. History fell in line behind sociology, focusing, as the latter did, on the study of the many and seeking to establish laws that could account for the development of societies, their mutations, and even their crises. All the determinist theories that extended their shadow over the century, from Marxism to psychoanalysis and structuralism, found favorable ground in France. There, great men, monsters, and heroes lost their special power to change the course of events, for better or for worse. After being the privileged actors of history, they became demystified subjects whose discourse and acts historians had to "deconstruct," the better to understand what "spoke" or "acted" through them: sometimes the infrastructures that dominated the subject and "acted" him from outside; sometimes the Unconscious and language that "acted" him from within. Whence the persistent erasure of the subject in his autonomy and his ability to master the real; whence, again, a privileged attention to the determining structures; and whence, finally, in the domain of historical studies, the privilege lent, on the one hand, to long-term developments (as opposed to events), and on the other to the anonymous masses (as opposed to individuals and "great actors")—in short, to everything that manifests necessity more than freedom of action.[140] This model, which certainly never had this programmatic simplicity, reigned over the social sciences and history for at least half a century, from the 1930s to the 1980s. Although it still dominates, even more than ever, the poor remains of what sociology used to be, it has almost completely disappeared from historical studies. It has to be said that a discourse more distant from experience has seldom been seen. Hasn't the twentieth century manifested, like no other before it, the determining role that can be played, under certain circumstances, by individual will? François Furet emphasized this in his book *Le passé d'une illusion:* although the advent of fascism and communism depended on particular conditions, although these two regimes were incarnated in collective passions, they were above all adventures of the will incarnated in charismatic leaders. "One trait links the three great dictatorships of the period," Furet added. "Their destiny depended on the will of a single man." Mussolini, Lenin, and Hitler "took power by destroying weak regimes by the superior power of their will, which was wholly directed, with an incredible stubbornness, toward that single goal."[141] Belief in the iron law of necessity has never been stronger than in the century most filled with the action of the will. In 1950, Roger Stéphane, wondering whether heroism is possible in modern societies, thus concluded in the negative, maintaining that the last heroes had been mere adventurers whose passion for action, dissociated from any collective movement, was for that very reason doomed to fail:

> The era of individual adventures is over, now that the action of collective forces has been openly substituted for the individual's grasp.

> Today, a single man has hardly any chance of leaving a mark on history. [. . .] Extraordinary circumstances were necessary to allow General de Gaulle, on two occasions, drawing solely on his solitude, to set his stamp on the history of France.[142]

From Lech Wałęsa to Margaret Thatcher and from John Paul II to Deng Xiaoping, what followed showed that it was still possible "to set one's stamp on history." But the influence of Marxism, even when as heterodox as it was in France, does not alone explain the phenomenon. The invocation of a "providential thread of necessity" conferred the deceptive appearance of a science, with its truths and its certainties, on the works of historians whose "discipline" had always been mixed with philosophy and literature; and Michelet provided the model of the historian who was also a writer and a philosopher. Historians, Georges Duby admitted, were then obsessed "with numbers, with averages, with curves," seeking, beyond "the foam of events" "the oscillations of the situation" and the famous "structures" imperceptibly drawn along by slower movements."[143] If history had set sail for these rebarbative lands, that was also the proof that it then felt itself powerful enough to claim to unite under its banner the whole of the social sciences. Fernand Braudel—who had, more than the founders of the *Annales* School, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, turned the movement toward the study of long-term developments that was supposed to open the way, better than any other approach, to understanding the past—never abandoned these principles. In 1986 he provided a final illustration of them in his *Identité de la France,* while around him the little army of the *Annales* was scattering in all directions. In the conclusion to the second part of this book, "Les hommes et les choses," Braudel recalled what he had learned from the study of the history of long-term developments, which he refused to compare to a river, a wave, or a surge that carried off everything along with it, comparing it instead to "a vast expanse of almost motionless water":

> Moving scarcely at all, at the slow speed of the secular *trend,* it nevertheless draws everything irresistibly along, whether our own fragile skiffs or the proud ships of the captains of history. That is why there is bound to be some continuity in history's slow progress, some

> monotonous repetition, some reactions which are easy to predict since they are always or almost always the same. [. . .] Of course there are breaks and discontinuities too, but never such that history as a whole is cut in two. The history of *longue durée* is thus a sort of reference by which every national destiny is not so much judged as situated and explained. It offers us the possibility, if I am not mistaken, of distinguishing the essential from the accessory. [. . .] Can we say that it limits—note that I do not say eliminates—both men's freedom and their responsibility? For men do not make history, rather it is history above all that makes men and thereby absolves them from blame.[144]

Here, innocence is the price to be paid for impotence. Never, perhaps, has the possibility of thoughtful, effective human action been so definitively rejected, have good and evil been considered with the same indifference, or has it been proclaimed that, judged by the yardstick of the centuries, humans are the simple playthings of a force that transcends them. We think of Herodotus describing the Persian army's crossing of the Hellespont on its way to attack Greece. Xerxes was watching his soldiers setting foot on the bridge of boats that barred the straits when suddenly tears flowed from his eyes. "My lord," said one of those who stood at his side, "surely there is a strange contradiction in what you do now and what you did a moment ago. Then you called yourself a lucky man—and now you weep." "I was thinking," Xerxes replied, "and it came into my mind how pitifully short human life is—for of all these thousands of men not one will be alive in a hundred years' time."[145] The Persian emperor was not weeping over the imminent death of so many of these soldiers who were going into battle against the Greek phalanxes, but over the insignificance of these lives with regard to the centuries. Fernand Braudel's masterpiece, *La Méditerranée au temps de Philippe II,* is based on the same philosophy: nothing matters on the scale of the centuries, especially not events which, no matter how tragic they might have been, are like the ripples made by the wind on the surface of the water. Braudel wrote *La Méditerranée* during the war, in a prisoner of war camp, without access to any book or any notes, citing from memory the sources he had earlier assembled. The enterprise was prodigious. The historian had long been meditating on his hypotheses concerning long-term developments, but circumstances had confirmed his views in this regard. As a prisoner faced with the collapse of his country, he wrote, he felt more than ever the need—this time, vital—to believe in the existence of forces so imperious, so free from any kind of influence, that they made it possible to relativize the present misfortunes and believe that on the scale of history the bad days would come to an end.[146] An American historian, Gertrude Himmelfarb, has emphasized the extent to which this attitude, in itself very comprehensible and praiseworthy, blinded Braudel, because precisely what led him to invest so much hope in the long-term disproved his theories: wasn't he there, in that camp, not by virtue of an impersonal historical logic, of forces that could not be controlled, but rather by virtue of events, of the *événements* that he abhorred, that were not explained by any determining factor, by any inevitable logic, but rather by the intentions, the projects, the fierce resolution, the acts and the criminal temperament of those who had unleashed the apocalypse on Europe and the world?[147]

L'Identité de la France met with a mixed reception, to put the point tactfully. Fernand Braudel's last work illustrated a conception of history that had rapidly and badly aged. Even if, despite the references to Marx, of which the master made liberal use, this school had had little to do with Marxism, it suffered from the repercussions of the crisis into which the latter fell toward the end of the 1970s. The belief that History has a meaning and a direction collapsed, and with it all the theories that emphasized the action of determining structures. On the one hand, social history entered a long phase of decline, while political history, centered on the study of events, of the contingent, of the intentions and initiatives of actors, returned to the foreground. Biography emerged from the purgatory to which it had been relegated for decades. It had been accused of being too close to literature, of granting too much importance to the imagination, of being based on an "illusion"—life as destiny, one, continuous, coherent, and transparent—and of being ultimately based on an outdated conception of history that exaggerated the effectiveness of human will and the sovereignty of individuals. So much has been written about the case made against this "impure genre" that there is no point in lingering on it.[148]

The "return of biography," which was signaled, in a way, by the publication in 1983—in French—of Paul Murray Kendall's *Louis XI* (originally published in English in 1971), testified to the rehabilitation of the fluid and open character of historical development, like individual trajectories, and a renewed interest in attending to "the explicit and well thought-out aspect of action."[149] After several decades of privileged attention given to the masses, constraints, and necessity, the individual was back.[150] The phenomenon has spared no one, not even those who, as disciples of the *Annales* School, had always shown themselves to be the most resistant to the genre. Bernard Guenée, an eminent medievalist belonging to that school, has said how much writing a biography had allowed him to escape the excessively rigid straitjacket of social and historical determinism:

> It seemed to me that the study of structures was irreplaceable. It explained the past with a marvelous coherence. But it made it too simple. And a biography made it possible to cast a first glance at the overwhelming complexity of things. The study of structures also seemed to me to give too large a role to necessity [. . .], a biography allowed me to give more attention to chance, to the event.[151]

Everyone knows that when Jacques Le Goff crowned the long list of his works with *Saint Louis* (1996), he placed before his narrative prudent and erudite remarks intended to forestall possible criticisms.[152] The fear of demeaning oneself is so great that all the historians trained in the *Annales* School who indulge in the somewhat shameful pleasure of writing a biography believe it necessary to present excuses. Even Georges Duby played hooky, first with his *Dimanche de Bouvines* (1973), which drew him toward the side of the history of events, and then with *Guillaume le Maréchal,* a biography he published in 1984. "It was not the individual that interested me,"[153] he thought it necessary to explain in his memoirs. These expeditions into enemy territory surprised more than one reader. Some of Duby's friends were even scandalized when he agreed to write the history of a battle, and ten years later, his incursion on forbidden territory provoked identical reactions: "I was accused of having betrayed the spirit of the *Annales,*" he said, referring to the publication of *Guillaume le Maréchal.* "I was in fact the first of Marc Bloch's and Lucien Febvre's followers to agree to write the biography of a *great man.*"[154]

Duby was exaggerating. He was not the only one to write such a biography. Lucien Febvre himself had set an example in 1928 by publishing a biography of Martin Luther that became one of the great classics of historiography. And Febvre might be said to have undertaken a similar enterprise when he devoted his course of lectures at the Collège de France to Michelet.[155] That was in 1943–1944. At that time, choosing Michelet's *Histoire de France* as the subject was in no way merely academic. For Febvre, it was a way of proclaiming his love for France and his conviction that despite the defeat of 1940 and what had followed it, France would not disappear. In his inaugural lecture, he said that he could not accept the "wreck" and the "disappearance" of the nation, "bruised, vanquished, cruelly vanquished," immediately exclaiming: "But after all, how many times in the course of history has it already touched the bottom of the abyss?" He recalled the disasters of 1356, of the Hundred Years' War, of 1525, of the Wars of Religion, of 1815, of 1870. "France always survives—France always rises again. When it descends into the abyss, it suddenly comes back from the depths and resumes its place among the nations."[156] It was saved by Charles V, Joan of Arc, or Henry IV. Is Febvre reiterating Bainville, twenty years after the publication of the latter's *Histoire de France*? Certainly not. He was to sharply criticize the historian of Action française in one of his lectures, accusing him of having a narrowly political and diplomatic view of the nation's history,[157] but he celebrates his homeland in terms no less laudatory than those of his antagonist—or those of Marc Bloch in *L'Etrange Défaite* or in his *Testament* of 1941:[158]

> France, a country one and multiple that has to be loved if one wants to understand it in its unity and at the same time in its multiplicity; France, which is never entirely itself, and which constantly renews itself; France, which more than any other country in the world belongs to all its children equally, to all its children who are bearers of ideals that are in no way contradictory—and who, in one case after another, provide the person needed at a given time, now Etienne Marcel, now Joan of Arc, now Louis XI, Richelieu, Colbert or Carnot, each time the person who can best incarnate, at the right time, the reaction of the Nation aroused to safeguard its peculiar genius.[159]

Here we are far away from the epistemology of the *Annales;* the tragedy of the defeat and the Occupation brought Febvre back to a heroic representation of the nation's history, one which at the same time inspired the moving speech given by Pierre Brossolette at the Royal Albert Hall.[160] "Get over individuals," really, as Michelet hoped? Easier to say than to do. In the history of France, everything leads back to them.

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England and France are the two oldest nation-states in Europe. In fact, for centuries they were virtually the only ones. Germany was, through language, a nation long before it became a state (1871), and it has, moreover, not always been content within its political borders: its linguistic frontiers exceed them. As for Spain, although it has been said that its monarchy exercised a strong influence on its French counterpart, its political existence resulted from the uniting of two crowns, each of which retained its autonomy and to this day has not lost it. If Spain is a state without forming a nation, Italy is neither a state nor a nation. The "campanilism" that Bonaparte considered the chief obstacle to the unification of the peninsula has not disappeared, and this "local spirit," this generalized particularism reinforced by cultural and linguistic differences, the gap between North and South, and the presence, at the very center of the country, of the head of the Catholic Church, have added to the difficulties: neither Mazzini, nor Garibaldi, nor Mussolini succeeded in their successive attempts to make Italians a single people and a single nation.

Regarding England and France, we can say that the former was a "nation" before it became a state, and the second was a state before it became a nation. The decisive factor, in England's case, was the lateness of the Norman invasion (1066). William the Conqueror found a Saxon England that was already solidly organized, notably in its local institutions: the idea that the sovereign had to govern in accord with the "council spirit" was deeply rooted, the limits of parishes and of the counties that were to provide the framework of local life were already established and hardly changed subsequently, and the Saxon nobility was more a nobility of service than of birth. The Saxon kings bequeathed a precious heritage that made William's task easier: he did not have to fight very much to impose his domination over England and encountered less resistance than the

French sovereigns who, at the same time, were struggling to impose their authority on feudal lords who were often more powerful than they were. The king of France's subjects were more inclined than the English to grant the monarch greater powers, provided that he would protect them from the abuses of the lords, whereas the king of England's subjects were more resistant to granting such powers because they had less need of this protection. That did not prevent William's successors from constructing a monarchy no less sovereign, centralized, and sacred than the French, and one that was, starting with the reign of Henry II (d. 1189), even stronger—England and France were the two countries where the doctrine of the king's thaumaturgic powers developed, through the ritual touching of those who suffered from scrofula—but local freedoms were incomparably earlier and solider in England. A century later the Magna Carta of 1215 showed that the English were capable of setting limits to royal authority, at the very time when, toward the end of Philip Augustus's reign, the French royalty was starting down the long road that led to Louis XIV's absolutism.

The English certainly enjoyed an advantage in having a Norman dynasty whose sovereigns spoke French, and continued to speak it until the thirteenth century, so that England spoke two languages: the people spoke English, the rulers spoke French. William's descendants did not always consider themselves island-dwellers; for instance, Richard the Lion-Hearted, a "non-resident king" who so much preferred the Normandy of his ancestors to his kingdom that he played "a small role in English history."[161] The British gained increased autonomy because of the existence of these Norman and then Angevine kings, some of whom were foreign to their new country, and this phenomenon was to be reproduced at the end of the seventeenth century, with the advent, following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, of William of Orange and his successors.

In France, history followed the inverse path. The history of the state coincides with the history of the Capetian dynasty that emerged from the failure of the Carolingian attempt to restore the Empire. A great deal of time and many efforts were necessary before the descendants of Hugh Capet (d. 996) imposed their authority on the feudal lords, but in the thirteenth century, from the reign of Philip Augustus to that of Philip the Fair, the Crown, which still lacked a well-developed state apparatus, endowed itself with a doctrine of the *imperium* and the *summa potestas* that made the king of France "an emperor in his kingdom," a doctrine to which subsequent centuries added little.[162] The support of the communes played an important part in this development. The French monarchy moved from an alliance between the king and the communes (the "third estate") against the feudal lords and a nobility that was from the outset less a nobility of service than a nobility of privilege. The great historical dispute that the French Revolution was to resolve began there.

But it was not in the struggle against feudalism that national feeling was formed. It is often said that the history of the nation in France did not precede the French Revolution, that the latter gave birth to the feeling of forming a community, a community less of history than of destiny. That gives too much importance to this event, which was significant, but on this level its effect was less to "invent" the nation than to change its form and its meaning: no longer a community of history mediated by the figure of the king, but rather a community of destiny proceeding from the repudiation of a history that was already almost a millennium old and from the twofold rejection of the heteronomy of politics and the inequalities based on birth. National feeling is anterior to the Revolution. Should it be located at the beginning of the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion, whose violence is supposed to have led to the awareness that there was between the French a bond far stronger than the difference of their religious opinions?[163] Or should we go back much further and maintain that the confrontation with the English caused this feeling to arise, and that it very quickly became powerful in order to make up for the eclipse of the royalty when the latter vacillated?[164] Or should we conclude that national feeling was the result of the monarchy's patient labor of amalgamating the disunited parts of the whole that was to become France?

Once the year 1000 was passed, one of the most striking features of French history resides in the power of the state, which grew steadily, though not without fits and starts, and in the structural weakness of "society": France had nothing resembling the English gentry. Its sole means of expression when confronted with royal power was soon reduced to the Estates General, which were themselves controlled by the king, and at the end of the Middle Ages the kingdom remained outside the movement that, under the influence of Thomism, led almost everywhere to the establishment of more or less representative assemblies, usually corporative or consultative, whose task was to enlighten the prince's power as much as to limit it de facto. In France, on the contrary, the monarchy continued its ascension and eroded as much as it could the privileges of the nobility and the freedoms of the corporations and the intermediary bodies that stood in its way. Ultimately, in Europe the French were the people who were the first to be freed of the guardianship of the privileged, but without for all that acquiring the political freedom that was looming on the horizon everywhere else, since the decline of the nobility benefitted only the king.

The doctrine of national temperaments is a little suspect today, even if we still commonly recur to it whenever we mention, for example, what differentiates "the Germans" from "the French," or the peoples of Northern Europe from those of Southern Europe.[165]

People long used the term *genius* to refer to these characteristics peculiar to each people which, though they are indelibly inscribed in each person and offer a principle for distinguishing between *us* and *them,* no longer constitute a straitjacket from which one can never escape or a given so fundamental that nothing could ever alter or modify it. Camille Jullian was an—unjustly forgotten—disciple of Michelet, from whom he had remembered this lesson: nations do not proceed from a race but from a shared history, and about that most mysterious of principles, the national temperament, he wrote:

> Where does it [the United States] come from? How is it formed? Why did a powerfully original national physiognomy emerge out of such diverse elements—English, French, German, and others? The nature of the soil, material necessities, political organization, social conditions, religious teachings, historical events, the examples or wills of certain individuals, countless facts that rose from the earth and the mind, from time and space, joined together to create this genius of the American nation, which, once created, subsequently descended into the souls of new generations as a heritage that cannot be repudiated.[166]

Until not so very long ago, historians who had not yet decided that Michelet was a pariah found in the old Gallic heritage the origin of several elements of the national temperament that Roman colonization and then Frankish domination had not been able to snuff out. I will not enter into the "quarrel of the Gauls"—were the latter really our ancestors?—but without wishing to point out that most of our territories were already known to the contemporaries of Brennus and that for the most part our cities occupied the sites of Gallic habitats, I will mention only that historians distinguished, in this heritage, two characteristics which undeniably played a cardinal role in our political history: the passion for equality and the exaggeration of liberty. The former was so strong that the Gauls found it possible to satisfy their repugnance for any kind of subordination only by submitting to a caste of priests that did not wound the extreme sensitivity of our distant ancestors because it exercised its power in the name of invisible powers that no one was able to control; and the latter was so imperious that even common danger could not persuade the various tribes to unite and accept a single leader, at least long enough to repel the invader. Goscinny showed that he knew his classics well when he invented the character of Astérix. To be sure, all that no longer has much meaning, since the Gauls will soon be said never to have existed. But *pace* those who rewrite the history of France the way the Soviet government erased from photographs those of its leaders whom purges had eliminated, the heritage of Gaul allows us to understand, at least in part, the nature of the relations that have been woven between the state and society in France, and which are so different in the case of England. In England, society, not very egalitarian and not very liberal, was strong enough to surround royal power with barriers—in 1649, Charles I paid with his head for trying to free himself of these limits—whereas in France the society sought in the state both protection against inequality and a principle of unity it did not find in itself.[167] It has always been easier to govern England, a society in which social differences are very clear, than France, which has always been more egalitarian.[168]

England has inherited from its history a ruling class—including both landowners and nobles—that has been remarkably stable over the centuries, and until very recently retained all its influence; France, on the contrary, has never had a genuine ruling class independent of the government. On the other hand, it has benefitted from an administration in which commoners very early acted on an equal footing with the nobility and the clergy. In France, service to the state founded an "aristocracy" that property did not suffice to confer.

That is why France cannot do without great men or heroes, any more than it can do without a strong state. Great men and heroes represent the unity that cannot be found elsewhere. More than that, they allow it to continue to survive the moments, which are not so rare in its history, when it barely escapes the abyss. Joseph de Maistre, a great admirer of France, was particularly sensitive to this permanent characteristic of our history:

> The French character is not capable of proceeding uniformly and continuously. The imperturbable obstinacy with which the Englishman or the German move toward their goal, without either falling or going astray, is not suitable for the French. Among them, depression follows enthusiasm, and blunders follow great political successes. The ship of state does not sail on a tranquil sea: sometimes it rises to the heights and sometimes it sinks into the abyss. [. . .] Hence the highs and lows, the oscillations between glory and humiliation, that are so common in the history of France.[169]

On these rough seas, France has always needed saviors. England has had no lack of great men, but during the time of its power it preferred to celebrate the "magnificent losers" of its history, as if it needed less to find in the cult of these figures proof of its existence than to recall, by recounting their failures, that nations are fragile and must be careful not to abuse their power.[170] When it almost succumbed, in 1810 or in 1940, it was under attack by external enemies, Napoleonic France or Nazi Germany. France, on the contrary, repeatedly almost perished as a result of self-inflicted blows resulting from its old propensity for civil war. Wellington and Churchill did not play the role of Napoleon and de Gaulle. They supported Britain when it was in peril, they incarnated its spirit of combat or resistance, but they did not save it. If France has such a long list of heroes, it is also because for a long time it had only one: the king. By decapitating him in 1793, the revolutionaries destroyed the body that symbolized the unity of this kingdom so heterogeneously constituted through the diversity of its languages, landscapes, cultures, and traditions. It was precisely to fill the void left by the disappearance of this "visible and signifying body" of the nation that in the nineteenth century its historians, writers, and politicians sought to "produce [this] missing symbolic body" by means of "a corpus of insignia, images, rites, and narratives"[171] that would confer cohesion and continued existence on the new nation. That is how a host of peerless heroes came to occupy the space left vacant after two centuries—since the reign of Louis XIV—during which, inversely, the multiplicity of heroes in French history had been, as it were, absorbed by the increasing heroization of the absolute monarchy.

Chapter Three

The Best among Us?

"THE THIRD MILLENNIUM seems to be smiling on great men and heroes."[1] That is how Christian Amalvi's *Les Héros des Français* begins. Exhibits testify to this, as do radio and television programs, biographies, and essays by the dozens. . . . In 2005, the France 2 television network asked viewers to name "the greatest Frenchman of all time"—Charles de Gaulle, of course—while in 2010 the "Journées du patrimoine"[2] honored great men. However, Napoleon remained a sure bet: "Two hundred years after his coronation, what you have not been told about Napoleon" and "Napoleon, the Ideal Hero" (*L'Express*); "Napoleon, emperor or dictator?" (*Historia*); "Napoleon, his women, his obsessions, his death, and his heritage," "Napoleon, a French Passion," and "Napoleon, the Eternal Return" (*Figaro Magazine*), which became, in *Le Monde,* "Napoleon Bonaparte, the Eternal Return of a French Passion"; Napoleon, the Legend, the Truth" (*Le Nouvel Observateur*); "Napoleon, the Ever-Renewed Myth" (*Figaro Littéraire*); "Portrait of Napoleon as a Precursor of Stalin and Hitler," "Was Napoleon a Monster?," and "The Scandal of Napoleon" (*Marianne*); "The Napoleon Madness" (*Le Point*); "Napoleon Superstar" (*France Soir*); "Napoleon Superman" (*Le Monde*); and "Napoleon, A Hot Topic" (*Télérama*). As for the "the most illustrious Frenchman," it took nothing less than the bicentennial of the Battle of Waterloo to deprive him of the starring role on 18 June 2015.

To discover the French pantheon, we can rely on the polls regularly carried out by magazines, Internet sites, and television programs. Of course, the results must be carefully interpreted. After all, we don't really know by whom these polls are conducted, or how the sample was selected. But to the sempiternal questions asked—"Who are your favorite historical figures?" and "With whom would you like to talk?" and "Which ones enjoy, if not your approval, at least your admiration?"—the replies are remarkably stable, the absence of variations testifying, if not to the rigor of the methodology, at least to the interest of the result.[3] Since the death of General de Gaulle in 1970, the result seems to be fixed. From one poll to the next, the leading trio no longer changes: when it is not Napoleon, de Gaulle, and Louis XIV, it is de Gaulle, Napoleon, and Louis XIV.[4] Among the runners-up, far behind: Louis Pasteur, Henry IV, Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, Jean Jaurès, Georges Clemenceau, Jean Moulin, and Marie Curie. If we omit figures who belong to the history of the twentieth century, these rankings could have been drawn up in the time of Lavisse. The great man of the polls is still that of the old-school textbooks.

However, it would be a mistake to think that the national "romance" escapes the climate of the time. Twenty years ago, drawing on a broader range of opinion polls and taking into account not only these competitions but also works on the historical culture of the French, a collective of historians led by François Bédarida sketched a less heartening picture that noted "a real weakening of the content of the national memory."[5] Although the leading trio does not change, it is followed by complete disarray. Every year, names disappear from a list on which the fortunate elect belong more and more often to the contemporary period. History is contracting, it has fewer centuries than it used to, and therefore fewer heroes. In 1987, Philippe Joutard points out in the same study, "62% of the significant responses [names cited by at least 1 percent of those polled] consist of contemporaries of the people polled; they would rather talk with Mitterrand than with Napoleon [. . .]. Vercingetorix, St. Louis, and Joan of Arc have disappeared from the list: the present has replaced history."[6] This memory problem has not lessened in the interim, especially since alongside those who reply more or less to the pollsters' questions, there are many others who are incapable of citing any name at all. They already represented one quarter of the sample in 1980. This is the ignorant France that no longer knows anything about its history and about which it could be said that its relation to the past is like that of Zola's Gervaise and Coupeau inspecting the paintings in the Louvre, where, after a big meal accompanied by heavy drinking, they decide to look around: "Centuries of art passed before their baffled ignorance, the subtle frugality of the primitives, the splendors of the Venetians, the rich, radiant life of the Dutch."[7] To ignorant France, nothing is of any interest because it is unknown. Vercingetorix, Du Guesclin, Henry IV, Colbert, Louis-Philippe, Clemenceau pass before its alarmed eyes. But the decline of what used to be called, not so long ago, general culture is not the only explanation for this phenomenon. The past matters little to a society that is so preoccupied with the present as ours is, not only because in it people think they were born yesterday, but also because they take no more interest in the future than they do in the past. What is the point of worrying about what used to be and about traditions if there is nothing other than a perpetual present, an endless day punctuated by continuous noise, and if on the social networks "it's all about me"?[8] Only the interest in tomorrow makes yesterday valuable.

I would not swear that the notoriety of our great men, even with the increased attention they are given, performs the same function today. I fear that faced with the uncertainties of the future, these days the past does not so much provide lessons for the present as it constitutes, like literature and poetry, a refuge. If a taste for the past for the past's sake, the antiquarian tradition, died out during the century of the Enlightenment, which replaced it with a conception of history as a preview of the future and a philosophy of action, today history is taking on the delicate, faded tint of dead things. The study of the past teaches us . . . the past, not the future. History has become a kind of "memory," or worse yet, merges with the "patrimony" so celebrated and popular, a whole secondhand shop of old jewels and rusty saucepans where one smells, as between the pages of old books, the perfume of yesteryear. The illusion of the perpetual present is not favorable to great men: in it, they lose their function. Egalitarianism is no more favorable to them: what idea of grandeur can be conceived when everything is as good as anything else, anyone as good as anyone else? The confusion of kinds is the price to be paid for this indifference to quality. The mere fact of being known, especially if one has no claim to it, raises the most mediocre to the level of the greatest. Celebrity, even ephemeral, even deprived of motives, is placed on the same footing as glory. What does it matter, since under the sky of equality neither superior nor inferior are any longer recognized? "No man is a hero to his valet," Hegel said, adding that this does not mean that the hero is not a hero, but that the valet is only a valet. For Hegel, the democratic individual is similar, with regard to great men, to the little "schoolmasters" whose desire to reduce all grandeur, all heroism, to common proportions:

> Alexander of Macedon partly conquered Greece and then Asia; it is said, therefore, that he craved conquest, and the proof offered is that he did things which resulted in fame. What schoolmaster has not demonstrated that Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were driven by such passions and were, consequently, immoral? From which it immediately follows that he, the schoolmaster, is a better man than they because he has no such passions and proves it by the fact that he has not conquered Asia nor vanquished Darius and Porus but enjoys life and allows others to enjoy it too. [. . .] Historical personages fare badly in historical literature when served by such psychological valets. These attendants degrade them to their own level, or rather a few degrees below the level of their own morality, these exquisite discerners of spirits.[9]

This leveling mentality has spread to all democratic societies. For them, there are no heroes, because these societies look upon the elevated passions that move heroes with the critical eye of the valet judging the very human weaknesses of his master. Confusing authentic geniuses—Charles de Gaulle—with the stars of showbiz or sports is to diminish "great men in history" (Hegel) and to make similar what is, by nature, exceptional. Democracy cannot do without heroes. It is true that it has had some genuine ones, even many of them, who far from encouraging identification, encouraged others to transcend themselves.[10] Now, one of the distinctive features of our time is that we give priority to the relation of identification to the detriment of elevation: to the heroes calling by their example for effort and sacrifice, it prefers antiheroes in its own image, who testify to their proximity to those who admire them and not to the incommensurable distance that, in mythology, situated heroes halfway between humans and gods.

Are Louis XIV, Napoleon, and de Gaulle the preferred heroes of the French people? Perhaps, because those are the names that remain after everything else has been forgotten.

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Our three heroes have been the most controversial people in our history. Moreover, when we move from the register of admiration to that of liking, none of them is mentioned even once in the polls we have just referred to. They are admirable, not likeable. Even de Gaulle. The hatred they have aroused is at least equal to the admiration that surrounds them.

Take Napoleon: what is more false than the accusatory portrait Taine painted of him? And what is less exact than the *Napoleon intime* that an honorable but not brilliant historian, Arthur Lévy, labored to write in order to refute Taine's *Origines de la France contemporaine*? For Taine, Napoleon was a monster, in the literal sense of the term; he was outside the order of things: foreign to France because he was a Corsican, foreign to his century because he was moved by passions—war, conquest, glory—on which modern society had turned its back. It took nothing less than an upheaval of the dimensions of the French Revolution for a personage as anachronistic to find a role to play in the France of the late eighteenth century. He had attacked the latter the way a bird of prey attacks its victim, then making it the matter of a personal adventure that neither the circumstances nor the material and moral context enables us completely to explain. An artist? Certainly; a powerful genius who had drawn a whole people into the pursuit of a personal dream of glory and universal domination, not hesitating to ruin the country and to sacrifice his youth in order, finally, to leave to his successors a France smaller than he had found it. What was the Napoleonic epic, according to Taine? A disaster proportionate to the personage's genius, and one that was not a simple and deplorable parenthesis in the history of France. It would have been that if it had left no trace, no monument, no institution, no legal code, if the nightmare had ended as suddenly as the history of the Emperor after Waterloo. But that is not what happened, and sixty years after the tyrant's death the nightmare continued. The Emperor had died, but his work survived. Not only were the French subjected to the tyranny of his government, and afterward to the tyranny of his memory,[11] but in addition, all around them, everything bore the mark of the deceased empire. Far from having sacrificed France to a short-lived dream, Napoleon had set his indelible stamp on it. By means of the institutions he had founded and the laws he had promulgated, he had inoculated the country with his own hatred of liberty and his religion of despotism. He had snuffed out, through administrative centralization and the arbitrariness of the prefects, what spirit of independence and capacity for initiative the nation had managed to preserve. The rebellious people that had always defeated royal attempts to limit local freedoms and to weaken intermediary bodies had been transformed by Napoleon into a people of citizens subject to the will of the central power's agents. Thus he had—and so he was not so foreign to France as Taine maintained—pursued the politics that centralizing absolutism had been trying to implement ever since the reign of Louis XIV, and had given new impetus to the anti-decentralizing reaction the Convention had begun in 1793. A powerful idea runs through Taine's *Origines de la France contemporaine.* It was not entirely new. Since Chateaubriand, it had been at the center of the campaign liberal thought had been conducting against royal absolutism, the Revolution, and Napoleon. It is diluted, manipulated, and adapted in countless ways throughout Taine's six volumes, and summarized in a single paragraph in Chateaubriand:

> The French go instinctively for power; they do not like liberty; equality is their only idol. But equality and despotism have hidden connections. In these two respects, Napoleon had his source in the hearts of the French, who were militarily inclined toward power, and democratically fond of the level. Once he had risen to the throne, he caused the people to sit there with him; a proletarian king, he humiliated the kings and the nobles in his antechambers; he leveled ranks, not by lowering them, but by elevating them: leveling through debasement would have been more pleasing to plebeian envy, but leveling through elevation was more flattering to its pride.[12]

It was no accident that the "fatal foreigner," the "ravager," as Chateaubriand calls him, failed to establish a domination over France such as the latter had never known. At least as much as he had seized control of the country, he had been the product of France's deepest instincts. The indictment went beyond criticism of the reign's admittedly mixed results. Chateaubriand, and Taine after him, accused Napoleon less of having ruined and permanently damaged France by his incessant wars than of having corrupted people's souls and made them degenerate, of having shaped them for obedience while at the same time giving an unprecedented extension to the French people's evil passions, starting with their love of equality, in other words, specifically, with the leveling jealousy that torments them.[13] In this way, Chateaubriand even claims, Napoleon had revealed himself to be worse than the revolutionaries whose violence and whose cult of civic virtue had, to be sure, decimated the old society, but without debasing it: "Its values were damaged, but not destroyed," whereas despotism destroyed them without society having to suffer extreme violence.[14] That is to forget, of course, how much glory was at that time not a poison but a powerful stimulant whose effects continued long after Napoleon's death and gave the whole nineteenth century colors that are not those of servitude, quite the contrary; and it is also to forget how much glory perpetuated values inherited from aristocratic times, to which the new society was, a priori, hostile. Taine is still more blind than Chateaubriand to this aspect of things, but he was writing less the history of a period than that of a national pathology.

Taine had the art of making enemies: the left applauded the first part of the *Origines,* which was very opposed to the Old Regime, and decried the second, which was even more critical of the Revolution. Regarding those who, as friends of order, rubbed their hands with satisfaction when they read his attacks on the Committee of Public Safety, he said, with quiet irony, "I'll be waiting for them when we get to Napoleon."[15] The third part, which is on precisely "the Ogre" and the "modern regime," delighted the liberals who, since Tocqueville, had seen in administrative centralization the cause of all the ills from which France was suffering, and irked everyone else. Taine was a regular at the salon presided over by Mathilde, the daughter of Jérôme Bonaparte. She was so annoyed—hadn't he dared to write that the Emperor's mother was slovenly?—that she refused to receive "that traitor, that fugitive from his country," finally sending him a note bearing these three letters: P.P.C., which was understood as "Princesse Pas Contente."[16] She had meant simply "Pour prendre congé" ("to say goodbye"), and she kept her word: Taine was never again received in the salon in the Rue de Berry.[17]

It was in this context that a few years later Arthur Lévy took up his pen to come to the Emperor's aid. His *Napoléon intime* (1893) was a best-seller, like the *Napoléon et la paix* that he published about a decade later. In the second of these works Arthur Lévy accumulated quotations and extracts from memoirs in order to clear the Emperor of accusations of bellicosity or an obsession with conquering and to show that he had never undertaken a war that was not forced upon him, while in the first, having rejected any suspicion that Napoleon was a monster, he set out to demonstrate that Napoleon was only a man, but a man in the full sense of the term: "Nothing human was foreign to him," Arthur Lévy writes artlessly, "a strong family feeling, in fact, kindness, gratitude, cordiality were his essential qualities."[18] François Coppée, another great admirer of the Emperor who wrote a review of Arthur Lévy's book, exaggerates a bit when he says that he sees in *Napoléon intime* "the reply to [. . .], the refutation of Taine's work."[19] That goes too far; the battle between Taine and Arthur Lévy is too unequal. The latter is not up to it. Not just anybody can be Taine, and there is not the glimmer of an idea in Arthur Lévy. He refutes and describes, he does not interpret, he does not seek to build a "system." However, in the adoration that he has for his hero and in his naïveté, he grasps a side of Napoleon's personality to which Taine remains blind, even if he gives us the keys to understanding this same characteristic trait. Arthur Lévy's Napoleon is good-natured, pleasant in private relationships; he has good manners when he wants to take the trouble, a charming smile, beautiful eyes and fine hands; he is not difficult, he is content with little; he is kind, not at all vindictive: if the little digs he inflicts on people he likes cause them to suffer cruelly, he spares those who betray him—and, in fact, it would be hard to find a master more capable of forgetting offenses. After Waterloo, he regretted this, saying that he should have had Fouché shot; but he didn't do that, even though he knew that Fouché, like Talleyrand, was betraying him. Napoleon? A good guy, for sure. Everything that Arthur Lévy says is correct. And yet he does not understand his character. He sees in this happy temperament the expression of an innate kindness and feelings of compassion. The truth is just the opposite, and on that head Taine is closer to it: in Napoleon, leniency was not the effect of good will, but of indifference and misanthropy. He did not pardon his contemporaries because he liked them but because he had contempt for them. He never expected anything from them. Genuine anger, which often follows disappointment or treachery, was unknown to him. His fits of anger were always calculated, owing everything to reason and nothing to impulse. In the end, Taine is closer to the truth about the causes, but farther from it in his description of the effects. There is monstrosity—in the literal sense, *extra-ordinariness*—in Napoleon, in which we see his genius, his superiority, his excessiveness, and the strangeness of his character, when the latter is compared with the values and beliefs of his contemporaries. Taine senses this and tries to express it by constructing an interpretation that is no doubt forced—if there is something of the condottiere in Napoleon, there is also in him, at least as much, a child of the Enlightenment—but he grasps, better than his opponent, the greatness of the personage. Taine "anatomizes" the hero engendered by the French Revolution, whereas the idolater Arthur Lévy could have replied, like old Dupin, a former minister of Louis-Philippe's, who was asked whether in his youth he had seen the Emperor: "Yes, I saw him. He was fat, common-looking."[20]

Napoleon, whom Nietzsche called a synthesis of the inhuman and the superhuman,[21] is here simply human; he is not "too human," no, just human. Great men are diminished when one tries to exculpate them, when one denies the immoderation that is constitutive of them and the tragedy of which their history bears the mark.

I am always astonished when historians blame the execution of the Duke of Enghien on Talleyrand, Caulaincourt, or Réal. Talleyrand's quip is famous: it was, he said, worse than a crime, it was a mistake. A crime, to be sure: how else can we describe abducting the Prince of Condé's son to a foreign land, his forced repatriation to Paris, and his execution in the moat of the château of Vincennes after a sham trial? A crime, yes, but was it a mistake? That is debatable. On spilling the blood of this cousin of the Bourbons, Bonaparte saw the path to the throne open before him. This crime was in fact the guarantee that the survivors of the Revolution, who feared more than anything the return of the Old Regime, had been waiting for—at that time, the princes in exile had not yet given up hope of punishing the regicides. The survivors of 1793 were tormented by doubt: might not Bonaparte, despite all the assurances he had given them, someday consider bringing back Louis XVIII? By killing one of their party, the First Consul made himself a regicide in turn, thus connecting his fate with that of the former members of the Convention. He reestablished the throne to his own benefit, yes, but he based it on the blood of the Bourbons. Moreover, as was proven by subsequent events, this quasi-regicide disarmed the royalists the way the deportations that followed the attack in the Rue Saint-Nicaise had broken the Jacobins: until 1812 and the first defeats, there were no further plots to kill the Emperor.

I like Mme de Rémusat's image of Bonaparte on the evening of 20 March 1804. He is at Malmaison. He is sitting on the floor to play with his brother Louis's son. He is laughing wholeheartedly. Around him, there are only gloomy faces. Josephine, his mother, his sisters are all on the verge of tears. The news has spread, the Duke of Enghien has been imprisoned in Vincennes, where he will be put on trial. The First Consul has already rejected his wife's pleas, telling her that it's none of her business. He rises and goes up to a table where there is a chessboard. He asks Mme de Rémusat, a close friend of Talleyrand who is currently Josephine's lady of honor, to play with him. He plays badly, refuses to obey the rules. His opponent is very pale. Suddenly, he gives her a penetrating look: "Why aren't you wearing rouge? You're too pale!" She forgot to put any on, she stammers. He turns to his wife and tells her, laughing, that she would never forget that. Then, the silence growing oppressive, he begins to sing, then interrupts himself to recite a few lines from Corneille's *Cinna:* "Let us be friends, Cinna, it's I who am asking / I gave you your life as to my enemy / And, despite the fury of your craven fate / I give it to you again as to my assassin."[22] Does he recite these verses—sotto voce, Mme de Rémusat notes—while pretending to play? Is he looking at her? Is he smiling? General Hulin, who has just come from Paris, is announced.[23] He has come to report. Bonaparte abruptly pushes back the table, rises, and goes to join his officers. When he reappears the following morning, the Duke of Enghien has been shot.[24]

This is less Arthur Lévy's easygoing Napoleon than the Napoleon whose absence of false pity during the massacre at Jaffa Stendhal praised, adding that the disapproval of this terrible but necessary act had to be attributed to the "mixture of Catholicism and aristocracy that has been flattening out our souls for the past two centuries."[25] Since then, humanitarian sentimentalism has won out over Catholicism, but it has prolonged its effects. Today, Napoleon is indicted, if not in the name of the principles, at least in the name of the prejudices Stendhal denounced. This is even more true now than it was in his time, because before Bainville, historians hardly dwelt at length on the morality of Napoleon's actions. Did he show that he was capable of dealing with the circumstances? Was he faithful to the heritage of the Revolution? Such were the questions that preoccupied them. Some mentioned the Civil Code, the prefects, the guarantee of national properties,[26] the thrones overturned, the Jews emancipated everywhere, the doors of the convents thrown open, French ideas and laws spreading with the armies; others emphasized the enslavement of assemblies and the press, the return of priests, conscription, the omnipresent police, the state prisons, the worker's logbook, the reestablishment of slavery and noble titles, the creation of puppet kingdoms to benefit Napoleon's family, and so on. These controversies filled the five hundred pages of the book that the Dutch historian Pieter Geyl devoted to them: *Napoleon: For and Against.* They are all there, defenders and detractors, formed up in battalions like two armies ready to do battle.[27]

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Whether he is the savior of the Revolution or its gravedigger, an ancient hero or a modern one, a liberator or a dictator, Napoleon's appearance has never ceased to change.[28] Some people see him as a demiurge who changed history, for better or for worse, by subjecting the course of events to the superior power of his will; for others, he was on the contrary the victim of these same events, less free than is believed and exhausting himself, and France along with him, trying to make Britain capitulate, without having the material means—a navy worthy of the name—to conquer it, doomed like Sisyphus to roll his stone eternally or, as a new Prometheus, to perish a prisoner of the British on an island lost in the ocean, his liver devoured by an eagle: Napoleon as the victim of fate rather than its master. Still others divide his life and his history into two parts, contrasting Bonaparte with Napoleon, the First Consul with the Emperor, the magistrate of a republic with the sovereign of a hereditary empire, the necessary man with the megalomaniac adventurer. There was indeed a time, under the Consulate, when the future prisoner of Saint Helena was, Chateaubriand said, a French Washington. Like Washington a few years earlier, Bonaparte had also wanted what he had to want, in accord with the interests and needs of his period. Approved by the majority of the French, he had then "established a regular and powerful government, a code of laws adopted in various countries, and a strong, active, intelligent administration"; he had also "caused order to be born out of chaos and reduced furious demagogues to serve under him."[29] Chateaubriand admits that Bonaparte was great by his work, a work that was destined to survive him, but also by virtue of the personal qualities and the clear superiority that allowed him to succeed where no one else had been able to succeed before him, finding in his genius the authority that he had not found in either the laws or the traditions. But for that very reason, in Bonaparte Napoleon already loomed beneath the surface. Although his extraordinary faculties allowed him to impose himself, it was also because of them that he very soon freed himself from any kind of dependency on the people and interests of his time, putting his period in the service of his desires and his ambitions after having initially yielded to its contingencies. Bonaparte may have been the French Washington, but only for two or three years; he had not been able or willing to do it longer. To the role of legislator and founder of his country's liberty, he ultimately preferred that of conqueror. He did not die, like Washington, as the father of his country, surrounded by universal affection, but as a prisoner, alone, and, at least at that time, little missed.

There are many different Napoleons—irreconcilable, contradictory, but all including some bit of truth. These debates have never ceased. In each case, the dominant judgment reflects the concerns of the time when it is issued. A recent essay by Lionel Jospin, *Le Mal napoléonien,* testifies to this. It recapitulates, against the Emperor, the principal grievances of the republican tradition, seasoning them—and this is characteristic of the time—with a pinch of morality.[30]

The recurrent comparisons between Napoleon and Hitler are a sign of this contamination of historical discourse by morality and anachronism.[31] Pieter Geyl had already made this comparison in the introduction to his *Napoléon, For and Against,* written in 1944 when fighting was still going on and his country, Holland, remained occupied by the Germans. The parallel was already a common one, to the great dismay of Churchill, who, admiring Napoleon to the point of thinking of writing a biography of him, was pained to see his hero compared with the master of the Third Reich.[32] Geyl agreed: it might seem insulting to juxtapose these two names, and yet he could not help seeing in Hitler a successor of the emperor of the French. Hadn't Napoleon inherited from the French Revolution the belief in the possibility of founding an entirely new world? Wasn't he convinced that he had law and truth on his side, and wasn't he inclined to treat his adversaries like criminals and to base his power on the action of propaganda and the regimentation of the French? Didn't he believe that he was destined to create, by the sword and by blood, a new European order? Didn't he detest the parliamentary system? Didn't he oppose to the latter's legitimacy, which was based on voting, the legitimacy that proceeded from the direct bond between the people and its charismatic leader? But the Dutch historian was not as simple-minded as those who adopt his view today, assimilating the reestablishment of slavery in Guadeloupe and Santo Domingo to "genocide." After drawing a parallel between the destinies of Napoleon and Hitler, Geyl emphasized the limits, which are in fact so great that they actually lead to the conclusion that the comparison is absurd: what is there, in the history of Napoleon, that corresponds to the death camps? To the totalitarian regimentation and indoctrination of society? Finally, what relationship is there between the Europe of the Enlightenment that Napoleon wanted to federate and the Third Reich, which sought to ensure the supremacy of the white race for a thousand years?[33] If Napoleon's Grande Armée set out to conquer Europe, it was not to enslave it but to free it.

Nonetheless, it was this tyrannical, colonialist, genocidal, racist Napoleon who in 2005 was at the center of an episode that was both distressing and ridiculous. Since 2002, the date of the bicentennial of the re-institution of slavery, the emperor had been in the hot seat. A malicious pamphlet, *Le Crime de Napoléon,* published two years later by Claude Ribbe, had caused an uproar. The cover showed Napoleon and Hitler side by side. The hypocrites—associations, small groups, and alleged descendants of slaves—mobilized. When the time came to commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Austerlitz, on 2 December 2005, the president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, and his prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, who were accustomed to strike their sails at the slightest breeze, preferred to abstain—even though Villepin had sung Napoleon's praises in a book on the Hundred Days published only three years before.[34] Hence, the brilliant victory won on 2 December 1805 was not commemorated, France joining instead in the ceremonies organized in Britain for the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Our two valiant leaders could at least be sure that if they commemorated a defeat rather than a victory no one would criticize them.[35]

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NAPOLEON IS NOT completely dead, because he continues to arouse passions. The same cannot be said of Louis XIV and Charles de Gaulle, his companions on the podium. These two now belong to History. If we except the Algerian tragedy, the passions have burnt out. They are dead, truly dead. Louis XIV is Versailles and the Trianon, the music of Lully and the theater of Molière, the language of Racine and Boileau, the gardens of Le Nôtre, the austere and solemn architecture of the courtyard of Les Invalides and Vauban's fortresses; the king has the face and the voice of Didier Sandre, who played him with such grace and subtlety in *L'Allèe du roi*.[36] Today, we see the Sun King through the eyes of Voltaire, who wrote, after discussing Louis's efforts "to make his nation more flourishing":

> It seems to me that one can hardly see all these works and all these efforts without some gratitude, and without being filled with the love of the public welfare that inspired them. [. . .] Louis XIV did his nation more good than twenty of his predecessors taken together; and he hardly did all he could have done [. . .]. However, this country, despite its ups and downs and its losses, is still one of the most flourishing on Earth, because all the good that Louis XIV did persists, and all the damage that it was hard not to do in turbulent times has been repaired. Ultimately posterity, which is the judge of kings, [. . .] will admit, weighing this monarch's virtues and weaknesses, that although he might have been too much praised during his life, he deserved to praised forever.[37]

Voltaire's view was far from generally shared. No monarch was more detested than Louis XIV. For a long time, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the incessant wars far outweighed Versailles. The Revolution added a major grievance that was tantamount to a condemnation: "this false great reign," as Victor Hugo called it, had incarnated the most absolute despotism. The dark flipside of Louis XIV's reign was still alive and well in the middle of the twentieth century, when Pierre Goubert published his *Louis XIV et vingt millions de Français,* a rather somber portrait of the Grand Siècle. The wind turned in the 1980s. The context was favorable for a rehabilitation of the Sun King. With the first "cohabitation"[38] (1986–1988), French politics, bidding farewell to all thought of grandeur and sinking to petty calculations and petty maneuvers, began the descent into hell that has since taken it lower and lower. The time had come to return to the heroes of the past.[39]

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IF IT TOOK almost three centuries for the history of the Sun King to pass "from mythology to history," twenty years sufficed for that of General de Gaulle to make the inverse journey, from history to mythology:

> The statesman who was the most contestable during his lifetime has become, in all polls [. . .] the most incontestable [. . .]. The great divider of the nation has been transformed into the ultimate symbol of unity. The man of the *permanent Coup d'Etat* is now the man to whom we owe institutions that enjoy the broadest approval in two centuries. [. . .] The mind contemporary with Barrès and Péguy grew into a visionary of the twenty-first century. The man of difference, the glacial and taciturn Commander, has become, through the grace of the media, through congenial caricature, by virtue of endless commentary, the idealized image most widely consumed by the popular imagination, the great Charles, our national Astérix and our Eiffel Tower.[40]

Here he is, embalmed, canonized, buried under tributes. It has to be said that the wretchedness of the time encourages nostalgia even more. A de Gaulle is so precious that his memory is well worth a few genuflections. The shortage of great souls is even such that we have to make do with what we find. The fortunate recipients do not always have all the desired claims to national recognition, but then how can we be too demanding? For example, in the case of Jacques Chirac: not being able to praise his political achievements, which are in truth nonexistent, we celebrate his artistic tastes and his so politically correct "openness to the world." Canonization is not far off. Although the General's ascent to Paradise occurred on the twentieth anniversary of his death, which coincided with the centenary of his birth and the fiftieth anniversary of the appeal of 18 June, it had already begun earlier. The publication of Jean Lacouture's *De Gaulle* inaugurated it in the mid-1980s. The left held power, was enjoying its delights, and was getting along very well with institutions that it had long considered fatal for freedom. Lacouture's work was not new, since he had already covered this ground twice before. In an initial version, published in 1964, he had been harsh on the General: if not the resister of 1940, at least the president who, in that same year, was forced into a run-off with François Mitterrand. It was in fact de Gaulle the candidate, rather than the man of 18 June, to whom Lacouture gave short shrift, denouncing a reactionary coupled, in the international domain, with a short-sighted man whose "primary" anti-communism was, moreover, to occupy a central place in the second version of the work, published after May 1968. That was the time when the journalist refused to believe in the reality of events on the pretext that the reactionary newspaper *Le Figaro* had spoken about them. Similarly, a few years later he long doubted the reality of the crimes attributed to the Khmer Rouge. When the third and last version of his *De Gaulle* was put on sale in 1984, Lacouture had admitted, several years earlier, that he had been mistaken, even if he persisted in calling Pol Pot's supporters "Nazis" in order to avoid applying to them the epithets "communist" or "Maoist," which he considered more honorable. But in the end, the revolutionary daydreams that had formerly led him to praise Ho Chi Minh (1967) or Nasser (1971) were no longer in fashion. His conversion was total: from an out-and-out detractor of de Gaulle, he had transformed himself into a fervent admirer, all the more easily since François Mitterrand, whom he had always supported—even political chameleons have their little weaknesses—had donned de General's garments, which were no doubt too big for him, but which he was to wear with better grace than his successors. This time, the account of De Gaulle's life had grown longer: three large volumes replaced the little book of 1965, with the ambition of offering "a coherent narrative, as equitable as possible (but not neutral!), of this epic journey through the twentieth century by the most illustrious, and in any case the most singular of Frenchmen."[41] It must be admitted that Jean Lacouture managed to climb this "mountain" that he did not contemplate, as he was later to acknowledge, "without feeling a certain vertigo." This is understandable: "The rock faces are sheer, the altitude exhausting." This book, which has become a classic whose tortuous genesis has been forgotten, paved the way for the flood of consensual tributes that were heaped upon the General's remains in 1990.

The polemics were over, the hatred extinguished! "Everyone was, is, or will be a Gaullist!" the General liked to joke. Twenty-five years later, the prediction has proved true: right and left prostrate themselves before the great man in the hope of improving their image a little, since that's what it's about. Haven't we recently seen François Hollande, the most mediocre head of state in the history of contemporary France, with the exception of Paul Deschanel, make a very public pilgrimage to Colombey (on 13 June 2016) in the apparent hope of drawing from it a few unlikely advantages? And Florian Philippot, former leader of a party historically shaped by a visceral anti-Gaullism (the National Front), make the same pilgrimage every 18 June?

The 1990s—and the movement has continued since then—from Régis Debray's *A demain de Gaulle* to Robert Hossein and Alain Decaux's show *Celui qui a dit non* (1999), by way of André Glucksmann's *De Gaulle où es-tu?* (1995), saw tributes and regrets rain down on the illustrious dead man. People competed to see who could repudiate the early anti-Gaullism of his youth or explain how Gaullist he had been without daring to admit it, and sometimes even without knowing it. Didn't Régis Debray explain that he had been anti-Gaullist only because down deep he was profoundly Gaullist? It was de Gaulle that he went in search of at the antipodes, not understanding that the hero he dreamed of was there, right before his eyes. The Gaullists blocked the view, the way a forest prevents us from seeing the trees. How, in fact, could one be enthusiastic when Gaullism had the face of Debré and Malraux leading the demonstration on the Champs-Elysées on 30 May 1968? Debray could not even discern the great man in "the exasperating beanpole" whose obsessive presence made him want to get out of there. "To find the rebel again, I turned my back on him; to return to London in 1940 I fled Paris in 1960. [. . .] A different setting, the same cast: guerillas in the role of the *maquis,* the Yankees in that of the Nazis, with Guevara as the de Gaulle of the Andes."[42] The adventure, the true adventure, was next door. At home. No need to cross the oceans to meet alleged heroes who were nothing more than dreadful murderers, Che first among them. But it was too late; when Régis Debray returned to France, the last hero in the history of France had left the stage: "I had mistaken the continent, the great man, and the epic,"[43] our ex-*barbudo* acknowledged. He was not the only one: "Even if I know that one ends up doing the contrary of what one wanted to do, and that mistakes reign over our lives, this one will always stun me: the Don Quixotes of the Latin Quarter opposing our last Don Quixote and giving Sancho Panza [Mitterrand] a leg up. Taking a prophet for a notary, and vice versa."[44] Clearly, this postwar generation made a total mess of things. It will leave nothing after it.

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The General had so many enemies that some people suggest that in any age he would have met with hostility and incomprehension. François Broche, the author of a *Histoire des antigaullismes,* writes that de Gaulle was the first and the most perseverant of his adversaries, so much did his haughty behavior, the severity of his character, and his inability to be cordial multiply detractors around him without him having wished it.[45] It is certain that his "excessive self-confidence, harsh treatment of other people's opinions, and attitude of a king in exile" that, according to one of his former teachers, was the core of his character, did not make him popular. "Good grades, not much liked,"[46] he might have said, like Napoleon, regarding his early years.[47] The valuable *Dictionnaire de Gaulle* in the "Bouquins" series does not have an entry for the word "hatred." On the other hand, we find articles on the "anti-Gaullists" of the left, the right, or converts. "Anti-Gaullists" is preferable to "anti-Gaullisms": the word has the advantage of suggesting how much the rejection has always targeted at least as much the General's person as his politics. Anti-Gaullism is not reducible to an argumentative discourse that can be refuted; it is a passion, and one of the most violent in the tumultuous history of French politics. De Gaulle did not simply arouse opposition, he elicited hatreds, total, ferocious, and definitive, inaccessible hatreds that were impermeable to arguments or proofs and that in many cases were extinguished only with those who had felt them.

In that, he was even more violently hated than Napoleon. The latter was hated chiefly by his political enemies, by those who had not found their place in the postrevolutionary France that he had undertaken to reconstruct by drawing on the idea of a fusion of traditions, histories, and parties. This politics, which might be called "centrist" and was equally accessible to supporters of the Old Regime and to the heirs of the Revolution, was possible only on the condition of excluding on the one hand those who had not given up hope of restoring the Bourbons to the throne, and on the other those who believed that the Revolution had simply been postponed—intransigent royalists and irreducible Jacobins. It was logical that Bonaparte felt exposed to the blows of both of these groups. The blues made several attempts to assassinate him during the Consulate; the whites almost succeeded in doing so the night of the attack in the Rue Saint-Nicaise on 28 December 1800. During the Cadoudal conspiracy of 1804, royalists and republicans even considered forming an alliance. General de Gaulle was hated first of all by members of his own camp. It was on the right, in the political family that was his by heritage, by upbringing, and also by conviction, even if he was not always a very orthodox representative of it, that he found his most inveterate adversaries, those who never pardoned him, some for the opprobrium cast on Vichy, others for the "abandonment" of Algeria.[48]

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Regarding the Appeal of 18 June, Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac wrote that it was "a rational act and at the same an act of faith," and, for that very reason, "the carefully considered rendezvous of a man and his destiny."[49]

It was definitely an act of faith. When he made his famous appeal, de Gaulle was himself responding to an appeal. At that time, he cared little about the prospects of success or failure, the probability of seeing, or not seeing, a large movement rally around his name: for him, the armistice was not a mistake but a crime; by laying down its arms, by abandoning France's allies, and by tearing up the treaties and commitments to which it had promised to adhere, the Pétain government let slip through its hands the "treasure of French sovereignty that, for fourteen centuries, had never been surrendered."[50] Worse yet, to ask for an armistice when no other government of a defeated country had done so was not only to cast dishonor on France but also to compromise its future renascence.[51] De Gaulle's rejection was visceral. The same was true of those who without responding to an appeal that very few heard, were the first to leave for Britain. They did so by instinct, rejecting the defeat and still more the occupation of their country by the "Boches."[52] Nothing was less thought through than their departure. They left because it was necessary, because they had to. Olivier Guichard would have been one of those if his attempt to leave had not ended at the Spanish border: "I had never heard of de Gaulle. The idea of continuing the war was simply a gut reaction."[53] The number of those who came with him didn't matter much. But he had hardly arrived in London before a whole flock followed him. There were those—Paul Morand and Alexis Corbin—who preferred to go back to France, and others—André Maurois, Saint-John Perse, and Jean Monnet—who, often opposed to this general who made conceited remarks and who was said not to be much of a democrat, preferred to take refuge in the United States. "Rats leaving a sinking ship,"[54] as Philippe de Gaulle was to call them. In late August, only three general officers had joined de Gaulle: Vice-Admiral Muselier; General Legentilhomme, who was in command in Somalia; and General Catroux, the governor of Indo-China.[55] In order to ensure the legitimacy of a temporary brigadier general who had been part of Reynaud's government for twelve days as an undersecretary of state in the War ministry, and who had left so few marks of his presence there that Marc Bloch could write a few weeks later, in his "Procès-verbal de l'an 1940": "To tell the truth, a very recent brigadier general was indeed brought into the Councils of the government. What did he do there? I don't know. However, I greatly fear that, faced with such constellations, his two little stars didn't have much weight. The Committee of Public Safety would have made him a commanding general."[56] History proved de Gaulle right and gave his act in 1940 a kind of necessity. People forget how extravagant, how mad it was at the time, when the Reich in fact seemed invincible. It was a doubly-crazy act: not only did Germany's final victory seem at that point more than plausible, but de Gaulle was nothing when he carried off to London the "remnant of the sword." This amounts to saying that at no time was he simply a rogue officer coming to put himself in the service of those who were continuing the battle; he was not a Major Schill, who, disapproving of Prussia's neutrality in 1809, raised troops on his own in order to right the French alongside the Austrians. From the outset, it was in the name of France that de Gaulle spoke, refusing to grant any legitimacy to the government that was about to replace Paul Reynaud's cabinet, even though it did so following legal procedures.[57] From the first day on, he knew that he was taking responsibility for France, against those who had abandoned and betrayed it.

The act of faith on 18 June has a history that is almost as long as that of the General himself. At the age of fifteen, the young man saw himself commanding armies and booting the Germans out of France, and at the age of twenty he was convinced that he would someday be called upon to perform some great service to his homeland.[58] He was not one of those military men who dream of a tranquil career which, without demanding too much of them, would lead them to an honorable retirement. But at the age of almost fifty, de Gaulle's career was, so to speak, behind him. It had not followed the course that he had dreamed of. De Gaulle? A frustrated soldier. He had been the right age in 1914—twenty-four—but by terrible bad luck he had spent the last three years of the war in various prisoner-of-war camps, far from the battlefields where so many other men were dying or winning fame. He later admitted that having embraced a military vocation, the prospect of a future war was far from horrifying him when he was young; he even wished for it.[59] If war is synonymous with destruction and suffering, isn't it also synonymous with heroic actions and sublime devotions? When he thought about a military career, he was certainly not imagining spending it in a staff office. Courageous under fire, intrepid even,[60] he had been wounded twice; and twice he had returned to the front.[61] The third wound, received on 2 March 1916 in the assault on Douaumont, was fatal for him. He was captured, and thought dead. History had wanted nothing to do with him. Still worse, it had inflicted on him the punishment he considered the most dishonorable for a career officer: captivity. The feeling that he had missed his destiny stayed with him for a long time. His letters from that period are full of disenchanted remarks: "I am now more directly than ever in the grip of a sorrow that will end only with my life and is, I think, more profound and bitter than any other I shall ever encounter," he wrote to his parents from the Ingolstadt fort on 19 December 1917. "Being so entirely and irremediably useless as I am in the hours we are living through when one is wholly constructed for action, and moreover in the situation I find myself in, which is for a man and a soldier the cruelest that can be imagined! Pardon me for being so weak as to complain."[62] Now that the war was coming to an end, what kind of future did he have? Life in the barracks, routine, one of those monotonous, flat lives that the army offers in peacetime? The man who in *Le Fil de l'épée* was to sing the praises of "first-rate ambitious men" was starting out with a serious handicap. From his *Stalag* in Germany, he wondered about his prospects:

> What goal can I have? My career, you say? But if I can't fight again between now and the end of the war, will I remain in the army? And what mediocre future would I have in it? Three years, four years of war in which I will not have participated, or perhaps more! To have some kind of future in my career, so far as officers of my age are concerned who have some ambition, the first, indispensable condition is to have fought in battle, to have, as the campaign changes in form, learned to judge it, shaped one's reasoning, hardened one's character and authority. From the military point of view, I have no illusions, I, too, will be nothing more than a "revenant."[63]

He was to some extent in the situation of a child of Musset's century, who had come into the world after the end of the Napoleonic saga; he had not come after the tragedy, he had seen it take place before his eyes, but it was impossible for him to play his part in it. It was even worse than being born too late. He had made five attempts to escape the prison camp, and five times he had been caught. Destiny was persecuting him. Through writing, he would make the mark on history he had not been able to make through action. That was why his relationship with Marshal Pétain, whose protégé he was for a few years, soon soured.

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It has been said that in the Marshal's predilection for his younger colleague there was "the affection of an old, childless man and of a leader who had up to that point been without disciples worthy of him."[64] In any case, in the young man Pétain discerned talent and a future: "the most intelligent officer in the French army,"[65] he said. As for de Gaulle, much later on he admitted that he had felt "affection"[66] for the victor of Verdun. Affection, admiration—there was a time when the old soldier and the young officer had a relationship that went beyond those that attach an aide-de-camp to his superior, a time when the latter saw in the former the model of the military leader that he himself dreamed of becoming.[67] De Gaulle went to lunch with the Marshal, they visited the battlefield at Verdun together,[68] Pétain dedicated a photo to the young Philippe de Gaulle,[69] he is said to have intervened to get the jury of the Ecole de guerre to raise his protégé's grade,[70] and, in 1927, he got him appointed as a lecturer in the same school, where the student de Gaulle was remembered with mixed feelings, at best. Pétain's predilection was no secret for anyone, and for his part Captain de Gaulle never forgot, when the occasion presented itself, to remind people that he was part of "Pétain's entourage."[71]

Historians do not much like the idea that de Gaulle was initially very close to the future head of the French state. Their relationship, Jean Lacouture asserts, was always, at least for de Gaulle, "suspended and conditional." He is supposed to have found in Pétain a patron rather than a master.[72] Is that so certain? If de Gaulle did not hesitate to criticize the doctrines that reduced the art of war to the rank of a procedure and that were favored by Pétain,[73] at the same period—the mid-1920s—he published articles that supported the Marshal's theses regarding the continuous front and the importance of fortifications.[74] The de Gaulle of 1925 had not yet written *Vers l'armée de métier* (1934).[75]

At that point, the victor of Verdun was loaded down with laurels. It was said that he would soon be elected to the Académie française, at least as soon as Foch had the good grace to leave his seat to him. As a future Immortal, Pétain had thus taken it into his head to pad out his literary production, which was in fact quite limited,[76] by signing a history of *Le Soldat à travers les âges* that, by its breadth of view and its historical depth, would be worthy of a marshal who was a member of the Academy. He had entrusted the task to his usual "ghost writers," but not being very satisfied with the result, he decided to bring in de Gaulle, who had just published *La Discorde chez l'ennemi.* This was in early 1925. De Gaulle experienced, on the marshal's staff, some fine years divided between family life and professional life, between the apartment in Desaix Square and the small, smoke-filled office on the Boulevard des Invalides, in the center of the monumental and military Left Bank that so well suited his character. He was kept very busy. There was the work of the staff, the preparation of the manuscript of *Le Soldat,* and speeches and articles to write. De Gaulle basked in the sun of Verdun.

One would like de Gaulle to have always been like his statue, impassive, clear-sighted, without illusions, adhering to reality, able better than anyone else to take its measure and draw lessons from it. Everything indicates that on the contrary, in his relations with Pétain he indulged in wild dreams. But de Gaulle was no ordinary ghostwriter. He had nothing in common with those who shared the work with him, Colonel Laure or Colonel Audet. De Gaulle was not content to be the Marshal's "pen." He saw the subjection, which is the usual characteristic of the literary ghost writer, as a kind of collaboration. It was his words he was putting down on paper, his sentences that he shaped and reshaped until he had found the precise formulation; they were not the Marshal's words, even if he allowed the Marshal to re-read his work, very attentively, looking for unnecessary adverbs and adjectives, striking a word here, putting a note in the margin there. De Gaulle knew the rules of the game, but although he accepted observations and corrections bearing on the form, he was less open to objections to the content. Then he debated, quibbled, argued, resisted every inch of the way, not hesitating to write pages and pages to reply to the slightest remark.[77] This manuscript, intended to be signed by the Marshal, was his text, his work, just like *La Discorde chez l'ennemi* and, later, *Le Fil de l'épée.* Did he really believe that he had become the Marshal's "collaborator" and not only his pen? In any case, he had a rude awakening when Pétain, in late 1927, finding that de Gaulle was not advancing fast enough, decided to entrust to Colonel Audet the task of finishing the work. Pétain had understood nothing about de Gaulle, proving that in his view de Gaulle was nothing more than another member of his staff, though certainly more talented than the others. De Gaulle revolted. He protested to Audet—"A book is a man. Up to this point, I was that man"[78]—and to the Marshal, reminding him that it was thanks to him that he had had the possibility of publishing a true book instead of the "honorable report" that less talented "editors" would have written, but that by making this change he was exposing himself to the worst of misadventures: despite his signature, wouldn't readers recognize the style of his first "collaborator"? The Marshal should not only let him finish this book, which was his work, but also acknowledge his participation.[79]

This furious letter testifies to the immensity of the disappointment felt by de Gaulle. At first, the Marshal adopted a conciliatory tone, promising his rather inconvenient ghost writer a preface acknowledging his role;[80] but Pétain soon decided that this affair had gone on long enough. He put the manuscript in a drawer, never, he thought, to be taken out again. When de Gaulle exhorted him to finally publish *Le Soldat,* the Marshal kept silent.[81] The bridges had not been totally burned, but something had really broken. De Gaulle later told General Catroux that the Marshal died in 1925.[82] Why 1925? Because in that year, the old soldier had agreed to go to Morocco to put down Abd el-Krim's revolt, which Lyautey had not been able to halt. Pétain had, de Gaulle said, out of the "senile ambition [to control] everything" agreed to help disgrace the great Lyautey. But 1925 was also the year that de Gaulle had joined the Marshal's staff and believed that he was becoming his closest collaborator, the two of them advancing together and benefitting from their interaction. If in his view Pétain was dead, it was also because he had failed to recognize what he was gaining by having de Gaulle in his entourage, imagining that he was simply adding a ghost writer to the collection he already had.

The relations between the two men really began to deteriorate only after the publication, in 1934, of *Vers l'armée de métier.* De Gaulle, who had never considered the manuscript of *Le Soldat* as his former mentor's property, then made up his mind to take it out of the drawer where it was reposing and, after revising it to erase the Marshal's additions, to publish it under his own name. "If I understand you correctly," Pétain wrote to him, "you intend to use for this publication the study that I earlier assigned you to make. I am deeply astonished. [. . .] The outline is my work, and many of [my] revisions and corrections complete the definition of its character: I consider this book to belong to me personally and exclusively. [. . .] I find your attitude very distressing."[83] De Gaulle replied with a long letter addressing the Marshal's grievances. In it, we find this confession, which tells us a great deal about the misunderstanding that had poisoned their relations from the outset:

> Without in any way wishing to deny, Marshal, the role played in the elaboration of part of my book by the impetus you provided me and the situation in which you placed me, I cannot, I admit, imagine that that impetus, that situation would have sufficed to make such a synthesis "a staff project." Its literary, historical, and philosophical nature, the extremely personal cast of the thought and style [. . .] give the study in question a character completely different from the one that a staff project takes on, and must take on. In a word, [. . .] it is not "drawn up," it is "written." In addition, Marshal, and without expatiating on the reasons that led you, eleven years ago, to put an end to my collaboration, it will certainly not have escaped you that in the course of those eleven years the elements of this affair have changed so far as I am concerned. I was then thirty-seven years old; now I am forty-eight. I have been wounded psychologically—even by you, Marshal—I have been disillusioned, and I have abandoned ambitions. From the point of view of ideas and style, I was ignored, but since then I have begun to gain some recognition. In short, I now lack both the flexibility and the "incognito" that would be necessary for me to allow to be ascribed to others whatever talent I may have in the area of literature and history.[84]

De Gaulle? "An ambitious man and one lacking proper upbringing," "a haughty, ungrateful, bitter man," Pétain fumed to anyone who would listen, furious about the humiliation that this colonel, not content to have put his name on *La France et son armée,* had inflicted on him by refusing to write the dedication that he had requested and that de Gaulle had seemed to promise.[85]

The two men were to meet three more times in 1940. The first was on 6 June, when de Gaulle, appointed by Reynaud as undersecretary of state for War, sat on the Council of Ministers of which Pétain was the vice-president; the second was on 11 June, at the château of Briare, where the government was spending the night. De Gaulle had just been promoted to the rank of general: "You're a general!" Pétain exclaimed. "I won't congratulate you on it. What good are ranks in defeat?"[86] Their last meeting took place in Bordeaux, at the Hotel Splendide, on 14 June. De Gaulle was having lunch with Geoffroy de Courcel, his aide-de-camp. The Marshal was sitting at a nearby table. De Gaulle walked over to greet him, in silence. "He shook my hand, without saying a word. I was never to see him again, ever."[87]

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It had been a long time since de Gaulle had dreamed of saving his country. A few foreign assignments—to Poland in 1920, to the Levant in 1930—dreary garrisons, the Marshal's offices and those of the War ministry in Paris, hardly made for a brilliant career. He was slowly rising through the ranks, as he gained seniority, and also thanks to recommendations. Eric Roussel has reproduced a note that was meant for Joseph Paul-Boncour and written in late 1935. In it, de Gaulle asks the senator to support his promotion from lieutenant-colonel to colonel.[88]

What is most striking, all through this rather gray period, is the self-confidence with which de Gaulle addressed even his superiors, as if he were already being swept along by History, which up to that time had seemed not to have deigned to notice him. But he had a presentiment of a destiny, a faith in what he *knew* was to be his destiny. De Gaulle preceded de Gaulle; above all, de Gaulle preceded the History through which he would become de Gaulle. Because although nothing, or almost nothing, was lacking in the personage, History was not there, not yet there. The personage was waiting for its setting to emerge. De Gaulle was waiting on an imaginary front line, the captain of a dormant ship that he *knew* would soon sail to take part in one of the great tests of which French history offers so many painful examples. We think of the hero of Julien Gracq's novel *Le Rivage des Syrtes,* a border guard on the remote shores of a sea, beyond which extends an unknown and obscurely menacing country, Fargestan. Relegated to this far corner of the world, watching for an invisible enemy who may or may not one day appear, he is vaguely certain that his patience will be rewarded, that he will not in vain have stood guard for so many years: he feels that he was a member "of that race of watchmen in whom interminable waiting feeds at its powerful sources the certitude of the event."[89] The storm would come. But would it come in time? In 1940, de Gaulle was going to "celebrate" (the quotation marks are necessary, because in the de Gaulle family no birthdays were celebrated, not even the children's) his fiftieth birthday; at that age, Napoleon had long since conquered, and then lost, all of Europe. The Emperor left history at the age the General entered it.

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If de Gaulle was waiting for History, Napoleon was born of the event that carried him away without his having anticipated it. De Gaulle awaited the test that might not have come, and had it not come, would have deprived him of the great role to which he aspired, while Napoleon might have missed out on the Revolution had he not been involved in it in spite of himself.

In the young Napoleon, that of Brienne, the Ecole militaire, the garrison in Valence, or the conspiracies and battles in Ajaccio, one would seek in vain to discern the future General Bonaparte. He himself had no idea of the latter. He saw his future as being in Corsica. Very early on, he was passionate about political combat, and he also had ambitions: to establish the Buonapartes as the leading family in Ajaccio, to follow in Paoli's footsteps, and to free Corsica from French domination as Paoli had freed it from the domination of Genoa. But before 1793 and his expulsion from the island, Bonaparte never looked beyond his native shores. Though his imagination was, as Mallet du Pan put it, "a storehouse of heroic romances,"[90] he was long content with a narrow sphere, even when on the continent the most extraordinary adventure an ambitious young man without scruples could dream of was then beginning: the French Revolution, which, uprooting the old world, overthrowing hierarchies, customs, and traditions, was opening to a whole generation the road to fortune, honors, and glory. He was also the right age—twenty—in 1789; de Gaulle was twenty-four in 1914. Both of them missed their chance, but for different reasons: de Gaulle—as we have said—was taken prisoner, whereas Bonaparte simply did not understand that events were offering him opportunities that the limited theater of Corsican politics would not give him. Even after France had declared war on Austria, in 1792, and soon thereafter on all of Europe, Bonaparte the military man had only idea in his head: getting a leave that would allow him to go home to rout his enemies and seal the triumph of the *casa* Buonaparte. In the end, it was the Corsicans who set him on his way by expelling him from the island. Without his having wished it, Bonaparte was thrown into a theater large enough for him.

Between the revolutionary who escaped Corsica on 9 June 1793 and the officer who was given, on 15 or 16 September of the same year, command of the artillery of the army besieging Toulon, there was a conversion so complete as to be inexplicable. This is the most mysterious moment in Napoleon's life. Favored by the circumstances, a different person rose up out of him, verifying the adage formulated by Victor Hugo after having studied the life of the painter Rubens: "A great man is born twice: the first time as a man, the second as a genius."[91] Napoleon was born twice, the first time in Ajaccio in 1769, and the second at Toulon in 1793, though we cannot find a common measure between the man he had been and the one he was to become. Here geographical transplantation is synonymous with rebirth, or rather with a new birth. The latter is a kind of sudden appearance. Nothing foretold it. It burst forth all at once and erased the one that preceded it as if it had never happened. In Toulon, we find Bonaparte as a whole, with his style, his ideas, his words, his charisma, and the strength that was to force so many wills to yield and to subjugate many more. Henceforth, he did not change. The phenomenon is all the stranger because Bonaparte had no experience of war, except for an incursion—which failed—on the coast of Sardinia in early 1793. When he arrived before Toulon and was put, more or less randomly, in command of the very limited artillery of the republican army besieging the city, which had gone over to the royalists, he was suddenly there, in possession of the peerless ability to size up a situation that, combined with boldness and rapidity of execution, long gave him superiority over his adversaries, both on the battlefield and in the political arena. To the officers who insisted on perfecting the blockade of the city while waiting to be able to launch a general assault, he pointed out the topography and argued that the fortress would not be taken by attacking it from the surrounding heights, but rather by bombarding the British fleet anchored in the harbor to force it to sail away; then, he said, the city would fall like a ripe fruit. To those who called him a madman, he never tired of repeating: the artillery has to be concentrated on the Pointe de l'Eguillette, in front of La Seyne-sur-Mer, at the junction of the small harbor and the great harbor. There lay the key to success. It took him weeks to convince the representatives of the people who had been sent by the Convention, and finally, the generals. He entered History and would never exit it.

It will be said that he knew the site well. That is true, and this familiarity with the topography was important. But the following year, when he had been promoted to the command of the artillery of the Army of Italy, which had been fighting for months on the crests of the Alps, trying in vain to make its way to Turin, he once again discerned at a glance the maneuver that in 1796 allowed him to conquer in one month both Sardinian Piedmont and Austrian Lombardy. Positioned at the intersection between Carcare and Cairo Montenotte, with the Piedmontese on his left and the Austrians on his right, he saw before him "two big holes opening toward the plain, one to the northeast, toward Alexandria, the other to the west, toward Ceva."[92] If he occupied this strategic point he would prevent the two enemy armies from joining forces, and would then be free to attack the Piedmontese on his left while warding off the Austrians on his right, and then, once the former had been thrown back on Turin, he could march on Milan, following the Po River, in order finally to drive the Austrians out of Lombardy.

He did not immediately realize how much he had accomplished. Certainly not after Toulon: "All that didn't rise very high,"[93] he was to say. Otherwise, would he have still considered, in 1795, putting himself in the service of the Turks, fearing that Thermidorian France no longer had anything to offer him? Perhaps he still failed to understand, even after the armistice imposed on the Piedmontese on April 26 1796; but at Lodi, on 10 May, he sensed that what he had just accomplished was on a par with the deeds of the greatest military leaders in history. Stendhal summed it up: "On 15 May 1796, General Bonaparte made his entrance into Milan at the head of this young army that had just crossed the bridge at Lodi, and showed the world that after so many centuries Caesar and Alexander had a successor."[94] He himself found the words to describe this metamorphosis that was now complete: "I saw the world slipping away beneath me as if I had been lifted up into the air."[95]

It was then that he realized that a path was opening up before him that no one had yet followed, and that less than ten years later he, the former Corsican "patriot," the partisan of independence for his native island and the son of a minor notable of a minuscule city, would succeed to an almost millennial kingdom. But it was in December 1793, at the time of the reconquest of Toulon, that he had mysteriously left behind the man he had been up to that point and that he would never be again: he had, all at once, become Napoleon; in 1796, he understood that.

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De Gaulle? A hero in search of history. Napoleon? The actor of a history in search of a hero.

Bonaparte took power on 18 Brumaire in order to recreate a body politic on the basis of a country torn apart, divided, fallen into ruins after ten years of chaos. It was also up to him to give a face to the splintered society that emerged from 1789, to embody its new values: equality, of course, whose banner he was going to brandish even on the imperial throne, but also, and still more strongly, the belief in the unlimited powers of the will, both individual and collective. However, it was outwardly that he added a new chapter, and the greatest, to the history of the Revolution's representation of the world as a blank page on which History could be started over again; because inwardly, on the contrary, he subjected the Revolution's principles to a severe censorship, agreeing to preserve them only if they did not contravene the nature of things and the enlargement of his power. Still more profoundly, he gave form, through his incredible destiny, to the modern belief in "infinite possibilities," the belief that every individual can free himself from the straitjacket of his origins or heritage, and in doing so, continually push back the limits of the possible.

After voluntarism came the cult of youth. Wasn't the Revolution a new beginning of the world, one that the revolutionaries believed would never grow old? Who could better incarnate this hope—especially after the Terror, which had made 1789 seem old—than the young generals of the republican armies, and the most brilliant and (almost) youngest of them? The portraits of Napoleon as a counterrevolutionary miss this point: a general at the age of twenty-three, the commander of the Army of Italy at twenty-seven, First Consul at thirty, emperor at thirty-five, vanquished at forty-five, dead at fifty. The Napoleonic saga was the saga of youth, a whirlwind of life such as we will probably never see again, and about which Marmont said:

> We were all very young, [. . .] all brilliantly strong, healthy, and devoured by the love of glory. Our ambition was noble and pure; there was no feeling of envy, no base passion found its way into our hearts, a genuine friendship united us all, and there were examples of attachment that went so far as devotion: a complete security regarding our future, a boundless confidence in our destinies gave us the philosophy that so greatly contributes to happiness, and a constant harmony, never troubled, transformed a meeting of men of war into a genuine family; and this variety in our occupations and in our pleasures, this successive use of our physical and mental faculties, gave life an extraordinary interest and rapidity.[96]

Not since Montaigne had anyone so eloquently sung the praises of military life and war as the most intense and most noble human experience. Today, we find it hard to understand these feelings: for the first time in history, our generation is not a "postwar" generation. War is no longer part, or only in a distant way, of the experience lived through or transmitted from father to son.[97] We no longer understand its tragic grandeur; we now grasp only its horror. Napoleon was the emblematic hero of that period; Charles de Gaulle was to be the emblematic hero of a very different period. He was no longer in harmony with his time but opposed to it. Napoleon (or Bonaparte, the better to keep in mind the image of youth) was the hero of a France that, after ten years of revolutionary turmoil, and despite a spell of fatigue under the Directory, retained enough energy in reserve to keep Europe dancing for another fifteen years—and what a dance! The France of 1800 pushed Bonaparte forward, it carried him. The France of 1940, bled white by the terrible losses of the preceding war, undermined by its divisions and the malicious hatreds that bedeviled it, and peopled by "forty-one million French people who do not love themselves,"[98] the France of the craven relief of Munich and the armistice, defeated and humiliated, was borne by de Gaulle. That is all the difference. And it is huge.

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The act of faith on 18 June was at the same time a rational act. The decision marked the culmination of a period of reflection that had gone on for several years. Its point of departure can be assigned to the publication, in 1934, of *Vers l'armée de métier,* which was to open to de Gaulle the doors of the political world and more or less close to him the doors of the military world. It was through this work that he made the acquaintance of Paul Reynaud, who was soon to succeed Pétain in the role of de Gaulle's mentor and protector.

It has often been asked how original this book was, some people seeing in it a visionary and premonitory work, while others see in it a compilation of commonplace ideas. De Gaulle did not claim to have written an original work: "To draw up this overall project," he wrote in his *Memoirs,* "I had, naturally, made use of the intellectual trends initiated throughout the world by the appearance of motorized fighting vehicles. [. . .] My plan sought to bring together these fragmentary but convergent views for the benefit of France."[99] Thinking about the future role of tanks was advancing almost everywhere, so that we should not be surprised if German generals, questioned after the war, said that de Gaulle had had little influence on them, especially since, one of them said, the author "was soaring in the clouds."[100] De Gaulle had in fact omitted all technical considerations.[101] The reason for this choice is obvious: the author was not addressing his peers, whose animosity or indifference toward him was well known to him, but rather to politicians, whom he had not yet given up hope of convincing of the urgency of reviewing French military doctrine regarding defense. "I was appealing to the state," he said later. "The army would no more transform itself by itself than any other body would."[102]

De Gaulle proposed to create six large armored divisions and especially to change the doctrine concerning the use of tanks, which up to that point limited them to the role of supporting the infantry. Tanks were expected to follow the infantrymen, and even to advance at the same pace as the latter.[103] As one officer put it, they were tethered to the infantry. German superiority in 1940 had less to do with the superiority of its equipment than with a new way of using them. The French had no fewer tanks than the Reich's forces, and they were not of lower quality.[104] The problem was that the old men in power imagined future wars on the model of that of

1914, which they had known. For them, war remained synonymous with trenches, prolonged immobilization at the front, operations limited to a restricted space, and battles destined to decide the outcome of the conflict. In Germany, young officers had revolutionized these obsolete schemas. They did not expect tanks to adapt to the slow march of the infantry; they demanded that infantrymen adjust to the rapidity of the tanks' advance. The objective of the new strategy was not to seek at any price the battle that would decide the outcome of the war but to sneak through the enemy lines, to go around them, to envelop them, in order, with the support of air power, to disorganize and dislocate them, and thus to destroy the enemy army's morale. "While the allied commanders thought in terms of battle, the new German commanders sought to eliminate it by producing the strategic paralysis of their opponents."[105] In this new war in which speed, surprise, and the terror provoked by aerial attacks replaced the clash of infantries, tanks were accorded unprecedented importance. Previously a way of covering the infantry, they were to be freed of this bond that limited their possibilities of action. De Gaulle wanted to cut the link between the infantry and tanks, in order to give the latter the autonomy which, six years later, would produce the German success. He proposed to reinvent battle by exploiting the potentialities offered by the appearance of the "fighting vehicle" and by substituting for the static wearing down of the infantry buried in trenches a strategy based on surprise and speed. This aspect of things greatly struck Marc Bloch in 1940: "The Germans have fought today's war, under the sign of speed." He added, full of bitterness:

> For our part, we have not only tried to fight yesterday's or the day before yesterday's war. At the very moment when we saw the Germans waging their war, we were unable or unwilling to understand the pace, which is in accord with the accelerated vibrations of a new era. So that in truth it was two adversaries belonging to different ages of humanity that collided on our battlefields.[106]

De Gaulle had rightly tried to make the French army enter "the new era." Without success. To be sure, people say, he was only a demi-prophet, since he notoriously underestimated the future role of air power, to which he assigned only the classic missions of reconnaissance or spraying smoke to conceal the movements of tanks.[107] This was far from Guderian, for whom tanks and airplanes were to act in close coordination, but it was enough to irritate the general staff. What was this arrogant giant sticking his nose into? The fact that he had risen through the ranks of the infantry aggravated his case; the superior officers resented his lecturing and his manners. The defensive doctrine of the continuous front, fortified bastions, and tanks as support for the infantry reigned everywhere in the upper ranks. Although a few specialists backed de Gaulle's proposals, he had more detractors than supporters among his colleagues. His reception was hardly warmer among politicians. He had hoped to convince Léon Blum.[108] Blum might have supported him if his proposals in favor of tanks had not been accompanied by a plea for the professionalization of this elite corps. A professional army? Unacceptable for most republicans, who were so attached to the mystique of the mass uprising and to conscription. In addition, there were several sulfurous passages in de Gaulle's book in which he called for the appearance, not of a leader, but of the "master" who would have the courage and strength necessary to impose the indispensable organizational and strategic reforms:

> The servant of the state alone, without prejudices, disdaining clienteles; a servant completely devoted to his task, imbued with long-term designs, knowledgeable about the people and things in his domain; a leader at one with the army, devoted to the men he commands, eager to take responsibility; a man strong enough to lead, clever enough to win support, great enough for a great work—such will be the minister, soldier or a politician, to whom the country will owe its future military organization and strategy.[109]

Far from succumbing to the currently popular fascist ideas, as he has been accused of doing, de Gaulle longed instead for the emergence of a Louvois or a Carnot energetic enough to force France to catch up, on the double. It is well known that at that time he thought he had found in Paul Reynaud the rara avis who would exploit his ideas and preside over the military renewal of France. Referring to his first conversation with Reynaud, on 5 December 1934, the General wrote: "I saw him, convinced him, and henceforth worked with him.[110] He entered politics by the back door, at the same time that he was distancing himself from the army, which was incapable of listening to him.

However, he pursued an insipid military career in the army, moving from the offices of the general staff to the command of the 507th regiment of combat tanks in 1937, and then to that of the Fifth Army's armored regiment during the "Phony War." De Gaulle in 1939 was a little like Pétain in 1914, with the addition of the campaign for tanks. At the end of 1939 he thought the time had come to launch another attack. Seeing that the Germans' inaction had to do solely with the fact that the Reich, busy in Poland, could not wage war on two fronts and had to wait to attack the West, he wrote a memo intended for the old men who were in command of the army and who were still living in the time of the "miracle of the Marne."[111] Did he think it was possible to shake them out of their torpor? It was instead from Reynaud, who had become head of the government, that he hoped the jolt would come, and, when that possibility became clearer, he composed "A Note on the Creation of a Ministry for the Conduct of War" that would centralize the war effort and the conduct of operations under the direct authority of the prime minister, thus making it possible to overcome the blockages that were an obstacle, at all levels, to any effort at renewal. In this project, he had foreseen the creation of a position of "head of the general staff of the Conduct of the war," which fit him like a glove.[112] He was shocked when, in March 1940, Reynaud was called upon to form a new government. When he informed Daladier, whom he had been forced to retain as minister of Defense, that he intended to appoint de Gaulle to the ministry, the outgoing prime minister vetoed the proposal. De Gaulle packed up his bags and returned to the Fifth Army.[113]

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"So now the war, the real war, has begun,"[114] de Gaulle wrote to Yvonne on 10 May. The opportunity he had so long awaited was finally there, even if it is doubtful that he had great hopes regarding what would ensue. To be sure, during these tragic days he sometimes caught himself nourishing hopes, but he could not have failed to draw the consequences of the sad spectacle that appeared before him when on 15 May, while the German forces were pouring through the breach at Sedan, he arrived in Laon to take command of the Fourth Armored Division.

The idea had made its way. Early in the year, it had been decided to create three armored divisions, but the indispensable change in the doctrine regarding their use had not been made. In fact, they disappeared during the first days of the German attack. It was then that General Georges, who was in charge of the northeast front, summoned de Gaulle to his headquarters: "All right, de Gaulle! You've had for a long time the conceptions that the enemy is applying, now here's your chance to act."[115] Was he being ironic? He was being called upon at a time when the battle was virtually lost. Reynaud admitted as much the same day in speaking to a stupefied Churchill: "We are beaten, we have lost the battle," and, the day before, General Georges had been taken ill when he learned the scope of the disaster.[116] On 17 May, de Gaulle sent his tanks to the road intersection at Montcornet to try to slow Guderian's tanks. On paper, he had almost 200 tanks, including three dozen B1-bis, the heaviest and strongest in the world. After Montcornet, he retreated to the Serre River, where, at Crécy, he once again attacked the German tanks on the 19th. Forced to retreat, at the end of the month he headed for Abbeville, where the Allied forces were trying to open a route toward the north. Some historians (hostile to de Gaulle, naturally) have been astonished that with such large forces "Colonel Motor" managed to do nothing more than give the German horse a few pricks, and especially that he had his tanks maneuver in a very classic way, quite different from the bold tactics that he had been advocating since 1934. Didn't he scatter them over the terrain so that they could support the infantry's advance?[117] In truth, he could have done no better than he did with this division gathered together "in great haste."[118] Although he had about thirty modern tanks, many of the others dated from the First World War. The losses were heavy: at Montcornet and Crécy, he lost 141 of his 219 tanks, and at Abbeville, on the evening of 28 May, he had only 57, as opposed to 187 in the morning.[119] Moreover, he had neither artillery nor infantry in sufficient quantity, no air support, and no radio system to coordinate the tanks' movements; de Gaulle traveled from one to another by car; soldiers on bicycles tried to keep contact under enemy fire.[120] The testimonies are damning. The infantry were transported into battle by bus, and the tank crews, some of which had had a total of less than four hours' experience, piled into the tanks as soon as they got off the train. The men did not know each other, and the officers did not know them.[121] De Gaulle achieved an exploit by leading them into battle where, despite the desperate circumstances, they more than defended their honor.

The importance of this episode is surely not military in nature: neither Montcornet nor Abbeville disrupted the Germans' plans. On the other hand, it was on observing "the spectacle of this lost people and this military rout," de Gaulle assures us, that he made a great decision: to continue to fight, "wherever it was necessary, as long as it was necessary, until the enemy was defeated and the blot on the nation cleansed." In France, if that was possible, in the empire, if metropolitan France fell into the enemy's hands.[122] These battles also made a decisive contribution to the development of de Gaulle's legend. They accredited the idea of a de Gaulle who not only knew what he would have agreed to do to resist the invader more effectively and the idea of a leader who, despite the mediocrity of the means put at his disposition, had won a victory—a partial one, no doubt, but a victory all the same. He was proud of this band of fourteen kilometers—not more than seven, in reality—that he had conquered at Abbeville and of the 500 prisoners—in actuality 250—that he had taken on the banks of the Somme.[123] This victory conferred military legitimacy on him—the list of victories, even if nothing came of them, was so small that the news of his successes before Abbeville provoked an explosion of joy in Weygand's HQ[124]—and, on 6 June, allowed him to enter the government as under-secretary of state for War, thus making official the role of advisor to the prime minister that he had been playing for several months. "[Had he been] beaten at Abbeville," Henri Amouroux correctly observes, "de Gaulle could not have been made part of Paul Reynaud's government. He could not have met Churchill, fly to London on 17 June, speak on the BBC, become de Gaulle."[125] In retrospect, we can see that it was no accident that he located in Abbeville—his Lodi—the point of departure for the history of Free France. On 29 May 1949 he told a commemorative gathering for veterans of the

Fourth Armored Division: "It was with these events that a different History began."[126]

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Abbeville is a symbolic point of departure; if we want to determine the date of the moment that de Gaulle's history began, we would have to go back instead to 26 January 1940.

On that day, he addressed to eighty prominent people a "Memorandum" that must be considered not only the first text in a truly "Gaullian" style but also an early version of the appeal made on 18 June.[127] The style is lapidary, the tone firm, the expressions striking. It is the written equivalent of the great speeches that this born orator was later to deliver. To shake off the torpor that gripped the high command in the course of the "Phony War," when nothing was happening, he insisted that "the Maginot Line, no matter what reinforcements it has received or might receive, no matter what quantities of infantry and artillery occupy it or rely on it, could be breached." Breached, or flanked, like any fortified line. It was a defense as illusory as the Germans' inaction. The Wehrmacht was going to attack as soon as it was ready, and it would do so in accord with the rules of modern warfare, rules that the French command ignored so obstinately: in particular, speed, represented on land by tank units, and in the air by fighter squadrons. In short, if France did not wake up, it would suffer the fate of Poland. The remedy was, of course, still the same: the creation of large tank units backed up by artillery, supported by infantry, and acting in close coordination with air power (this time, de Gaulle had incorporated the lessons learned from the German invasion of Poland). De Gaulle was driven by two convictions that in his view legitimized his departure for London a few months later: first, the outcome of this war waged in entirely new ways would depend in the final analysis on which side was able to field a "mechanical force" superior to that of its adversary;[128] second, the war that was beginning, conceived on the model of the preceding one in which states had fought to defend or promote *interests,* would no longer follow the classic schema: "Let us make no mistake! The conflict that has begun might well be the most extensive, most complex, and most violent of all those that have ravaged the

Earth. The political, economic, social, and moral crisis from which it has arisen has become so deep and so ubiquitous that it will inevitably lead to a complete upheaval in the situation of peoples and the structure of states."[129] This was truly, six months in advance, the appeal of 18 June.

There is something enigmatic in this view, simultaneously lucid and passionate, of reality. The judgment is cool, self-assured. It contrasted with the general confusion of people's minds. The events of May and June 1940 were merely to confirm the predictions made on 26 January. Olivier Guichard, impressed by "the rational act" that took the General to London, explains that de Gaulle combined three qualities that no one else could boast of at that time: first, among the men in the government at that period, he was the only one who "did not feel weighing on his shoulders the weight of twenty years of parliamentary discredit"; second, he was one of the rare men, among the officers, "for whom the collapse of [French] arms did not also mean a collapse of ideas, if not of reflexes," since he had discerned its causes even before it occurred; and finally, among those who still had the will to fight—like General Nogués, then in Morocco—he had the advantage of not being overwhelmed by the prestige of Pétain and Weygand—he had broken with the former in 1934 and the twelve days he had spent in the government had given him a low opinion of the latter.[130] He was free of all the hindrances that paralyzed those who might, in theory, have taken his place.

So much lucidity is difficult to forgive. He was not forgiven for having it. Neither those who had been infected with that "obscure feeling of impotence"[131] that he saw spreading, little by little, in all levels of the society and the army; nor those who believed that the war was already over, Britain ineluctably lost, and Germany already the victor; nor those who wanted to see France expiate, by a salutary defeat, its past errors; nor those who had already chosen the Third Reich over their homeland; nor those who, among the early resisters, were prepared to grant de Gaulle a role as military leader but refused to accord him political powers. All these added up to a lot of skeptics and enemies, and we haven't yet counted either the Americans, whose prejudices against this condottiere who had risen up out of nowhere and was suspected of being a disciple of Maurras were nourished by the French in Washington—the worst of all, or the

British, whose warm reception had cooled by the end of summer 1940 and which would have cooled even more had Churchill not been able to break completely the *mésentente cordiale* that bound him to de Gaulle.[132]

In his *Mémoires,* Raymond Aron deplores the violence with which de Gaulle treated from the outset those—the immense majority—who had made a choice different from his own for reasons which were, Aron says, not all dishonorable. More than the armistice itself, which Aron was inclined to think "inevitable," it was the motives of those who had signed it that were dishonoring. Thus rather than excommunicating all supporters of Vichy without exception, it would have been better "to bring most of them back to the cause of France and its allies."[133]

It is true that de Gaulle was rather harsh. If, so long as the armistice had not been signed, he had limited himself to speaking of the "government" when referring to Pétain and his consorts, things would have been very different later on. He couldn't find words severe enough to castigate the "clique of cretins, shameless wheeler-dealers, careerist officials, and bad generals" who had seized power as a result of the defeat,[134] a condemnation that de facto extended to all those who followed them and who, without being traitors, chose the path of dishonor.

In June 1940, there was something incongruous about the General's faith in victory. The very idea of continuing the fighting on the basis of the empire seemed as unreal as the project of organizing the resistance in a Breton redoubt, or that of uniting Britain and France, both of which had been considered at that time. Raymond Aron himself considered this idea delusive, pointing out that the decision would in any case have been made too late to transfer enough troops and materiel to North Africa to continue the battle. Furthermore, where were, in the empire, the resources that would allow France to continue the war without depending on its allies? Wouldn't de Gaulle be forced to endorse—no doubt half-heartedly—the British attack on Mers el Kébir? De Gaulle, the Englanders' man? This suspicion was to leave its mark, especially among those who later accused the General of not hesitating to cause French blood to be shed to serve the interests of his new masters. Although it was the Vichy forces that fired the first shots, it was de Gaulle who was blamed for the price paid for the "painful fiasco" at Dakar in September 1940 and the "doubtful success" in Syria in May 1941.[135] Albion's vassal now became the man of civil war. There was no lack of doubts that accordingly limited support for the de Gaulle of 18 June. The most serious one was his claim to represent France, and even to *be* France. France outside France, without France, without the French? The fate of the members of parliament who had sailed aboard the *Massilia* to North Africa, there to prepare for the transfer of public authorities, provided sufficient evidence that this idea was incomprehensible for a large segment of the French people. Could France be anywhere but France? The passengers on the *Massilia* were booed and denounced as cowardly runaways, both when they embarked at Port-Vendres on 21 June and when they landed at Casablanca three days later (before being arrested on orders of the Pétain government).[136] In these dark days, the Marshal's legitimacy was largely based on the oath that he made not to abandon the French and to protect them during their ordeal. He was addressing the French, while de Gaulle was addressing France. Their two kinds of legitimacy were not complementary—the famous sword and buckler thesis[137]—but instead resolutely opposed.

To the legitimacy that it claimed, the Marshal's government could add the legality of its power. Moreover, hadn't the "crime" of the armistice denounced by de Gaulle allowed France to avoid being wiped off the map, to retain a government, a territory, and even an army—reduced in size, of course, so that its present debasement perhaps did not exclude the possibility of a future rebirth? A precedent came to mind: Germany—or rather, Prussia—had found itself in an analogous situation in 1806, after its defeat by Napoleon. At that time, Frederick William III had submitted to the harsh conditions imposed by the victor, preferring humiliation to disappearance.[138] Whereas the Prussian government had often dishonored itself since the peace treaty signed with revolutionary France in 1795, yielding to everyone in the hope of receiving the maximum benefits from its successive betrayals, the defeat—a terrible one, because it lost half its territory—had returned it to the path of honor. The disaster had allowed the Berlin government to carry out many reforms—structural, economic, and social—that in peacetime had encountered opposition in many categories of Prussian society. Patiently and secretly, it had prepared its revenge, and in 1813 it was able to rejoin the ranks of the powers forming a coalition against imperial France. Its army, virtually destroyed in 1806, was bivouacking on the Champs-Elysées in 1814.[139] This precedent was known. In 1940, the eldest French leaders were closer, by their date of birth, to the defeat of 1815 than to that of 1940. This was the case for Pétain; born under Napoleon III, it is not clear that he really understood whom he was dealing with at Montoire,[140] when he passed before German soldiers paying him homage.[141] How many French people thought they were seeing in these soldiers those of 1914, 1870, 1815, or 1806, and in this war a conflict of the classical type? How many of them imagined that these Germans could be "won over" and led to engage in a give-and-take that would make it possible to avoid the worst? It took de Gaulle's lucidity to describe the awful novelty of this "Thirty Years' War" that had begun in 1914 and that, having initially taken the classical form of a rivalry between nations, had been transformed into a conflict of civilizations raging in the very heart of Europe. In a major speech given at Oxford in November 1941, de Gaulle said:

> At the foundation of our civilization lies each person's freedom of thought, belief, opinion, work, leisure. This civilization, born in Western Europe, has gone through many tribulations. [. . .] But up to now, it has been able to retain enough internal vitality and power of attraction to finally win out. More than that, it has conquered, to their benefit, immense parts of the world. It has imbued America, to the point of having flourished there par excellence. It has spread to Asia, Africa, and Oceania. Thanks to colonization, and then to the gradual liberation of countless peoples, the moment was approaching when all the Earth's inhabitants would have recognized the same superior principles and acquired the same dignity.[142]

This time, the tribulation was "the transformation of the conditions of life by the machine, [by] the growth of the masses, and [by] the gigantic collective conformism that result [and] attack everyone's freedoms. On the breeding ground of the crisis of classical liberal individualism, a "diametrically opposed movement [. . .] that recognizes only the racial or national collectivity's rights denies each individual any capacity to think, judge, or act as he sees fit, deprives him of the possibility of doing so, and refers to dictatorship the exorbitant power to define good and evil, to decree what is true and what is false, to put to death or to allow to live."[143] The Germany of 1940, which had found in this ideology the means of satisfying its "perpetual ambitions,"[144] was no longer that of 1806, but neither was the France of 1940 like the Germany defeated at Jena. The latter, united behind Frederick William III, had agreed to make the efforts necessary to achieve recovery. The architects of the Prussian renascence, Stein and Hardenberg, did not live in a country that was torn asunder as France was during the German occupation, that had been divided for many years by social and ideological conflicts, and that was in the grip of a deep moral crisis. When the time came, the disunited French found no recourse except to rally around the protective but vacillating figure of Marshal Pétain. All those who thought they could outwit Hitler as the Prussians had outwitted Napoleon—and there were many people in the "armistice army" who thought they could—should have read the letter in which Joseph de Maistre, fearing that Russia might give in and try to negotiate with the "Corsican ogre," warned against the inevitable machinery of shameful concessions and humiliations. About Chancellor Rumyantsev, who, despite being "a good Russian and a good subject of the emperor, seemed to be inclined to adopt an accommodating policy toward Napoleon, Maistre said: "Who can even suspect that he wanted to debase or enslave his master or his nation? His system of supporting France and of boundless indulgence must thus be based only on the preceding belief that Russia is not in a position to resist and that it has to yield." But that was a "terrible card" to play, Maistre added, because the risk of that policy was that the Czars' empire, by making accommodations and concessions, would "lose both its honor and its security."[145] Doesn't that sum up the history of Vichy?

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NAPOLEON NEVER FOUND himself in a situation as delicate as the one General de Gaulle faced in 1940. In fact, at no point did the future emperor ever lack legitimacy. He didn't have to win it by hard fighting. His victories in Italy, and then the "miracles" of his Egyptian campaign—the details of the events were not known with precision in France—won it for him. Hadn't he given "the Great Nation" its finest triumphs, from Montenotte to the Pyramids? He had enriched France with the spoils of the vanquished, huge quantities of gold, paintings, and statues; he had added Piedmont and Milan, Venice, and Ancona to the national territory, along with the islands of Elba and Corfu; and, adding poetry to glory, he had planted the French flag in the valley of the Nile and in Palestine. As if that were not enough, he had made peace with Austria by signing the Treaty of Campoformio. Thus he was both a conqueror and a peacemaker. Since no kind of superiority was likely to satisfy his ambition, he also wanted to be a defender of the arts and sciences, taking a cortege of scientists and artists with him on his adventure in the East, and a legislator, giving constitutions and laws to the new states that he sowed all along his passage. We should not be surprised to find that on returning to Egypt he was received "like a sovereign returning to his lands."[146] Ministers came to his home to report to him on the day's affairs, and conspirators—Paris had no lack of them in 1799—revised their plans to make room for the man they already knew would be the next master of France. He didn't yet hold power, but he was already exercising it.

This legitimacy that had more to do with the victories he had won than with any system of legitimation—constitutional and plebiscitary under the Consulate, hereditary and religious under the Empire—was so powerful that it subsequently made his task considerably easier. It sufficed to disarm most of his adversaries, allowed him to surmount the divisions inherited from the revolutionary period, and even to impose a policy that sometimes aroused strong prejudices: for example, in the case of the Concordat, the creation of the Legion of Honor, and amnesty for the émigrés. The unprecedented successes Napoleon won during the first years of the Empire, from Austerlitz to the Treaty of Tilsit, obviously only confirmed his authority, without for all that, we must note, helping the institutions created after 1799 to take root. The cheers were all for the conqueror, not for a system that many thought would not survive the Emperor. The identification of power with his person constituted both the regime's strength and its weakness. Subsequent events showed that the first defeats did little to diminish this personal legitimacy. To be sure, confidence in the future began to weaken seriously after the campaign of 1812, but in 1814 the French had still not completely abandoned the "little corporal." They still expected miracles from him. As for the Allies, they feared that once again he would find a way out of this difficult situation, and they still feared battle with him in person. He reigned by his victories and the fear they inspired. Therein lay his legitimacy. If he stopped winning, his legitimacy would collapse. When he set out for Elba, he was booed.

If the current carried Napoleon along, it ran counter to de Gaulle's efforts. The paradox is that Bonaparte was the product of a crisis—the French Revolution—whose scope and consequences were incomparably more serious than the crisis provoked by the debacle of 1940. Over the long term, there is no doubt. The Revolution overthrew a society, put an end to a thousand years of history, founded a new social pact and vainly sought the form of government that would best suit this new society; the defeat of 1940 hardly interrupted the functioning of institutions, which resumed in 1945, and in forms hardly different from those of the parliamentary regime in place before the war. But in the short term, the perspective is different: the collapse of 1940 was more sudden, more complete, but its consequences were less.

In 1800—let us leave aside the Hundred Days, when Napoleon returned to find an end worthy of his extraordinary destiny—a state had to be reconstructed and a society remade; the French, divided by ten years of revolution and civil war, had to be reconciled; barriers to prevent a restoration of the monarchy or a renewal of the Terror had to be built; the recognition of the France that had emerged from 1789 had to be obtained from monarchical Europe, and, to do that, the latter had to be defeated so completely that it could never withdraw its consent to the new order of things. The task was immense, the means considerable. Bonaparte could count on an army, the best in the world, an administration that he had reorganized, budgetary resources that, once the first period was over, were increasing; he could count on the support of a large part of the elites formed under the Revolution and even on the support of a non-negligible number of Old Regime returnees. De Gaulle, on the contrary, was on his own, without resources. His weapons? His eloquence and an unshakeable will. With these assets alone, he had to invent an army, rally men of good will around him, recreate a semblance of a government, root Free France in French soil, even if it was imperial, and above all, gain the recognition of allies on which he was dependent for almost everything. In the short term, it was more difficult to be de Gaulle in 1940 than Bonaparte in 1800. De Gaulle reminds us of Louis XVIII, all by himself far from France, with faith in his destiny and the interested support of foreign allies as his only assets.

It was de Gaulle's material and symbolic weakness that forced him to be intransigent. The rough way he treated everyone who was not in his camp was the price to be paid for his isolation. No doubt this was partly temperamental—de Gaulle's egocentrism, his lack of magnanimity, "his rather inflexible use of authority" or command,[147] but that was because he was of no importance, or of so little that he had to claim everything and, confronted by the established legal power in Vichy, declare himself to be invested with a legitimacy superior to that of institutions, a legitimacy that would confer on him the task of preserving "the treasure of French sovereignty."

The difference in position explains at least in part why Bonaparte reconciled a great majority of the French people under the aegis of the civil peace and military glory that he also dispensed, and why de Gaulle divided people. Bonaparte could show magnanimity, de Gaulle could not. Napoleon was also to divide people—during the Hundred Days—but de Gaulle always divided them.

In 1940, the treacherous, the timorous, the cowardly, the spineless were never to pardon him for having cast blame on their conduct; during the war, the partisans of the Americans also refused to pardon him for having revived France; in 1944, he was blamed for the shaving of collaborationist women's heads, the savage cleansing, the writers executed—Georges Suarez, Robert Brasillach, Paul Chack—in 1947, the affair of the RPF,[148] the Algiers uprising on 13 May 1958, in 1962 the "betrayal" of the Evian Accords and the "permanent coup d'état," in 1968 the "escape" to Baden-Baden. . . . The left, communist or not, the right, supporters of French Algeria or liberals and Europeans, ex-Gaullists motivated by a hatred all the more inexplicable given that they had adored "the great Charles"—one thinks of Jacques Soustelle—officials, pieds-noirs, students, intellectuals . . . anti-Gaullism had many faces. Never did the General know a state of grace like the one that accompanied the First Consul and even the Emperor for several years.

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Gaullists don't like de Gaulle to be compared to Napoleon. Olivier Guichard, having juxtaposed their names, hastens to add: "They have nothing in common other than to have had genius."[149] From their point of view, the latter were right: comparisons of the General with the Emperor—either Napoleon I or Napoleon III—have always been the work of anti-Gaullists. The parallel had its source in a series of suspicions that, both in London and within the internal resistance, clung to the man of 18 June: his alleged adherence to *maurassisme*[150] and connections with Action Française or other far-right groups before the war; the use of the phrase "I, General de Gaulle" in the statements he made on the BBC, which caused him to be suspected of claiming to be Vichy's sole opponent, the sole resister, from whom all legitimacy proceeded, and his supposed intentions to change institutions after the war to install an authoritarian regime. These suspicions led a large part of the Resistance to unite against him, a broad spectrum that included Jean Monnet, who called de Gaulle a "Hitlerian fascist";[151] Henri Frenay, who rejected the connection between the Resistance and appeal of 18 June that the Gaullists sought to establish; Yvon Morandat, who suspected the General of dreaming of a "dictatorial regime" for postwar France; and the small London group, *La France libre,* organized around André Labarthe and Raymond Aron, in which de Gaulle was out of favor. Labarthe said that de Gaulle was "mendacious, underhanded, and unbalanced," "a fascist surrounded by hoods."[152] These words were not part of Raymond Aron's vocabulary, but he was not far from sharing these views that were as lapidary as they were unjust.

"The Shadow of the Bonapartes" ("L'ombre des Bonaparte") appeared in *La France libre* in August 1943. The General's name is never cited in the article, but it is clearly about him, presented as the potential successor to Napoleon, Badinguet, and Boulanger, three names that Aron associated as so many stages in the genesis of a specifically French version of fascism. Down to the present day, this thesis regarding the profound connivance between the French inclination toward Caesarism and the invention of a fascism that was, certainly, to flourish elsewhere in Europe, but which, because of that connivance, could "never be altered by the corrosion of power," is supposed to have remained most authentic in France.[153]

Inspired by Max Weber's theses concerning charismatic power, Aron's analysis of Bonapartism is hardly original—or convincing. Bonapartism, he tells us, is based first of all on the existence of a person convinced that he is predestined to play the role of a providential man and is endowed with qualities that allow him to honorably entertain that belief (qualities that the unfortunate Boulanger obviously lacked); then, on the existence of an audience prepared to follow him; and finally, on a context of crisis that delegitimates the institutions and actors (individuals and parties) of political life:

> Bonapartism is thus simultaneously the anticipation and the French version of fascism. A French anticipation because the Revolution's political instability, patriotic humiliation, and concern about social conquests—mixed with a certain indifference to political conquests—created, on various occasions, a plebiscitary situation in the country. [. . .] A French version because there are always millions of French people who, under favorable circumstances, are prepared to make up for their customary hostility to their governments by indulging in emotional outbursts crystallizing around a person designated by events. And again a French version because an authoritarian regime, in France, inevitably appeals to the great Revolution, pays verbal tribute to the national will, adopts a left-wing vocabulary, and professes to be addressing, beyond parties, the people as a whole. In France, even despotisms want to be republican.[154]

The analysis of the Bonapartist tradition as it crystallized at the time of the Second Empire is not absurd, but the comparison with fascism is. Strangely, Aron failed to gauge the latter's dreadful specificity, just as he failed to gauge the character of the Vichy regime, toward which, perhaps out of anti-Gaullism, he was always indulgent.[155]

De Gaulle was clearly the target of Aron's article. The situation played a large role in this. The dismissal of Admiral Muselier, one of the first to contest the General's power openly, led the editorial board of *La France libre* to distance itself from the Gaullists.[156] Prefiguring very precisely Aron's remarks, in January 1943 André Labarthe wrote in *La France libre:* "Nothing is more absurd, nothing is more contradictory, than to connect with a name the idea of French democracy, whereas [. . .] the supposed incarnation of democracy in a man risks ending up in anti-democracy and an authoritarian regime."[157] The attack was concerted and was to take on all its meaning when the French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN) was created in early June 1943, a few days after de Gaulle's arrival in Algiers—on 30 May—and the publication of "The Shadow of the Bonapartes." The General's detractors wanted to see in the establishment of this organization an attempt to normalize and make permanent the extraordinary power granted de Gaulle on the ground of circumstances that were themselves extraordinary. Aron did not challenge 18 June, on the contrary; he said that what the General had done on that day was "as moral as it was political";[158] but he contested the meaning and the import that de Gaulle gave this heroic act: "The appeal of 18 June retains its moral and political significance, but the speeches that immediately followed it were already those of a party leader, and not of a spokesman for a gagged country."[159] It was the transformation of the Appeal into an ambition that was political and, in his view, partisan, that he rejected and that founded, as Crémieux-Brilhac later said, more than his anti-Gaullism, his "a-Gaullism."[160] A sign of this desired normalization that was supposed to bring the General's charismatic authority back within the framework of a legal-bureaucratic organization—to put it in Max Weber's terms—was the co-presidency entrusted to Giraud and the announcement of the coming convocation of an Advisory Committee serving as a parliament. Did Aron suspect de Gaulle of privately refusing to leave behind the role of providential man that he had been playing since 1940? In any case, he concluded his article by saying that if the country once again followed a path it had taken often enough in the past for it to be considered a French pathology, authoritarian and anti-democratic, it had to be expected that soon, as in 1814 and 1870, "one man's adventure would end in a national tragedy."[161]

Forty years later, in his *Mémoires,* Raymond Aron was to regret having written "The Shadow of Bonaparte," recognizing that he had underestimated the General's republican convictions. The events of 1946 and then those of 1958 were to demonstrate, he said, that de Gaulle was "neither General Monck nor a coup d'état general."[162] Aron's admission was sincere, his regrets partial. In addition, if in 1958 he fell in line behind de Gaulle, that was above all because he expected the General to find a solution to the Algerian crisis; and if he gave his blessing to the Constitution of 4 October 1958 in a famous study entitled "The Fifth Republic or the Parliamentary Empire" (November 1958), which made another comparison—positive, this time—between de Gaulle and Napoleon III, he never approved of the way de Gaulle regained power in 1958. The General having referred in his press conference on 19 May 1958 to the "moral capital" he had received from his accomplishments between 1940 and 1945, Aron added, not without bitterness, that the French had not all condemned the armistice, and that in any case the appeal of 18 June had not been able to create a personal legitimacy that was to subsist after the war. Thus, it was by relapsing into his old errors, and taking the French with him, that the General had returned to power.[163]

But this was far from the text of 1943, since Aron finally recognized that de Gaulle had made legitimate use of a power reconquered in such a dubious way:

> There are always millions of French people who, under favorable circumstances, are prepared to make up for their customary hostility to their governments by indulging in emotional outbursts crystallizing around a person designated by events [a passage taken verbatim from the 1943 text, where he described Gaullism as Bonapartism and neo-fascism]. General de Gaulle is a charismatic leader par excellence, but he has historical ambitions comparable to those of a Washington. He seeks neither to continue the Roman dictatorship granted him by the Assembly (1 June 1958) nor to use the function of legislator to make his reign permanent.[164]

De Gaulle-Bonaparte? There was 13 May, to be sure; but what followed had cleared him of any suspicion that he was related to Napoleon III (excepting the Napoleon III of the parliamentary Empire of 1869) or Boulanger. So there remains the comparison of de Gaulle to Washington, a Washington that de Gaulle was never able to become. The General, for his part, did not forget things. When people spoke to him about his contradictor, he said: "Raymond Aron, isn't that the man who is a professor at *Le Figaro* and a journalist at the College de France?"[165] He had reasons for bearing a grudge against Aron. "The Shadow of the Bonapartes," which appeared a few days before his arrival in Algiers and the beginning of the power struggle with Giraud and the latter's American protectors, was nothing other than a stab in the back.

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WHETHER FROM THE left or the right, French liberals have always looked on de Gaulle with a mixture of admiration, disapproval, and apprehension that reminds us of Mme de Staël's mixed feelings toward Napoleon. She had admired the man, his exceptional abilities and his genius, she had loved in him the heir of the French Revolution, and when the powers gathered in Vienna discussed the possibility of kidnapping him from the island of Elba and moving him to a place—Saint Helena, already—whence he could never return, it was she who warned Joseph Bonaparte, who had retired to Prangins, not far from Coppet, where she resided. It is true that, especially in the first years, her correspondence is full of positive remarks. She had hoped that Bonaparte would become a Washington and that he would put an end to the Revolution and its accompanying troubles, not by a dictatorship, but by free institutions that he would found in conformity with the genius of the century and whose initial steps he would accompany with the intention of passing on the torch as soon as circumstances permitted. This dream was short-lived. The savior had used popular support as a pretext for constantly increasing his power, to the point of putting the imperial crown on his head. Far from respecting the representative assemblies that he had had to put up with after 18 Brumaire, and protecting the freedom of individuals and the press, he had suppressed most of the newspapers, set up special tribunals, and forced the assemblies to be silent or disappear. Still graver was something she could not pardon: he had humiliated those he disdainfully called "philosophers" or "ideologues," and something that she did not willingly admit: he had scorned her, even though her greatest desire had been to serve him.

In the same way, Raymond Aron and all those who later were, at one time or another, anti-Gaullists or "a-Gaullists" certainly did not hate General de Gaulle. Though they had no liking for the man, they admired the rebel of 18 June; they even approved of the role he had ended up playing in the decolonization that they desired or considered inevitable, and no doubt they even recognized that this military man, who had twice restored the republic had not suppressed the Parliament and had shown himself to be the architect of Franco-German reconciliation and of a united Europe, made a very unusual fascist.

The liberals' anti-Gaullism covered a broad spectrum. In it we find worse as well as better. On the worse side, I think of the very mediocre book that Jean-François Revel published in 1959, *Le Style du général,* which cannot be read today without boredom and even sadness, if we think what a great mind the author was: doesn't this examination, pen in hand, of the General's written or oratorical style resemble the corrections that a schoolteacher might make, in red ink, in the margins of a bad student's composition, with the goal of pointing out the lie and the illusion—the "romance"—that is supposed to be the foundation of the saga of de Gaulle, a lie about a resisting France and the illusion of a politics of grandeur?[166] On the better side, I have re-read the articles that François Furet published in *L'Observateur* between 1959 and 1965. Put end to end, they constitute an indictment as brilliant as it is implacable.[167] Furet maintains that more than de Gaulle's "Bonapartism," more than his acquaintances with "militarism" or "fascism," more than his "Maurrassisme," or his "clerically" inspired culture, even more than everything that connects him, ideologically, to the reactionaries of Vichyism's "national revolution," what characterizes de Gaulle is lying as politics; not the word becoming action, as his supporters claim, but the word misrepresenting reality, replacing true history with a fable that fulfilled the "outdated ambitions" of this aging soldier and, at the same time, those of a country that preferred to stick its head in the sand rather than face up to reality. The great enterprise of mystification had begun on 18 June, orchestrated by a man who always hoped for a storm: 1940 avenged him for the military career he hadn't had, while 1958—when he did not hesitate to help the storm break out—opened the way to power once again, and when Algeria, having become independent, ceased to provide him with the drama he needed, he sought it in the tumults of international politics. "Today, [Furet wrote these lines in February 1963], calm times have returned. Now, the man who for French people is the guarantor of these calm times, the man who has just reestablished his power on the basis of the desire for refrigerators and automobiles, continues to be an adventurer in diplomacy, a maniac of historical suspense."[168] From the recurrent tensions in Franco-American relations to the speech given in Mexico and the thundering remarks made in Quebec, it was an old actor rehearsing a role. But there is something more than the expression of a mania in this: the mark of a politics that is always founded on lies and illusions. Furet agreed with Aron. Even if it was true that between 1940 and 1944 de Gaulle was "for captive France, the abstract figure of its liberty,"[169] he did not for all that have any personal right to govern it after Liberation. His supposed legitimacy did not give him the power to take control of a country whose lifeblood, particularly in the Resistance, had never been Gaullist or inspired by the appeal of 18 June. Instead of allowing France to reinvent itself on the basis of what it was at that moment, drawn toward the left because of the opprobrium weighing on the Vichyist or collaborationist right, de Gaulle imprisoned it in a myth of a national reconciliation of which he presented himself as the sole guarantor: hadn't his first concern, in 1944, been to "contain popular effervescence, to save what at the time could be saved of the country's traditional frameworks, to reestablish what has to be called by its name, not order in general, but the bourgeois order, which had been compromised by collaboration with the occupying forces?"[170] What was still more serious, de Gaulle cast over the society of the Liberation a veil woven of lies: France a full-fledged victor (but excluded from the Potsdam Conference) and France reconciled (whereas it was, and would remain, deeply roiled by the aftermath of the war and, already, by the revolt of the colonies). The consequence of this mendacious fable was to delay, or even prevent, "the transition that leads from chauvinistic exaltation [peculiar to wartime] to acceptance of the actual place of the French nation in the contemporary world."[171] That is the cardinal sin of Gaullism. Although the Fourth Republic responded to the challenge posed by the necessary industrial modernization of France, it could not find a solution to the decolonization whose difficulties de Gaulle had significantly increased by supporting the terrible repression of the protest demonstrations in Sétif in 1945. The politics of illusion, based on the two pillars of grandeur and unity, had consequences that were tragic in the short term, and damaging in the long term: it prevented France from adapting to the world surrounding it. In that respect, Furet concluded, Gaullism, though "plebiscitary and Bonapartist in heritage," was nonetheless a third-rate Bonapartism and was not very fertile:

> The two Bonapartes had provided relatively durable solutions to French society's problems. National reconciliation, the centralized bourgeois state, the politics of grandeur, are all realities of the Consulate and the Empire. Economic expansion, the conquest of colonies, and France's power in Europe are realities of the Second Empire. For the past twenty years, on the contrary [Furet was writing in May 1961], we are dealing with a decadent Bonapartism: and that is why Gaullism remains the principal political phenomenon in the France of the mid-twentieth century. Whereas a new France is being born from demographic and economic expansion, the two main ideas of Gaullist propaganda, the strong state and national grandeur—one being the condition of the other—are now only parts of an ideology of psychological compensation. The reality is that de Gaulle has dislocated the traditional bourgeois state and is presiding over the end of the old nationalist France. This cultivated, skeptical old man embellishes with a prestigious vocabulary the slow death of his dream and the idea of France that he learned in private school. That is what gives his regime this crepuscular odor that moves the whole world: French provincialism is part of the poetry of the twentieth century.[172]

Pierre Nora was no more indulgent toward the General, whose genius consisted, he said, "in draping the actual diminution of French power in the vocabulary of grandeur."[173] For him, de Gaulle was a conjurer, and his France was a dead chicken running around with its head cut off. As for the history of France, it was a collection of *lieux de mémoire.* The French—rather than France, which is now stored in the museum of dead things—paid a high price for Gaullism's and communism's "backward-looking illusionism," which together maintained the belief in the permanence of a national model that was historically obsolete. Confined in illusions and "old-fashioned ambitions" that still have not completely disappeared, this belief makes it difficult to see the world as it is and to adapt to it by bidding farewell to power. Ultimately, liberal anti-Gaullism reproduces the Orleanism of 1830, which already argued for a reawakening and a return to cold reality against reactionaries or revolutionaries selling illusions, some of whom dreamed of a return to an Old Regime represented as easy living, while others saw it as transcending 1789, combining republican mysticism with imperial glory. To both of these groups, Guizot replied by referring to the end of History and, already, by aspiring to a "republic of the center"[174] that would tear France away from its mythologies and allow it to continue its history, or rather to begin it over again, but this time freed from the burden of its past. Basically, the rejection of Napoleon and de Gaulle, despite the accusations that can legitimately be made against either of them—the former's despotism, the latter's cruelty in the way he dealt with partisans of French Algeria—was nourished by the same source: the view of both men as "illusionists" who delayed for a short time, one by war, the other by words, the irresistible decline of a nation kept afloat by the conviction of its manifest destiny. Napoleon had made the French believe that they could reconnect with the supremacy they had enjoyed under Louis XIV and that they had irremediably lost since the Seven Years' War, whereas de Gaulle prolonged for a few years France's pact with the universal, by fictively erasing the ineluctable consequences of the disaster of 1940.

In the end, for French liberalism both Napoleon and de Gaulle are champions of anachronism, wrapping their real work—the modernization of the state—in the garments of a poetry of national grandeur, which is certainly more justified in Napoleon's case than in de Gaulle's. Whereas the Emperor took control over Europe, without being able to keep it, the General won a victory less than he "made people forget a defeat."[175] Napoleon is supposed to have presided over the end of French hegemony in Europe and de Gaulle over "the end of a certain kind of French exceptionalism." The Napoleonic legend conveyed an extraordinarily strong idea of the nation, while de Gaulle, seeking to avert France's decline, merely suspended it. If the "Great Nation" moved outside History, politics kept it there by the discourse's power to produce illusions. François Furet observes:

> The irony of the first ten or fifteen years of the Fifth Republic, during which General de Gaulle and his supporters governed the country,

> was that they superimposed a traditional idea of the nation—the monarchy and the Revolution together—on what was in the process of subverting it: the country's growing wealth, the hedonism of its lifestyle, the birth of a European economy and consciousness. The original weak point in the first version of Gaullism was to have reinvented national grandeur on the basis of an imaginary victory, and to use it to maintain this illusion in a world dominated by the United States and the USSR. The politics of the second version of Gaullism claimed to resolve this contradiction but only deepened it as an inevitability infinitely stronger than the General's passion for the history of France.[176]

These lines were written in 1988. That was just before legend took hold of the figure of de Gaulle. Whether or not one shares Furet's views, they have become inaudible. Anti-Gaullism is dead. And so is Gaullism. Passions have flickered out and the hermit of Colombey has become the ghostly guardian of an almost moribund France. That is because since 1980, when the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War seemed to be opening up a new era, France has entered one of those periods of depression and languor with which it is familiar and during which the memory of a tutelary hero serves it as a crutch. In a way, de Gaulle's legend has "Pétainized" him: "France finally has a man to love,"[177] we read in a newspaper announcing a journey by the Marshal in December 1940. In de Gaulle, the France of the 2000s also finds "a man to love," but he is certainly no longer the man who, in 1940 and 1958, had shown it the path of striving.

Chapter Four

The Pen and the Sword

"Oh! quel sinistre bruit font dans le crépuscule les chênes / qu'on abat pour le bucher d'Hercule" ("Ô! What a sinister sound is made at twilight by the oaks being cut down for Hercules' funeral pyre"). Composed by Victor Hugo on the occasion of Théophile Gautier's death, these verses are an apt commentary on de Gaulle and his last conversation with Malraux. This scene, which took place on 11 December 1969 at Colombey, is famous. The former minister had come to visit the former president in reclusion at La Boisserie. They had lunched with Yvonne and the faithful Geoffroy de Courcel, and then the two men retired to the General's study, a suitable setting for a summit meeting. The snow had had the good idea to fall in abundance. Under a leaden sky it provided a brilliance that was already casting long twilight shadows over the frozen, silent countryside. "Saint Bernard's cell, looking out on the snow of centuries and solitude."[1] Alexander and Aristotle—oh, yes! The adulators of the great man make generous comparisons—are conversing about life, history, ungrateful France, and the doomed world. The hour granted Malraux having passed, de Gaulle rises to his feet. The audience is over. His guest later continued it in his book *Les chênes qu'on abat,* which, we are well aware, is not the report of a conversation but the last will and testament of a long companionship.

During lunch, Malraux had turned the conversation to cats. These excellent animals led him from Azincourt to Concarneau by way of the land of the Eskimos, but when the roast replaced the fish course, the conversation, after a detour through Niger, returned to French history. Yvonne kept an eye on the servants, Geoffroy de Courcel was silent, Malraux was brilliant. With Malraux, and only with Malraux, "it was de Gaulle who listened, it was de Gaulle who asked questions, who 'played along,' as it were, in order to set off the fireworks."[2] The writer was playing the starring role, and his host took pleasure in hearing him talk, without stopping to catch his breath, about Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Cagliostro, and Casanova, until the General finally asked him, out of the blue: "What do you think about the Emperor?" Malraux, not missing a beat, replied: "A very great mind, and a rather small soul." Napoleon was too positivist, too far distant from any metaphysical question; on these thorny issues he relied on his mother's religious convictions, which were in truth extremely vague. In short, he was a great man who was more concerned with things in this world than in the beyond, and in this he was like all conquerors too obsessed with themselves to turn their eyes toward Heaven. Malraux: "Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Timor. . . . When they appeared before God, I suppose that he sent them all to catechism class." With a faint smile, the General replied: "As for the soul, he [Napoleon] had no time for it." But nonetheless, he added, he certainly did not have a "common soul." The proof? The words Bonaparte uttered on entering the Tuileries Palace, not in 1815, as Malraux supposed, but in 1800, not after the collapse of illusions, but at the beginning, when glory was smiling on him: "Yes, it's sad, like grandeur." Made in this context, this remark casts a still brighter light on Napoleon's soul. "And then," De Gaulle added, "the legendary power of creation, you see what I mean, takes the place of the soul."[3] Yvonne signaled to the maid to clear the table.

Napoleon was not a new subject of conversation between de Gaulle and Malraux. They had often talked about him. On that day, they were merely picking up the conversation where they had left it. Both of them were very interested in the Emperor. Malraux had written a book about him entitled *Napoléon par lui-même,* a collection of quotations that remains, almost a century after its publication (1930), the most successful of its kind. As for the General, he had become familiar with great men and heroic actions as he was growing up. His father had taught him History, and he was to teach it to his own son.[4] He belonged to a generation in which the masses remained in the background of a historical narrative that was dominated by the high deeds of famous men. It was chiefly a political history to which Michelet and then Lavisse had added a little geography. The constraints that gave France its coherence and constants had to do with its network of rivers and the orientation of its mountain ranges more than with its economy or mentalities. The life of nations developed between necessity and contingencies, the former having to do with geography and the latter with human actions, which were not always beneficial. That is also why the General was such a good portraitist in his *Memoirs.* In his view, it was in the character of Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, or Pétain that history found—in part—its explanation. This explanation blended psychology and geography, individual will, and the permanent interests of peoples, events, and fundamental givens.

The history cherished by the General has style, elegance; it doesn't relax, it is on familiar terms with the summits. It is a kind of ambrosia of which he partook so young that it made ordinary wine forever intolerable for him.[5] Naturally, Napoleon occupies an eminent place in this history, even if it was never to be, in his view, the first one. Too much adventure, too little morality in the great conqueror. De Gaulle preferred Hoche or Carnot, who were no doubt less talented but better patriots. He had read Napoleon at Saint-Cyr, where the study of the Emperor's campaigns was used to introduce pupils to grand strategy;[6] having become a teacher himself, he had taught these same campaigns to his pupils at the Ecole de guerre. The notes for a few of the lectures he gave in 1921 on the campaigns of 1805 and 1813 have been preserved.[7] The Emperor never left him. At the very end of his life, when he was working furiously to finish his *Mémoires d'espoir,* fearing that he would not live long enough to do so, he had entertained the idea of concluding the work with a dialogue in which, at death's gates, he would meet the great figures of the national narrative: Clovis, Charlemagne, Sully, Richelieu, Louis XIV, Colbert, Danton, Napoleon, Clemenceau. He would have asked them what they would have done in the situation in which he had found himself.[8] He had pursued this dialogue for a long time. He didn't *imagine* living among these tutelary shades; he lived with them, guided by their experience. He pursued a conversation with France, whose history he thought embodied in its leading figures, the founders and saviors, starting with Hugh Capet and Joan of

Arc, all of them equally indispensable for a country which, more than any other, periodically verges on the abyss.[9]

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General de Gaulle's Napoleon is first of all a soldier. In his books or remarks, he rarely shows an interest in Napoleon as a politician or a statesman. This has to do with the generation he belonged to. In 1900, people's hearts still beat faster at the thought of the Battle of the Pyramids or the Battle of Austerlitz. Two world wars had not yet killed the magic of combats. The Emperor on campaign was more important, in French hearts, than the First Consul coming to the Council of State to discuss the Civil Code. What he had lost ultimately took priority over what he had bequeathed: victories and conquests over institutions. The General's relative lack of interest in Napoleon as a politician also had to do with his education. At Saint-Cyr, what people cared about was the art of war. In *The Edge of the Sword,* it was the secrets of the art of military command that preoccupied de Gaulle, and that he sought, more or less explicitly, in the history of the master of battles. If "character" and "prestige" are the two principal supports of authority, who possessed them more than Napoleon? When de Gaulle mentions the advantages of terseness, reserve, and silence in the art of command, it is once again "the gray greatcoat" that he alludes to: "Who is as taciturn as Bonaparte?"[10] And who else is he speaking of in a famous passage on the grandeur that must always characterize the leader's orders?

> He must aim high, see greatly, judge broadly, thereby distinguishing himself from the common man who struggles within narrow limits. He has to personify scorn for contingencies, whereas the masses are obsessed with details. He has to rid his ways and procedures of anything petty, whereas the common man is not self-aware. This is not a matter of virtue, and evangelical perfection does not lead to control. The man of action can hardly be conceived without a strong dose of egoism, pride, severity, and guile. But he is forgiven all that and stands out even more if he makes these characteristics the means of achieving great things. Thus by satisfying everyone's secret desires, by offering this compensation for constraints, he wins over subordinates and, even when he stumbles along the way,

> retains in their eyes the prestige of the summits toward which he sought to lead them.[11]

Isn't this Bonaparte failing to cross the bridge at Arcole and falling in the river, from which he was with difficulty pulled out? That momentary setback, which was reversed the following day, in no way harmed the young general at the head of the Army of Italy. But at the same time, this portrait is only half true. I am not sure that Napoleon would have recognized himself in this praise of command as asceticism, all about restraint, silence, mystery, controlled feelings, distance from the "common man," and, for the leader, a "constant constraint" that results in "a state of inward struggle that is more or less acute depending on temperament, but that ceaselessly wounds the soul, the way a hair shirt hurts the penitent at every step."[12] The prestige Napoleon enjoyed among his men did not reside in a distance that was never relaxed, but rather, on the contrary, in a proximity that was far from being always calculated. His men were his true family.[13] If he governed as well as he waged war, it was amid his soldiers, and not surrounded by ministers and courtiers, that he felt at home. It must be admitted that he owed everything to the army. It had made his incredible ascent possible, and it was within it that he had for the first time deployed his talent. As early as 1793 one could already observe the ability to size up a situation that so fascinated Clausewitz; and one could also gauge to what point he possessed, instinctively—where could he have learned it?—the art of commanding men. A few years—indeed, a few months—sufficed for the army whose command he had been given to become *his* army rather than that of the Republic. He took control of it by his sole presence, and of course this power only increased with notoriety and success. He knew how to win people over, how to make them follow him, appealing by turns to soldiers' greed and their love of glory, alluding to the "rich provinces" and "great cities" that would fall under their power,[14] or to their sense of honor, in order to extract more and more efforts and sacrifices from them. He was not unaware that these men he commanded—and this remained true right to the end—were driven, even the most boorish among them, by values and ideals inculcated by the French Revolution. Fighters in an army composed of citizens and not of robots, they would have felt insulted to be treated as mercenaries. Their leader knew how, in his bulletins and proclamations, to magnify their exploits, how to change the smallest battle into an epic event, and how to assign to each individual the place he deserved in History. He ennobled them. When he spoke of it, war became a "frightening and passionate drama" (Jomini) in which each person, from the supreme commander down to the most obscure infantrymen, played an irreplaceable role.

No other commander of an army was, like him, capable of making himself both a peer and peerless. He deliberately favored garb that by its simplicity, made him stand out among his officers in colorful uniforms. The hat placed on his head and the famous gray greatcoat, by making his soldiers think that he was no different from them, raised him a hundred cubits above the most splendid of his marshals. "In my campaigns," he later said, "I used to go along the lines, in the bivouacs, sit down alongside the simplest soldier, to chat, laugh, and joke with him. I was always proud to be *the man of the people.*"[15] The "little corporal," as his men called him after the Battle of Lodi in 1796, was the first of his soldiers, putting himself on the line the better to be seen as such. He liked to address his men using the familiar *tu,* whereas he said *vous* to his courtiers, tugged their ears, and, under the Empire, he did not hesitate to detach his own Legion of Honor medal in order to pin it on the chest of one of these anonymous heroes. For de Gaulle, the art of command was the art of cultivating distance; for Napoleon, it was the art of erasing it. The troops willingly attributed superhuman powers to their leader, "a body that no march could fatigue, sleep that came at his command, a stomach that could digest anything and do without anything."[16] We don't know when he began to keep up to date the famous "livrets" in which the number of each regiment was recorded, along with its men, its leaders, and its successive positions.[17] On this subject, he was unbeatable. He had "his whole army in his head."[18] It is easy to understand why his soldiers were astonished when, on review days, he stopped in front of them, told them the history of their regiment better than they could have done it themselves. Such attentions, along with his genuine concern about their living conditions—good clothing, boots, care for the wounded, payment of their salaries—galvanized them, strengthened their loyalty, and made it possible to obtain more and more from them. He was not one of those leaders who attract respect by proving "that they are just as demanding of themselves as they are of their subordinates, that their severity is a rule of conduct that is in no way capricious, and that they can be trusted under fire," but one of those who "win their troops' affection and admiration by their unexpected reactions and their capacity for improvisation and initiative."[19] General Moreau was of the first type; his soldiers liked his wisdom, the moderation of his calculations, and his rejection of any rash action; he was beloved and for a long time the army was divided into two clans that didn't much like one another, the daredevils of the Army of Italy and the disciplined troops of the Army of Germany. But if the latter esteemed Moreau, did they admire him? Napoleon was loved and admired precisely because of the suffering and sacrifices he imposed on his men. He pushed them to achieve exploits, he led them to victory—or better, to glory and therefore to immortality. Napoleon did not make war, he loved it; he flourished in it, certain that it made life more wide-ranging, greater, more intense. To understand him, it suffices to read his correspondence from 1810 and 1811, years without war (except in Spain). The energy that the Emperor did not expend on the battlefield he consumed by writing even more letters than usual. He meddled in everything, checking and supervising every detail. We sense that like his biographers, who find these years awkward because they don't know what to do with them, Napoléon was bored.

Never, since Caesar's legions, had an army like the Grande Armée been seen, bound together by patriotism, the ambition to win glory, love of war, and attachment to its leader. No defeat ever tarnished Napoleon's prestige. Not until 1815 and Waterloo was the charm finally broken.

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André Malraux said he found it awkward to compare Napoleon and de Gaulle, the former because he was "the greatest military leader of modern times," whereas the latter was certainly "a considerable historical figure" but "not a great military leader."[20] The General lacked experience in war. He conceived it intellectually, but he had not really waged it, at least not as a commander. Napoleon, on the other hand, had both instinct and experience. In one of his *Causeries du lundi,* Sainte-Beuve distinguishes three different types of military men: the brave soldier seeking glory, the knowledgeable soldier, and the loyal and modest soldier who carries out his orders. While de Gaulle certainly did not belong to this third category in which we find soldiers "always ready to serve, to fight, asking nothing, content and almost astonished when they are rewarded, inviolably loyal to the flag and to their oath," neither was he one of the "race of the valiant, [. . .] brave, proud, clearly born for war, ardently seeking occasions to win glory, impatient to bring them about, always in the van, extraordinary, confident, brilliant, the first to run risks, but also eager to gain honor and rewards." Neither Drouot nor Masséna, he belonged instead to the race of the Catinats and Vaubans, that of "soldiers who combined the good qualities of their profession with the almost contradictory merits of being thinkers, philosophers, reasoners": "They make judgments," Saint-Beuve added, "they have political ideas, civil virtues; [. . .] reflection puts its stamp on their foreheads but deprives them of what characterizes the [others], namely brilliance and energy." De Gaulle, a knowledgeable soldier, had reflected on command before he exercised it.[21] When the opportunity arose, perhaps he tried to conform to the rules that he himself had formulated in *The Edge of the Sword.* Napoleon's army would have followed its leader into the depths of Hell—and it did follow him there in Russia and then at Waterloo—but none of those who served under the command of Colonel de Gaulle in May 1940 joined him in London.[22]

Reading Henri de Wailly's account of the Battle of Abbeville, where from 28 to 31 May de Gaulle, commanding the Fourth Armored Division, attacked with its tanks the German bridgehead on the Somme, we see why. He had nothing in common with Rommel,[23] who, to buck up his tank crews' morale, did not hesitate to climb into a tank leading the column. I do not mean that de Gaulle lacked this kind of courage, so greatly admired by subordinates; on the contrary, he was intrepid, careless of danger, usually not taking the trouble to wear a helmet, granting himself no favors, "never undressed at night, never completely asleep." Intrepid, but insensitive, as if he did not know the words that would comfort exhausted and terrified men and make them return to the fray. Contrary to received opinion, the French army of 1940 did fight. A hundred thousand of its men died in one month.[24] The men who served under de Gaulle would have fought under any other commander. Moreover, they continued to fight after his departure for Paris on 1 June. Although he obtained from them what they were capable of giving, he did not help them surpass themselves. He flew into a rage, reprimanded them in front of their comrades, was sarcastic with his officers, refused to listen to anyone, even when he was wrong; he treated them harshly and kept his distance from them. His style of command? "Independent, exclusive, authoritarian, and egocentric,"[25] another historian of this episode concludes. A witness, Father Bourgeon, found him, after one of his countless explosions of anger, "hard, unjust, and almost nasty": "In this place, after a courageous and victorious offensive, confronted by the heroism of these men and the sacrifices they had made, he found nothing to say to share their mourning, to congratulate them on their valor."[26] The picture does not enhance de Gaulle's reputation. The political leader was better, far better, than the military leader. The outcome of military operations mattered less to him than the political events that were at the same time being played out behind the scenes. He sought success, any success, that would free him from the army, from an army that was insufficiently prepared, insufficiently trained, insufficiently equipped, and already defeated, and would bring him back to politics and to Paris. On 28 May, on the eve of the first day of the offensive against the bridgehead the Germans had constructed south of Abbeville, he called Reynaud—forgetting to inform Weygand, who was furious—to crow over his victory: his tanks had advanced a few kilometers and occupied Huppy and Caumont.[27] They were to do better the next day, spreading panic in several German units, entering Villers, which was on fire, and thus approaching the heights of "Mount" Caubert—an ancient Roman camp—and the German bridgehead, but because he failed to immediately exploit this breakthrough, or to pursue this effort, de Gaulle had not been able to prevent the Germans from reforming their lines before nightfall. On 30 May, when it became clear that they had received reinforcements and could not be dislodged, he lost interest in the battle. The successes of 28 and 29 May had preceded the failure of 30 May. But that was the essential point: he had won "his" victory. "The 2nd big scrap that I engaged in with my division ended with a great success near Abbeville,"[28] he wrote to his wife, taking a few liberties with the truth. He left his men and his tanks—or what remained of them—without regret. When the operations near Abbeville resumed on 4 June (they were abandoned shortly afterward), he was already far away. Driving to Paris, no doubt informed of the imminence of the ministerial shakeup that was to see the departure of Daladier, he was expecting more than a secondary portfolio. General de Gaulle—he had been provisionally promoted on 25 May—was hastening toward his destiny.

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The Edge of the Sword has long tarnished the General's reputation. Retrospectively, it has been seen as a kind of ideal self-portrait, since at the time when it was written nothing suggested that History with a capital *H* would soon be within the reach of this officer who was, to be sure, brilliant, but could make no claim to a truly military "grandeur." This book, the most personal that he wrote, including his *Mémoires,* is seen as a kind of window opening onto its author's soul. Thus we are supposed to be able to grasp the *true* de Gaulle in certain passages that his detractors never fail to cite. This one, for instance:

> Faced by an event, a man of character relies on himself. He moves to put his stamp on action, to take responsibility for it, to appropriate it. And far from seeking shelter under the hierarchy, hiding in the texts, covering himself in reports, he stands up, plants his feet, and confronts. It is not that he wants to ignore orders or pays no attention to advice, but he is passionate about exercising his will, he is jealous of the power to make decisions. It is not that he is unaware of risks or scornful of consequences, but he gauges them frankly and accepts them without guile. Rather, he embraces action with the pride of the master, because he is engaged in it, it belongs to him; enjoying success provided that he deserves it and even when he derives no benefit from it, bearing all the weight of defeats, not without a certain bitter satisfaction. In short, a fighter who finds inside himself his ardor and his support, a gambler who seeks less gain than success, and pays his debts with his own money, the man of character confers nobility on action: without him it is a dismal slave's task, with him it is a divine game of heroes.[29]

De Gaulle was an amalgam of Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and the Barrès of *Le Culte du moi.* From this explosive mixture, it has been concluded that his conception of life amounted to a philosophy of action and will, with a mysticism of destiny that implied a permanent self-affirmation—all this combined with almost complete indifference to the ideas of good and evil, an indifference scarcely veiled by patriotism, or more precisely, by identification with the homeland. This "Nietzschean" de Gaulle has played a major role in the distrust that has long accompanied him. Who was, really, this general who claimed to have re-established the republic, on two separate occasions? Was he a republican? His imagination was too full of the idea of the "leader" or the "master" for him to be a true republican. After the institutions of the Fifth Republic took root, they made people forget the image of him as a "fascist." But it nonetheless stuck to him, especially on the other side of the Atlantic, where Roosevelt's aversion to him during the war, which was certainly fed by Jean Monnet, Saint-John Perse, and their consorts, never went away.[30] It has still not completely disappeared. It must be granted that the Gaullist religion has few followers outside France. Abroad, he continues to irritate people, when he does not arouse a smile. The image of a de Gaulle who is sometimes a follower of Nietzsche and sometimes a follower of Maurras, and sometimes both at once, has not completely disappeared, either. Many examples of it are cited in an essay Daniel Mahoney wrote precisely to refute these anti-Gaullist "prejudices."[31] For some writers, de Gaulle was "a Nietzschean superman beyond good and evil"; for others, he was a "neo-Nietzschean intellectual" who was convinced, like Sartre and Camus, that existence has no meaning, and who sought to give meaning to his own life through "an extraordinary act of will under extremely difficult circumstances."[32] No moral sense, no limit, but action, always action, action as the sole horizon.

This orthodox view has had many followers: Jean Monnet, as I said, but also Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie, the founder of the Libération-Sud resistance network (1940–1944), or, in the opposite camp Alfred Fabre-Luce. A vague echo of it remains in the paradoxical Gaullism of Régis Debray, devoted more to the artist than to the work, to the General than to France. But the work is certainly not on the same level as the artist. What did de Gaulle succeed in doing? Postponing for a few decades the end of a history of France that 1940 had irrevocably doomed. Through the word, the magician delayed the execution, which was certainly no insignificant achievement, and even in getting this potential cadaver a place at the table of the victors, obtaining for it a seat on the UN Security Council, with the right to cast a veto. Thanks to de Gaulle, France was thus able to travel "in first-class with a second-class ticket."[33] He embellished our twilight. He did not resuscitate France, he did not give it a second chance; he did something that was better, under the circumstances: he allowed France to exit History without feeling that it was demeaning itself. The man who was passionate about France and its history seems ultimately to have been the man of the end of French history, the latter finding in him, in his person, at the moment of its conclusion, the unity that it had never had: "The baptism of Clovis and the Battle of Valmy, recapitulated in a single individual."[34] "The princess of the fairy tales," dear to the General, "the Madonna of frescos," finally came into being. All that remained was to bid him farewell. The French people did just that in 1969, on the occasion of a referendum regarding which some of the General's supporters murmured that he had organized it only because he knew that defeat was certain.[35] He left history crowned with the ingratitude of those whom he had brought far higher than they deserved; as for the latter, the time had come for them to return, relieved, to mediocrity and decadence.

When he was down in the dumps, de Gaulle himself was not far from being a paradoxical Gaullist: "I'm the character of *The Old Man and the Sea,*" he told Malraux. "I've brought back nothing but a skeleton."[36] But he was not always in this bitter, melancholic mood. On his good days, he talked differently. Malraux having asked him about his return to public life in 1958, he replied: "If it was just a question of liquidating, what need did they have of me? To close a great book of history, the Fourth [Republic] sufficed."[37] A liquidator? No, he had been the man of hope and renewal, against all those who, precisely, shared the idea that France had died in 1940, that myth in which the "French bourgeois," eager to "erase France at any price,"[38] took pleasure. Returning, in his *Mémoires d'espoir* to the situation at the end of the war, he writes:

> Despite everything, [France] is alive, sovereign, and victorious. That is, to be sure, a marvel. How many people believed, in fact, that having

> first suffered an unprecedented disaster, witnessed the enslavement of its government under the enemy's authority, [. . .] undergone the debasement inflicted on it by an authority built on surrender and humiliation, the wounds to its body and its soul would ever heal? How many considered it certain that after such a crushing defeat, its liberation, if it were to take place, would be due only to the foreign power and that it would be that power that would decide what would happen to it, at home and abroad? [. . .] However, in the end, [France] emerged from the tragedy with its borders and its unity intact, governing itself and ranking among the victors.[39]

De Gaulle believed in France, and even loved it. He was not an aesthete of action whose policy consisted in disguising France's decline by means of a rhetoric of grandeur. He was trying, by speech as well as by action, to keep it from continuing its descent. The General's true grandeur was not to have *believed,* by some mental aberration, that he himself was France and that it lived in him, but to have *decided* that he would be France, or rather that he would take on the burden at a time when the country had plunged, almost without transition, from the summit to the abyss. Judged by that yardstick, there was in de Gaulle an immoderation and a heroism that were, paradoxically, better expressed by his detractors than by his advocates—for example, by David Mahoney, who emphasizes de Gaulle's reasonableness a little too much, to the point of neglecting what distinguishes him. It is certainly true that de Gaulle was never a rebel out of pure love of rebellion—even if he had all the characteristics of a person who is against everything. He always recognized that his action was delimited by values that transcended him: France and its history, his religious faith, the cause of civilization as opposed to that of barbarism, the rejection of tyranny or dictatorship. However, within this vast circle there was room for self-affirmation and an egocentric adventure to which the relation that he maintained with France ultimately testifies: he submitted all the more to the "law" that it imposed on him because it became, through a process of identification, his own "law."[40] Nietzsche is certainly not the most useful author for understanding the personality of a man who owed far more to Péguy's religion and Barrès's politics (the politics of *Les Déracinés,* not that of the

Culte du moi), but the Nietzschean superman—taken figuratively, of course—is not entirely foreign to his story.

During the luncheon at Colombey, the General told Malraux things that I find significant. We have to remember the context. At the time when, in the spring of the same year (1969), de Gaulle lost the referendum held on 27 April and left office, the official commemoration of the bicentenary of Napoleon's birth was being prepared. It had been decided that de Gaulle would give a speech at Les Invalides, whereas Malraux would go to Ajaccio.[41] Events decided differently. It was Georges Pompidou who presided over the ceremonies. He traveled to Corsica, where he gave a formally exemplary but uninspired speech.[42] De Gaulle, who rarely failed to watch the evening television news, must have been amused to see the "Borgia gentleman,"[43] with his airs of an authorized representative, celebrating the Emperor in such prosaic terms. A month before the bicentenary, Marcel Jullian, who was at that time the director of the Plon publishing house, had come to see the General at La Boisserie to talk with him about his *Mémoires d'espoir*. He had not been able to resist asking de Gaulle what he would have said in the courtyard of Les Invalides. The General replied: "I would have said that he [Napoleon] and I have been betrayed by men who bit the hand that fed them. . . . And that both of us have had the same successor: Louis XVIII."[44] Dining with Malraux at La Boisserie, the General refrained from mentioning Pompidou, this time. Even if his resentment of the "traitor" was intact, several months had passed. What would he have said at Les Invalides? "He left France smaller than he had found it, true; but a nation is not defined that way. He had to exist for France. It's a little like Versailles: it had to be done. Let's not quibble over grandeur."[45] Versailles had cost France dearly, and it cost the monarchy even more dearly, imprisoning it in the splendid isolation that had the disadvantage of breaking the ties that had bound the king to the French for a thousand years; but like Napoleon's victories, the splendor of the royal château exemplified a saga that had dazzled the whole world. France was magnified by them, even if Versailles had played a role in igniting the French Revolution, and even if Napoleon ultimately lost his conquests. De Gaulle was far from sharing the judgment with which Jacques Bainville concluded his *Napoleon* (which de Gaulle certainly read) in 1931: "Except for the glory, except for *the art,* it would probably have been better if he had never existed."[46] This amounts to judging Napoleon on the basis of his liabilities; de Gaulle judged him by the yardstick of his influence.

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When Churchill bowed his head before the tomb of Napoleon in 1944, he said to de Gaulle: "In the world there is nothing grander!"[47] Grandeur is no doubt the key term in de Gaulle's lexicon. The idea opens his *Mémoires de guerre*—"France cannot be France without grandeur"[48]—and thus puts the saga under the sign of this notion, which is, to say the least, difficult to define. It is first of all the opposite of the "mediocrity" so often condemned by the General. It testifies to a Romantic conception of politics that did not prevent him, as Philippe Braud emphasizes, from having "a solid sense of realities."[49] It combines a goal, a politics, and a rule of conduct. For France, the goal is to preserve or regain the first rank, without which it is no longer entirely France; as a politics, it consists in the "great undertakings" that alone are capable of bringing together the French, who are by nature divided, and, by cementing their unity, of guaranteeing the nation's independence and sovereignty; and finally, it is a moral code, individual and collective, that privileges effort over relaxation, sacrifice over dishonor, and helps people "aim high and stand up straight."[50] Grandeur merges, in many respects, with a demanding ethics of honor. A vital need for France, it is no less a vital need for individuals. In de Gaulle, it is the basis for the conviction that he is predestined, called upon to perform "a signal service" for his country. At the end of his life, he described this mission this way:

> On the slope that France is ascending, my mission is always to guide it toward the summit, whereas all the voices from down below constantly call for it to descend. Having once again [here he refers to his return to power in 1958] chosen to listen to me, it has extricated itself from stagnation and has just entered the stage of renewal. But from there on, as earlier, I have no goal to show it other than the summit, no path other than that of effort.[51]

Ultimately, grandeur merges with will, which gives France the strength to rise again after every fall, and even the strength to reach an elevation that its actual material means deny it. It dissociates economic power from political power. De Gaulle was to find in it the principle of a diplomacy that Maurice Vaïsse has rightly defined as "grandeur," even if we have to acknowledge that its results were not always satisfactory.[52] Alain Peyrefitte once asked de Gaulle about this: "You often speak of grandeur, General. What is grandeur?" "It's the path one takes to surpass oneself." "Well, then," Peyrefitte said, "for France, grandeur . . ." "Is to rise above itself, to escape mediocrity, and to become once again what it has been in its best periods." "Namely?" "Radiant."[53] Peyrefitte says that he didn't dare ask further questions: hadn't everything already been said?

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It is precisely his sense of grandeur that makes de Gaulle like Napoleon; paradoxically, it is also what differentiates him from the Emperor. The General would certainly not have agreed with Foch when the latter, in a lecture given at the beginning of the century, maintained that the victor at Wagram fell because he had alienated peoples whose rights he scorned:

> In him, said the man who was not yet a marshal, the conqueror had killed the sovereign. [. . .] In opposition to him, Europe rose up at the call of its patriots; it took up arms, leading its sovereigns to defend its liberties [. . .] Laon [where Napoleon was defeated by the Prussians on 9 and 10 March 1814] was in fact the defeat of genius by Law in revolt. [. . .] It was Valmy all over again; 1792–1793 turned back against us. Yes, in the end, after showing Europe people rising up victoriously to save their independence, it is Europe that we find once again victorious for the same cause, with the same weapons, over the greatest military genius in history, who was guilty of having infringed on their rights.[54]

In reality, Napoleon, before being defeated by his enemies' coalition, and for reasons that had hardly any relation to the right of peoples or nations, had defeated himself through the excess of his genius, through the resulting absence of any moderation, and through his inability to assign a goal to his action, even if it was elevated, imbued with a grandeur inaccessible to anyone else, and to avoid crossing its limits. On this point, de Gaulle shared the opinion of the Marxist historian Georges Lefebvre, for whom Napoleon was the very incarnation of unlimited will:

> Bonaparte's ambition was not at all like the ambition each of us can feel: the ambition to attain a certain goal that will satisfy us; it is an ambition that has no final goal, and the finest thing he said about it was his reply to Murat, who had told him that "People say you are so ambitious that you would like to put yourself in the place of God the Father." "God the Father?" Bonaparte cried. "Never, that's a dead-end." That is why it is pointless to seek the final goal of Bonaparte's politics.[55]

Lefebvre was echoing Chateaubriand. Whereas the historian writes that Napoleon cannot be compared to Richelieu or Bismarck, both of whom knew where they wanted to go, the Romantic thought he could not be compared even to Alexander the Great. Alexander wanted to multiply his conquests, always further extending his empire, while Napoleon found his happiness, which was necessarily ephemeral, in the act of conquest rather than in possession. He was a conqueror who was not able to keep his empire and lost it more quickly than he had created it: "Instead of pausing after each step to build up in a different form behind him what he had torn down, he continually moved forward amid the ruins: he went so fast that he hardly had time to breathe where he passed. [. . .] The Macedonian [Alexander] founded empires as he raced forward, while Bonaparte, racing forward, knew only how to destroy them; his sole goal was personal mastery over the globe, without worrying about the means of keeping it."[56] Like a gambler, he was moved more by the thrill of the game than by the winnings, and dealt a hand that he hoped was favorable, he was prepared to stake all he had in the hope that his military genius or "fortune" would once again save him from a possible mistake.

Napoleon's temperament—the urge to surpass himself that no success ever satisfied—was not the sole issue in question. The prodigious nature of an unparalleled political ascension and military glory also have to be taken into account. When people talk about Napoleon, they never give sufficient attention to the length of time involved. A mere quarter of a century. One generation, and this extraordinary adventure was already no more than a memory. A quarter of a century is not very long, even if the years are not very full. In this case, they were brimming over. Young people who were, like Bonaparte, twenty years old in 1789, were forty-six at the time of the Battle of Waterloo. A third of a life that had provided enough material for several lives. All the contemporaries were aware of the acceleration of the rhythm, of the rapidity of changes, of the accumulation of so many events in such a short period of time. Retrospectively, it was not easy for them to believe that all that had been real: "I need to reflect at length, helped by solitude, to persuade myself that it is certain that I witnessed the federation of 1790 on the Champ de Mars, that I saw Louis XVI, Robespierre, Barras, Buonaparte, Napoleon, Louis XVIII, and that I am only forty-five years old,"[57] wrote one of them. Napoleon's life flowed like running water: on 18 Brumaire, only six years after entering the stage in 1793, he took power; three years later, he was made Consul for life; and two years after that he became Emperor. Jacques Bainville observes:

> Ten years later, less than ten years later, Louis XVIII would be there [. . .]. Ten years, when it had been hardly ten years earlier that he began to emerge from obscurity, just ten years, and it would already be over. [. . .] A low-ranking officer at twenty-five, now here he is, *mirabile dictu,* emperor at thirty-five. Time gripped him by the shoulder and pushed him. His days are counted. They will fly by with the rapidity of a dream so prodigiously full, interrupted by so few pauses and so little respite, in a sort of impatience to reach the catastrophe more rapidly, and loaded with so many grandiose events that this reign, which was actually so short, seems to have lasted a century.[58]

After all, who else fought and won so many battles? It is true that he sometimes barely avoided disaster, as at Marengo in 1800, or else retained control of the field only at the price of losses so heavy that they cast a pall on the victory, as at Eylau in 1807; but not until 1809 and the Battle of Essling did he suffer his first defeat.[59] In the meantime, he had beaten the Piedmontese and the Neapolitans, trounced the Austrians on three occasions, crushed Prussia, and defeated the Russians in all the engagements they fought. Even the defeats were sublime: Essling, the retreat from Russia, Leipzig, the campaign of 1814, and Waterloo all seem tragically heroic. He was defeated but never humiliated, as the Austrians had been at Ulm and the Prussians at Jena. Who can be compared with him? No one. Attempts to define his "doctrine" have often been made. He didn't like the art of war to be seen as a science. Although he willingly admitted the existence of a number of elementary principles that every officer had to learn and apply, at the same time he thought it absurd to conceive war without taking into account the power relationships, the quality of the leaders and the combatants, the terrain, and the countless circumstances that change the face of things from one moment to the next. "Woe be to the general who comes to the battlefield with a system,"[60] he warned. For him, war was "a simple art, all in the execution": "the role of principles in it is minimal; ideology is not involved in it at all."[61] One thinks of *The Edge of the Sword,* which contains an all-out attack on supporters of a "science" of war and forcefully reminds the reader that "the action of war essentially takes on the character of contingency."[62] It is an art, in the literal sense. Napoleon was not unaware of this, taking care to shape his judgment by studying his predecessors, but adapting what he had learned to the new and changing circumstances that he faced on each occasion. Ultimately, his treatise could have been summed up in the few words that he wrote to General Lauriston, who had been sent to the Antilles and Guyana in late 1804:

> It is already too late in the season; leave without delay; carry my flag on that fine continent; justify my confidence, and if, once you are established, the English attack you, always remember these three things: forces gathered together, activity, and a firm resolution to die with glory. These are the three great principles of the military art that have always made fortune favorable to me in all my operations. Death is nothing; but to live defeated and without glory is to die every day.[63]

Napoleon's theory of war was primarily a philosophy. It gave him the ability to combine what he called "the divine part of war" with its "material part": on the one hand, "everything that derives from moral considerations of your adversary's character, talent, and interest, and the soldier's opinion and the spirit," and on the other hand "the weapons, the entrenchments, positions, battle orders, everything that has to do with the combination of material things."[64] He associated the "small number of fundamental principles" to which the art of war can be reduced with "natural genius" and its "happy inspirations," namely, technique and the power of imagination, the latter keeping one from falling into the routine of rules learned, and technical competence making it possible to avoid—in theory—giving inspiration an excessively free rein, neglecting realities.[65] When people worried about his "castles in the air," he replied that he was a dreamer who was wide awake. "I gauged my dreams with the compass of reality,"[66] he said. That was true until 1812, because even Napoleon's military genius had to enter into its autumn. In Russia, it was only at Moscow that he was abruptly reminded of reality. But it was already too late.

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Victory is a powerful drug. Napoleon had always been the victor, so that for him war ended up seeming the most direct and least costly way of realizing his political or diplomatic objectives. There as elsewhere, for a long time he was able to show a certain pragmatism. It is said that he considered dethroning the Hohenzollern after the lightning campaign of 1806 in Prussia, and in 1809 he did not exclude the possibility of dismantling the empire of the Habsburgs, who, despite the three thrashings they suffered in 1797, 1800, and 1805, had decided to try once more. But in both cases, Napoleon did not act on his threats, or even seriously think about doing so. On the contrary, he knew he had to handle Prussia gently if he wanted to get along with the Czar, and at the same time, to avoid weakening Austria too much if he did not want to see the Russians extend their influence in Eastern Europe. The problem was located less at the end of the conflicts than at the beginning. Of course, it is always easy to decide after the fact that a war could have been avoided with a little common sense and moderation. Napoleon was not any freer in his initiatives than his adversaries were. In the great game of international relations, each player determines more or less the decisions made by the others. Britain not being inclined to peace, except sporadically in 1802 and then in 1807—the pursuit of the war in Europe was inevitable, but it is true that on several occasions Napoleon did nothing to avoid it, even triggering it under conditions that, for someone less talented and fortunate than he was, could have turned out to be catastrophic. I am thinking in particular of the 1805 campaign against Austria and Russia. “The Eagle” was arriving at the highpoint of his career: in Paris he had been crowned emperor before having the crown of the Lombard kings placed on his head in Milan. It is certain that this double coronation, the double consecration that made him the successor of Charlemagne, was not without consequences. Whereas he was still busy preparing for the planned invasion of Britain, he did nothing to undo the coalition between the Austrians and the Russians that was being formed behind him. The former were hesitating to launch into another war—in view of the preceding ones—but for them there could be no question of allowing the French to extend their already considerable domination in Italy. While the discussions between the Russians and the Austrians moved forward, Napoleon had gone to Milan, where, six months after the coronation in Notre-Dame, he was crowned king of Italy. “Seeing this Italy,” Thiers notes, “filled him with new designs for the grandeur of his empire and the establishment of his family. Far from wishing to share it with anyone, he dreamed, on the contrary of occupying it as a whole and of creating there a few of the vassal kingdoms that were supposed to fortify the new empire of the West.”[67] He threatened to overthrow the Bourbons in Naples and, without waiting, pronounced the integration of Genoa into the French Empire, ceding the republic of Lucca to his sister Elisa. This was more than a provocation; it was the first manifestation of hubris in a career that would include many others. He was so sure of himself—so sure that he would reach London before the Austrians and the Russians had completed their preparations, or that he would defeat them as he had always done—that the risk of fighting on two fronts did not frighten him. He probably knew that no matter what he did, the continental powers would attack him sooner or later; perhaps the landing in Britain was merely a feint intended to embolden his enemies on the continent, in order to provoke a general war that would settle the situation there once and for all. If that hypothesis turned out to be correct, it would nonetheless remain that his past victories, like his unprecedented ascension, conspired to rid him of any notion of limits and to establish war as the ultima ratio of politics. Was he not later to become "the only one of the moderns who voluntarily undertook to wage two or even three terrible wars at once, with Spain, Britain, and Russia?"[68]

In 1805, as soon as the landing on the British coast had been compromised by Admiral Villeneuve's failure to take control of the Channel long enough for the French army to cross it, Napoleon sent his armies from the Channel and the North Sea to the Rhine, to prepare in record time for what was to be his most splendid campaign. Never had an army marched more rapidly and in a more orderly manner. The various corps, separated during the march in order to move faster by avoiding clogging the roads and to take advantage of opportunities to procure fresh supplies—encumbering the army with stores that would have slowed its advance was out of the question—coalesced as they drew near the Danube.[69] At Donauworth, they crossed the river and fell on the rear of the Austrian army at Ulm, where the Austrians, convinced that the French would attack from the Black Forest, were waiting for Russian reinforcements. It is not for nothing that the maneuver at Ulm is still considered a masterpiece of strategy. Once the Austrians were out of action, the Grande Armée raced toward Vienna to meet the Russians. When he arrived in the Austrian capital, Napoleon turned north. He went so fast that his lines became dangerously extended. It was only on the morning of the Battle of Austerlitz that Davout's third corps rejoined the main body of the French troops after an exhausting march. If at that time the Russians had refused to fight and marched directly toward Vienna without stopping, it is likely that Napoleon, cut off from his bases and reinforcements, would have been doomed. He gambled and won. On this occasion, he showed how much he was his own master. He succeeded in deceiving the Russians by making them think that he was in difficulty—which was true—and about to retreat—which was false. They fell into the trap, attacked, and were crushed.

Further examples could be cited. Mustn't he have thought himself invincible when he decided in 1812, against the advice of his entourage, that invading Russia was the most appropriate way to force a restoration of the alliance with the Czar that had been made in 1807?

In 1814, when he was fighting alone against three opponents, he still believed that war, rather than diplomacy, could always settle the political question. To be sure, room for maneuver was becoming very limited. At the end of 1813, France had returned to its "natural borders," vassals and allies were abandoning it one after the other, and the coalition's armies were preparing to cross the borders. However, the ebbing of the Napoleonic armies paradoxically weakened the coalition. Hadn't their objective been achieved? If the British insisted that France give up the left bank of the Rhine—and thus Belgium; if the Prussians still wanted to avenge their humiliation in 1806; if Czar Alexander dreamed of being the savior of Europe[70] and of restoring its peace, the allies not only had divergent interests but also distrusted one another, and notably Austria, which, about to regain its foothold in Germany and in Italy, might be tempted to sign a separate peace treaty that would give it the advantage in the struggle for hegemony that had long opposed it to Prussia. Thus all might not be lost for Napoleon. At least in theory. On 9 November 1813, in Frankfurt, the Allies offered him peace on the basis of the treaties of 1797 (Campoformio) and 1801 (Lunéville), which amounted to letting France retain Belgium and its border on the Rhine. But these offers led to nothing. Did Maret, the foreign minister, forget to transmit the message to Napoleon, who accepted the enemy's proposals only on 2 December, while the Allies, interpreting the silence of the French as a rejection, decided on 4 December to attack?[71] Or, having been informed of the proposals made in Frankfurt, did he delay his reply because he was afraid of revealing the weakness of his position by accepting too quickly?[72]

We know the great events of the Allied campaign in France: the invasion of French territory during the first days of 1814; then, starting in late January, Napoleon's counterattack, which was so successful that a month later, on 23 February, the emperor thought he could reject the Austrian offer of an armistice by demanding the maintenance of the "natural borders" and the Allied armies' withdrawal beyond the Meuse. The Russians and Prussians were so worried that Austria would defect that on 8 March, at Chaumont, they reaffirmed their commitment not to make a separate peace with Napoleon, forcing Vienna to join in this pact, with the reservation that they would consider it null and void in the event that the military situation turned decisively in favor of the French. But the day after the treaty was signed, the situation changed: Napoleon having been defeated at Laon (9–10 March), the Allies broke off the negotiations at

Châtillon (19 March) and Czar Alexander got them to agree to march directly on Paris to get there before the Emperor did. Thus Napoleon had twice dismissed an opportunity to exploit the Allies' differences: on 9 November and then again on 23 February, pinning his hopes, in spite of everything, on winning on the battlefield.

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In *France and Her Army,* de Gaulle blamed the final disaster on both Napoleon's character and the situation in which he found himself. In fact, his power remained intrinsically fragile. Despite plebiscites, constitutions, and the consecration by the pope, it was based above all on his victories and the prestige they conferred on him. He was doomed to renew this marvel, to continue to win, and thus to go on fighting. War had brought him to power, and victory alone could keep him there. His character? His genius, of course, that extraordinary concentrate of abilities and power that could only obscure, in his mind, the notion of limits, and whose failings became more obvious not only with his successes, but also with the decline, both in quantity and in quality, of the means at his disposal: the best troops were in Spain; perpetual war was thinning the ranks, which were filled with inexperienced, hastily trained new recruits; it was killing off the most capable generals and the country was grumbling, even as the task to be performed continued to grow.

As far as the Treaties of Tilsit (1807), de Gaulle wrote, "[Napoleon] took care not to undertake a task that exceeded his means. In 1805, 1806, and 1807, his policy, as ambitious and demanding as it was, remained relatively moderate."[73] It was not so much that the objective was "moderate" as that the instrument—the Grande Armée—was exceptional. Defeat occurred when there ceased to be any proportion between the goal and the means.[74] In the end, the Napoleonic saga was not solely the product of Napoleon's genius; it was the outcome of the encounter between a leader and an exceptional army, that of the years 1796–1807, which several campaigns had already tested and hardened when he took it in hand. So long as he could rely on it, his domination was striking. But at least 35,000 men were killed in the campaigns from 1805 to 1807, and 150,000 more were wounded. When he went to war against Austria in 1809, the army was no longer entirely the Grande Armée of 1805. The internationalization of recruitment, very conspicuous in 1812 and 1813, was to further weaken the cohesion of the whole. If in 1814 Napoleon seemed to recover the energy he had at twenty, that was because he was reduced to an army of the size of those he had commanded at the beginning of his career, at Rivoli and Marengo; and it was also that in training young recruits, some of whom did not know how to fire a rifle,[75] he could count on "a handful of veterans, the debris of the Army of Spain and the Old Guard."[76] His fall was gigantic, in proportion to his glory. De Gaulle concluded:

> In the presence of such a prodigious career, judgment remains divided between blame and admiration. Napoleon left France crushed, invaded, drained of blood and courage, smaller than he had found it, doomed to bad borders [. . .], exposed to the mistrust of Europe [. . .]; but must we count for nothing the incredible prestige with which he surrounded our arms, the awareness given to the nation, once and for all, of its incredible military aptitudes, the renown of power that the homeland derived from them and whose echo still resounds? No one has more profoundly aroused human passions, provoked more ardent hatreds, given rise to more furious curses; what name, however, trails after it more devotion and enthusiasm, to the point that it is not uttered without stirring up a kind of mute ardor in people's souls? Napoleon exhausted the French people's good will, abused their sacrifices, covered Europe with tombs, ashes, and tears; but even those whom he caused to suffer, the soldiers, were the most loyal to him, and even in our own day, despite the time that has elapsed, the different feelings, the new griefs, of the crowds that have come from all parts of the world, pay homage to his memory, and give way, when they draw near his tomb, to the thrill of grandeur. The tragic revenge of moderation, the righteous wrath of reason; but the superhuman prestige of genius and the marvelous virtue of arms![77]

Thirty years after the publication of *France and Her Army,* de Gaulle's opinion on Napoleon had not changed: one doesn't quibble over grandeur, even if it lacks the cardinal virtue of having a sense of measure. For that reason, he did not like to be compared with the Emperor. One day—it was in the time of the Rally of the French People,[78] when the communists were accusing him of planning a coup d'état: "No, I'm not Bonaparte! No, I'm not Boulanger! I'm General de Gaulle!"[79]

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It is one of the characteristic traits of Napoleonic politics: war determines the limits—or the absence of any limit—of political objectives, and not the other way around. The distance that de Gaulle felt with regard to Napoleon, to which we will return, is partly explained by this. The General, even as he cultivated a heroic image of war, never saw it as independent of the superior objectives that provoked it, or as being free from any political control. That is why "democratic war," to borrow Bainville's expression, horrified him, because mobilizing the masses, it tends to cut itself off from any rational consideration in order to feed on its own violence and the extreme passions that it unleashes. *The Army of the Future* is eloquent on this point. The project of professionalizing part of the army, which was justified by the competencies henceforth required because of technical progress, was justified even more, according to de Gaulle, by the ineluctable return—at least he wanted to believe this—to the very Clausewitzian subordination of war to political reason. The First World War, by its violence and the magnitude of the losses, had convinced him that a cycle in military history had ended: that of conscript armies and the infantry as the "queen of battles" that the conflicts of the French Revolution and the Empire had inaugurated. Never again would it be possible to repeat the effort made in 1914. Hadn't France lost a quarter of its young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-seven? So there could be no return to "the atrocious and barbarous theory of popular masses trained, armed, and mobilized to kill, destroy, and hate one another."[80] With the help of the memory of the great massacre, the world was going to go back to limited conflicts subject to diplomatic resolution. In the future, wars would be shorter and less murderous, because they would be fought by "specialists":

> Good reasons lead us to think that a war waged in the future would have, to start with, only a distant relation to the hasty clash of mobilized masses. The era of great conquests is over. [. . .] We see how much a professional army, immediately ready to march anywhere,

> capable, thanks to motor vehicles, of going into action in a few hours, able to draw from its materiel all the effects of surprise and abrupt change that it can provide, designed, in short, *to obtain the most complete and fastest local result,* corresponds to the new political conditions. There is a terrible connection between the properties of speed, power, and concentration that modern equipment confers on a trained military elite, and states' tendency to limit the object of dispute in order to seize it as cheaply and quickly as possible.[81]

As we know, this prediction was brutally contradicted by events foreshadowed as early as 1936 by the Spanish Civil War, less than two years after the publication of de Gaulle's book. Not only did the mechanization of warfare increase its capacity for destruction, but ideology helped radicalize the rise to extremes that was supposed to decline after the paroxysm of 1914–1918. Nonetheless, this text testifies to a way of conceiving the relations between war and politics that makes de Gaulle the anti-Napoleon.

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AFTER A MIDDAY or evening meal in the Elysée palace, the General sometimes showed his guests the "Salon d'argent"[82] where Napoléon abdicated after Waterloo. Edgar Faure, to whom de Gaulle was showing this room, took from a pedestal table a facsimile of the act of abdication and began to read it: "Frenchmen, by beginning a war to support national independence . . ." He stopped after these first words. Pierre-Louis Blanc tells us: "Turning to de Gaulle, [he] added: 'Napoleon sought to obtain national independence by war; you, General, pursued the same goal, but in peace." This was said without any trace of sycophancy, with his well-known lisp, and with an ease in his remarks that few people showed when they were in de Gaulle's presence. The latter, amused, looked at his guest and replied with these simple words: "You know, dear Mr. President,[83] it's a question of means."[84]

It was, of course, a question of means. It has been said that the France of 1940 or 1958—these remains of a great people, as Bernanos called them[85]—was no longer the France of 1800, but had de Gaulle had the same means at his disposal it is unlikely that he would have used them in the same way as the Emperor did. When it is suggested that both of them sought to restore the French Europe that Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV had tried to impose on the powers and that the Sun King's successors had sold off cheaply, that is both true and false. True for de Gaulle, because after bringing defeated France back into the camp of the victors he had done his best to restore its international rank by assigning it a driving role in a European structure that, far from drowning French power in a supranational community, was on the contrary to attest to its particular mission on the continent.[86]

> So far as I am concerned, I have always [. . .] felt what the nations that people [Europe] have in common. All of them being of the same white race, of the same Christian origin, sharing the same way of life, interconnected since time immemorial by countless relations of thought, art, science, politics, and trade, it is in conformity with their nature that they should come to form a whole, having its own character and organization in the middle of the world. It is by virtue of this essence of Europe that the Roman emperors reigned there, that Charlemagne, Charles V, and Napoleon attempted to bring it together, that Hitler sought to impose on it his crushing domination. But how can we fail to observe that none of these federators were able to force the countries they subdued to give up being themselves? On the contrary, arbitrary centralization always provoked, as a rebound, the virulence of nationalities. I therefore think that at present, no more than in other periods, Europe cannot be unified by the fusion of peoples; rather, it can and must result from their systematic rapprochement. [. . .] My policy thus seeks the institution of the concert of European states [. . .]. Nothing prevents us from thinking, that on that basis, and especially if someday they [the European states] should be the object of the same threat, this development might lead to their confederation.[87]

A statement admirable for its lucidity, intelligence, and truth, which the General's successors, and first of all Pompidou, who made Britain—"our greatest hereditary enemy,"[88] de Gaulle said, more than Germany—enter the Common Market (1972), certainly did not use as their guide. De Gaulle thus bound together strands which, in the history of France, went back to the minister-cardinals—Richelieu, Mazarin, Fleury—and, even beyond, back to Sully. He was heir to the project that, long before him, had been that of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre and, more generally, of the French monarchy: guaranteeing the balance and peace in Europe not by a federalism that would deprive the entity thus created of any real ability to exercise its will, and to do so strongly, but rather by the coming together, around France, of all the middle-level powers concerned to protect themselves against the enterprises of those who aspired to universal monarchy.[89] Before the First World War, Maurras had eloquently described this project in his *Kiel et Tanger.* In this work he explained that France, even if it was no longer the France of the *Grand Siècle,* was not doomed to disappear and to experience the fate of Greece when it was faced with Rome. On the contrary, the rise of empires offered it an opportunity to play a decisive role by becoming the protector of independent nations.[90] Maurras rehabilitated the policy advocated by Vergennes when he said to Louis XIV: "Grouping around you the secondary states [that France] protects, their self-interest will guarantee it their alliance, and it will be the head of a defensive coalition strong enough to repel all ambitious challengers."[91] In this plea for the reestablishment of the Europe of the Treaties of Westphalia, as it were, the General did in fact find the subject of European politics that was his own: constituting a "Europe of states" that would draw strength from the threat to international security posed by the two great powers. Such a filiation does not suffice to make de Gaulle a full-fledged Maurrassian; it shows that, in the domain of international relations, he was, though so "Bainvillian," firmly rooted in the camp of the realists.[92]

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The case of Napoleon is more complex. On Saint Helena, he spoke at length about the great project he said was his: the foundation of a United States of Europe that would have federated states recomposed in accord with the principle of nationalities. Before establishing the great federative system he was thinking of, it was therefore necessary to undertake "the agglomeration, the concentration of the same geographic peoples that revolutions and politics have dissolved, fragmented."[93] Later on, the future Napoleon III presented this famous but belated declaration as one of the most fertile "Napoleonic ideas."[94] It is very true that the century inaugurated by his uncle was that of the rise of "nationalities." Thus Napoleon was seen as a prophet. But it was only in 1815, at the sunset of the Hundred Days, that this "federative pact" entered into his repertoire: "Our goal was then to organize a *grand European federative system,* which we had adopted as being in conformity with the spirit of the century, and favorable to the progress of civilization,"[95] he declared in the preamble to the Acte additionnel aux Constitutions de l'Empire of 22 April 1815. At that time he had good reasons for appealing to the European peoples and to the idea of a federation suggesting voluntary union and reciprocity of rights and obligations. France, once again, found itself under siege, and the returnee from the island of Elba was threatened by the most formidable coalition he had ever faced. He saw in this manifesto a chance, even if minimal, of weakening the coalition's solidarity, of introducing a germ of division between public opinion and the sovereigns which, even if it had little chance of producing effects, was not to be neglected. On Saint Helena, he was pursuing the same objective, though under very different conditions, when he made himself the misunderstood herald of a Europe of nationalities. At that time, national aspirations were beginning to seriously disturb the Old Continent, which the Congress of Vienna had brought back to the ideas of balance current before the French Revolution. By supporting this movement and claiming its paternity, even though it had developed in Spain, Germany, the Tyrol, and Hungary in reaction to French occupation, he allowed himself the satisfaction of a final vengeance against the kings who had defeated him, at the same time that he monopolized, as it were, posterity: the Europe of the future, which he sensed would be a Europe of nations, far from arising from his failure, would appear as the outcome of his prophetic designs.

In reality, if we except Italy, where Napoleon might in fact be considered as the father of its unity, his policy had nowhere tended toward "the agglomeration of peoples." On the contrary, he had fragmented them, not with the exclusive goal of cutting them up into fiefs to be distributed to his relatives and clients, but to nullify them politically. He has been accused, for example, of having strengthened Prussia at the time of the reorganization of Germany in 1801–1803. That is not entirely correct. He rounded out Prussian territory not only the better to deprive Berlin of its possessions in the Rhineland and thus distance Prussia from France, but also to decrease Austria's influence in Germany, while he interposed between Vienna and Berlin, and between Berlin and Paris, a series of vassal states subservient to France—Saxony, Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria, and later, after the Prussian defeat of 1806, the kingdom of Westphalia. His policy sought the domination of a strong France over a weak Europe. We can say that at this point, the way France behaved with regard to Germany, Italy, and Switzerland (the Act of Mediation, 1802) was in conformity with the French diplomatic tradition that sought to group mid-level powers around France in order to make continental Europe capable of resisting the two states that threatened it: Britain and Russia. After Czar Paul I's mediocre reign, Napoleon was convinced that Russia would return to its expansionist temptations that were directed on the one hand toward Eastern Europe, and on the other toward the Caucasus and Ottoman territories. In short, France was following its old policy, which sought to prevent any attempt to encircle it.

The establishment of such a system of alliances was based on a starting point regarding which the First Consul had explained his thinking in 1800.[96] The great danger seemed to be the powers' limited faith in the solidity of the treaties. There were two main reasons for that, the older of which went back to the middle of the preceding century, when Frederick II, tearing up the accords signed by Prussia, attacked Austrian Silesia (1740), inaugurating a policy of brigandage of which the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) and the partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, and 1795) were to become the most detestable symbols. It was then that the Europe of the treaties of Westphalia died. In addition to this first cause, the French Revolution had led to a genuine fracture in Europe "between old monarchies and an entirely new republic" that differed on everything: principles of legitimacy, institutions, and the leading groups' social origins, so that the customs governing international relations had been overturned by them. Dialogue between diplomats had become impossible. This situation struck Bonaparte at the time when, in Italy, he had been led to negotiate with emissaries of the pope, the grand duke of Tuscany, the king of Piedmont, and the emperor of Austria. These emissaries no longer spoke to one another because they no longer understood one another. It was therefore urgent to find a common language again. For that purpose, a different politics was required, both internal and external. Bonaparte discussed this again shortly afterward with the British minister Charles Fox, when the latter, taking advantage of the ephemeral Peace of Amiens, visited him in Paris.[97] He explained, in substance, that France had to take a step toward the old Europe by becoming a little less "revolutionary," and old Europe had to take a step toward France by becoming a little more "liberal": "To hope for more solidity and good faith in peace treaties, either the form of the governments surrounding us has to become more like ours, or our political institutions have to be a little more in harmony with theirs."[98] The formation of a meritocratic aristocracy with the creation of the Legion of Honor, the return to monarchical forms with the proclamation of the Empire, and the reestablishment of Catholicism with the Concordat were all moves in this direction. In this way it would be possible to resume with the chancelleries the use of the common language without which no durable peace was conceivable. As a man of the Enlightenment, Bonaparte thought that law, and in particular civil law, would be the instrument of this rapprochement. He believed that laws are not only the expression of existing social relationships, but also make it possible to cause a people's mores to develop. Thus Italy, conquered in 1796 and returned to France in 1800, had become a sort of laboratory in which the occupier sought to forge a new Italian identity that received the imprint of revolutionary ideas. Why wouldn't what worked on the Italian peninsula work on the scale of Europe as a whole? That was how the First Consul, emboldened by the successes he had continually won in all domains, gradually started down a hegemonic path that no longer had any relation to France's traditional diplomacy. Thus in 1803, a year before the establishment of the Empire, he told Miot de Melito, a close associate of his brother Joseph, that his intention was to extend French law to the whole continent—"as far as the Pillars of Hercules,"[99] he explained. This ambition, which now aimed at converting Europe to the Revolution, rather than moderating the Revolution to bring it closer to Europe, could be accomplished only through a series of conquests that would see French laws spread across the continent in the wake of his armies. Henceforth, it was no longer really a question of some sort of "federative pact," but rather of the formation of a Europe "placed under the direction of a greater France," indeed, "itself transformed into a very great France."[100] The new Caesar was thinking more about the first solution—the resurrection of the

Carolingian Empire—than about the second, which took its inspiration from the figure of universal monarchy. He spoke openly about this to Miot: the European states would be placed under the authority "of a single head," an emperor who had kings as his officers and "who would distribute kingdoms to his lieutenants, making one of them king of Italy, another king of Bavaria, another *landamann* [the chief magistrate of the Helvetic Confederation] of Switzerland, and still another the *stathouder* of Holland, all of them holding offices in the imperial household with the titles of Grand Cupbearer, Grand Stationer, Grand Huntsman, etc." From 1805 to 1807, until the Treaty of Tilsit, which established French hegemony over Europe, Napoleon did in fact head in this direction, creating out of Italy and Holland kingdoms just as the Revolution had created republics. The former's fate did not differ from the latter's. Just as the republics had never really been independent, the states federated around the French Empire were less allies than vassals enlisted, willingly or not, in the policy of the continental blockade decreed in Berlin in November 1806 to overcome Britain. But the magnitude of the sacrifices demanded of the vassal states doomed the Grand Empire. Its members constantly circumvented the rules that had been imposed on them and was destroying them. Thus the "new empire of the West"—Napoleon used the expression in 1806[101]—was destined to be transformed, little by little, into a "*very* great France" that would end up absorbing it altogether: the obese, 130-department France of 1810, extending into Holland, Germany, and Rome, prefigured that future development. Its frontiers would have expanded still more had the Empire lasted. This continually enlarged France was the product of circumstances and not the result of a plan. It was because the pope grumbled that Rome was incorporated into the Empire; it was because Louis Bonaparte refused to sacrifice Holland's interests to those of his brother that his kingdom was transformed into French departments, and perhaps Joseph's Spain, or at least its northern regions, would have finally met the same fate. The new Carolingian Empire was doomed to be transformed into a no less impossible universal monarchy. Edgar Quinet was not entirely wrong when he accused Napoleon of having been, without knowing it, "the testamentary executor of Dante's chimerical plans."[102]

It would be wrong to denounce the Emperor's "madness." To be sure, with every success the field of the possible grew larger in his mind, and there as elsewhere 1805 marked a turning point; but the demands of the war with Britain played an equally important role in this drift toward an increasingly strict domination of the continent. Lacking a navy commensurate with his ambitions, Napoleon was, as he said to his brother Louis, doomed to "conquer the sea by power on land," or, in Bainville's formula, to "respond to closure of the sea by closure of the land."[103] The continental blockade was less the instrument of a European policy than an act of war. The most self-willed of our historical actors was not always the freest in his initiatives. There is a certain fatality in his story. As he was later to admit to Las Cases, "The truth is that I have never been master of my movements; I have never been entirely myself. I had plans: but I never had the freedom to carry out any of them . . . I have always been governed by circumstances. [. . .] I was not the master of my acts, because I was not mad enough to try to twist events to my system: on the contrary, I adapted my system to the events."[104] Basically, Napoleon was too weak—for lack of a navy—to be able to succeed where Richelieu and Mazarin had succeeded: the establishment of a new European balance. The splendor of the Grande Armée was an illusion: Napoleon definitively lost the Battle of Trafalgar a few weeks before winning, at Austerlitz, his most brilliant victory. The end, which was ineluctable, was henceforth only a question of time. One failure, in Russia, sufficed to make the "universal monarchy" collapse like a house of cards.

Here again, any comparison with de Gaulle would be pointless. Napoleon did not become the heir of Mazarin or Vergennes. General de Gaulle, on the other hand, was the ultimate representative of that diplomatic tradition—of which the politics of the "empty chair" in 1965[105] and the exit from NATO in 1966 remain the symbols.

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NAPOLEON LACKED NOT only the sense of measure, but also, de Gaulle said, "the vocation of France": "He loved the French army because at the time and under his command, it was the best. But I think he saw his destiny, even on Saint Helena, as that of an extraordinary individual. However, an individual is not very important compared to a people."[106]

But the moment when Bonaparte had emerged—the general dissolution to which the period of the Directory had led—was precisely one of those in which an individual can seize power over a people. The wasting disease from which France was suffering—temporarily—ensured his success. Taine understood this.[107] The terrain was favorable. Bonaparte's thought was in people's minds even before he had taken power. Mme de Staël, referring to 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799) when, precisely, she arrived in Paris from Switzerland, noted this: "It was the first time since the Revolution that one heard everyone mention a proper name. Up to that point people said: The Constituent Assembly did this or that, the people, the Convention; now, all they talk about is this man who was to put himself in the place of everyone, and make the human species anonymous by seizing celebrity for himself alone and by preventing any existing being from ever being able to acquire any."[108]

His success was all the more complete because he was the most "disaffiliated" of men: born in Corsica to a family that saw itself as above all Italian, he did not speak a word of French when at the age of nine he arrived on the continent to pursue his education. Returning to his island at the age of seventeen, he no longer understood his native language, but that does not mean that he became foreign to his native island. He proudly wore the uniform of a royal officer cadet while thinking only of killing French troops and freeing his country from France's yoke. He despised his father, who had gone over to the side of the "invaders," and dreamed of succeeding Paoli. Having doubts—unjustified—about the identity of his biological father, Napoleon was, as bastards sometimes are, free of any attachment, convinced that he was his own son (as he was to say later when people invented more or less fictitious genealogies for him), that he was the child of his victories and of no one else. In spite of himself, he was finally cast onto the continent, finding there a scope of action on a scale proportional to his genius, but without contracting the slightest attachment to the French or the passions that troubled them. When asked which country was his homeland, he remained silent for a moment, then said "Italy," actually preferring it to France but secretly preferring Egypt to all others because, as he was to tell Mme de Rémusat, in that "land of poetry," "setting off on an elephant, a turban on his head and a new Koran in his hand," he would have been "freed of the restraint of a burdensome civilization."[109] He sometimes said that he had missed his chance at Acre, where his defeat forced him henceforth to envisage his life solely in "the molehill of Europe." We must not be deceived by the statement in his last will and testament: "I desire my ashes to be buried on the banks of the Seine, amid the French people I have loved so much."

In reality, he was himself everywhere because, Taine said, he belonged nowhere, not in any place or century.[110] The encounter between Napoleon and France was accidental. He had long dreamed of fulfilling his destiny against it, or elsewhere. This peculiar disposition explains the indulgence and moderation he showed once he was in power, the ability to forget a past that was not his own and in no way concerned him, the power to make republicans *and* royalists come to him, and, by so doing, to build a bridge between the two Frances and their two histories that the Revolution had divided, the power to close, for a time, the French fracture. De Gaulle was endowed with the same power. In Napoleon and de Gaulle, the two divided Frances cohabited: the France of the republic and that of the monarchy, the blue and the white. That is the way in which they are comparable, in the power that they were also given to "transcend French quarrels, to be simultaneously of the right and of the left, to unite Old Regime France and post-revolutionary France."[111] Napoleon was better prepared to do this than de Gaulle was. The General had to put more will and effort into the task because if there was one person about whom it can be said that he is *somewhere,* it is certainly he. In sum, if Napoleon was the least French of Frenchmen, de Gaulle was, on the contrary, the most French of Frenchmen. It is very simple, Napoleon can be imagined everywhere, in Italy as in France, in Egypt and even in America if, in 1815, he had listened to his brother Joseph and taken refuge in the New World. De Gaulle, on the other hand, could not easily be moved around. He did not feel comfortable outside France. France was in his blood, every drop of which testified to his origins. It is this Charles "of France," the incarnation of traditions, of a culture, a language, a history—in short, of a civilization, that we see living on in the pages of his son Philippe's memoirs. *My Father, Charles de Gaulle* has been roundly criticized; the son is accused of having "rightified" (Jean Lacouture) or "Pétainized" (Pierre Nora) his father, and in any case, of having tried to imprison him in a mythical construct that sometimes went far beyond the myth the General himself built (Eric Roussel).[112] That is unfair. It is true that the son watches over his father's statue and rejects any suspicions as well as any accusations. According to him, the General always acted as well as he could, under the circumstances, and as closely as possible in accord with the nation's interests. There are no defects in his armor, no base sentiments, no failures. How can we imagine that de Gaulle was able, in a moment of adversity, to consider suicide? How can we even suppose that he had nothing whatever to do with the assassination of Darlan in late 1942 or the conspiracies in Algiers in 1958, or that he did not do all he could to prevent the terrible massacres perpetrated by the victorious Algerian National Liberation Front after the Evian accords were signed in 1962? But nonetheless, this book lacks neither merit nor interest. It is the homage paid by a son to a father of whom it was certainly not easy to be the son; it is, above all, a portrait that in fact contradicts many received ideas. It shows how much the General's personality was independent of his action. I find Jean Lacouture's criticism strange when he writes: "Here, every trace of red is erased from a figure we thought was red, white, and blue." So what? Did de Gaulle have to be a republican in order to twice reestablish the republic? Did Napoleon, who, from the creation of the prefectoral system to the Civil Code, inscribed the principles of the Revolution in the marble of institutions and laws, have to be a revolutionary to achieve this? He wasn't a revolutionary. He hated pretty much everything that the Revolution represented, from equality to freedom, including the sovereignty of the people. If he had been obliged to follow his inclinations, he would have ended up in the camp of the royalists and émigrés. He was nostalgic for a world, that of the Old Regime, that he had not known. He admired its splendor, luxury, distinction, manners, politeness, and the privileges it granted to birth. . . . If his sentiments led him toward the old France, political reason kept him on the side of the new France that had raised him on high. The calculation was quickly made: the king's party had little to offer him compared to that of 1792; on the one hand, the office of royal furrier; on the other, a crown. There could be no comparison. He never hesitated, lending a hand to the destruction of a world that he was fond of and from which he liked to say he was descended. The protector of those who purchased the national goods confiscated from clerics and nobles was proud of his family's nobility. "We nobles . . ." he said to his interlocutors, as if he didn't know that this nobility was recent—it went back to the early 1770s—and that it was, to say the least, doubtful, based on certificates that his father had had made in Italy. A strange vanity of the great man who thought thereby to magnify himself, when his victories sufficed to make him peerless. It was an upstart's ridiculous fancy, a rather touching one, as touching as the words he whispered to his brother Joseph during the coronation ceremony in Notre-Dame in 1804: "If only our father could see us now."

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De Gaulle can be summed up in three words: noble, Catholic, soldier. No better summary of French history can be imagined. He seldom mentioned, at least in public, the noble origins that made him, the leader of a republic, an "aristo." He had first been the leader of Free France, and then president of the Republic, never the representative of a social class. But he was proud of these ancestors who, since at least the thirteenth century, had served the king, some of them on battlefields, others in law courts or in administrative offices. A de Gaulle had fought at Azincourt, another sat on the King's Council. The nobility of the sword, based on bloodshed, associated with the nobility of the robe, which was based on service to the state. The devotion to the res publica was an old story in the family. This long ancestral lineage—very minor nobility, rarely well-off, deepened the personal relation that the General maintained with the history of France.[113] In the life of great men, nothing seems fortuitous; predestination is dominant. Didn't Napoleon bear a first name that belonged only to him? It has to be admitted: when one's name is de Gaulle—often spelled, before the French Revolution, "de Gaule"—it must be difficult not to feel oneself invested with a particular responsibility. But everything, even the choices that appear to be the least premeditated or calculated, seems to deliver a message. Take La Boisserie, purchased in 1934 to allow little Anne to play outside without being seen and without bothering the neighbors; but from the windows of his study, the General could contemplate a landscape that seems to have been created for him. These "long slopes descending toward the valley of the Aube" and "the heights opposite them," the dark, austere forests that ripple toward "the wild bottom land" are, as it were, saturated with history:[114] "In this region where Champagne, Lorraine, and Burgundy meet, the sky streams with glories and griefs, and earth is full of blood and dead bodies. Here is the line of the great Roman road that went from Langres to Strasbourg. Here are the Catalaunian Plains. Here are the Emperor's battlefields. Here is the route of the invasions, laying bare the underpinnings of the homeland opened up after the immense wooded frontier lands of Gaul were cleared.[115] In the forests of Les Dhuits, Clairvaux, Le Heu, Blinfeix, and La Chapelle, through which he liked to walk, alone, enjoying their silence and "Merovingian solitude,"[116] it was once again the "Gallic forest," the eternal France, the product of its geography, that he loved.[117]

From his family ancestry to the landscapes he was fond of, everything spoke to him about France and its millennial history. The same goes for religion. Some people say that he lacked religious convictions, having only an "apparent faith,"[118] while others say that he was a Christian by tradition and upbringing, but was not in the least tormented by the mysteries of religion. It would be astonishing if being born in a devout family and having received all his education from priests had left no mark on him. In his family, believing was as natural as breathing. Except when it was impossible, he never failed to attend Mass, never forgot to go to confession, and so far as the rites were concerned, it cannot be said that he joyfully welcomed innovations, whether celebrating the Mass in French or infringements of canon law in the course of the service. "Progressive priests" were not much to his taste; and they didn't much care for him, either: his relations with the Church of France were often cool, and sometimes tense.

The birth of his daughter Anne in 1928 confirmed his faith: "She is an instance of God's grace in my life," he is supposed to have told his regiment's chaplain in 1940. "She keeps me secure in the belief that I am obeying God's sovereign will."[119] In his view, religion was a private matter, like joys and sorrows, mourning or manifestations of tenderness. It concerned no one (except those close to him, with whom he willing spoke about it).[120] De Gaulle would not approve of the way people now weep, cry out in joy, scream, laugh loudly, show off, or publicly disclose their inmost feelings and thoughts. Thus his deep religious faith—which he showed, for example, when, sheltered from other people's eyes and from photographers, he tried to get Anne, "his strength and his joy," as he called her, to join her little hands, since she could not say a prayer—was expressed only rarely in a letter or in a few words uttered in the course of a conversation.[121] In the 1920s, he had been close to the defenders of a social Catholicism that was part of the family tradition. Much has been written about his ties with Marc Sangnier's "Sillon," a Catholic socialist movement, but he also frequented the "popularist" movement, whose project was, according to Philippe Portier, "to remake the Republic on Christian foundations."[122] Closely associated with Francisque Gay and Georges Bidault, and then later with Maurice Schumann, this movement had much in common with the leaders of the Popular Republican Movement (Mouvement républicain populaire, MRP) founded in 1944. De Gaulle had the same mistrust of economic liberalism and of socialism, and was engaged in the same quest for a third way that would reconcile free enterprise and social justice. At that time, the MRP was considered "the party of loyalty," less because of its members' social convictions than because many of them, starting with Schumann and Bidault, had been in the Resistance. The creation of the Rally of the French People (RPF) in 1947 put an end to the idyll. De Gaulle never pardoned the MRP's compromises with the regime,[123] while the MRP rejected the "neo-Boulangism" of aggressive Gaullism, as well as the General's constitutional theses and his positions on Europe, which it considered overly cautious. Ultimately, the way in which de Gaulle was Christian—and he was a Christian, deeply and sincerely—was in any case unable to outweigh his attachment to his country. For him, Catholicism and patriotism were one and the same, but had he been forced to choose between them, his choice was quickly made: "I, too, like you, adore only God," he wrote one day to Maurice Clavel. "But I too, like you, love France more than anything."[124]

André Malraux acknowledged always finding it difficult to "grasp" the General's religious faith: "The Church is part of his life, but he says to the pope: And now, Holy Father, what if we spoke about France? He referred very little to God, and not at all in his last will and testament. He never mentioned Christ." There is a reason for that, intermingling modesty and pride: "I know his silence on a few important subjects, a silence arising from an invulnerable modesty and a great deal of pride, if we can call pride this feeling: that concerns only me." Another reason was the depth of his religious faith, which discouraged him from mentioning it: "His faith is not a question, it's a given, like France." However, Malraux adds, "he spoke more willingly about France than about God."[125] God is his concern, France is everyone's. His salvation is his own, while that of the homeland is implicit in the commitment he made in 1940 in front of the French people.

If religion occupied, in a way, a central place in his public life, that was because he was convinced that France and Christianity were inseparable: didn't the Church make France, at least as much as the Capetians did? And a central place, also because he sought, at least until the referendum lost in 1969, to impose his ideas regarding the proper means of founding a new social organicism—the association of capital and labor later renamed "participation"—at equal distances from socialist collectivism and free market anomie. But in the same way as Richelieu, Mazarin, Louis XIV, or Napoleon had never subordinated the state's interests to those of religion, not hesitating to ally themselves, if necessary, with the Devil—the Ottoman sultan or Protestant Sweden—the better to defend the kingdom's vital interests and increase its power, religion never dictated the General's political choices: France first, France alone, but all of France in the profound unity of its history.[126] His religion was France, one, eternal, which patriotic faith had saved in its dark times. To that faith France owed its survival of invasions, civil wars, and the follies of an eighteenth century he didn't much like and of a French Revolution whose crimes he detested: his France was that of Turenne and Carnot, combining defense of the homeland's sacred soil, the grandeur of the state, and God's special protection for "the Church's eldest daughter." There was in him an element of Joseph de Maistre, regarding the divine election of France; an element of Louis XIV, the Louis XIV of the *Memoirs,* regarding his religion of the state; and an element of Barrès, the Barrès of *La Colline inspirée* and *Les Déracinés,* regarding his faith in the continuity and indivisibility of the nation's history.

Here we will not refer to the portrait of this man to whom slovenliness in appearance or in feelings was alien, who detested as much exhibiting himself—we know what a trial it was for him, and for Yvonne, when

Churchill forced them to pose for photographers in 1941[127]—as he did revealing his feelings, who liked neither ostentation nor luxury, who respected money but did not glorify it, who had a sense of economy, work well done, and saving, courteous under all circumstances, especially with the humble or subaltern, scrupulously honest, and who, finally, never deviated from respect for conventions, seeking to be, as he put it, "worthy" in everything, remarks, manners, thought, and action. Wasn't he a little dismayed that he had to reside in the Elysée, that "debauched palace" that had sheltered the love affairs of Mme de Pompadour, Pauline Bonaparte, and Mme Steinheil?[128] Besides, we glimpse the de Gaulle family's home life only by hearsay. Has anyone ever heard a recording of his wife's voice? What about his friends? Do we know them, do we even know if he had any? He certainly felt friendship, affection along with respect, and even admiration for Leclerc or Thierry d'Argenlieu, but were they "friends"? In the letters he sent to the latter, who had returned to monastic life after the war, he called him "my dear friend," a formula used for many other correspondents who were not, strictly speaking, close friends. We sense a particular attachment, but restraint prevails. De Gaulle was modest about his feelings, and if there really was friendship, it was never expressed effusively.[129] Malraux rightly notes that although it is possible to approach a person humanly "through the slippers," no one, except perhaps his wife, ever saw the General's.[130] The boundary between the public figure and the private man was impermeable. He let his person be seen, not his *self*.[131] Today, such a man would be a phenomenon. In his time, this voluntary isolation was already not so common. He was heir to the pre-1914 bourgeoisie about which Jacques Bainville said that it was more than a social class: "A way of life and a way of thinking."[132] Watching him live in the pages written by his son Philippe, we can gauge everything that distinguished him and recalled the well-ordered universe of that "world of yesterday," which Stefan Zweig remembered with nostalgia before committing suicide, the world that the First World War had broken before the Second destroyed it.[133]

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THE SENSE OF "MEASURE," which the General did not dissociate from true "grandeur," has much to do with the person's social, historical, and religious rootedness. I fully subscribe to these lines by Maurice Agulhon regarding the appeal of 18 June: “He confounds indissolubly two acts of faith [. . .] one, properly national—France cannot perish, *Providence* always ends up finding a way out for it; the other, which is humanistic and moral—Liberty will win out over Nazism. [. . .] In that way [through this twofold act of faith], the *Appel* is a statesman’s vision and a free man’s vision.”[134] In the end, de Gaulle is a marriage between a providentialist idea of history, a conservative conception of society, and a rational attachment to modern political ideas; a nationalist whose exclusive fidelity to the nation is tempered by liberal and Christian values, a republican who has a moderate love for the republic and is ready, in the event it is necessary, to oppose legitimacy—and first of all his own, identified providentially with France—to a failing legality. There is no testimony to this more convincing than the speech he gave in Bayeux on 16 June 1946, which has often been interpreted as an all-out attack on democracy, whereas it is in fact a plea in favor of a constitutional revision that would put an end to the disorders provoked in the state by the weak institutions of the parliamentary regime. Moreover, it includes these lines directed against dictatorship, a false remedy for the crises of the body politic, lines that also ring like a condemnation of the two Empires and of the two Napoleons:

> What is dictatorship, if not a great adventure? To be sure, its beginnings seem advantageous. Amid the enthusiasm of some people and the resignation of others, in the rigor of the order it imposes, thanks to a striking setting and one-sided propaganda, at first it traverses a phase of efficiency that contrasts with the anarchy that had preceded it. But it is the destiny of dictatorship to exaggerate its enterprises. As impatience with the constraints and nostalgia for freedom emerges among citizens, the latter has to offer them increasingly extensive successes in compensation. The nation becomes a machine that the master forces to accelerate madly. Whether it is a matter of domestic or foreign designs, the goals, risks, and efforts gradually exceed any measure. At every step, more and more obstacles appear. Finally, the mainspring breaks, and the grandiose edifice collapses [in 1815, in 1870] in disaster and bloodshed. The nation finds itself broken, inferior to what it was before the adventure began.[135]

Couldn't any republican who scorns the two Napoleons have written these lines? De Gaulle was particularly convinced that the will—and he, too, had a heroic conception of life, the feeling of his superiority and his destiny—cannot completely escape the domination of circumstances and traditions; that, precisely, not *everything* is possible. He did not believe—and it is in this that he is wholly different from Napoleon, who was the contemporary and the product of the French Revolution—in either the unlimited efficacy of the will (even if inspired by genius), or, as Bainville would say, "indefinite possibilities": he did not believe in the revolutionary myth of the tabula rasa and the blank page. God, the homeland, France, with which he identified himself, constituted for him a "super-ego" that was little inclined toward adventures.[136] That is precisely what Napoleon lacked, for the reasons already given: de Gaulle is great because of this "super-ego," Napoleon is great despite its absence. Mauriac exaggerates when he contrasts a wholly moderate de Gaulle who never had any idea other "than to do what he could to see to it that the sublime history continued," with a Napoleon identified with his deplorable family and driven by an "ignoble hunger."[137] Could de Gaulle have inspired Balzac's character Rastignac? The answer is obviously no, but Mauriac forgets that Napoleon was not similar to the Rastignacs who did in fact follow him. The world of the Rastignacs is a world from which glory has withdrawn, it is the post-epic world, the world that Chateaubriand, at the end of his history of Napoleon, apologized for feeling compelled to discuss:

> To move from Bonaparte and the Empire to what followed them is to fall from reality into nullity, from the summit of a mountain into an abyss. Didn't everything come to an end with Napoleon? [. . .] What other figure can interest us? Who and what can be discussed, after such a man? [. . .] How could Louis XVIII be named in place of the emperor? I blush to think that at the present time I have to whine about a bunch of tiny creatures, one of whom I am, the dubious, nocturnal beings that we were on a stage from which the broad sun had disappeared.[138]

In the register of comparisons, that between de Gaulle and Napoleon wins out. It has to be admitted that it is tempting. In particular, they both governed twice (1799 and 1815; 1944 and 1958), and both presided over a great, reforming Consulate (1799–1804 and 1958–1962); they shared the solitude of power and the poetics of exile, in which they were to sublimate their fall by writing, and thus allow myth to triumph over the dark legend. The parallel with Joan of Arc is rarer, although it is not without pertinence. An Australian political scientist, John Kane, has suggested another comparison: with Abraham Lincoln. Although the two men are in fact dissimilar in many respects, from social origin to religious convictions and from training for a political role—Lincoln was born into a family of humble farmers, while de Gaulle was born into a bourgeois family, Lincoln became a prosperous lawyer and a skillful politician—and although intellectually it is difficult to place Lincoln at the same level as de Gaulle, both of them believed in their predestination and saw themselves as instruments of destiny. Both were led beyond a point they did not originally intend to pass, since Lincoln, opposing any extension of the slave system, did not reject the notion that the slave states could keep their slaves, precisely by virtue of the existing laws, and it was only later that he came to consider complete abolition, just as de Gaulle only gradually rallied to the idea of restoring the republican system. Both of them changed their minds as a result of the necessities of war, the war against the South's secession in one case, and the war against Vichy in the other. Both of them, after being the protagonists in a civil war, restored their country's unity, and Lincoln would have tried, had he lived, to heal the wounds inflicted by the War of Secession by means of a magnanimous policy toward the defeated, whereas de Gaulle, once the first phase of vengeance was over, also sought to heal the wounds of the Occupation, by means of a judicious mixture of oblivion and shaming punishments.[139] Finally, these two immense orators, even though their styles were very different, made it a point of honor—and that is their common grandeur—never to separate their cause from the one that they had embraced: for Lincoln, the preservation of the American Constitution, both in letter and in spirit, and for de Gaulle, France's honor.[140]

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THE TWO STORIES of the Emperor and the General join at one point and only one in their respective careers: 18 Brumaire and 13 May, and the few years that followed. From the provisional Consulate to the period during which de Gaulle was the Fourth Republic's last head of government, and from the first years of the Consulate—up to the resumption of the war with Britain in the spring of 1803—to the first years of the Fifth Republic, the two sequences follow similar courses, combining a recasting of institutions and of the state, a necessary reform, monetary reform, economic recovery, and pacification. Since I have just cited Mauriac, let us remain with him. Although he placed de Gaulle higher than Napoleon, at least from the moral point of view, he placed the Consulate, "that radiant moment in our history," and the Fifth Republic on the same level: "By an incredible series of circumstances, here was that consular republic again, and for the first time since Bonaparte, it substituted for the headless woman [the expression is borrowed from Maurras] who presided over so many massacres, so many shameful events and disasters, a republic that has a man's head, with a brain and a heart."[141]

We will not return here to the way in which Bonaparte seized a power that was in escheat in November 1799, or to General de Gaulle's return to power. I have already discussed these subjects in the first chapter of this book.[142]

On the evening of 19 Brumaire, the second day of the coup d'état, opponents had been dispersed by Murat's grenadiers, the deputies who were still in Saint-Cloud—few in number, they were deliberating under the "protection" of the army—adopted a law, dated 19 Brumaire Year VII (10 November 1799) that was to serve as a provisional charter for the new regime. Formally, nothing, or almost nothing, changed: the authority that had been conferred by the Constitution of Year III since 1795 on five directors was put in the hands of three consuls, and the powers of the two legislative councils, the Cinq-Cents and the Anciens—the equivalents of the Chambre des députés and the Sénat—were delegated to two "legislative commissions" consisting of twenty-five members each, chosen among currently serving deputies. The chambers were not dissolved but instead adjourned for five months. Of course, these were merely linguistic precautions to provide the semblance of a legal basis for the transition from the regime of the Directory to the Consulate that was going to emerge from the coup d'état. Of the sixteen articles of this law, only two were truly important: the third, which granted the three consuls—at that time, Bonaparte, Sieyès, and Roger Ducos—"the plenitude of directorial power" and entrusted them "specially to organize order in all parts of the administration, to restore domestic tranquility, and to procure an honorable and solid peace"; and the thirteenth, which, after the two legislative commissions had been assigned to "prepare the changes to be made in the organic dispositions of the Constitution," authorized the executive to "present to them his views on this subject." In other words, the consuls obtained, on the one hand, full powers, and on the other hand, the right to interfere and, in reality, to undertake a "revision" of the Constitution.[143]

On 29 May 1958, General de Gaulle consulted President Coty regarding the conditions of his return to power before agreeing to accept the procedure of parliamentary investiture. It must not have been easy for him to agree to become head of the government of a Republic whose institutions he had never ceased to denounce for the past twelve years, and moreover, to be installed in this office by a parliament controlled by political parties he held in contempt. Having been assured that he would have a majority—can one imagine de Gaulle failing?—he appeared before the National Assembly on 1 June and, after delivering the shortest speech ever heard during a ceremony of investiture—less than eight minutes—he left the Assembly without waiting to hear the result of the vote or to listen to the speeches of a handful of opponents—Duclos, Mendès, and Mitterrand—who had to speak before the empty bench of the government. A scene that was assuredly humiliating, as was the one the following day, when de Gaulle, this time more loquacious—"in order to surround with good grace the final moments of the regime's last Assembly"[144]—mounted the podium again to demand full powers, a six-month suspension of the parliamentary assemblies of the Fourth Republic, and the approval of the law that regulated the procedure for the constitutional revision. The planned Constitution, which would ultimately be subject to approval by the people, was to be prepared by the government, duly mandated, after receiving the opinion of an advisory committee of which at least two-thirds of the members would be chosen by the chambers among members of the parliament.[145] The same law of 3 June stated several principles from which the constitutive power could not deviate: universal suffrage; the separation of powers; the government's responsibility to the parliament; the independence of the judicial branch; respect for the freedoms asserted by the preamble to the Constitution of 1946 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789; plus a proviso regarding the organization of the relations between the Republic and the peoples that are "associated" with it. These limitations on the freedom of the Constitutive Assembly remind us of those that had been similarly imposed on the consuls by the law of 19 Brumaire: the latter stipulated that "changes [made to the Constitution] can have as their goal only to consolidate, guarantee, and inviolably consecrate the sovereignty of the French people, the Republic one and indivisible, the representative system, the separation of powers, liberty, equality, security, and property."

It cannot be said that there was a tradition in this domain. In 1791, the first French Constitution had resulted from the shaping—and the revision, already—of various laws organizing the powers and their relations that the Constitutive Assembly, which had issued from the Estates General of 1789, had approved over the past two years. It was the same procedure that was adopted again after 1870 and that led to the laws of 1875 that founded the Third Republic, whose "Constitution" was not presented to the people for its approval, any more than that of 1791 had been.[146] The national Convention, which had borrowed its name from the convention in Philadelphia that had written the American constitution of 1787, had on the contrary been specially mandated to reform the institutions of 1791, which had become null and void after the fall of the king. The Convention wrote two texts, in 1793 and 1795, both of which were subjected to a popular referendum, and it was that procedure that inspired the adoption of the Constitutions of 1848 and 1946.

The Constitution of 1958 was based on a quite different model, that of the "authoritarian" constitutions drawn up without the assistance of the Parliament, or after the latter had authorized the executive to make whatever changes it deemed necessary. Nonetheless, the elaboration of the 1958 text cannot really be compared with that of 1799. In 1958, the committee headed by Michel Debré that drew up the new Constitution took its role seriously, and in fact time has proven that its work was well done. The same cannot be said about the new Constitution that was adopted following the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire, whose raison d'être was less to construct a solid edifice than to settle the question as to who, Bonaparte or Sieyès—the latter representing the interests of the conservative republicans who had supported the coup d'état—would hold the first rank. The outcome of this battle was hardly in doubt, but Sieyès thought he could fetter Bonaparte by means of a constitutional plan he had cooked up that, though it gave the general the first place, granted him powers that were mainly honorific. There were disputes and threats. Bonaparte declared that he would not become a "cochon à l'engrais" (a pig being fattened up for slaughter), and, in early December, he took matters in hand. He brought together an informal group at his home, contrasted the text Sieyès had proposed with another he had had Daunou draw up and, setting himself up as arbiter and Grand Elector, he directed the composition of the Constitution, putting into it everything that would increase his power and eliminating anything that might subject him to any kind of supervision. Then he had himself named First Consul and, since the play-acting had gone on long enough, he decided that the Constitution would go into effect without waiting for the results of the plebiscite! At no time had the provisions of the law of 19 Brumaire been respected. When people were asked how the new Constitution differed from the preceding one, the reply was always the same: "There's Bonaparte!"[147] The rest was of secondary importance, and provisional.

In 1958, procedure was respected from start to finish, even if things were conducted quickly: on 14 July the preliminary draft was submitted to the Council of Ministers headed by de Gaulle, then presented to the advisory committee (twenty-six members of parliament and thirteen outsiders), which rendered its opinion in mid-August. The text, from which the government eliminated most of the advisory committee's amendments, was sent to the Council of State before finally coming before the Council of Ministers which, having approved it on 4 September, decided that the referendum would be held on 29 September. Less than three months had been enough.[148]

If we limit ourselves to the formal aspects of the procedure, it is in fact the episode of 1799 that is related to the constitutional procedure of 1958, far more than the ones that presided over the changes introduced in 1802 (the Consulate for life), 1804 (the hereditary Empire), and 1815 (a kind of draft of the "liberal" empire in which Napoleon, having returned from the island of Elba, shared power with the representatives of the nation), or to the one that was used to adopt the Constitution of 14 January 1852 that put an end to the Second Republic and served as a prelude to the reestablishment of the Empire.[149]

Whether or not it was similar to the events of 1799, the result was not very different: the members of parliament had little part in the creation of the new institutions, assemblies were permanently weakened, politically and constitutionally, the government was invested with the power to conceive and conduct both domestic and international policy. François Mitterrand was not mistaken when, after General de Gaulle was granted full powers, he said to his friend Roland Dumas: "We'll be sidelined for ten years. We'll have to find something to do. We'll read beautiful poetry, listen to beautiful music. In short, we'll live!"[150]

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THE SEVEN MONTHS following General de Gaulle's investiture were decisive. Nominally head of government, and not head of state, he imposed his conception of executive power and his way of governing:

> In the sphere of executive power, it is thus the president who must have priority, both officially and in reality; he is the one who rules and who governs, the one who knows and decides. It is a true *restoration* of the status of the president as the latter was understood around 1860–1870 [. . .], as a substitute for the royal monarch and as the national arbiter [. . .]. Whereas in the republican tradition the only way to endow the executive with strong powers was to agree to constantly confirm them before the Assembly, [. . .] with de Gaulle the contrary was the case. A power becomes determinative and structuring insofar as it is free and independent of the assemblies. Thus, with de Gaulle, the notion of "power" is increasingly detached from its original meaning connected with the word "executive"; it is no longer synonymous with "servitude" and it is emancipated from the subaltern role in which governmental power had been imprisoned (supervising and ensuring the execution of laws). It is once again

> inhabited by a substantial, positive power: executive power does not exist as a concession or as an extension of the parliament's sovereignty; it exists as such and with its own legitimacy.[151]

This was, compared with the Fourth Republic's institutions, a Copernican movement comparable to the one to which the advent of the Consulate had subjected the Directory's institutions, and of the same order. Until 1799, decisions were made at all levels after the collective deliberation required by the principle of popular sovereignty, which was expected to produce a result that was more just, more enlightened, and based on a larger consensus than if the ruling had been handed down from on high without consultation. Execution appeared as a secondary question that was left up to magistrates who were closely supervised and responsible to the representatives of the nation, who occupied the first rank in the institutions because they were held to emanate directly from the people. Bonaparte's accession to power had upset this system. Far from separating legislation and execution, the new constitution put them in the same hands, those of the government and its head. Not only did the executive consider itself authorized to intervene in the shaping of laws, it could also propose them; since the executive branch was now entrusted with applying the laws, no one could know the country's interests and needs better than it did. In 1958, de Gaulle imposed the same revolution on the parliamentary regime.

I have studied elsewhere the First Consul's methods of governing: his prodigious capacity for work and his astonishing ability to concentrate, his exceptional memory, the equal attention given to both great and small things, monitoring the execution of decisions made and auditing accounts—preferably at night, during hours of sleeplessness—diligently studying and informing himself in order to understand the issues, preferring specialists in the questions involved, and having difficulty getting used to new people, the little obsessions of this man of habit who liked to always find his files in the same place, the predilection for the Council of State, which was his true parliament, perhaps because he had chosen its members and because he knew he would find there legal technicians rather than orators and party men, ministers reduced for the most part to the rank of civil servants, the strict separation between deliberations—though they were not true deliberations, but rather informational meetings—and decision-making, which was for him alone. Moreover, the ministers were never immediately informed of decisions that had been made, but always later, through the intermediary of state secretary Maret.[152] De Gaulle's way of governing could be described in almost the same terms. In Pierre-Louis Blanc's memoirs, there are passages that seem to be about Napoleon: on the care the General took to inform himself and the monopoly he subsequently had on decision-making, on his mastery of governmental work, on his impressive ability to concentrate, on the aptitude he had for always picking out what was essential in a file or a discussion. Blanc writes:

> The superiority of his mind allowed him to exercise over the members of the government an intellectual ascendancy that never weakened. [. . .] He dominated them to the point of fascination. Quite simply because he was superior to them in his understanding of problems, no matter how technical they might be, in his ability to direct discussions, and in his ability to synthesize. [. . .] He had mastered the question, knew what he wanted, and committed himself resolutely. His mind advanced smoothly from analysis to synthesis. In a few sentences, he reduced questions to the essential points, [. . .] then made a decision.[153]

To this must be added the art of judging people and choosing collaborators: in Napoleon's case, the minister of Finance, Gaudin, Berthier, Decrès, Cretet, Cambacérès, Mollien, Clarke, and Portalis; in de Gaulle's case, Pompidou, Michel Debré, Couve de Murville, Giscard d'Estaing, Malraux, Peyrefitte, Edgar Faure, and Louis Joxe. Was there, in both cases, a concentration of talents as exceptional as it was inexplicable? It is hard to see why that would be. The explanation has to do rather with the existence of a leader whose authority and charisma attracted talents, and whose judgment was capable of discerning them. It was one of those periods when the idea spreads that finally, after years of paralysis and impotence, the time has come to undertake reforms with a good chance of succeeding, thanks to the existence of a government that is "capable, *mirabile dictu*! of conceiving, foreseeing, and acting."[154] Thus Gaudin, Napoleon's minister of Finance, says in his memoirs that under the Directory, which he considered unstable and unworthy of his trust, he had repeatedly refused to exercise that responsibility; but with Bonaparte's accession to power, he felt that an era of political stability was beginning that would make it possible finally to take the steps that had previously been deferred because of the prevailing turbulence.[155] Both Napoleon and de Gaulle knew not only how to surround themselves with the best, but also how to get the best out of them by leaving them a considerable freedom of action while at the same time keeping them on the margins. Sustained by the conviction that they were serving the country and by the admiration they had for their leader, they surpassed themselves. After the General's death, under Pompidou, Michel Debré, who had played a major role when the Fifth Republic was being born, became a rather ordinary politician. De Gaulle had, so to speak, caused Debré to rise above himself.

Never were so many reforms successfully carried out in so short a time. The Consulate began to operate on 11 November 1799: the fiscal administration was created on 24 November, the sinking fund on 27 November, the Bank of France on 13 February 1800, the prefectoral system on 17 February, the Paris police prefecture on 18 February. . . . It is true that the context was favorable: the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire had left the various parties so disoriented that even if they had wanted to, they could not have effectively opposed the government's policy, while bringing the assemblies to heel—in addition to their constitutional marginalization—removed one of the main obstacles to the speed of the reforms. In his *Memoirs,* Gaudin pretends to be astonished by the ease with which such a fundamental, complex reform as that of the administration of taxes could be carried out so easily in just a few weeks:

> The operations [. . .] were singularly facilitated by the existence of two legislative commissions that temporarily replaced, pending the promulgation of the new constitution, the two councils that the events of 18 Brumaire had destroyed. I devised, with a subcommittee of each of these commissions, dispositions that required a legal authorization. The law was immediately written up, and from one day to the next it was rendered. In the interim, the instructions necessary for its exe-

> cution were prepared, so that they arrived in the departments at the same time as the law itself. This kind of *dictatorship in finances* prevented the greatest misfortunes. [. . .] Thus on the one hand, some of the *extraordinary* dispositions that the perilous situation of the Public Treasury demanded, and on the other hand, *the fundamental bases of the financial system,* were decreed in twenty days.[156]

Five months after Bonaparte's accession to power, the contours of Consular France began to emerge. That was the length of time it took de Gaulle, the last head of the Fourth Republic's government, to lay the foundations of the Fifth Republic. From June to December 1958, freed from the opposition and supervision of the assemblies, and holding full powers, he resorted to decrees: 335 of them in 290 days![157] They concerned all questions, great and small, from the reform of the judicial system and that of medical research to the price of short films and the requirement that apartment buildings be connected to the sewer system. As under the Consulate, when reforms carried through to completion projects worked out under the Directory, and sometimes even earlier—the reform of the Civil Code, for example—in 1958 the reforms had often been conceived before the General's return. The whole merit of both regimes lies in this: having had the authority and the legitimacy necessary to achieve what their predecessors were able to conceive, but were too weak to carry out. Robert Debray later said, speaking of the reform of health care in hospitals: "In 1958, projects of reform were ready; they had been accepted by the ministers concerned, and they were supposed to be submitted to a vote by the parliament. But we knew that they had no chance of being adopted; they conflicted too much with traditions and, paying no attention to political cleavages, the lobby of conservative physicians blocked them."[158] De Gaulle's appointment as prime minister and the procedure of issuing decrees completely changed the situation. The General was not exaggerating when he wrote in his memoirs:

> My return makes it seem that the normal order has been reestablished. As a result, the storm clouds that were obscuring the national horizon are dissipating. Since the captain is now at the helm of the ship of state, everyone feels that the hard problems, always raised but never resolved, that the nation faces can finally be decided. Indeed, the

> somewhat mythical character with which my person is adorned helps spread the idea that obstacles that are for all others insuperable will not impede me.[159]

René Rémond has shown that Gaullism combined nationalism and Bonapartism, though each of these components had its own peculiar characteristics. A nationalism—but one that is alien to the "integral nationalism" of Action Française—which "repudiates no chapter in French history," accepts in toto the whole of France's past, receives its heritage without any preliminary inventory"; a "nationalism of rallying together," as Rémond[160] still calls it, that owed as much to Michelet as it did to Barrès, and which another specialist on Gaullism, Jean Charlot, thought had "purified" nationalist ideas.[161] Gaullism is Bonapartist less in its doctrine—the existence of a Bonapartist doctrine is largely a myth—than because of its history. The relation between Gaullism and Bonapartism emerges in certain aspirations: for example, to move beyond the left-right cleavage that has structured French politics since 1789, in the hostility toward "parties" or "factions" and the preference for a strong executive branch, in what René Rémond calls their "authoritarian reformism," in the idea that legitimacy proceeds more from a direct link between the leader and his people than from any sort of juridical arrangement, the latter merely confirming the former, and in the resort to plebiscites as a means of reaffirming the leader's authority. There are further convergences:

> The passion for national grandeur considered an absolute value, the attachment to national unity, both of these being guaranteed by the authority of a strong state, the sovereignty of the people exercised through forms of direct democracy, alone or in combination with the action of assemblies that also proceed from universal suffrage: these elements sum up the essence of Gaullism's political philosophy [. . .]. All of them were already present in Bonapartism.[162]

Just as Gaullism "purified" the nationalism of the early twentieth century, it "revolutionized" Bonapartism by wrenching it away from its belated ties with the right wing (after 1850) in order to restore it, as it were, to the freshness of its origins: the will to be nothing but national, as Bonaparte put it before the Council of State in 1800, “ni bonnet rouge, ni talon rouge.”[163]

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The similarity stops there, if we now compare not 1800 and 1958, but 1804 and 1965. As early as 1800–1801, or at least after Marengo, Bonaparte’s goal was to reestablish the monarchy to his own advantage. He saw being Consul for life as merely a stepping-stone, and in 1802 no one had any illusions about this. It was known that this stage would not be the last in an ascension that was to end only when he had placed the crown on his own head. To qualify this and to avoid falling into the error of railing against Napoleon’s untamed ambition, we must recall that the constitutions of 1799 and 1802 amounted to a makeshift that could not last. In 1799, Sieyès had persuaded his colleagues to do away with elections, while at the same time retaining the principle of universal suffrage! He had increased the number of assemblies while at the same time gradually depriving them of any real influence on the shaping of laws. As for the executive branch, everyone knew that Bonaparte would soon get rid of the other two consuls—Cambacérès and Lebrun—who had been put there only to preserve the fiction, dear to republicans, of a collegial executive branch. The intention was to keep people from suspecting an underhand return to royalty, incarnated in this First Consul invested with considerable powers, appointed for a term of ten years that could be renewed indefinitely. The transition from the decennial consulate to the consulate for life in 1802 must have seemed to be a transition toward hereditary power. After all, hadn’t the First Consul been granted the right to designate his successor? He was already a king, minus the title, who had in addition been accorded the royal prerogative par excellence: the right to pardon. The Revolution had abolished this right, but the senatus consultum of 1802 restored it.

However, it is not the reestablishment of the monarch—first in the form of the consulate for life, then in that of a hereditary empire—that marks a turning point in the history of Napoleon. The return to monarchy was not a counterrevolution. Bonaparte crowns the principles of the Revolution. He was to reign in the name of the sovereign people and guarantee that the properties confiscated from the nobility and the clergy and sold off would not be returned to their earlier owners. He succeeded in combining modern society with the royalty, a combination about which a majority of the members of the Constituent Assembly, and first of all Mirabeau and La Fayette, had dreamed. It was outside the borders of France that his history took a new turn, not in 1812, as de Gaulle supposed, but as early as 1805. This turning point is a matter of debate. One apparently marginal episode illustrates it: not a massive event such as the war in Spain, but rather the annexation of Genoa. I have already mentioned this crucial moment. Just as the French Revolution had, as Michelet put it, "overflowed its banks" by declaring war on Austria in 1792,[164] Napoleon's history "overflowed its banks" in Italy in 1805.[165]

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On the one hand, 1805; on the other, 1965: the Fifth Republic's first presidential election, which was supposed to be another plebiscite, ended with a runoff between de Gaulle and François Mitterrand, the former finally winning with 54.5 percent of the votes: in the context of the time, this was far from a triumph. But de Gaulle had believed in this plebiscite, the only one he had envisaged. The election being set for 5 December, he had declared his candidacy only a month earlier, allowing rumors that he would withdraw in favor of Pompidou to run wild. He had hardly campaigned, thus showing that he did not even consider the idea of engaging in a contest. The sense of the brief speech he gave on 4 November was clear: "If the sincere and massive support of the citizens urges me to remain in office, the future of the new Republic will certainly be assured."[166] It was indeed a plebiscite that he imagined. It was not a matter of engaging in "dirty tricks politics," of leaving "the high ground" to descend into "the mud" to do battle with "the ruffian" (Mitterrand), or, as he was to say a few days later, of going on television to say "My name is Charles de Gaulle," or of "speaking to the French people dressed in pajamas."[167] Today, the result of the first round of voting—43.7 percent versus 32.3 percent for his main competitor—would delight any candidate, but for de Gaulle it was a humiliation that left him terribly depressed.[168] Between the two rounds, he was forced to descend into the arena against his will. He did so in the way most dignified for him, by agreeing to be interviewed on television by Michel Droit, and then by "soliciting" the votes of the French people, which he assuredly saw as humiliating. Two days before the second round, he forced himself:

> Here I am, such as I am. I do not say that I am perfect or that that I am not as old as I am. I do not claim to know everything, or to be able to do everything. I know, better than anyone, that I will have to have successors and that the nation will choose them so that they will follow the same line. But with the French people, history has allowed me to succeed in certain enterprises. With the French people, I am currently working to ensure our progress, independence, and peace [. . .]. French women, French men! That is why I am once again ready to take on the highest post, that is, the greatest duty.[169]

"The election"—he put quotation marks around it[170]—left a bitter taste in his mouth. Arnaud Teyssier wrote:

> Thus the man of 18 June descends from his pedestal. [. . .] Forced into a runoff like an ordinary politician, de Gaulle had to struggle to get reelected. He remained wounded by this, divided more than ever between an unshakeable will and moments of weariness and discouragement. [. . .] To be sure, the founding father came down among mortals. But by exposing himself to the direct fire of the political game, by obtaining reelection by universal suffrage [. . .], hadn't he demonstrated the viability of the system he had set up? It is true that de Gaulle ended up a little less special, but the system entered the mores along with him."[171]

Conversely, the Napoleonic system—that of Napoleon I, not that of his nephew, which, toward the end, followed a path analogous to that of the Fifth Republic—was never institutionalized, nor could it be: Napoleon Bonaparte could not be constricted by any constitutional straitjacket. By his personality, his genius, he exceeded, and had to forever exceed, the limits within which people might try to confine his power. The regime he had founded could not survive him. In 1812, when in Paris he was thought to have died in Russia, no one remembered that he had an heir, the king of Rome, who, according to the constitution, was supposed to succeed him; in 1815, when he was about to abdicate for the second time, Napoleon himself began by forgetting to mention his son's rights in the document, and Lucien Bonaparte had to remind him of them. A few months earlier, returning from the island of Elba, he had merely pretended to want to become a constitutional monarch. Such a decline in status was not in conformity with either his character or his history. A constraint of the same kind weighed on de Gaulle in 1965, but he agreed to descend "from the level of myth to that of politics"—or rather he resigned himself to this descent.

The left was pleased by this achievement, and a large part of the right, which was beginning to have had enough of de Gaulle, probably was as well. Shortly afterward, Roger-Gérard Schwartzenberg published a study on the election of 1965 to explain how much it had casually changed the spirit of institutions. He saw in this precisely a chance that the latter would survive their founder:

> The head of state had to behave like a candidate. His adversaries had to behave as statesmen. The former's power had been deprived of its mystique. [. . .] The latter's institutional image gained in intensity [. . .]. The opposition candidates rose above the political forces that supported them. They were the leaders of these forces, not their representatives. On the other hand, inversely, the head of state had to re-enter a partisan universe, consult a team and a majority. In the second round, his investiture was not individual. The two developments merged: an end was put to the excessive importance given to political parties as well as to that given to individuals. A harmonious equilibrium emerged, characterized by the "relative" importance of parties and individuals.[172]

Half a century later, this prediction, initially confirmed by events, now seems false. The Fifth Republic has suffered the trial of three "cohabitations" (1986–1988, 1993–1995, 1997–2002). De Gaulle did not consider calling on Mitterrand as prime minister, and he would certainly have resigned had he lost the legislative elections of 1967. His successors, François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac, respected the letter rather than the spirit of the institutions. The five-year term of office for the president,[173] which was intended to avoid cohabitations but resulted in largely depriving the president of the weapon of dissolution,[174] struck another blow against the regime, before the generalization, in 2016, of the system of primary elections gave it the coup de grâce*:* the political party system made a strong comeback because, chosen by members of their party, candidates became once again the "representatives" of parties that were less and less representative of public opinion. This time, it is really the end of the institutions of a Republic that will no doubt survive itself in the name and the appearance, but without the content.

Gaullism's heritage does not reside in the institutions alone: the General restored the French people's self-esteem, made it possible to put an end, not without tragedy, to colonialism, and succeeded in making France's voice heard in a world dominated by the two superpowers by giving it the military means to maintain an independent existence. He also gave it—though this is less and less true—its energy independence, protected its farmers, encouraged its industry, and set limits to the construction of Europe that he believed could not be overstepped. Since then, the world has greatly changed. The France that, borne along by the growth of the *Trente Glorieuses,* maintained rather well the rank de Gaulle had succeeded in restoring to it found itself poorly armed when difficult times arrived, starting in 1973. It cannot be denied that the Gaullist discourse about grandeur did not prepare the French to meet the challenges of the economic transformation, the opening up of the world, and the passage from a reassuring bipolar system to an anarchic, multipolar "system." The rhetoric of grandeur was a little too successful in inculcating in them "the art of overestimating oneself."[175] Gaullism also encouraged the very French penchant for a planned economy (the Plan and its *énarques*)[176] and the religion of the welfare state. It even contributed, by its brilliance, to the aggravation of the political crisis in which we have been living for the past thirty years. The institutions founded by de Gaulle, and for de Gaulle, are not without responsibility for this. Although they grant the president broad powers, they demand in return a great deal of effort and abnegation. De Gaulle's successors have donned, with varying degrees of success, a suit much too big for them: Pompidou wore it well, Giscard and Mitterrand rather well, and those who followed them less and less well. From this point of view, the Fifth Republic reminds us of the monarchy according to Louis XIV, which the Sun King's unfortunate successors never succeeded in embodying. Just as the "parlements" of the Old Regime that Louis XIV had tamed made a strong comeback, more rebellious than ever, under Louis XV and Louis XVI, the parties that de Gaulle had broken took their revenge starting in the late 1980s, to the point of undermining the institutions by misappropriating them to their own benefit.

To be sure, de Gaulle's heritage will not last as long as that of Napoleon. The latter did not leave political institutions behind him. The quest for the appropriate political system, interrupted by the imperial interlude, was resumed in 1814. But he gave France a Civil Code that reshaped society for more than a century, and an administrative constitution about which Tocqueville said that it explained why France, roiled by an almost permanent political instability, had been able, thanks to its prefects and civil servants, to survive so many revolutions and crises without too much damage: "Since '89 the administrative constitution has always remained intact amid the ruins of the political constitutions."[177] It produces its work, he added, independently of the circumstances, and even of the competence of those who operate it. But decentralization and regionalization have called into question this "mass of granite" established by Bonaparte, and the Civil Code could not survive the changes in society and mentalities.

But the heritage is not solely material, and, in the domain of the immaterial, Napoleon will always be the victor. On this level—and that is why he has not ceased and will never cease to fascinate us—he left to the world less a work than an idea: faith in creative energy, the idea that, to borrow an expression from Tocqueville, "within his vast limits, man is free."[178] Napoleon's posterity has, of course, been political: How can Bolivar, Garibaldi, or Bismarck, not to mention Napoleon III, be imagined without Napoleon? He set the century's tempo. He gave it a taste for great enterprises. "It cannot be denied that Napoleon's destiny had split the skulls of his time with a mighty hammer blow," a saddened Zola was to write. "Everyone's ambitions swelled, projects tended toward the gigantic, and all people dreamed about was universal monarchy."[179] His posterity was no less literary and artistic than it was political. And for good reason: if wanting to *act* like Napoleon could only be a fool's idea, trying to *be* like Napoleon is, ultimately, the starting point for all creation.[180] Hadn't Balzac, "our literary Napoleon" (Paul Bourget), taken as his goal "to achieve by the pen what [the Emperor had] begun with the sword?" Didn't he also say that his will passed "for a sister to that of Napoleon"?[181] From Beethoven to Berlioz and from Stendhal to Victor Hugo, there are countless artists who, like the composer of the *Eroica* symphony, felt the depths of their hearts illuminated by his genius"[182] and undertook, as he did, to reinvent the world.

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Starting with Richelieu's *Political Testament,* Louis XIV's *Memoirs,* and the Marshal of Saxe's *Reveries,* the association of politics, war, and literature has a long history in France. Statesmen and military leaders write. Many of them have left a name in literary history, especially in the nineteenth century, but also in the twentieth. Guizot and Thiers were followed by Lyautey, Jaurès, and Clemenceau. We won't draw up the list; it would be too long. It is, moreover, not concluded, even if the exercise is no longer what it was. Our political and military writers were concerned above all with leaving a mark on History more lasting than the one whose circumstances they had noted, and which would inevitably someday disappear from people's memories. They sought by writing to ward off oblivion and even to influence the future. Today, the ambition is quite different. Louis XIV, Napoleon, and de Gaulle having, so to speak, established the model of the statesman–writer, it is now those who aspire to the role of statesman who feel obliged to publish a book, not to leave it to posterity to remember their history, but, more modestly, to enter their career by plowing a furrow in the media. It would be so simple not to write, or especially not to employ a ghost writer. The French people would not hold it against candidates whose ephemeral works appear, as elections approach, in bookstores' display windows. After all, it is not their unlikely talent as authors that will get them elected. Their predecessors became writers in addition: the work crowned their glory, it did not create it.

Napoleon and Charles de Gaulle both entered the literary pantheon of the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, but not under the same conditions.[183] The General appeared under his own name, the Emperor under the signature of the author of the *Memorial of Saint-Helena.*

The same year—1823—that Las Cases's book was put on sale, Napoleon's *Memoirs* were published.[184] This work is so little known that it is often confused with the *Memorial.* Its six volumes collect the transcripts of the exile's dictations, which he had reviewed and corrected. The Emperor had long thought about writing, or rather dictating, his memoirs. He mentioned this project when he said farewell at Fontainebleau: "If I have consented to go on living," he told the soldiers of the Guard, "it is in order to continue to serve your glory. I want to write down the great things we have done together." When he arrived on the island of Elba, he asked that all the bulletins from his campaigns in Italy be collected so that he might write the history of his military life.[185] But he soon forgot this project. His political career was not over. This sad chapter in his life would not be the last, he was certain of that. The idea of writing his memoirs returned after Waterloo. He did not yet know where he would be going, but he knew that this time there would be no return. The time for action was past; now the time had come for him to recount his story. He requested and obtained from the Chamber of Representatives permission to take with him into exile—he was not yet the prisoner of the British—the two thousand volumes of the Trianon library to help him write his memoirs.[186] He did not receive these books until the following year, but as soon as he had embarked on the *Northumberland* he began to talk about his past with his companions in misfortune. Whether Las Cases suggested that he immediately begin dictating his memoirs or he himself took the initiative matters little; in any case, the ship was still far from Saint Helena when Napoleon began his work. It was also a way of filling the gloomy days of the voyage and, afterward, the long months of captivity on that lonely rock swept by winds and rain. "Work is the scythe of time,"[187] he declared.

Although he preferred dictation, that was, he said, because his thought moved faster than his pen. His handwriting was so bad that even he was not always able to read it. He made spelling mistakes and sometimes used the wrong word. His detractors have seen it as their duty to point out that he said "Philippine Islands" instead of "Philippines," "section" instead of "session"; "fulminating point" for "culminating point," "*rentes voyagers*" instead of "*rentes viagères,*" "armistice" instead of "amnesty," and so on, or that he had written "Ocean" for Ossian and *Ducecling* instead of "Thucydides."[188] Was his mastery of the language really so poor? We will never know for sure. The dramatist Arnault, who was close to him, tells us that Napoleon read very badly,[189] but not everyone shares his opinion:

> When he spoke himself [to his soldiers], and that happened frequently, he raised the troops' enthusiasm to its peak. To them, he seemed a hero from Antiquity, almost a supernatural figure, standing a hundred cubits high, despite his short stature. To my two grandfathers, it seemed that when the Emperor spoke amid the companies, his head was surrounded by a color like a halo.[190]

But was that effect produced by his words, or by his exploits? We know what a trial it was to write under Napoleon's dictation:

> His first dictation was the expression of his memories without any reflection or classification; and one had to be careful not to draw his attention to the disorder or incoherence, because that produced the same instantaneous effect on the surge of his thought as the breaking of the mainspring produces on a watch. One had to write as fast as he spoke, no matter what the price, and never ask him to repeat even the last word he had uttered. Often, several hours would go by without his ceasing to dictate in this way his memories of his wars or the dominant events of his reign. Making a fair copy of the first dictation served him as a memorandum for the second one, and this second dictation, copied out, became the draft for him to go over personally.[191]

Napoleon reworked the text three or four times, sometimes more.[192] Occasionally, he added reading to dictation, Montholon putting down on paper Napoleon's commentaries on the documents read to him by Gourgaud. There were daytime dictations and nighttime dictations. When he woke up, several times in the course of the night, he had Las Cases or Gourgaud brought in.[193] Thus in addition to his memoirs, he dictated to his valet a *Précis des guerres de César,* or annotated Fleury de Chaboulon's memoirs on The Hundred Days. The authenticity of these texts has sometimes been challenged by pointing out that the copyist necessarily influenced the final result. Since it was impossible for the copyist to transcribe the Emperor's remarks exactly, each copyist worked out a system for noting down sentence fragments, words, or abbreviations that would allow him to find later, if not always the letter, at least the spirit of the imperial volubility. The quality of the restitution depended to a large degree on the scribe. But Napoleon then went over the manuscript, crossing out, supplementing, annotating. The most astonishing thing, which deepens the mystery, is that his interventions concerned not only the content but also the form of the transcription. He took care to find the right word and paid attention to defective turns of phrase, as he had always done, scolding his ministers for using an expression or for the tone of a letter.[194] His prose was full of spelling errors, but its syntax and style were flawless. "And people have said that I couldn't write!" he exclaimed.

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NAPOLEON DID NOT complete his *Memoirs.* As early as 1816 the dictations became less frequent, then stopped altogether. The advance of the illness from which he was suffering discouraged him from writing. Between the beginning of the Consulate and his stay on the island of Elba, he left a gaping hole. Not a word about the years of glory. The incomplete nature of the work is not the sole explanation for this. These *Memoirs* were intended to be State memoirs. They were supposed to recount the lofty deeds of the general and the emperor, to analyze the circumstances in which he had found himself at various times in his life; the history of his family and of his youth, which he was so fond of talking about, had no place in them. We can understand why the *Memoirs* have never been able to rival the *Memorial.* They even ended up falling into such complete oblivion that they were republished only recently.[195] However, they have had fervent admirers. Sainte-Beuve considered them "one of the monuments of the French genius." Some pages in them are certainly worthy of Tacitus (of whom Napoleon thought so little that in 1806 he published in the *Journal des débats* a long refutation of his merits as a historian[196]): I am thinking of the beginning—cited above—of the chapter on Brumaire, or the admirable account of the Egyptian campaign.

Posterity has not ratified Sainte-Beuve's judgment. It has been said that the text is too staid, too polished, too much inspired by the desire to imitate classical authors; in short, that it lacks the "splendors" and "dazzling style" of the letters and proclamations.[197] The monument is grandiose, but cold. It does not do justice to Napoleon's passionate soul. If we knew him only through these texts, we would easily agree with Mme de Staël that Napoleon's soul was like a great, icy desert that no emotion had ever crossed. Nothing in it testifies to the "most powerful breath of life that ever gave life to human clay,"[198] or to the state of "perpetual illumination"[199] that so struck Goethe when he met him. Napoleon himself sensed this. He blamed the mistake on his scribes, demanded that the manuscript be sent to the poet Arnault, who would revise it.[200] In short, if he gave up on the project, it was also because, this time, he had not been able to find the right tone.

The masterpiece of Napoleon's captivity is not, then, the *Memoirs,* but the *Memorial of Saint-Helena,* in which Las Cases collected Napoleon's random remarks, related the small ups and downs of this isolated existence, and the constant battle against Hudson Lowe. Gourgaud, Montholon, Bertrand, Marchand, and the physicians Antommarchi and O'Meara also wrote memoirs or kept a diary.[201] None of them can compare with the *Memorial.* In that book we find the movement of life. Jean-Paul Kauffmann was not mistaken about this: the quality of the text has largely to do with its incoherence, with its leaps in space and time without transitions, with the labyrinthine exploration of a life that was so rich, so abundant, so incredible that it cannot be confined to the straitjacket of chronology. It is "a treasure hunt," a rebus that the defeated man seeks to solve by the activity of memory."[202] Las Cases allowed the disorder of memories to take possession of his work.[203] Stendhal says that the great merit of the Emperor's former chamberlain was not "to mix Las Cases with Napoleon."[204] When the book appeared in 1823, it was the first time that news had been received directly, so to speak, from the prisoner, if we except the apocryphal *Manuscrit venu de Sainte-Hélène d'une manière inconnue* published in 1817.[205] It was a voice from beyond the tomb. Above all, Las Cases describes the Napoleon that the time was ready to receive: the general who arose from the Revolution who, after conquering and losing Europe, ended his career as a champion of liberal ideas.[206] It was the pen of this aristocrat who had rallied to the Emperor without abjuring his royalism that gave birth to the "Napoleon of the people" dear to Balzac, and that informed the public of his suffering in exile: thus the myth of the "little corporal" who had become Prometheus Bound was born. Neither Gourgaud nor Bertrand, who may be the *truest* witnesses, but who are otherwise more banal, can compete with Las Cases. The latter's work was for many people the gospel of the century. One thinks of Julien Sorel looking sadly at the stream into which his book has fallen; "it was the one he loved the most, the *Memorial of St. Helena*."[207] The creature has devoured its creator. Las Cases has become the name of a book whose author is . . . Napoleon.

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As a young man, Bonaparte had been one of the family of *noircisseurs de papier,*[208] always writing, taking notes, sketching out stories, tales, and little essays, planning a *History of Corsica* that he began but never finished, and taking part in the academic contests then in vogue. This jumble of "juvenilia"[209] filled two large volumes. In them we find nothing that would not be found in countless other young people dreaming of becoming the Voltaires, Rousseaus, or Bernardin de Saint-Pierres of tomorrow. The muse of literature did not linger over his cradle. His style was that of the late eighteenth century: precious, verbose, emphatic, sentimental. It was a time when tears flowed in abundance. The adolescent Napoleon could not hold back his own when he was reading *The New Heloise* or *Paul and Virginia.* The Revolution saved him. He continued to write, but henceforth he had a goal and soon, a destiny. If he persevered in his plan to write a *History of Corsica,* it was no longer in a disinterested manner. Becoming the island's historian was also a way, or at least he hoped it was, of attracting the good graces of Paoli, "the father of the country," without which nothing was possible there. But Napoleon soon had to accept the obvious: nothing could be done, Paoli could not abide these Bonapartes whose father had betrayed him by supporting the French twenty years earlier. He hardly replied when Napoleon asked his advice. The young Bonaparte's vocation as a writer thus evaporated along with the hope of becoming Paoli's "favorite son." He left his manuscript unfinished and wrote to Joseph that he was abandoning "the little ambition of becoming an author."[210]

This letter dates from 7 August 1792, three days before the fall of the throne. Napoleon turned his back on his literary ambitions at the moment when war welcomed him with open arms and offered him the glory he had thought to gain by writing. He still wrote a few small works: in 1793, a pamphlet—*Le Souper de Beaucaire*—to demonstrate the orthodoxy of his Jacobinism; in 1795, a little narrative—*Clisson et Eugénie*—inspired by his idyll with Désirée Clary.[211] But if he had said farewell to his youthful ambitions, he was far from being finished with literature. The latter found expression in the flights which, in his correspondence or his proclamations, illumine the style he had adopted starting with the Italian campaign (1796); the refined style "in which thought and will dominate a form of imperial brevity (*imperatoria brevitas*) and imagination appears in bright flashes."[212] The literary inspiration is striking in this letter written to Joséphine from the camp at Boulogne and whose "Chateaubriand-like stamp" Montherlant liked:[213]

> The wind having grown a great deal stronger that night, one of our gunboats that was in the harbor set out to hunt and went aground on the rocks a league from Boulogne; I thought all was lost, men and goods; but we succeeded in saving everything. This was a grand spectacle: canons fired to sound the alarm, the shore covered with fires, the sea raging and bellowing, the whole night spent in the anxiety of saving these unfortunates or seeing them perish. The soul was between eternity, the ocean and the dark.[214]

The last sentence is beautiful. In it we can discern the reader of Ossian, the false Scottish bard of the third century invented out of whole cloth by James Macpherson (1736–1796).[215] Napoleon loved Ossian so much that he did not hesitate to call Homer a "dotard" when someone dared to say he was superior to his favorite poet, and carrying with him everywhere a collection with tattered pages covered with annotations, stained by his yellowed, snuff-taker's fingers, and from which there still emanated, years later, an odor of patchouli.[216] Ossian guided him through the misty heaths of Scotland into a country peopled with heroes. That was what he liked so much in the poet, as he did, moreover, in Corneille. He rediscovered in them the models of the heroic life to which he aspired and heroes whose sole limit was destiny and its *fatum.* "Heroes have to die," he liked to say when people spoke to him about plays with happy endings. The poem he loved most of all was *Temora.* On reading these poems, which are not as mediocre as they are said to be, we seem to glimpse Napoleon's soul: the men are great, even immense, in a twilight world under an empty sky.[217] Along with music, to which he was sensitive, Ossianism testifies to this hidden side, so difficult to grasp, of the Napoleonic star. He probably owed to the poet "a few of the well-known characteristics of his style: the sublimity and curtness of the tone, the grandeur of the images, the simultaneously abstract and metaphorical character. Even in his conversation, when a great idea took hold of his soul, he *ossianized.*"[218] Sainte-Beuve claimed that it was Napoleon who lent his genius to Ossian, rather than the other way around. But it matters little. Ossian was more in accord than any other with the oratorical poetry that formed the basis of the Emperor's correspondence.

It is again the orator that we find in this love letter written to Joséphine at the time when Bonaparte was assuming command of the Army of Italy:

> I have not spent a single day without writing to you; I have not spent a single night without holding you in my arms; I have not taken a single cup of tea without cursing the glory and ambition that keep me far away from the soul of my life. Amid affairs, at the head of the troops, and as I move through the camps, my adorable Joséphine is alone in my heart, occupies my mind, absorbs my thought. If I am moving away from you at the speed of the torrent of the Rhône, it is the sooner to see you again. If, in the middle of the night, I get up to work again, that is because it might hasten by a few days the arrival of my sweet love. [. . .] Joséphine! Joséphine! Remember what I have sometimes told you: nature has given me a strong, decisive soul; it has made you of lace and gauze.[219]

It would be easy to cite dozens of other letters in which the conqueror's passionate soul is revealed, if not naked, at least hardly veiled: letters addressed to the widows of his generals; touching missives sent to the viceroy of Italy, Eugène de Beauharnais, to instruct him in the trade of war and the art of governing; stinging letters aimed at Bernadotte whenever he did something ignoble—that is, all the time; furious denunciations sent to his brothers to remind them of the duties of their office; orders of the day, proclamations, or bulletins of the Grande Armée . . .

Bonaparte did not awaken to literature, great literature, solely "when he gave up the pen and began to dictate";[220] in his case, there is also a very close link between literary aptitude and military or political action. The letters he exchanged with Joséphine are a good example of this. It suffices to compare the letters addressed to the future empress with those which, hardly a few months before he met her, he was writing to Désirée Clary. The two sets of letters are certainly not written either by the same man or in the same style. He seems passionately in love with the woman who was to become his wife, whereas with Désirée he had had only a pleasant flirtation mixed with plans for raising his standing. On the other hand, the passion he felt for Joséphine was increased by the excitement of war and by the whirlwind of activity into which he found himself suddenly plunged. Because they excite people and lead them to rise above themselves, love and war often go together well. In Bonaparte's case, they fed one another and together they helped transfigure a style that nothing, up to that point, had suggested. It was war that, in 1796, abruptly caused Bonaparte to move from Rousseau to Caesar. That is why the thirty thousand and more letters of his correspondence, which was an integral part of his art of command—conceiving, deciding, directing, and supervising execution—constitute his true masterpiece.

Napoleon was an "author," or wanted to be one, before the saga carried him off on its wings: he became a *writer* in and through action.

His "Ossianic" letters must be set alongside those he addressed to his generals regarding the conduct of military operations in order to gauge how much imagination and reason there were simultaneously in that head, how much soul and thought, Thiers said,[221] the imagination keeping him on the side of the sentimental eighteenth century, reason raising him, so far as brevity and clarity of expression are concerned, to the level of Caesar or Frederick the Great. "In the style of the great captains," the literary critic Désiré Nisard observes, "it is action that expresses itself through great characteristics, and even the writer's negligences add to the narrator's credibility. I know of no better teachers of the art of writing than these men who have written without art, or who, being highly versed, like Caesar, in all the skills of language, have made perfection consist in doing without them. Bonaparte's dispatches are no more ornamented than Caesar's memoirs; they are even plainer."[222] The short, stripped-down sentence, that of the proclamations and many of the letters, belongs more to the oratorical art than to writing. Napoleon's style is in fact that of a master of speech.[223]

Oratorical poetry, poetry of action. In Napoleon, writing—even if dictated—is both the means and the continuation of action. It accompanies it, it magnifies it, it transfigures it. It has also been transfigured by it. The exercise of command and governmental work provided Napoleon's literary apprenticeship. His style was purified by them, it was concentrated, reduced to an algebra. There is nothing more remarkable than the dozens, the hundreds of letters, orders, and notes that precede the launching of each campaign. That is when "the Eagle" is at the maximum of his capacities, keeping an eye on everything, attentive to both the conception of the whole and the details of the execution. Simon Leys has rightly said that Bonaparte was "incapable of contemplation."[224] Rumination was not for him. The disordered recollection of the *Memorial,* yes, because remembering is still reliving; but reviewing his history in order to draw lessons from it, to understand its sources or to confer coherence and unity on it, in short, to write his memoirs, was absolutely foreign to his temperament. He was not made for autobiography, because it requires silence and contemplation. In his case, action explains everything. It was the motor that drove him, his real passion, in the conviction that to live is to act.

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IT WAS THROUGH being relegated to Saint Helena that Napoleon reconnected with the literary ambition of his youth; on the other hand, this ambition never left Charles de Gaulle. In his case as well, there is a long list of "juvenilia" consisting of patriotic short stories or narratives imitated from Pierre Loti that would not seem out of place juxtaposed with the young Bonaparte's "little works." Significantly, the First World War turned him away from any effort in the genre of fiction—his last known attempt being a short narrative, *Le Baptême,* written in September 1914—just as war had definitively distanced Napoleon from his dreams of becoming an author. If de Gaulle made one further attempt at fiction, in 1928, it was for a play, *Le Flambeau,* which, celebrating military virtues, continued the lectures given in 1927 on "Character" or "Prestige," and foreshadowed *The Edge of the Sword.* This play constitutes in a way the connection between the early literary essays and the works of his maturity, such as *The Army of the Future* and *France and Her Army.*

The fact that de Gaulle was already at this time writing with a practical goal in mind—convincing political and military leaders of the necessity of revising French military doctrine—did not prevent writing from playing a central role in his life, both before and after 1940. Whereas Napoleon became a writer without having wished to, the exercise of command revealing in him a literary genius that nothing had foretold, de Gaulle long found in writing a distraction from a present that did not correspond to the future of which he had dreamed. *The Army of the Future* was not a simple argument in favor of armored weapons, but also a literary work that, in fact, limited the impact of the book and caused it to be seen as the expression of a dreamer's fantasies rather than of a technician's expertise. But without realizing it at the time, by grappling with words he was preparing himself for the great role that was soon to fall to him:

> De Gaulle would not have been de Gaulle without writing, Jean-Luc Barré correctly observes. It was through words that he constructed his image, elaborated his myth, staked out his role and his place in history. Through his brilliant language, he often triumphed where action would not always have sufficed for him to impose his will. And through the power of his language and the brilliance of his style, the professor at the Ecole de guerre, the exile in London, the tribune of the Rally of the French People, the man who harangued crowds in Algiers and Phnom Penh, and the actor on television found his best weapon when confronting adversity.[225]

In de Gaulle's view, words were not merely a political weapon or a refuge from adversity. He loved them for themselves. However, they did not come to him easily: "I don't write easily," he admitted. He was not like Napoleon, who, because he was dictating, emitted bursts of sentences. De Gaulle's manuscripts testify to this. They are no easier to decipher than the Emperor's handwriting. His first draft was soon covered with deletions, corrections, and elaborations, so that he later took care to make a fair copy of what he had written, leaving space between the lines, and then going over it again. He reread his text out loud to "have the sentence in his ear before definitively accepting it."[226] He was sorry that he could not write as limpidly as Anatole France, who was, in his opinion, the most perfect stylist in the French language. He relentlessly tracked down interpolated clauses, parentheses, and dashes, or, like Taine, who didn't think much of French-style classicism and was instead fond of nested sentences, he refused "to write at random and in accord with the caprice of eloquence, to throw out ideas in bunches, to interrupt himself with parentheses, to slip into the endless series of quotations and enumerations."[227] He also tracked down anecdotes. "How strange it is that one has to fight to this point to drag out of oneself what one wants to write,"[228] he told Malraux. He was a classical writer, trained in the purist school of the seventeenth century. It was only when, though still not completely satisfied, he considered the text more presentable, that he had it typed up. His friends said that even in the Elysée Palace he tried to steal a few hours every day that he could devote to writing, just as his official duties never prevented him from reading; he was not far from agreeing with Montesquieu that there is no sorrow in life that an hour of reading cannot dissipate: "I am indifferent to everything; I have plunged into [Chateaubriand's] *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,*"[229] he said.

One cannot imagine de Gaulle writing his memoirs the way Churchill wrote his, six volumes consisting of a patchwork of documents, speeches, letters, reports presented in toto, personal memories dictated to his assistants, and chapters he commissioned, which he subsequently corrected, cut up, and organized with a pair of scissors, a pot of glue, and pencils in different colors, each reserved for the work of one of his "ghost writers." There was nothing reprehensible in this; not only did Churchill thus prove himself faithful to the Victorian tradition of biographies consisting of a mixture of life and correspondence, but his memoirs—decorated, moreover, with a neutral title, *The Second World War*—were intended to contribute to knowledge of that period as much as they did to knowledge of the role he played in it.[230] The paper monument was at least as much a historical document as it was an autobiography. De Gaulle's enterprise was entirely different, because for him the point was less to recount history than to transfigure it. Thus he could not limit himself to putting together "a voluminous assemblage of everything." Although he resorted to the services of researchers assigned in particular to bring to Colombey documents and items kept in the offices of the Rally for the French People, he wrote and rewrote in his own hand each line of each page of his *Mémoires de guerre,* advancing slowly, as anxious as a beginner when he read to his friends the result of his work, and, after the book was published, he worried about the reactions of critics and the public at large. During the last months of his life, he was obsessed by one question: would he have time to finish his *Mémoires d'espoir*?[231]

There was another reason for the labor he forced himself to do. The ambition to write a work that would mark a milestone and earn him a place in French literary history still haunted him: "Can a writer worthy of the name write with several hands?,"[232] he asked, citing precisely the example of Churchill. He had too much respect for literature to indulge in easy options that he would have regretted later on.

We know that he found it difficult not to pardon the writers who had been sentenced to die at the time of the Liberation. He gladly pardoned Henri Béraud, the author of *Le Martyre de l'obèse,* who, after passing through every color in the political rainbow, had washed up in Vichy, the victim of his devouring anglophobia; but he pardoned neither Paul Chack[233] nor Robert Brasillach. Regarding the latter, he was to write in his *Memoirs* that "talent is a ground for responsibility,"[234] not an excuse. It is said that he had rebelled upon hearing of a photo of Brasillach wearing a German uniform, or again that he refused to pardon him because he had relentlessly attacked Georges Mandel, whom de Gaulle had greatly admired.[235] But Brasillach in particular had sinned against the spirit. Would de Gaulle have pardoned Drieu la Rochelle if the latter hadn't committed suicide before he could be arrested? It was easier for the General to be clement with a black-market profiteer than with a lost writer.

That is because he revered literature as he revered France, and in his mind he probably did not distinguish one from the other. Wasn't the "great" nation—better than a people, better than a race, Bainville said[236]—a civilization in which literature counts as much as language, because it inscribes its place in history and the universal?

De Gaulle's devotion to literature extended to its servants. Thus he never forgot to thank with a personal, handwritten note, even if it was simply a polite one, the authors who had dedicated their books to him. Many of these notes show that he had read the work; they are often touching, less from a head of state to a writer than from one author to another. Jean-Marie Le Clézio was twenty-three years old when he published *Le Procès-verbal,* his first novel. He dedicated it to the General, and the latter replied with a few lines full of tactfulness:

> Your book [. . .] has taken me into another world, very probably the real one, and I was able, with Adam, to zigzag through it. Since everything is beginning for you, this promenade will be followed by others. All the better! Because you have a great deal of talent. To me, as I reach the end, you write that "power and faith are forms of humility." To you, who are just now passing the first saplings along the way, I say that talent is also a form of humility.[237]

De Gaulle, who had had such a hard time "ridding himself of the obsessions of writing,"[238] knew something about this. He really aspired to be recognized by men of letters as one of theirs, and that independently of what he had accomplished in other domains. In that respect he was very different from Napoleon, who in late 1797 sent a flattering reply to the members of Institute, who had elected him: "The suffrage of the distinguished men who compose the Institute honors me. I am well aware that before being their equal I shall long be their pupil."[239] Obviously, he didn't believe a word of that, and neither did the addressees of the letter, who were sufficiently flattered that the man who was already behaving as a master affected to call himself their pupil. Besides, de Gaulle had soon had enough of playing the pupil. When he took power, he liked to present himself as the protector of the sciences and the arts, but there was no longer any question of his going to sit amid his "colleagues": the time for small talk was past. The word *colleague* suggested an equality between him and the members of the Institute that was no longer appropriate.

Naturally, the General's memoirs were intended to show that *his* version of events was the right one; they also sought, like the *Memorial,* to establish the image that de Gaulle would leave in history; perhaps he even hoped that his *Memoirs* would later be a kind of small flame which, should the country unfortunately return toward the abyss, would help France find salvation once again—but above all, he expected them to ensure him a place in the literary pantheon. He sometimes joked about this: "Je dois être dans l'histoire l'écrivain sur lequel on a le plus tiré."[240,241] He was certainly hurt by the hostility that men of letters and intellectuals showed to him, with a few exceptions (Malraux, Mauriac, Bernanos, Claudel, and Romain Gary). There was, for example, the odious scene made by the students at the Ecole normale supérieure who refused to "shake the hand of a dictator."[242] The intellectual world and de Gaulle were incompatible by nature. Since Voltaire, French intellectuals have looked toward the future. They are progressives, in the literal sense; they do not like history and are inclined to scorn the past. But de Gaulle did not live in history solely through his accomplishments; he was himself a concentrate of history, beliefs, and traditions that connected him to the "Gallic forest" that he loved so much (like Mitterrand), a reminder of what rooted him rather than an appeal to a brighter tomorrow. The left hopes, the right remembers. What wound had he received that led him to write in his last notebook: "From a writer, nothing is to be expected, except talent"?[243] There was bitterness in those words. In his view, the generally hostile attitude taken by the princes of thought with regard to him undoubtedly conferred an inestimable value on Malraux's admiration and loyalty to him.

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AN ODD COUPLE. They were not Alexander and Aristotle, or even Frederick the Great and Voltaire, but in 1950 there was no longer any Voltaire. Moreover, there was more sincerity in this "friendship" of a quarter of a century between the General and the author of *La Condition humaine* than between the king of Prussia and the author of *Candide.*

Malraux had been late to rally to de Gaulle, a military man surrounded by officers belonging to the Action Française movement, he said, and whom he had refused to join in London.[244] Had he rushed to help the victors in 1944, this man who three months before the Normandy landings still thought it too early to enter the resistance? Did he join de Gaulle out of anti-communism? Out of retrospective attraction to the very literary saga of Free France, where an unknown officer, alone and without means, had, by the power of language alone, by the magic of words, put France in the winners' camp and imposed his presence at the table of the Great Powers? Because he saw de Gaulle as an embodiment of his own heroic conception of life, or a hero of History who was a brother to the literary hero, bearing within him, like the latter, "dreams that he incarnates and that preexisted him"?[245] Because he was attracted by power? Didn't he play a not very honorable part for the sole pleasure of talking with Mao, even saying—right in the middle of the Cultural Revolution!—that the Chinese tyrant wasn't doing enough to neutralize the "the revisionist stratum"?[246] In the end, it matters little whether the reasons for his choice were more aesthetic than political, or the other way around; once he had made his decision, it was made forever, and even de Gaulle's visit to General Franco—the General had never forgotten the favor the Spaniard had done France by refusing to let the Germans cross his country[247]—did not alienate from the General the Spanish republicans' former comrade in arms. Malraux had given himself to de Gaulle the way a heroic knight gave himself to his king, even if he later said he had seen him instead as a kind of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux:[248] it was still a matter of order. Now he would be the privileged apostle, faithful among the faithful, adding to Gaullism's mystique, "warming up," in his incantatory style, the crowds of the RPF before the General took the stage:

> People often talk about something called knighthood; it's not the armor, it's the group of men who know what they want and who sacrifice their whole lives to their will. O French faces surrounding me, on which I see again those Gothic faces alongside me in captivity, on which I see again the simple faces of the soldiers of Verdun, the faces that are those of France, I call you the knighthood![249]

Was Malraux the General's court jester? De Gaulle must have found him entertaining. Jean Cau, who had spent a great deal of time with the firebrand, has left us an immensely droll portrait of him: always playacting, a cloak thrown artistically over his shoulders, a lock of hair falling across his forehead, dark, inspired eyes, always looking like he had just arrived "from China or Spain, from some guerilla war or revolution he had fled through a surprising hidden door leading to a museum." Then he speaks "in a low, sweet voice that sometimes thickens and gets entangled in a poorly fitting denture; "he clasps and wrings his hands, then opens them and "takes off on a mad stampede" through space and time. Everything is fair game, cats and Egypt, Michelangelo and Caesar, Peru and de Gaulle, India, the cat (again) belonging to Manet and the China of the Ming dynasty, rockets constantly shooting off without anyone being able to say "what darkness they enlighten, or why."[250]

Malraux was something of both a genius and a charlatan. Perhaps he was above all a brilliant phoney, a poser, drugged to his eyeballs, a great traveler in the absurd, professing theories that were as grandiose as they were incomprehensible. In *Les chênes qu'on abat,* he cannot stop playing Malraux. One imagines the look on Yvonne's face; she didn't much care for him, thinking he had the shady air of a hothead,[251] and the General's malicious way of seeing things.

Malraux did in fact resemble a court jester; but he was also, and especially, a great writer whose reputation suffered from his unfailing loyalty to de Gaulle. The latter would not have entrusted cultural affairs to a simple entertainer, and he certainly would not have had him seated on his right hand at the table of the Council of Ministers. He admired the novelist, and even the author of the *Miroir des limbes* and the *Psychologie de l'art,* at the same time that he was grateful to him for his loyalty. Malraux demanded nothing; and he was incapable of doing harm. Jean Cau, after making fun of him, recognizes that "This man is very kind, very gentle, very naïvely pure. I see that, and he does not conceal—this is infinitely rare—any nastiness or violence. He simply resounds with purity and sincerity."[252] The apostle was, moreover, trustworthy. De Gaulle knew he could count on him, even when there were setbacks and failures. Neither the adventure of the RPF nor the referendum lost in 1969 led Malraux to distance himself from the General. And yet, he would have had an interest in doing so. Hadn't he become the target of the communists and the left-wing intelligentsia, even though before the war he had attended the meeting of anti-fascist writers? By rallying to de Gaulle, he had donned the unenviable costume of the renegade, before becoming, in May 1968, the very incarnation of the square, the old fool who doesn't get it. De Gaulle saw things differently. He knew that Malraux was still on the left, which, moreover, the minister of Cultural Affairs was to demonstrate by the policy that he pursued under the Fifth Republic and that is finally being re-evaluated.[253] He alone represented Gaullism's left wing, the proof that the regime was neither left nor right, but rather transcended French divisions.

In Malraux, de Gaulle esteemed the companion and the honorable man, in spite of his compromises with the truth, his mythomania, and his fantastic inventions; and above all he admired the writer. When one day he was asked what he thought about Malraux's work, he replied, out of the blue: "Foggy, with periods of clear skies."[254] One could not be closer to the truth, but in the *Mémoires d'espoir*, de Gaulle is not stingy with his praise. Referring to the Council of Ministers, he writes: "Across from me is Michel Debré. On my right, I have, and will always have, André Malraux. Having at my side this brilliant friend who loves exalted destinies makes me feel that I am thereby shielded from the commonplace. The idea that this incomparable witness has of me helps strengthen me. I know that in discussions, when the subject is serious, his trenchant judgment will help me dissipate the shadows."[255] At his side, Malraux was the writer-confidant in whom, moreover, he found a reflection of his own heroic literary and poetic conception of political action. Not enough attention has been given to the fact that the most inspired of de Gaulle's speeches—"Paris! Violated Paris! Broken Paris! But Paris liberated!" is echoed in Malraux's most inspired speech—"Enter here, Jean Moulin, with your terrible cortege." The inspiration is the same, addressing the summits in familiar terms and taking pleasure in the tragic.

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ULTIMATELY, MALRAUX WAS this Alexander's Aristotle after all. Although de Gaulle's entourage was small—we might add Mauriac, of course—it was larger than Napoleon's. In the Emperor's wake we find a few figures who have now been forgotten, such as the dramatist Arnault, or Fontanes, a Voltairean poet whom the Revolution had brought back, along with many others, to religion, and whom Napoleon made the grand master of the University; but Malraux is one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, while Fontanes is a second-rate author who has rightly been forgotten. Napoleon could have added the Malrauxs of his time to his crown. We think, of course, of Mme de Staël and Chateaubriand who, before they became his implacable opponents, did not spare their efforts to win the master's esteem. For a long time, Mme de Staël wanted to believe, despite being rebuffed, that "Bonaparte loves the Enlightenment," and that since he loved the Enlightenment, he could not help also loving her.[256] She was annoyed by her own awkwardness: "What can I say," she told his brother Lucien, "I become stupid in front of your brother because I am so eager to please him."[257] Even her book *De la littérature,* with which Bonaparte was very unhappy, was not an attack on him. In it she celebrated the merits of Ossian in order to please him, and if she included a long development directed against military despotism, that was also because the First Consul liked to emphasize the civilian nature of his power.[258] As for Chateaubriand, he dedicated the second edition of the *Génie du christianisme* (1803) to the new master, adopting the language of a true courtier:

> Citizen First Consul, you have been so kind as to take under your protection this edition of the *Génie du christianisme;* it is a further testimony to the favor that you grant to the illustrious cause that is triumphing in the shelter of your power. One cannot but recognize in your destinies the hand of that Providence that distinguished you long ago for the accomplishment of its marvelous designs. Peoples look upon you; France, enlarged by your victories, has placed its hopes in you, since you have based on religion the foundations of the state and of your prosperities. Continue to hold out a helping hand to the thirty million Christians who pray for you at the feet of the altars that you have returned to them.[259]

This is "beautiful" in the same way as Mauriac's fawning in his *De Gaulle.* Chateaubriand was rewarded with a minor role in the legation in Rome, where he had to carry out little tasks under the orders of Bonaparte's uncle, Bishop Fesch. He was mortified. The execution of the Duke of Enghien came at just the right time. Appointed in the interim to a post in the Valais, Chateaubriand refused it and departed, slamming the door behind him. Mme de Staël took longer to join the opposition; despite threats and harassment by the police, she still hoped to convince a man who in the meantime had had himself crowned emperor to become the constitutional monarch for whom she would provide inspiration. Heine was exaggerating a little when he wrote: "When the lovely lady noticed that she was making no headway with her importunities, she did what women do in cases like this: she threw herself body and soul into the opposition, spoke out against the Emperor, against his brutal, ungallant domination, and declaimed so much and so loudly that the police ended up banning her from the country."[260] Napoleon was at least as responsible for this as she was, and in the *Memorial* he is not very charitable toward her. It was not that he couldn't have won over the two greatest minds of his time, or didn't know how to do it; he just didn't want to.

Napoleon believed that he did not need poets to sing his saga. He undertook to do that himself, and did it rather well. To unruly writers he preferred composers and architects who wrote operas for him and built monuments to his glory. Besides, he distrusted literary people, who tended to be ungrateful and seditious. Wasn't it common knowledge that the Enlightenment had prepared the way for the Revolution and the fall of the throne? Hadn't the philosophes made themselves a power to rival that of the king? Weren't the representatives of "public opinion" self-proclaimed? Hadn't the past century seen "the consecration of the writer" and the emergence of a spiritual power that, like the pope of the year 1000, sought to judge the sovereigns themselves? More prosaically, Napoleon knew the role played by men of letters—second-rate writers and journalists—in the Revolution. More particularly, in the case of Mme de Staël he was not unaware of the intrigues through which she had tried in 1792 to advance her lover at that time, Narbonne, to take power, nor of those through which she had favored Talleyrand under the Directory before throwing into the ring, at the time of the Consulate, her latest puppet, Benjamin Constant.[261] She reminded him of the rebellious women of the seventeenth century who were ready to burn down the kingdom provided that their champions were thereby covered with glory. Just as he refused to reopen the parliamentary tribune, which had lent itself so well to escalations during the revolutionary decade, he refused to restore to writers the political role they had played for half a century. His point of view was not so far from Tocqueville's analysis of the reasons that opposed literature to politics at the end of the Old Regime:

> Writers provided not only their ideas to the people who made [the revolution]; they gave it their temperament and their mood. [. . .] On reading them, the whole nation ended up contracting the instincts, the turn of mind, the tastes, and even the natural failings of those who wrote; so that when it finally had to act, it transported into politics all the habits of literature. When one studies the history of our revolution, one sees that it was carried out in precisely the same spirit that caused so many abstract books on government to be written. The same attraction to general theories, complete systems of legislation and exact symmetry in laws; the same scorn for existing facts; the same confidence in theory; the same taste for the unusual, the ingenious, and the new in institutions. [. . .] What a frightening spectacle! Because what is a good quality in a writer is sometimes a vice in a statesman, and the same things that have often caused fine books to be written can lead to great revolutions.[262]

The proscription of Mme de Staël, which often scandalizes people, had no other motivation. But Napoleon paid a high price for putting her on the index. It inspired in the author of *Corinne* the terrible posthumous indictment of *Dix années d'exil.* Chateaubriand broke with Napoleon as early as July 1807, in the *Mercure de France.* The attack took the form of a simple paragraph in a long review of a book by Alexandre de Laborde on Spain: "When, in the silence of abjection, all we hear resounding is the slave's chain and the voice of the informer; when everything trembles in front of the tyrant, and it is as dangerous to court his favor as to deserve to lose it, the historian appears, entrusted with the task of avenging peoples. Nero prospers in vain, Tacitus has already been born in the Empire."[263] The bulletin announcing the victory at Friedland appeared in the same issue. Napoleon was at the height of his power; he could easily have ignored these lines and even admired their style. Instead, he had Chateaubriand threatened and shut down the *Mercure.*

Napoleon was never able to remove the mask of an enemy of literature and of an "ideophobe" that writers had put on him. He could call for the help of people like Monge, Laplace, Fontaine, Gros, Ingres, David, Gérard, Paisiello, Lesueur, or Méhul, but these celebrities in the sciences, music, painting, or architecture could not compete with the authors that he had deliberately kept at a distance and then ostracized. Chateaubriand repeated it in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe:* thought had been Napoleon's enemy, because he had shown himself to be the enemy of intelligence:

> The literature that expresses the new era [. . .] was used only by the opposition. It consisted of Mme de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Lemercier, Bonald, and also me. The change in literature that the nineteenth century boasts about came to it from emigration and exile. [. . .] One part of the human spirit, the part that deals with transcendent matters, advanced alone with a steady pace toward civilization; unfortunately, the glory of knowledge was not unstained: people such as Laplace, Lagrange, Monge, Chaptal, Berthollet, all these marvels who used to be proud democrats, became Napoleon's most obsequious servants. It has to be said to the honor of letters: the new literature was free, science was servile.[264]

If "the Ogre" prevented writers from exercising at the time the political influence to which they aspired, he could not keep them from also conquering an empire—and one more durable than his own. Wasn't Mme de Staël's life "like a great empire that she was constantly busy, no less than that other conqueror, completing and expanding,"[265] an empire of the mind whose only equivalent was the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* the "Napoleon and I" in which the two lives of the author and the hero correspond to and oppose one another?

The indictment brought by Mme de Staël and Chateaubriand accredited the idea that ultimately there was something in Napoleon that was not entirely French, because under his regime belles-lettres had been persecuted. There is a logical link between this accusation against the situation in which literature was put and the vitriolic attack on "the fatal foreigner" in *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons.*

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Napoleon was an authentic writer who did not like writers, except for those recruited to serve him. De Gaulle was a writer who was, if not mediocre, at least laborious, and he may have liked writers so much only because he knew that he would never really be one. Adrien Le Bihan emphasizes this: neither Mauriac nor Malraux ever clearly said what they thought of the General's work. Malraux arranged matters so that he never had to answer de Gaulle's requests for an opinion; Mauriac added a discreet reservation to a vague eulogy. Although Mauriac did not hesitate to compare the General's style with that of Bossuet and Chateaubriand, and found in some of his pages "Pascal's style," he immediately added: "what French style would de Gaulle not have made his own? They all belong to him, even if he does not master all of them equally."[266] Perhaps both Mauriac and Malraux shared the opinion of Marcel Arland, whose frankness de Gaulle did not hold against him, even when he criticized the *Mémoires de guerre:* "too many logicians' scruples . . . monotonous articulation . . . a touching persistence, in a great head of state, of a barracks poet. . . . [But] even when we discern in it effort or the memory of academic disciplines, the *Mémoires de guerre* strikes us less by its naturalness than by the elevation of the tone. . . . It seems that in de Gaulle, grandeur is natural."[267]

De Gaulle's work is not free of dross. Adrien Le Bihan has made an inventory of it, and if one seeks a more abundant harvest, it suffices to read Jean-François Revel's *Le Style du Général* or Jacques Laurent's truculent *Mauriac sous de Gaulle.* But in his work we also find grandeur, and not only that somewhat pompous, starchy, bloated elevation that is often denounced in him, but a true grandeur such as we find in particular in his portraits of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Pétain—"old age is a disaster"—or in the portrait of President Lebrun, which is as laconic as it is complete—"Basically, as a head of state, he lacked two things: that he be a leader; that there be a state"—without forgetting, of course, his portrait of Stalin:

> Stalin was possessed by the will to power. Accustomed, by a lifetime of conspiracies, to mask his features and his soul, to dispense with illusions, pity, sincerity, to see in each man an obstacle or a danger, in him, everything was maneuver, distrust, obstinacy. [. . .] A communist

> dressed as a marshal, a dictator concealed in his ruses, a conqueror with a friendly air, he worked hard to deceive people. But his passion was so fierce that it often showed through, not without a kind of saturnine charm.[268]

With the experienced eye of the man who holds power, de Gaulle had judged the red czar more accurately than the unfortunate author Romain Rolland, who had been duped by the wily Georgian, who put him in his pocket from the outset by greeting him as the "world's greatest writer."[269] We find in Napoleon nothing comparable to the portraits painted by de Gaulle, not even that of Kléber, "the Nestor of the army," even though Sainte-Beuve considered it a model of the genre.[270] But in de Gaulle's work, we never find the equivalent of the 30th bulletin of the Grande Armée dictated by Napoleon on the day after the Battle of Austerlitz:

> That evening (4 December, 1805), [Napoleon] wanted to visit on foot and incognito all the bivouacs; but he had hardly set out before he was recognized. It would be impossible to describe the soldiers' enthusiasm when they saw him. In an instant, beacons of straw were lit atop thousands of poles, and 80,000 men presented themselves before the Emperor, saluting him with acclamations; some to celebrate the anniversary of his coronation, others saying that the army would give its bouquet to the Emperor the next day. [. . .] The Emperor said, as he entered his bivouac, which consisted of a poor, roofless straw hut that the grenadiers had made for him: "This is the finest evening of my life, but I am sorry to think that I will lose a great many of these brave people. I feel, by the pain that it causes me, that they are truly my children; and to tell the truth, I sometimes reproach myself for having this feeling, because I fear that it will end up making me incapable of waging war.[271]

Here we see the whole difference between the classical grandeur of Charles de Gaulle's prose and the Napoleonic sublime that sets the imagination on fire. But whatever the defects and merits of each of them, what they wrote will never make people forget what they did, or what they were.

Chapter Five

The Heroes' Sepulcher

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It all began with a vow. In 1744, right in the middle of the War of the Austrian Succession, Louis XV fell gravely ill. He was at that time in Metz. His condition grew worse, to the point that people feared for his life. His subjects prayed for him and the devout in his entourage begged him finally to agree to confess his sins and repudiate his mistress. He preferred to say a prayer to St. Genevieve: if he survived this trial, he vowed to dedicate a new church to the patron saint of Paris to replace the old abbey church that was threatening to collapse. Once he had recovered, the king soon returned to the petty vices from which he suffered without really repenting them, but he did not forget his promise. Jacques-Germain Soufflot, a protégé of Mme de Pompadour, was assigned to draw up the plans for the new church, which the king wanted to be monumental. Construction was far from finished when Louis the Bien-Aimé—who had in the meantime become Louis the Mal-Aimé—died in 1774, and work on the project was still going on when the French Revolution broke out.[1]

Hardly had the church been consecrated before the Constituent Assembly changed its purpose. The representatives were then reeling from the death of Mirabeau. Wanting to pay homage to their colleague and refusing to listen to the rumors of corruption and even treachery that were circulating about him, they decided that his body would be interred in the crypt of the St. Genevieve church, which was at the same time transformed into a sepulcher dedicated to great men. The Assembly had prudently reserved the right to choose the heroes to which the country would pay homage. It made parsimonious use of this right. It has to be said that the history of the Pantheon began in a calamitous way: Voltaire's ashes had been brought to lie alongside those of Mirabeau, but a few months were enough to make this new occupant burdensome. When the monarchy was overthrown in 1792, proof of ties between Voltaire and the Court was revealed. A commission was created to prosecute posthumously the former great man, who nonetheless remained in the Pantheon until the inquest had reached its conclusions.[2] It was very embarrassing. The times were turbulent, reputations ephemeral. After this failed beginning, the successors of members of the Constituent Assembly of 1789 were in no hurry to give Voltaire a companion in eternity. More than two years went by before Le Peletier de Saint Fargeau, a representative in the Convention who was stabbed by a royalist on the same day that Louis XVI was executed, entered the Pantheon. The fall of Robespierre in July 1794 was fatal for Le Peletier. Since the Incorruptible and his partisans had made Le Peletier a hero, the latter's tomb was removed from the crypt and replaced by those of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Marat. If Marat, who had been assassinated in 1793, made such a belated entry into the Pantheon, it was because Robespierre had always detested him. But the timing was bad. Only a few months after 9 Thermidor, it was a time for the denunciation of the crimes committed during the Terror. Marat's diatribes against the treacherous and the lukewarm were no longer in fashion. Hardly had "the Friend of the People" entered the Pantheon before he, too, was expelled from it.[3] Those who ripped him out of it probably did not remember that he had rejected in advance the "honor" of lying for eternity alongside the false great men and enemies of the people who he was sure would soon fill the crypt of the former church of St. Genevieve, even declaring that he would prefer "never to die rather than to have to fear such a cruel outrage."[4] Hadn't the representatives set themselves up as the "arbiters of fame and distributors of certificates of immortality," thus usurping a power that could belong only to citizens? And weren't they necessarily wielding this power in accord with their interests at the moment and to the benefit of their friends and clients?[5] Subsequent events proved him right, and as a member of the Convention declared when it was decided to expel Marat, wasn't it necessary, on reflection, to "let public opinion judge men who, in a moment of enthusiasm, had been thought great?"[6] The debate was only beginning.

The public was amused by the comings and goings of these ephemeral heroes who entered and left the Pantheon without having the time, so to speak, to catch their breath. At the end of the revolutionary decade, only Voltaire and Rousseau were resident in this temple that people didn't know what to do with. We imagine them looking at one another like china dogs and ruminating on their old grievances.

The Napoleonic regime began by restoring St. Genevieve to its original religious purpose. First, considerable work had to be done to strengthen the dome, which was about to fall in,[7] but in February1806 instructions signed by the Emperor ordered "this church to be dedicated to the burial of senators, great officers of the Legion of Honor, and generals and other public officials who have served the state well."[8] Simultaneously a church, a sepulcher, and an annex to the museum of French monuments—funerary monuments proceeding from destroyed or closed churches were supposed to be stored there—between 1806 and 1815 the Pantheon received no less than forty new occupants—more than half of the total of those chosen for it up to the present—French and foreigners, civilians and soldiers, most of them not well known and usually buried without any particular ceremony.[9]

As we might expect, the Restoration, succeeding the Empire, had little desire to perpetuate a ritual that was so revolutionary in origin: the Pantheon was therefore given back to the Church. To believers who were offended by the presence of Voltaire beneath their feet, Louis XVIII replied: "Leave him alone, he is punished enough by having to listen to mass every day."[10] The doors of the monument were subsequently closed for almost sixty years. It sat there, aground in the middle of Paris like a ship of stone that no one any longer visited. That has hardly changed. Few visitors venture into this frozen, and freezing, place. The Pantheon, "a living place of national memory?" Mona Ozouf asks. No, it is a "dead site of the national imagination," a "temple of the void."[11] "To the Great Men from the Grateful Country," we read on the Pantheon's pediment. A strange kind of gratitude! In it one feels the cold of death. Here, eternity smells like punishment. The premises are partly responsible for this: "a bit of a bastard Rome, both ancient and Jesuit, plopped down out of the way on the hill, from which life has flowed down from every side toward the low slopes,"[12] Julien Gracq said. And another writer, in a somewhat less ornate style:

> A lifetime stock of material for nightmares, Gambetta's heart . . . a few little republican and secular bones . . . debris from the Empire . . . the frescoes of Puvis [de Chavannes]! Seen from outside, it is still more horrible, and I think that at night it is even worse, with that impression of mineral emptiness that certain deserted places in East Berlin secrete, an enormous, monumental fear, as if the belt of façades that encircles it were conspiring to keep the dead inside the necropolis located on this scabby plateau.[13]

How can one not feel compassion for those who repose there? We recall the sad episode of the "Pantheonization" of Alexandre Dumas in 2002, because a president of the Republic had decreed that it was finally time that the nation granted "one of the most turbulent and talented of its children his full place."[14] The father of the *Three Musketeers* would surely have laughed at this Ubu-like decree—which was also odious because it relegated Dumas to a "negritude" that had scarcely tormented him during his lifetime—had this decision not resulted in his removal from his burial place in Villers-Cotterêts, where he lay, in accord with his wishes, alongside his relatives.[15] On this occasion, the Fifth Republic did not show the delicacy that in 1907 had led the Third Republic not to separate the chemist Marcellin Berthelot from his wife, Sophie, whose death had pained him so much that he had died of sorrow,[16] and in 1949 led the Fourth Republic to respect the last wishes of Victor Schoelcher, who wanted to be buried next to his father. The body of Dumas now lies between those of Hugo and Zola. There is worse company, it is true. When all is said and done, the history of this "gloomy tomb" is short.[17] It consists almost entirely in a single date that sums up its—rare—great moments: that of Victor Hugo's interment on 1 June 1885. Maurice Agulhon writes:

> Two years earlier, Gambetta's death had already imposed on Paris an immense, secular funeral procession. Victor Hugo was going to redouble the triumph. Then, after the procession, there would be the tomb. A beautiful monument, like a hundred others, at Père Lachaise?

> That relative banality was not grand enough for such an extraordinary memory. Then the Republican party proposed the Pantheon.[18]

Was Père Lachaise banal? All through the nineteenth century, this cemetery in the twentieth arrondissement had been the site of demonstrations occasioned by the funerals of great liberal or republican leaders. More than once the funerals had degenerated into riots. No, it was certainly not a banal place. No more at that time than it is today. One gets lost in the labyrinth of Père Lachaise, but the dead don't disappear there. "I strolled through the lanes," Zola wrote after a visit to Alfred de Musset's tomb. "What a thrilling silence, what penetrating odors, what cool air traversed by warmer puffs that come from no one knows where [. . .]. One senses that a whole people sleeps there in this living and painful earth beneath the stroller's feet. From each plant in the beds, from each crack in the paving stones, there escapes a vague breath that lingers on the soil with confused murmurs. The dead were joyous at that time, they were warm, and they were thanking the springtime."[19] Not so long ago, Musset's and Benjamin Constant's tombs were still always adorned with fresh flowers. Victor Hugo, for his part, sleeps in the middle of a desert of stone that is not traversed by any "vague breath," but being "ceremonial and ceremonious" by temperament, he had long known not only that he would be put there, but also that he would be at home there.[20] It is true that his burial was the occasion for a grandiose ceremony. Two million people, it is said, accompanied his remains from the Arc de Triomphe, where the coffin had been placed on top of an immense catafalque, to the Pantheon, where it was taken down into the crypt. Never, or almost never, had anyone witnessed such a spectacle.[21] It took eight hours for the procession to reach its destination, and no fewer than nineteen speeches were given. The Republic, which was then triumphant, was celebrating its own advent through the funeral of the man who had not only ended up incarnating its values but whose history had also summed up a whole century.[22] There was also a crowd for Zola's entrance into the Pantheon in 1908 and for that of Jaurès in 1924, but in both cases the spell had already been broken. Maurice Barrès opposed the "pantheonization" of Zola in a speech that does him no honor—"You have put Zola in the Pantheon, you are dishonoring the Pantheon!"[23]—and both Action Française and the communist party demonstrated against Jaurès's burial in the Pantheon. The other "fortunate" elect subsequently made more discreet entrances. The history of the Pantheon was already coming to an end. What entrances are remembered, apart from that of Jean Moulin, who was escorted to his last resting place by an inspired Malraux?[24] Figures whose names have been forgotten or whose quality as "great men" is not immediately obvious, a rather lackluster "Third Republic museum," "a learned reunion of prizewinners,"[25] an "Ecole normale of the dead."[26] There are now a few truly great men among them, Marshal Lannes, Jean Moulin, and Pierre Brossolette, but how could what they have that is exceptional not fade in this kolkhoz where true and false heroes, civil servants and professors, scientists and writers are doomed to cohabit for eternity?

The cult of great men imagined by the Revolution never won people's hearts and minds, and the cold ceremonies organized in 2015 for the last four entrants will certainly not finally breathe life into it.[27] And to reinvent this "secular pile," as Léon Daudet maliciously calls it,[28] no one should count, either, on the report written a few years ago by Philippe Bélaval at the request of the president of the Republic. Among other insignificant or ludicrous proposals, this report suggested giving priority to "women of the twentieth century who distinguished themselves by their courage and the tenacity of their republican commitment to the service of the transformation of society." As Isabelle Marchandier pointed out in the issue of *Valeurs actuelles* for 30 January 2014, in that case, Mme de Staël, who nonetheless meets all the requirements, and has more than enough talent, will not be entering the Pantheon any time soon. In this regard, one thinks of what Joseph de Maistre wrote about the failure of the French Revolution's civic ceremonies:

> Every year, in the name of *Saint* John, of *Saint* Martin, *Saint* Benedict, etc., the people gather around a rustic temple: they arrive animated by a joy that is noisy but innocent. Religion sanctifies joy, and joy embellishes religion: the people forget their sufferings; they think, as they depart, about the pleasure they will have on the same day the following year, and that day is for them a significant date. Alongside this tableau, place that of the masters of France, which an unprecedented revolution has endowed with full powers, and who cannot organize a simple festival. They spend lavishly, summon all the arts to

> their aid, and the citizen stays home, or responds to the call only in order to laugh at the organizers.[29]

That sums up the history of the Pantheon: dull and cold like grandeur when it is not incarnated. And yet the destiny of the temple on the hill of Saint Genevieve nonetheless remains singular, if we think of the success of other great symbols of the revolutionary period, beginning with the tricolor flag and "La Marseillaise." However, both of these refer to a history that is less narrow, less selective, less sectarian than the one of which the Pantheon is supposed to be the memory. The illustrious dead who repose there incarnate a history of France that does not go back beyond 1789. Although in 1791 the Constituent Assembly reserved for itself the right to admit to the Pantheon a "few great men who died before the Revolution," it had exercised this right only in favor of Voltaire and Rousseau, and only because they both symbolized the philosophical pedigree the revolutionaries claimed and not a *history* they had dismissed: didn't the Revolution say it had invented an entirely new world? The tricolor flag undoubtedly became the symbol of the new France fighting against the old France gathered around the white flag of the royalty, but starting from a combination of colors that had initially sought to unite the France of the past with the France of the future, the colors of liberty—the blue and red of the city of Paris—with the white of the monarchy.[30] As for "La Marseillaise," that war song for the army of the Rhine's soldiers, it soon became a patriotic hymn that could be appropriated by those who felt hardly any sympathy for 1789 and its consequences. The "impure blood" had originally been that of the aristocrats and the partisans of the Old Regime, but when the first battles on foreign soil took place, it became more generally the blood of the enemies of the nation, of France.[31] In the three colors, as in the national anthem, resound the echoes of a history longer than that of the Revolution, the elements of a reconciliation under the sign of patriotism. There is nothing of the sort in the Pantheon, whose memory "is not the national memory, but one of the political memories offered the French,"[32] the history of France reduced to that of 1792 and its sequels.

The revolutionary ambition to begin France all over again by erasing its thousand-year history failed. In the Thermidorian period, people had already begun re-stitching together the torn garment of French history, even if only in order to give the Revolution origins that were older and less fragile than the philosophy of the Enlightenment.

* * *

Great men do not like to be compared with one another. They instinctively reject any idea of a common measure, even with men of their own kind. Isn't the great man—or the hero—the one who, by his courage, audacity, and inflexible will, rises up to oppose apparent inevitabilities and received ideas, to push back limits, those of the possible or of knowledge, that it was thought impossible to cross? Heroism is not only transgressive but also profoundly individual, unique, non-reproducible, incomparable. Just as the saints of religious history who, by renouncing the world, contributed to the invention of the individual in a universe that did not know what an individual free of any shackle and master of his own destiny was,[33] heroes also imply the idea of the sovereign individual, even if they ultimately succumb to the force of circumstances. Their very existence is a protest against fate. They are sui generis. No matter which domain they have excelled in—politics, war, literature, or science—they retain a specific place that belongs only to them.

From the Great Condé[34]—who was compared to Alexander the Great after the victory he won at Rocroi in 1643[35]—to the Sun King, who seized a monopoly on glory, the better to impose the state's authority,[36] and to Corneille's tragedies, the seventeenth century, which was religious and military, had celebrated the cult of heroes who are supposed to have suddenly lost their splendor in the century of the Enlightenment, which was secular and civilian, having been replaced in people's hearts by the Good Samaritan useful to his fellow men. Voltaire was the first to sound the charge, and these lines he wrote in 1735 are often cited: "You know that in my work great men are the first and heroes the last." And he added: "I call great men all those who have excelled in the useful and the pleasant. People who ravage provinces are merely heroes."[37] It would be a mistake to draw definitive conclusions from this distinction between the hero, "the man of the saving instant," and the great man, the product of "cumulative time," the former being defined by his action, the latter by his work.[38] It is true that some of Voltaire's texts—think of *Candide*—contain a definitive condemnation of military heroism and its alleged virtues, but that would be to forget that their author lived, at least through his writing, close to the leading figures whose history he wrote—from the king of Sweden, Charles XII, to Peter the Great and Louis XIV—and that he became an intimate friend of one of the most famous heroes of the century, Frederick the Great. The author of *Candide* liked, more than people say, "heroes and bold actions."[39] Moreover, it was because the life of the Swedish king Charles XII (1682–1718) was incredibly romantic and had everything needed to attract Voltaire's "poetic imagination" that the latter wrote his history.[40] From Charles XII's invasion of Russia to his fall, and then from his exile in Ottoman territory to his reconquest of the Swedish throne and his last war against the czars' empire, it was an unparalleled example of success and failure that certainly places Charles more in the camp of the heroes and the "ravagers" than in that of the great men, but as Voltaire repeatedly says, the king of Sweden had been "excessively great, unfortunate, and mad."[41] That was reason enough for him to interest the historian as much as a figure whose work was less ephemeral but duller. Charles XII was a hero, even if in Voltaire's view he was inferior to that other "hero of the north," his contemporary and adversary Peter the Great. In his *Le Siècle de Louis XIV,* Voltaire noted that:

> Starting in 1700, the north was roiled by two of the most extraordinary men on earth, One was the czar Peter Alexiovitz, emperor of Russia; the other was the young Charles XII. Czar Peter, superior to his century and his nation, was, through his genius and his works, the reformer or rather the founder of his empire. Charles XII, more courageous but less useful to his subjects, born to command soldiers and not peoples, was the leading hero of his time: but he died with the reputation of an imprudent king.[42]

The modernizer of Russia combined with the virtues of the great man the courage, audacity, and will characteristic of the hero. The first lines of Voltaire's *Anecdotes sur le czar Pierre le Grand* (1848) are eloquent:

> Peter I was called the Great because he undertook and did great things that none of his predecessors had thought of. Before him, his people limited themselves to the basic arts taught by necessity. Habit has so much power over men, they desire so little what they do not know,

> and genius develops with such difficulty and is so easily stifled by obstacles, that it seems very likely that all nations remained primitive for thousands of years until men such as Czar Peter came, precisely when it was necessary that they come.[43]

Neither Hegel nor, later, Thomas Carlyle, would have disavowed this definition of the great man or the hero as simultaneously the tool and the midwife of history.[44]

It was after Voltaire that everything changed.

Montesquieu was already more a man of his century than was the author of *Le Siècle de Louis XIV.* Didn't Montesquieu say that despite the marvels he achieved, Charles XII "did not amount to much"?[45] It was now a time for praising private virtues and acts of public generosity as signs of an authentic grandeur. The time for "warrior aristocracies," which royal absolutism had finally subjugated,[46] was over. It was also no longer a time for adventurous and more or less gratuitous undertakings, about which Voltaire said, regarding the Fronde:

> The French [. . .], laughing, rushed to join seditions out of caprice: women were at the head of factions; love made and broke up conspiracies. [. . .] Everyone knows the verses that Duke La Rochefoucauld wrote for the Duchess of Longueville when at the battle of Saint-Antoine he received a musket shot that temporarily blinded him:
>
> To deserve her heart, to please her lovely eyes,
> I made war on kings: I would have made it on the gods.[47]

"Enlightened" monarchs now dreamed of administering their states well, and nobles had been transformed into courtiers. As Chateaubriand was to say, they had passed from the age of honor to that of privileges, pending the age of vanities. The generation of the *philosophes* that succeeded Voltaire's was in accord with these changes. Even if the cult of the fashionable heroes of Antiquity or the seventeenth century had not yet entirely disappeared,[48] criticism became increasingly sharp. Could a society that no longer recognized distinctions of rank continue to celebrate so-called great men without creating disastrous distinctions between citizens? Shouldn't it rather pay homage to more authentic forms of grandeur? Didn't the activity of the virtuous citizen, of the good paterfamilias, surpass the epic achievements of Alexander?[49]

In 1784 it was this "righteous citizen," a modest, anonymous, even obscure hero, whom Bernardin de Saint-Pierre put at the center of his "Elysium," a plan for a leafy pantheon scattered with statues where the great ordinary man, so to speak, would be surrounded by mothers no less anonymous, and farther on, much farther on, by the circle of the illustrious defenders of the country, the men of letters and inventors.[50] Bernardin de Saint-Pierre rejected inequality and the separation that posterity introduces between people. True grandeur, he said, does not separate people, it brings them together and even makes them more equal, because it lies within each of them. So down with the providential man of the classical age, who revealed exceptional gifts as a result of extraordinary circumstances and was separated from his fellow men by an incommensurable distance. To this grandeur that singles out individuals, the author of *Paul et Virginie* opposed another kind of grandeur that brings them together, thus replacing the heroism based on exceptional qualities by "a heroism without qualities, without attributes [and] perfectly ordinary."[51]

As we have seen, the French Revolution was initially on Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's side. It dreamed of establishing a society of equal citizens who, without being perfectly virtuous, would at least be virtuous enough to silence their own individual interests. Moreover, it placed at the center of its Elysium the people itself, in a body, collective and anonymous. But the Revolution never ceased to see the emergence of heroes who, despite the ephemeral character of their "reign," seemed nonetheless to contradict the ways it imagined its own history. The phenomenon was disconcerting. What should be thought about the individuals who, from Marat to Robespierre, were fleetingly invested with the power to incarnate the sovereign people? Wasn't this the proof that the old reflexes were still operative? The Pantheon had seemed a lesser evil: if the need to admire was so imperious that people could not forego heroes, then the way to obviate the dangers of admiration, fraught with usurpation, was to reserve the nation's homage for its dead heroes and to offer them for admiration in groups, even in crowds, to avoid running the risk of seeing the people attach itself to the memory of a "select, unique, and solitary individual."[52]

That was undoubtedly why the truly great men in the history of France over the past two centuries are not buried in the Pantheon. Neither Napoleon, nor Clemenceau, nor de Gaulle is interred there. Clemenceau found at home, near Monchamps in Vendée, a rural burial place like the one of which Jaurès feared he would someday be deprived in order to put him—a disaster can always happen—in the Pantheon,[53] while Napoleon preferred Les Invalides, and de Gaulle preferred Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, final resting places that better reflected their singularity and perpetuated their legends.

There is another explanation: although the Pantheon was intended to be the conservatory of national memory, it was conceived from the outset as a burial place rivaling Saint-Denis, destined to supplant the latter and thus to give material form to the new beginning of the history of France in 1789. The comparison with Westminster Abbey is eloquent: there, in the "labyrinth of tombs," as it was called by Chateaubriand (who had himself locked inside it for a night so he could spend it among "these illustrious effigies),[54] it is the whole history of Great Britain that is gathered in a single place, the kings and queens up to Charles II, admirals and aristocrats, writers and composers, martyrs, prelates and priors, ministers and soldiers. If burials there have become less frequent over time, that is simply because there is not enough room. Compared with the very classical rigor of the French Pantheon—its "Roman physiognomy,"[55] as one visitor put it—Westminster has the charm of an English garden. One could almost get lost in it. Many a commemorative plaque, statue, or chapel recalls the memory of someone not buried in the Abbey. There are all kinds of styles, sublime and less felicitous, and questionable choices (Robert Burns but not Byron, Sheridan but not Shelley). However, the fact remains that Westminster is in a way a combination of Saint-Denis and the Pantheon in a single church, a testimony to a history that is also marked by ruptures (the English revolutions of the seventeenth century, not to mention earlier ones), but that merges in this stone structure dedicated to England and its ex-empire.[56] The proof of this is that Oliver Cromwell and a few other leaders of the first English revolution, that of 1642, who had been interred at Westminster were removed from it after the restoration of 1660, Charles II being reluctant to leave there the remains of the men who had decapitated his predecessor. But they returned—surreptitiously, of course—in the form of a plaque reminding visitors of them and testifying to their participation in the common history. Adolphe Blanqui, the brother of the revolutionary, visited London in 1823 and was hardly exaggerating when he wrote, regarding the abbey where the British both crowned and buried their kings:[57]

> Twenty revolutions have taken place below its walls; but yesterday's hero has never been exhumed by his successor. Each party has recognized genius when it was encountered in the opposing party. Republicans lie there alongside royalists, Catholics alongside Protestants.[58]

The Pantheon, on the contrary, reflects the rifts among the French; hence it was logical that those whose main claim to posterity was to have tried to surmount these rifts should have preferred to be buried in a place that would better indicate their exceptional nature: one of the seventeenth century's most exemplary monuments for some of them, and simple French soil for others.

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Although we cannot say that Napoleon explicitly designated Les Invalides as his final resting place, he was much concerned with this monument, which Montesquieu called "the most respectable place on Earth" and which illustrated, perhaps as much as Versailles, the reign of Louis XIV. Hardly had he taken control before he attempted, unsuccessfully, to evict the mutilated soldiers who were housed there. He had his reasons for sending to Versailles those whom he called "the country's most cherished children";[59] he wanted to transform Les Invalides into a temple to the glory of the French armies and, of course, to himself, who would now be its living incarnation.[60] Less than a year after 18 Brumaire, he had Turenne's remains transferred to Les Invalides. This was a way of making amends for the outrages the marshal's body had suffered during the Revolution (removed from Saint-Denis, it had been sent to the Jardin des Plantes, where little scamps had pulled out his teeth and sold them) of paying homage to the military leader whom the future emperor admired most,[61] and, finally, of showing that with his accession to power, France was reconnecting with its glorious past. The ceremony was imposing, and the glory of Turenne was an opportunity to extol that of the First Consul himself.[62] Bonaparte's favorite architects, Percier and Fontaine, set to work. There was a lot to do. Les Invalides had to be repaired and major works undertaken in response to the general's intentions. To some extent, Turenne played the role that Voltaire had played at the Pantheon, though in a quite different spirit. The care with which the First Consul studied the plans that were submitted to him and followed the progress of the works is easy to understand. Bonaparte could not help being attracted to Les Invalides. What place other than that one, with the very classical rigor of its architecture, could have illustrated more exactly the association of a military grandeur and administrative wisdom—Marengo and the Civil Code—that characterized the Consulate?[63]

When Napoleon was proclaimed emperor, the Council of State was called upon to discuss the organization of the coronation. The Emperor took part in some of these discussions, in which the possibility of a ceremony outside Paris was considered. Perhaps in Lyon, which had proved to be more loyal than the capital, where General Moreau, convicted as Cadoudal's accomplice, had had no lack of supporters. Or in Aix-la-Chapelle, the burial place of Charlemagne, as whose successor Napoleon had been presented for months.[64] If Paris won out—and no one really doubted that it would—the members of the Council of State had a preference for the Champ-de-Mars, where the coronation of the new emperor in the presence of the people would renew the ephemeral pact between the king and the French at the time of the festival of the Federation on 14 July 1789. That was, in their view, a way of strengthening the ties between Napoleon and the Revolution, and of dissipating the concerns of those who suspected the new emperor of wanting to turn his back on 1789 and establish himself as the successor of the Bourbons. Napoleon objected that at the time set for the ceremony—the date of 9 November 1804, the fifth anniversary of 18 Brumaire, had been chosen—the weather might be too bad for it to take place outside. It was then that the idea of having the ceremony in Les Invalides came to the fore. A few weeks later, on 15 July, the Empire's first great representation, the distribution of the Crosses of the Legion of Honor, was organized under the dome. A decree had been prepared: the coronation would take place in Les Invalides. But facts had to be faced: the Saint-Louis des Invalides church could not hold more than two thousand spectators, whereas ten thousand were foreseen for the coronation. Napoleon gave up and proposed Notre-Dame.[65] Had he pretended to prefer Les Invalides because he knew it was impossible and simply in order to impose the cathedral, thus strengthening in advance the religious dimension of the ceremony which would add to the coronation the pope's consecration of the new emperor?[66]

The decision to be buried, when the time came, in Saint-Denis, in the abbey church where the tombs of the kings of France had been before 1793, participated in the same spirit of the reconciliation of memories.[67] Wasn't Napoleon the founder of a fourth dynasty destined to succeed that of the Capetians? Just as, by having himself consecrated by the pope, he had deprived the Bourbons of the religious legitimacy they claimed, why not supplant them even in death? As Victor Hugo was to write:

> Of my family
> This great tomb shall be the door;
> I wish to succeed the kings
> Whom I replace even in death.[68]

When the little Napoleon-Charles, the eldest son of Louis Bonaparte and Hortense de Beauharnais, died in The Hague on 5 July 1807, Napoleon gave orders that he be interred in the basilica of Saint-Denis.[69] In this we might see the logical consequence of the consecration, a supplementary step taken toward the dispossession of the Bourbons, an appropriation of a heritage, but ultimately an error. It was in fact, like moving into a house that is not one's own and is so strongly associated with the memory of its former owners that it could never become one's own. Moreover, he sensed this, because having for a moment considered returning to the church the royal tombs that had been removed from it in 1793, he ended up abandoning the idea. What would he, the founder of a brand-new dynasty, be amid this procession of kings with a millennial history? One thinks of what Thiers said about the reestablishment, in 1804, of the hereditary monarchy to the benefit of Napoleon. The latter, the historian of the Empire tells us, then committed a fateful mistake. He compromised himself with regard to the French people by casting doubt on the sincerity of his fidelity to the Revolution without winning the slightest additional esteem on the part of foreign powers:

> This soldier, in his natural and simple position of first magistrate of the French Republic, had no equal on Earth, even on the highest thrones. By becoming a hereditary monarch, he was going to be compared with kings, small or great, and constituted as their inferior on one point, that of blood. [. . .] Received into their company and flattered because he was feared, he would be secretly disdained by even the most wretched of them.[70]

Ultimately, Napoleon's fall and the return of the Bourbons saved him by preventing him from ending up in Saint-Denis. The basilica having recovered its royal tombs, the dead Napoleon would have been seen as an intruder, an undesirable parvenu, and assuredly his legend, initially magnified by his captivity on a remote island in the middle of the Atlantic, and then by the splendid isolation of the tomb in Les Invalides, would have suffered from this untimely proximity.

Even as he dreamed of supplanting the Bourbons in death, Napoleon had not forgotten Les Invalides. The vaults of that "Elysium of the brave"[71] were being loaded with flags taken from the enemy and its walls were being covered with plaques in memory of soldiers killed in combat. It is said that Napoleon himself was called "the decorator of Les Invalides."[72] In 1808, Vauban's heart was solemnly placed beneath a bust, across from Turenne's tomb. Two years later, on 6 July, a few days before the first anniversary of the victory at Wagram, the body of Marshal Lannes, who had been mortally wounded at Essling the preceding year, lay in state there.[73] Napoleon had ordered a grandiose funeral ceremony for the man he called "the bravest of all men," his "companion in arms for the past sixteen years," even his "loving friend."[74] But when the time for the funeral came, he did not attend it. To prevent his absence being seen as indifference, he arranged to be in Rambouillet on the day of the ceremony.[75] He had his reasons for doing this. The circumstances were no longer the same. Austria, which was earlier an enemy, had become an ally since he had married one of the daughters of Emperor Francis I. It would be awkward to attend, in the company of Marie-Louise, a funeral celebrating, through the marshal, a victory won over her family.[76] Lannes was the first marshal of the Empire to die in battle. That was also why Napoleon had wanted particular homage to be paid to him. But for all that, there was no question of burying him alongside Turenne. After having lain in state at Les Invalides for four days, his remains were taken to the Pantheon, while the deceased's heart remained at Les Invalides.[77] It is true that other military men had preceded Lannes in the Pantheon, "the burial place of illustrious men," as a newspaper of the time put it,[78] but none of them were as famous as he.[79] Was Napoleon already thinking about Les Invalides as a possible site of his eternal rest, and was he loath to be the second, so to speak, to enter there, and moreover after one of his lieutenants?[80] That is not impossible, especially since the idea of creating a new royal burial site in Les Invalides was not a new one. Louis XIV had already entertained it. The great king had begun by ordering major works to be done at Saint-Denis, so that the kings of the Bourbon line might have a chapel worthy of this name, whereas since Henry IV's death the family's dead had been without a funerary monument, the last one having been built for Henry II in 1559. Since that time, "the former tomb, known as the tomb of ceremonies, in which the body of each king had formerly been temporarily placed on the day of the funeral, and the central part of the crypt, whose lateral arches were walled up, [had become] a vast tomb in which the Bourbons of the elder branch all lay, lined up alongside one another. There were no longer either marbles, or statues, or tombs, but only two lines of leaden coffins placed on iron trestles."[81] Louis XIV commanded François Mansart to add a chapel to the basilica. Although the project was canceled in 1676, the king had already called upon Jules Hardouin-Mansart to construct the dome of Les Invalides. Alain Erlande-Brandenburg has shown that the plan the king selected belonged to a very ancient tradition combining a church, a rotunda, and a mausoleum, in light of which the dome, which otherwise served no obvious purpose, found its function: that of a burial site—a royal one, of course—of which the Sun King would have been the first occupant if, in the last years of the century, he had not abandoned it.[82] Napoleon was thus following in the footsteps of the great king.

Lannes would have been out of place. The only person Napoleon seems to have really wanted to be buried at his side was Duroc. He was three years older than the future Duke of Friuli: Duroc was born in 1772. Since the siege of Toulon in 1793, he had never really left Bonaparte; he had taken part in all the campaigns and all the battles, joining to his immense bravery diplomatic talents that had taken him as far as Russia. It was he who, in 1808, received the king of Spain's abdication. Since Napoleon's consecration, he had directed the Emperor's household. Napoleon had complete confidence in him; he esteemed the servant and loved the man. Duroc was probably the only friend he ever had. He was cut down by a cannon ball at Bautzen on 22 May 1813. Napoleon went to his bedside, where the dying man, terribly mutilated, was strong enough to ask him to leave. The Emperor held his hand. As he left, Caulaincourt tells us, Napoleon wept, something no one had ever seen. Three months later, he returned to the place where Duroc had fallen. The land belonged to a farmer. Napoleon had him come and bought his farm on the spot, authorizing him to remain there on the condition that he have a monument built that would bear this inscription: "Here General Duroc, Duke of Friuli, grand marshal of the palace of Emperor Napoleon, struck by a cannon ball, expired in the arms of his emperor and friend." Events decided otherwise. The Russians, who soon occupied this region, refused to allow the monument to be built. As for Duroc's body, it had been transported to Mainz until the time came for it to be transferred to Les Invalides, where Napoleon had decided to organize in honor of the deceased an imposing ceremony that the end of the Empire, in 1814, prevented. It was only long afterward, in 1847, that Duroc's remains joined those of his master.[83]

The Emperor, sensing that his end was approaching, expressed his last wishes to his intimates. He asked that his body be taken back to France and that his remains be buried in Paris, preferably in the Père Lachaise cemetery, "between Masséna and Lefebvre."[84] He returned to the idea of Saint-Denis. After all, he had also reigned over France. The Bourbons would be honored by making room for him. But he didn't think it would happen, knowing how much fear he inspired in them. If he was refused Paris and Père Lachaise, then why not a symbolic place, "the confluence of the Rhône and the Saône, that is, Lyon, where he had been acclaimed again in 1815?[85] Lastly, he mentioned Corsica, half-heartedly, saying that if it was decided to treat him as a pariah, then he could always be buried in the Ajaccio cathedral where he had been baptized.[86] Not once did he mention the Pantheon. And then, in his last will and testament dated 15 April 1821, he dictated the famous sentence: "I desire that my remains be laid to rest on the banks of the Seine, amid the French people that I have loved so much." This time, no doubt was any longer permitted, it would be Les Invalides, because on the banks of the Seine there was no other place that could receive his body. Perhaps he had always toyed with this idea, because after all, he was no fool; his glory, and hence his power, had been based first of all on military exploits, before any other form of legitimacy:[87] "My power is based on my glory, and my glory on the victories I won,"[88] he said with that lucidity regarding himself that had (almost) always characterized him. He could have found no sepulcher more suitable than the edifice dedicated to military grandeur, the only one that could reconcile the French at that time.

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Charles de Gaulle did not choose the place where he would repose after his death: the cemetery at Colombey-les-deux-Eglises imposed itself on him. In 1934, he had bought in life annuity the property of La Boisserie in this village in Champagne. The general and his wife—as we have said—were looking for a house where their daughter Anne, who had Down syndrome, could be outside without being seen. They had spent time there before the war. The Germans had subsequently pillaged and burned the house. It was in such bad shape that the General, when he resigned his office in January 1946, went to live in Marly until the repair work was finished. When, a few months later, La Boisserie had become habitable again, he set up housekeeping there. Colombey became his island of Elba. Anne died on 6 February 1948. She was not even twenty years old. The General remained inconsolable about the death of this child who, he was to say, had in death finally become "like the others."[89]

De Gaulle was thinking of his daughter first of all when he drew up his last will and testament in 1952. How could he imagine being buried anywhere but at her side, in the little cemetery that was almost adjacent to La Boisserie, that house which, though having no connection with him—none of his ancestors or those of Yvonne was from this region—had become his true home, and in this unknown village that, thanks to him, had been transformed into a place loaded with History? He was sixty-two years old. Time, which had passed so quickly since 1940, seemed to have stopped. His eyesight was deteriorating. He, a man whose constitution was to remain so strong, almost right up to the end, began to think about his demise. The circumstances were not foreign to his thought. He then found himself at the midpoint of an "interior exile" that he could justifiably think might become permanent. His resentment against those who had turned their backs on him, added to his suffering as a father, made him wish to have a funeral and a tomb that no one could exploit. He would not give *them* the satisfaction of paying homage to him after having betrayed him, and thereby to claim his heritage.

Moreover, two precedents provoked him and hastened the writing of his will. First, there was General Leclerc's funeral.[90] De Gaulle, who at that time—late 1947—thought he was about to return to power without difficulty, thanks to a flourishing RPF, had told his close associates how much he disliked these national funerals, which were often imbued with insincerity and hypocrisy. It was torture for him to envisage the prospect of attending ceremonies, first in Notre-Dame, then at the Place de l'Etoile, and finally at Les Invalides, lost among that political class that he detested and that was going to take advantage of the situation to draw attention to itself and, with a multitude of speeches and crocodile tears, to praise the victor at Koufra and the commander of the Second Armored Division as a fine model for France.[91] He refused the invitation that was sent to him, and before anyone else, on 6 December he went to Les Invalides to bow down before the coffin of his old companion in arms, one of the few military men he liked and at the same time admired.[92] Four years later, on 15 January 1952, it was Marshal Jean de Lattre de Tassigny's turn to receive a national funeral. There was an impressive ceremony, attended by Eisenhower and Montgomery, first in Notre-Dame, then in Les Invalides, before the marshal's mortal remains—raised to this dignity on the occasion of his funeral—were taken to Vendée, where they would be interred in the family tomb. Charles de Gaulle attended this homage, in which he saw nothing other than an odious attempt at recuperation. Relations between de Gaulle and "King Jean" had never been serene,[93] but after all it was an insult to the memory of the dead officer to entrust his funeral eulogy to Edouard Herriot. Hadn't that vestige of the Third Republic (interned in Metz because he had claimed, to avoid being sent to a German concentration camp, like Georges Mandel or Léon Blum, to have a "phobia about imprisonment") agreed, in August 1944, a few days before General de Gaulle's entrance into Paris, to be freed by Laval with the consent of the Germans? At that point, "Bougnaparte" (Pierre Laval), at bay, was thinking of reestablishing the parliamentary regime. If the prewar National Assembly were meeting again at the time of the Allies' entrance into Paris, wouldn't that mean the end of the General's ambitions and, for Laval, perhaps an opportunity, if not for a new start, at least for an honorable exit? For his part, Herriot already saw himself as the man who restored the Third Republic. The Germans did not oppose that, and the Americans were for it, because de Gaulle would be the victim of an operation of that kind. The former leader of the "Cartel of the Left[94] was waiting for the moment to move into the residence of the president of the National Assembly. He was already bitterly arguing with Laval over the distribution of portfolios and, joining the useful with the pleasant, summoned his tailor to spruce up his wardrobe while the Allies were approaching Paris, where an insurrection was brewing. If he finally gave up on the idea, that was because the other party leaders—starting with the president of the Senate, Jules Jeanneny—did not follow. He therefore turned away from Laval, without for all that joining the Resistance, as he had been asked to do. The Germans having told him that he could return to Metz, to his comfortable refuge, it now became his dearest wish, and had he not been tricked by his interlocutors, who, instead of giving him asylum, had him arrested and sent to Germany, where the Red Army "liberated" him in 1945, he might have escaped this difficult situation less well: from then on, he, too, could claim to be a victim.[95] And it was this man, without honor, a coward and a traitor, who had been asked to deliver the eulogy of the soldier who had, in the name of France, received the Third Reich's capitulation? It was nauseating. De Gaulle imagined himself in De Lattre's place. He could almost hear the speeches and the eulogies that would resemble the ones that he had just heard. And he had another reason for taking precautions. He saw the funeral, even of a public man, as a "private matter" and a "Christian matter."[96] They belonged to the private realm, to the family circle, and the state had no business getting involved in it or dictating its modalities. The day after De Lattre's funeral, he wrote his will. No, he would not give them an opportunity to appear at his funeral and to parade themselves there at his expense. Rejecting their hypocritical homage, he would be buried at Colombey after an “extremely simple” ceremony organized by his family and his office, a ceremony with which representatives of the three branches of the military might be associated, but without music, bell-ringing, or delegations of state authorities—“Neither president, nor ministers, nor departments of assemblies, nor established bodies”; no site in the church in Colombey would be reserved, no speech would be given, and there would be no posthumous award of a medal; on the other hand, the General wrote, “the men and women of France and of other countries will be permitted, if they wish, to honor my memory by accompanying my body [in silence] to its final resting place.”[97]

An irrevocable decision which he never revisited, even after his return to office in 1958, and a fortiori after his definitive departure in 1969. His wife said how much events had affected him during the last two years of his life. He felt misunderstood—or worse yet, betrayed. He forgot nothing, “the weaknesses of some people, the ambiguous attitude of many people, and the treachery of certain people.”[98] He was done with politics. He thought he had exited history on the day the “no” votes won the referendum—he even said that he died on that day;[99] the time had in fact come for him to enter into posterity forever.

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Obviously, the Emperor was not involved in organizing his own funeral, which took place more than twenty years after his death,[100] but in the end the ceremonial turned out to be worthy of the personage. In it we find in fact the mixture of incomparable grandeur and kitsch that gave its style to his period and of which Ingres’s painting representing Napoleon wearing the outfit he wore on the day of his coronation gives us a more or less correct idea. All that Egyptian, Roman, or Carolingian bric-a-brac made up an “Empire” style that did not survive its inspirer and has not always aged well. However, Napoleon believed it was necessary to lend his very new royalty a little patina. No doubt his victories did more for his renown than the pompous settings with which he decorated his power, but there was something touching about this bad taste redolent of the parvenu. It “humanized” Napoleon, of whom Nietzsche quite rightly said that he was a synthesis of the inhuman and the superhuman;[101] it reduced a little, very little, this gigantic, extraordinary, incomparable personage to the level of common mortals.

It was in 1830 that Victor Hugo—having gotten over the legitimism of his youth—composed the famous verse: "Oh, va! Nous te ferons de belles funerailles!" ("Oh, don't worry! We'll give you a fine funeral!").[102] To tell the truth, the Emperor's loyal followers had not waited for Hugo to be converted to their cause to demand the return of their hero's remains. As early as 14 July 1821, General Gourgaud, one of his companions in exile, presented the chamber with a petition along these lines, but we can imagine that Louis XVIII and then Charles X were not exactly eager to see the awkward body return among the French.

Petition after petition were thus being filed in vain when the revolution of 1830 broke out.[103] Louis-Philippe, who owed his throne to the July uprising, was no more fond of the Emperor than he was of the Bourbons of the elder branch whom he was succeeding. He had always felt that Napoleon had stolen his destiny in 1799, at the time when the collapse of the Directory and a further invasion opened the door to a restoration of the monarchy of which he might have been the beneficiary if, as could then be supposed, France wanted nothing to do with Louis XVI's younger brother. Didn't the Duke of Orléans belong to the royal family, even if he had proved, before 1793, his attachment to the Revolution's liberal ideas? Hadn't he fought, in 1792, a Valmy and at Jemmapes? If he had Bourbon blood in his veins, Mme de Rémusat maliciously remarked, he was also covered with it.[104] Who was more capable than he of incarnating the alliance of monarchy with liberty under the aegis of the Constitution to which the men of 1789 had aspired in vain? But then the Corsican had overtaken him, depriving him of his role and dooming him, perhaps, to an endless exile. He had to wait for thirty years, during which time Napoleon, Louis XVIII, and Charles X succeeded one another. An interminable wait. Having taken refuge in England, then in Sicily, he never ceased to hope that the "very small great man," as he called the Emperor, would fall, and that the French armies would be defeated. Didn't he call the invasion of 1814 "the most beautiful phenomenon that history has to offer?"[105] Since his reconciliation with the Bourbons of the elder branch (February 1800), the son of Philippe Egalité had expiated, as it were, his revolutionary past by means of a relentless hatred of the "usurper" and, by extension, of Napoleonic France, the France, as he called it, "that went barefoot."[106] In 1814, when the Empire fell, he nourished the mad hope that he would be called to the throne, but once again History forgot him and, as he said, "his house." After fifteen years of Empire, he was therefore forced to bide his time for the fifteen years of the Restoration that followed it. He watched for mistakes, and each one delighted him, while every success made him scowl. In 1820, when the birth of the Duke of Bordeaux—known as "the miracle child" because he was born after the assassination of his father the Duke of Berry—seemed to block his path to the throne, he could not hide his resentment. But gradually, he was able to appear as a possible resort. In his home, he brought liberals and people nostalgic for the Empire together with his supporters. Louis XVIII, who detested him, said: "He's not getting anywhere, but I sense that he's on the move." Finally his turn came. Forty years had passed since the meeting of the Estates General in Versailles. And what years! They had made the earth tremble all over the globe. We can understand why the survivors of these incredible events felt a certain fatigue. They wanted to enjoy a well-deserved rest. In their view, this new commotion was to be the last, the belated but definitive fulfillment of the Revolution, which, along with the advent of this liberal prince, was reaching its destination. The year 1830 provided a happy conclusion to 1789, just as in England the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had concluded a cycle begun in 1642 by the revolt against Charles I. This liberal regime, a guarantor of peace abroad and order at home, presented itself as an outcome and an heir to both the former monarchy and the Revolution. Its legacy included both Saint-Denis and the Pantheon, Rocroi and Austerlitz, the kings, the Republic, and the Emperor. Rémusat, the minister of the Interior, summed it up when he proposed to the Chamber that Napoleon's body be brought back to France, since "the monarchy of 1830 is [. . .] the sole and legitimate heir to all the sovereigns in whom France takes pride."[107] As might have been expected, the restored Bourbons refused to have anything to do with the Revolution and the Empire, but that did not prevent either the cult of the Republic or the Napoleonic legend from surviving and rapidly expanding. Ever since the Emperor's death on Saint Helena (1821) and the publication of Las Cases's *Memorial* in 1823, Napoleon was everywhere, in books and songs, in engravings and on plates, in the form of statuettes, busts, pipes, and tapestries. The time when the "dark legend" held sway, after the first abdication in 1814 and again shortly after the Hundred Days,[108] was already far in the past. Prometheus had erased "the Ogre," as Jean Tulard puts it.[109] Savary's gendarmes, the censorship of newspapers, and conscription were forgotten; so were the young people who went to war and were never seen again, along with most of those who returned crippled. What had become almost unbearable for the French in 1813 or 1814 now provided the inexhaustible material for a saga to be recounted, in the manner of the old soldier in Balzac's novel *Le Médecin de campagne,* on evenings around the hearth: "Come now, Monsieur Goguelat, tell us about the Emperor." Napoleon, whose legend had faded after the disastrous Russia campaign, was looking better. He was no longer the despot of 1810 or 1811, at the time of the marriage with an Austrian Grand Duchess and the birth of the king of Rome, but the heir and guarantor of the Revolution, the *Petit Tondu* ("little short-haired fellow") who was close to his soldiers and attentive to the condition of the humble: the "Napoleon of the people." Although the July Monarchy was at first presented as the heir and guarantor of 1789, less the saga, it retained no more than a few weeks the popular character that the revolutionary circumstances of its birth had conferred on it. Six months later, the divorce was consummated and a ferocious repression was about to befall all those who sought to overthrow this new monarchy that had, according to them, whether they were republicans or Bonapartists, betrayed the promises made during the "Three Glorious Days" (27, 28, and 29 July 1830) of the revolution. For Louis-Philippe, making a few concessions to the left and thus putting the great memories on his side was not a bad policy—or at least he hoped so. The statue of Napoleon was returned to its place atop the column in Place Vendôme, and work to complete the Arch of Triumph at L'Etoile was resumed. But returning the Emperor's body to France was out of the question. As under the reign of Louis XVIII, multiple petitions were filed in vain, the government paid them no attention, and perhaps the Emperor would have reposed still longer on Saint Helena had Adolphe Thiers not been requested, in March 1840, to form a new government.

"That misshapen dwarf," as Marx called him,[110] who in 1834 had unhesitatingly repressed the workers' uprisings, then once again set out to take power after having been driven out of it four years earlier, true to form: still just as much in a hurry, energetic, resourceful, talented, intelligent, and completely without scruples. It has been said that he made himself the proponent of returning Napoleon's remains because he saw in this good publicity for the *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* on which he was working and whose first volume would appear five years later.[111] That is not impossible, even if Napoleon did not need Thiers to be fashionable and even if Thiers did not need Napoleon to become a fashionable author: his *Histoire de la Révolution française* (1823–1827) had established him as the leader of all those who were working to rehabilitate 1789, and even 1792. As an apostle of historical fatalism, he did in fact maintain that in the course of these ten tumultuous years almost everything had been necessary. In addition, Thiers sincerely admired Napoleon. While working on his great study, he had grown fond of his hero, always trying to weigh the pros and cons, to clearly distinguish the responsibilities which, he showed, were not always on the side of "the Ogre." Bringing back his remains was, of course, a political "coup" of which he expected to derive the benefit, but it was also an homage paid to the hero by the France that had inherited the great revolutionary saga, and moreover, at the instigation of this Rastignac from Marseilles who had originally been almost as destitute as the young Bonaparte may have been, and who, like Bonaparte, had undertaken to conquer Paris. The battlefields that his time did not offer him, he had found in the editorial boards of newspapers, the rostrum of the Chamber, ministerial offices, and the writing of the history of the "Great Nation."

The idea took hold of him all the more forcefully because in addition to these motives, he had another reason to strike the patriotic chord by bringing Napoleon home to give him that "fine funeral" of which Hugo had spoken. The domestic politics of the new head of the government reflected the convictions of this man whose loyalty to the principles of 1789 was equaled only by the constancy of his hatred of the "populace" and the *partageux*.[112] Completely in favor of the great economic interests, this politics could not bring large parts of public opinion to support the government. But to force the king to adopt the reckless foreign policy he wanted to pursue, Thiers needed support much broader than that of the class of bourgeois who were qualified to vote. France and England were engaged in a power struggle over Egypt. Whereas France supported the rebellion of Muhammad Ali, the Egyptian pasha, who dreamed of freeing the Arab world from Ottoman supervision, England defended the Sultan of Constantinople's right and the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Tensions between the two countries continually rose, and soon Russia, Austria, and Prussia even took sides against Paris. Isolated, the French felt they were reliving the dark times of the great coalitions of 1813 and 1815.[113]

The task was all the more difficult for Thiers because Louis-Philippe had made the peace treaty and the Entente Cordiale the untouchable principles of his foreign policy.[114] There was a fierce battle between the two parties, one of which, Tocqueville said, "dreams of conquests and loves war, either for itself, or for the revolutions to which it may give rise," while the other, that of the king, "has for peace a love that I would not hesitate to call dishonest, because its sole principle is not the public interest, but a taste for material well-being and a lack of courage."[115] Invoking Napoleon's ashes was enough to make the monarch engage in an escalation that was limited for the moment to exchanging acerbic notes and vehement speeches, but which might very well lead to a confrontation.

The king did not put up much of a fight. Thiers had warned him: Irish patriots were getting ready to demand that the British government hand over Napoleon's body to France, and it would be better for him to take the initiative. On May 1, Louis-Philippe notified his minister that once London's consent had been obtained, one of his sons, the Prince of Joinville, would sail to Saint Helena. After all, this would be an opportunity to resume dialogue with the British government, and the king no longer thought that the specter of Napoleon could represent a political danger. He had defeated conspirators of all kinds, legitimists or republicans, who had tried to overthrow him, as he had the workers' insurrections that had marked the beginnings of his reign. The Napoleonic legend was alive more than ever, but it was only a legend, and in any case not a political force or the standard of a party. "Sooner or later," the king told his friends, "that [the return of Napoleon's ashes] would have been forced by petitions. I prefer to grant it. There is no danger. The [Bonaparte] family is of no importance."[116] The proof of this was administered a few weeks later, when on 6 August Prince Louis-Napoleon, the future Napoleon III—landed at Boulogne-sur-Mer for what was supposed to be the point of departure for a kind of repetition of the return from the island of Elba. This venture fell as flat as the one he had already attempted in Strasbourg in 1836.[117] The idea that someone could base his legitimacy on Napoleon's, even if he was descended from him by blood, did not occur to anyone. The emperor of the French shone in the firmament of French history with a unique brilliance: there would be no Napoleon III any more than there had been a Napoleon II. Thus the return of Napoleon's ashes had only advantages.

In London, the French ambassador, who was none other than Guizot, easily obtained the British cabinet's consent. "What do these old bones matter to England," especially since in the Orient the crisis was coming to an end, and heading in a direction very satisfactory for Britain.[118] Thiers rubbed his hands in pleasure. The only person who pulled a long face was the Prince of Joinville, who saw his mission as an onerous chore and hated the idea of playing the role of "undertaker" to please that little fellow Thiers.[119]

When the minister of the interior, Rémusat, appeared before the members of parliament to obtain the funds necessary for the operation, stupor soon gave way to enthusiasm.[120] The reporter for the committee entrusted with drafting the proposed law, Marshal Clauzel,[121] seized the occasion to ask the Chamber of Deputies to allocate two million francs rather the one million requested by the ministry, and especially to see to it that Les Invalides, which continued to be reserved by the government, accepted no future burials after that of Napoleon, so that this monument would be forever devoted to him. Although the deputies massively approved the government's project (by 280 votes to 65), they followed the committee's recommendations neither regarding the doubling of the funds allocated nor regarding its proposal to reserve in perpetuity Les Invalides for the Emperor's remains. Lamartine, who did not conceal his "intellectual hatred for [the] hero of the century,"[122] whom he accused, as he was to say at the Chamber's rostrum, of having been neither "a complete great man" nor "the Washington of Europe," had somewhat tempered the ardor of the members of the parliament:

> I do not bow down before memory; I do not adhere to this Napoleonic religion, this worship of force, which people want [. . .] to substitute in the mind of the Nation for the genuine religion of liberty. I

> do not believe that it is good constantly to deify war in this way, [. . .] as if peace, which is the happiness and glory of the world, could be the shame of nations.[123]

When, seven months later,[124] the frigate *La Belle Poule* returned to France with the Emperor's coffin on board, Thiers had been dismissed and replaced by Guizot (28 October).[125] Louis-Philippe had chosen between war with Europe and peace. As a result, the ceremony lost its political interest, especially since the new head of government was not as confident as the king and saw many disadvantages in this funeral which, by reviving glorious memories, would not be very flattering for the July monarchy; the people, far from being grateful to the king for having brought the hero's body back to France, would judge all the more harshly the narrowly bourgeois and prosaic character of the regime. Guizot did all he could to diminish the impact of the ceremony. Thus he prevented the government and the great state bodies from taking part in the parade, which would be purely military. The Emperor? He was a soldier who was returning to be with his men, received by army veterans and buried in a site dedicated to France's military glories.[126]

The preparations had fallen far behind schedule. Activity increased as Napoleon's body was being carried up the Seine. When the vessel transporting the coffin tied up at Courbevoie, on 14 December 1840, the setting was barely finished. However, the next day, despite glacial cold and falling snowflakes, an immense crowd gathered along the route taken by the convoy, from the Pont de Neuilly to the Arch of Triumph, then down the Champs-Elysées to the courtyard of Les Invalides. Victor Hugo, who was the—critical—reporter on the day, put it nicely when he said that it was as if the population of Paris had flowed to one side of the city, "like a liquid in a tilted vessel."[127] In the eastern part of Paris, the streets were empty, and Hugo heard his steps ring on the frozen pavement. A few people ran past him, all of them hurrying toward the west, and then he noticed a vague rumbling that increased when he crossed the Seine and, following the left bank, approached the esplanade of Les Invalides. The crowd was there, enormous. In the courtyard, where the spectators who held invitations had gathered, bleachers had been erected on each side. The noise was loudest there. It was the sound of people striking the wooden steps with their feet to warm themselves as they waited for the funeral cortege's arrival.

The cortege was moving slowly through the crowds and between two ranks formed of 80,000 soldiers and national guardsmen drawn up from the Arch of Triumph to Les Invalides. In the cortege, the veterans: "They are all there, the grenadiers in their russet fur hats, the sailors in worn duffle coats, the light infantrymen, the mamluks, the hussars, the lancers, the dragoons with faded uniforms, leaning on canes."[128] Cheers were heard, and songs to the glory of the *Petit Tondu,* and a few people sang the "Marseillaise." However, Victor Hugo states that disappointment competed with emotion. It has to be admitted that the setting was not up to the level of the event. The heroic figures arranged along the route were made of plaster, the paintings on canvas looked like "cast-offs and rags." The great men hastily painted on large canvases installed on the esplanade of Les Invalides,[129] who were supposed to provide a cortege for the hero as he entered his last resting place, cut a sad figure. Here and there, the paint, too fresh, had run. The plaster could be seen beneath the false marble, and the pasteboard beneath the stone. "The petty clothed the grandiose,"[130] Hugo said. Nonetheless, the catafalque, drawn by sixteen horses caparisoned in gold, had a certain style, but it also had a major defect: the Emperor's coffin was invisible. To cite Hugo once again:

> The whole affair has grandeur. It is an enormous mass, entirely gilt, whose tiers rise pyramid-like above the four large, gilt wheels that bear it. Under the violet crepe dotted with bees that covers it from top to bottom, rather beautiful details can be distinguished: the alarmed eagles on the base, and the fourteen Victories on top bearing a replica of a coffin. The true coffin cannot be seen. It has been placed at the bottom of the base, which diminishes the emotional impact. That is the most serious defect of this hearse. It conceals what everyone would like to see, what France has demanded, what the people expect, what all eyes are looking for, Napoleon's coffin.[131]

Hugo no doubt somewhat exaggerates the public's disappointment, but it is true that if fervor prevailed on the Champs-Elysées, the same was not true at Les Invalides. For most of the spectators waiting at the procession's terminus, who were attached to officialdom, Napoleon belonged to the past. Some people even joked.[132] Another witness, the Duchess of Dino, says that in general the onlookers' attitude was "neither religious, nor contemplative, nor touching."[133] Nonetheless, there was a moment of intense emotion when, as the cortege entered the esplanade of Les Invalides, the sun pierced the clouds for a moment. Since it was December, people thought they were seeing an allusion to the sun of Austerlitz: "A great thought ran through that crowd,"[134] Hugo noted.

The next day, *Le Moniteur* invented the strong words exchanged between the Prince of Joinville, who was delivering the Emperor's body, and his father, who was receiving it: "Sire, I present to you the body of the Emperor Napoleon," said Joinville. "I receive it in the name of France," replied Louis-Philippe, who, like the members of the government, had abstained from following the funeral cortege. (It must be said that the preceding day, Guizot had been met with boos and hostile shouts when he went to Courbevoie to bow down before the coffin just after it had been unloaded from the boat that had brought it up the Seine from Le Havre.[135]) In fact, a speech had been prepared, but Joinville, who was growing tired of all this farcical play-acting, had not learned it.[136] In reality, the father and son mumbled a few words and, after a mass celebrated in the church of Saint-Louis des Invalides, they drew the curtain, much relieved. Hugo correctly said that the ceremony had had "an odd, dodgy character":

> The government seemed to be afraid of the phantom it was evoking. It was as if they were displaying and hiding Napoleon at the same time. Everything that would have been too grand or too moving was left in obscurity. The real and the grandiose had been concealed beneath more or less splendid envelopes, the imperial cortege had been obscured by the military cortege, the army by the national guard, the Chambers by Les Invalides, the coffin by the cenotaph.[137]

A cobbled-together procession that would have been a failure had it not been for the presence, even if invisible, of an immense memory, so great that the efforts made to appropriate it, to tame or neutralize it, seemed even pettier and meaner than they really were. The July monarchy, the throne of this king who was pictured in the form of a pear, had more to lose than to gain in the return of Napoleon's ashes, as Lamartine had eloquently prophesied during the debate in May:

> Those of us who take liberty seriously are moderate in our demonstrations. Let us not enchant the opinion of a people who understands far better what dazzles it than what serves it. Let us not erase everything, let us not so much diminish our reasonable monarchy, our new, representative, peaceful monarchy. It would end up disappearing in the eyes of the people.[138]

William Thackeray, the author of *Vanity Fair,* was living in Paris at that time. He found the ceremony imposing, not because of its grandiose character—he, too, mocked the unsuccessful setting and the government's obvious ill will—but because of the people's fervor: as the boat carrying Napoleon's remains made its way up the Seine, the banks of the river "were lined with old soldiers and country folk who had come from miles around to contemplate Napoleon's coffin and to pray for him."[139] The same fervor was found in Paris, even though the bitter cold dispersed the crowd as soon as the procession was over. The streets emptied out as they had filled up, and nothing remained of this day apart from the plaster statues, the banners, and the bleachers in the courtyard of Les Invalides, which workers were hastening to remove. At Courbevoie, the ship that had brought Napoleon back remained at the dock for several days. Passersby hardly looked at it. A few weeks later, the coffin was placed in one of the six chapels in the church, the one dedicated to St. Jerome, where it remained . . . until 1861. In the meantime, another Napoleon, the third of the name, had reestablished the imperial throne, and it was he who, on April 2, presided over the installation of the coffin in the red porphyry sarcophagus, at the center of the open crypt constructed under the dome after immense works carried out by Louis-Tullius Visconti.[140] Forty years after his death, Napoleon came home for good.

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AFTER RESIGNING HIS office in 1969, following the victory of the "no" voters in the constitutional referendum, de Gaulle bade the French farewell in his own way. Shortly after his departure from the Elysée, he went to Ireland to look for traces of his ancestors on his mother's side.[141] Everyone remembers the photos of the General walking on the dunes at Derrynane. Afterward, he returned to the small hotel where he and Yvonne were sojourning, where he plunged into reading two masterpieces of the literature of exile, Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* and Las Cases's *Mémorial de Saint-Hélène*.[142] "The Gaullist legend, crowned, appropriately, by ingratitude and failure, rose to the level of myth,"[143] writes the historian of this itinerary. De Gaulle bade France farewell by bequeathing to it a final image: that of an old man dressed in black walking, with the help of a cane, through an empty moor. For him, nothing remained but to go die among his own people. A year later, Paul Morand, whose hatred of de Gaulle is well known, greeted his death with this sardonic remark: "de Gaulle has died, playing solitaire. What an ambitious man!"[144] It is true that the General departed "without music or fanfare,"[145] if we except the cry "Oh! My back hurts!" that his wife heard when he collapsed, brought down by a ruptured aneurysm.

His last journey was not without grandeur. Of course, his last wishes, written down in the will of 1952, were not entirely respected, any more than those of Clemenceau had been. The latter had, like the General after him, rejected a national funeral. He wanted to be buried alongside his father, in Vendée, "without either speeches or prayers."[146] The government nonetheless organized, on 1 December 1929, an official ceremony that was attended by neither the relatives nor the friends of the Tiger. The next day, at Colombier, near Mouchamps, he was buried as he had wished. A few flowers were thrown on the coffin, and women on their knees wept over the grave, but they were from his area, from the land where he had wished to lie in rest.[147]

Pierre-Louis Blanc, who was one of the last loyalists who worked with General de Gaulle—he had earlier been the head of the Elysée's press office—and Jean Mauriac, who had also been close to the General for a quarter of a century, have recounted scenes that followed the death of the man whom his personal bodyguards called "granddad."[148] Other witnesses have since added their views to the body of evidence. The facts are hazy, the chronology sometimes unclear. We can sense eloquent silences, hesitations, old resentments that continue to brood. One thing is sure: Yvonne did not want her husband to be given a national funeral. She had required that only his family be notified of his death, and even then in veiled terms, for fear that the telephone at La Boisserie might be tapped. When she said that Charles had suffered a great deal since May 1968,[149] she was thinking of Georges Pompidou. Bridges between the General and his former closest collaborator had been burned: de Gaulle did not forgive Pompidou for having taken things in hand at a time when he himself seemed overwhelmed by events; as for Pompidou, he had felt manipulated when the General secretly left the Elysée to meet Massu in Baden-Baden, humiliated by the way in which he had later been "dismissed" from Matignon, betrayed by innuendos, the smiles of de Gaulle's entourage, and the General's silence at the time of the Marković affair. Pompidou had taken his revenge a few weeks later, in Rome, and did it again during a trip to Geneva, declaring that he was prepared, "when the time came," to announce his candidacy for the presidency of the Republic.[150] This was a stab in the back, according to de Gaulle, who was convinced that Pompidou had contributed to his fall in April 1969 as much as had Giscard's call to vote "no." De Gaulle had not spared his former prime minister, devoting a murderous portrait of him in the chapter of his *Mémoires d'espoir* that he barely had time to finish before the fateful 9 November. Referring to Pompidou's re-appointment as prime minister after the referendum of 1962, he wrote:

> Although his intelligence and culture make him capable of dealing with all sorts of ideas, he is by nature led to consider above all the practical side of things. Even as he reveres bold action, risk in enterprise, and audacity in authority, he is inclined toward prudent attitudes and reserved initiatives [. . .]. So here we have this political neophyte of the forum, unknown to public opinion even in his fifties, who suddenly sees himself, through my action and without having sought it himself, invested with an unlimited office, thrown into the center of public life, riddled with the concentrated spotlights of the news media. But luckily for him, he finds cordial and vigorous support at the summit of the state [. . .], and in the country a great number of people determined to approve of de Gaulle.[151]

Thus Pompidou, born of the leader's will, saw his measured steps "authorized from above and supported from below." It was mordant, cruel, unfair. The close associates to whom the General read these pages were delighted. There was a running battle between the partisans of the man of 18 June and the friends of the new president. Today, it is difficult to gauge the hostilities that the events of 1968 had aroused between the "historical" Gaullists and the new generation. Couve de Murville, Malraux, Guichard, not to mention de Gaulle's family, regarded Pompidou as a "traitor," a "usurper," a "parvenu," and couldn't find words harsh enough to describe the new president's entourage, from Pierre Juillet to Marie-France Garaud and Jacques Chirac. The latter were not to be outdone: didn't Pierre Juillet say to anyone who would listen how basically "Machiavellian, sly, petty, small" de Gaulle was? Georges Pompidou's advisor, who in 1968 was in a position to know, understood that the page had been turned on Gaullism, that the General had not died politically in April 1969, but the preceding year. As for the old Gaullists, their ferocious remarks were the price to be paid for their bitterness. History, with a capital H, had left them behind without their having noticed it.

The General's widow did not forgive, either. Her fear was that Pompidou, to whom de Gaulle had entrusted the first copy of his will in 1952—two other copies having been given to his children, Philippe and Elisabeth—might use this document as a pretext for organizing the funeral as he wished. Thus the news had to be kept secret long enough to make sure that the will could not be contested. Philippe, who was at the naval base in Brest, received the order to return immediately. As his father would have done in his place, he did not wish to benefit in any way from the state's largesse, so he took a night train from Brest to Paris. When he arrived at his apartment in Paris, his brother-in-law, Alain de Boissieu, had already tried to reach the president of the Republic, but in vain. Philippe de Gaulle had no more luck. An attempt was even made to connect him with Denis Baudouin, who had five years earlier directed Jean Lecanuet's presidential campaign! Naturally, there was no question of accepting this traitor's invitation and shaking his hand.[152] The General's son then asked one of his father's loyal followers, Pierre Lefranc, to go to the Elysée in his place. Georges Pompidou was not available. The copies of the will were compared, and they were in fact identical. Henceforth, the Elysée could not deviate from the dead man's last wishes, supposing that the idea had been even briefly considered. Lefranc saw Michel Jobert, who tried to convince him to do nothing until the president of the Republic had read the will before the Council of Ministers. Lefranc did not give in, repeating that it was for the family, and it alone, to announce the news and to make the will's content public. But at 9:42 a.m., a communiqué from the Elysée informed the French Press Agency that the General was dead. The family had been overtaken. The publication of the will soon followed. This time, the presidency and the family had each, at the same time, taken the initiative to make the dead man's last wishes known. Next there was an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers, and Georges Pompidou appeared on television: "Françaises, Français, General de Gaulle is dead. France is a widow." After hesitating, he had yielded to his entourage's arguments, and was preparing to make the trip to Colombey when he learned that Yvonne de Gaulle refused to receive him, on the pretext that her son, who had not yet arrived at La Boisserie, was absent. In reality, she did not wish her husband's body to be seen before it was placed in the coffin. And especially not by Pompidou! It was only on the following day, 11 November, that "Brutus," accompanied by Chaban-Delmas, was able to come to present his condolences, sincerely wounded not to have been able to see the General one last time.[153] The night before, the carpenter had nailed down the casket's lid, after removing the wedding ring from the deceased's finger. The president and his prime minister lingered a moment before the closed coffin. There was no effusion or warmth on either side. If the de Gaulles believed they had won by forcing the government to publish the will in which the General had rejected any official homage, they were mistaken. In the end, the government announced that a national tribute would be organized on 12 November at Notre-Dame. Thus it had not given up, even if the mass would have to be said in the absence of the dead man. When Philippe de Gaulle reached La Boisserie on the afternoon of 10 December, he was presented with a fait accompli. A decision was immediately made not to participate in this ceremony that violated the General's last wishes, and even to schedule the private ceremony in such a way as to prevent those who had gone to the mass at Notre-Dame from getting to Colombey in time to attend the real funeral.[154] The renegade would not have the last word. Pierre-Louis Blanc is perhaps too severe when he writes that "the operation intended to make public opinion see Georges Pompidou as the heir of General de Gaulle had succeeded."[155] But Blanc had espoused his hero's passions and like de Gaulle, he no longer saw in Pompidou anything other than a traitor seeking to appropriate the great man's memory, after having preempted his heritage. Between the family and the Elysée there had been a dialogue of the deaf, and the behavior of Pompidou's entourage had been rather undignified. But had the General's entourage behaved more honorably at the time of the Marković affair? The episode, however insignificant, illustrates the breakdown of the Gaullist family that was already taking place, and of which Jean Mauriac was to be a chronicler both talented and without illusions.[156]

On 12 November, the president of the Republic, government officials, and sundry French politicians assembled in Notre-Dame, alongside several dozen sovereigns and heads of state or government, ranging from Richard Nixon to Nikolai Podgornyi, from the shah of Iran to the emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, from Ben Gurion to Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, and although Mao was not present, he had made sure that an enormous wreath was laid at Colombey. The mass celebrated without a coffin or a homily was imposing. Three thousand persons crowded inside the cathedral, while tens of thousands more had gathered on the square in front of it and in the surrounding streets. The throng was such that in photos we see policemen pushing against the barriers close to the cathedral in order to prevent them from being overturned. In the evening, the crowd grew even larger when, in a driving rain, hundreds of thousands of persons walked up the Champs-Elysées that the General had triumphantly walked down in August 1944. Once again, "it was an ocean," an immense procession impressive by its silence, a human river that spread as far as the Place de l'Etoile, pooling in a circle around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which was covered with mounds of wreaths and bouquets.

The Mass celebrated at Notre-Dame, with its pews of leaders from all over the planet, testified not only to the General's aura but also to that of France. No other death, in any other nation, could have caused so many important people to drop everything and rush to the other side of the world. Ultimately, the real power of France matters little; its influence has more to do with its history and the universality of its culture than with the vitality of its economy or the extent of its military forces; it has more to do with what it represents than with what it is.

The prominence of the homage paid at Notre-Dame was also connected with the fact that General de Gaulle's death marked a turning point. Everyone who was there felt that. After Roosevelt in 1945, Stalin in 1953, and Churchill in 1965, he was the last of the four great leaders to die. A page in world history had been turned. In France, his "dear old country," it was an inconvenient judge who had passed away, and Pierre-Louis Blanc's intransigence did not cloud his judgment when he wrote these very true lines regarding the president of the Republic and his ministers who witnessed from front-row seats the Mass celebrated by Mgr. Marty, and who seemed to him to be simultaneously "sad and relieved":

> Sad, because they had all [. . .] been shaped by de Gaulle, who had taught them how to act and to think. Even though they did not always want to admit it, they knew what they owed him. [. . .] They all understood that the national patrimony had been diminished, that France's weight in the world was no longer the same, that History had just taken a new direction. On the still uncertain river of our future, a powerful dike had cracked. And also relieved: [. . .] the discomfort they felt when they governed, spoke, or administered, feeling themselves judged by one of the most lucid political minds of our history, who could, as they knew by experience, sound their courage and their hearts. They no longer had to cope with a grandeur and a style which, no matter what they did, reduced them to their true dimensions. Henceforth, everyone could live on his own scale.[157]

Television images recorded in Colombey-les-deux-Eglises the same day can be viewed on the internet. They are in color. Patches of blue sky are visible amid the clouds. The trees are about to finish losing their leaves. Reflections of a world of yesterday, of a past century. People have old-fashioned faces. We see priests in cassocks, nuns, uniforms, military caps, women wearing scarves tied under their chins or bonnets, men wearing ties and hats. People interviewed in the special trains taking them to Colombey express their deep emotion, their sorrow, and also their pride, in simple words and in a French that now seems extraordinary. It was a large migration: tens of thousands of persons have converged from all sides. They gather in the village's narrow streets; they fill the tiny square at the base of the church steeple. Cadets from Saint-Cyr have lined up on each side of the door of the church, where four hundred people are waiting. Soldiers represent the three branches of the armed forces, marine riflemen from Lorient, aviators from the airbase in Rheims, soldiers from the 501st armored regiment in Rambouillet. People who were then well-known but are today forgotten, pass by. We see Massu, Messmer, Christian Pineau, Jean Mauriac, Rol-Tanguy, Alain Savary, Claude Bourdet, and others. Romain Gary in his aviator's uniform that is now a little tight on him. He seems to be in a hurry. Malraux arrives just before the ceremony begins, his eyes gloomy, his face twitching. Others are not there, the ones who were seen at Notre-Dame that morning and who did not intend to come, those who—like Valéry Giscard d'Estaing—had expressed the desire to come but to whom the loyalists have made it clear that they are not welcome.[158] It is a reunion of the great French family, and traitors have no business being there. Loudspeakers have been placed outside the church. The crowd waits. A few flags flutter in the breeze. The silence is impressive. The camera lingers on the armored vehicle at the entrance to La Boisserie on which the coffin, covered with a tricolor flag, has been placed. Followed by the cortege of cars in which the family is riding, the vehicle advances slowly through the crowd. Some people cross themselves as the coffin passes, others give a military salute, and still others flash the "V" for victory. The bishop of Langres is waiting in front of the church with the village priest and one of the General's nephews, Father François de Gaulle. Twelve young men from the village carry the coffin inside, where the family, companions-in-arms from the Liberation, and people from the village are sitting. When the coffin entered the church, it is said that the people there were so motionless that no one dared turn his head to see it.[159] Around 4 p.m., it's all over. The wind picks up. It becomes cooler. The convoy now moves toward the little cemetery adjacent to the church. In the presence of the family, it is lowered into the earth. The wall separating the cemetery from the street is so low that the cameras can record the scene, the descent into the grave, and the paternoster said by the family. The General now lies alongside his daughter under the white marble tombstone surmounted by a cross, on which one can read, in gilt letters of the same size and style: "Anne de Gaulle 1928–1948" and "Charles de Gaulle 1890–1970." After the inner circle departed, an immense procession began and went on long after night fell, despite calls for the crowd to disperse. France was filing past the tomb. Some merely passed by, while others crossed themselves or joined their hands. At the same time, there were identical scenes in Paris, around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where a resonant "Marseillaise" was heard. Simplicity, even austerity, grandeur and fervor accompanied the General's last journey. As for his widow, she had left the cemetery long before. She went back to La Boisserie where, the following morning, she burned her husband's clothes and even his bed, to ensure that no one might display any "relic." Hadn't she already refused, when the carpenter was preparing to seal the coffin, to allow a lock of hair to be cut or a death mask to be made? It was only at the last moment that she asked to keep Charles's wedding ring.[160]

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A HUNDRED AND TEN years earlier, in 1861, Napoleon had gone to his last resting place, the sarcophagus in Les Invalides. Four decades had passed since the death of the Emperor, whose story was so full of marvels that it was sometimes difficult to believe that he was now at rest forever, as he had wished, "on the banks of the Seine." During his lifetime, it had regularly been reported that he had escaped from Saint Helena and was getting ready, somewhere, to turn the world upside down again; after his death, there was a rumor that his coffin was empty, or that the body in it was not his.[161] It is unlikely that these rumors had the slightest foundation, but even if they were true, that would change nothing: whether or not Napoleon is present in the coffin, it is his tomb that visitors to Les Invalides have come to see. As we have seen, the Chamber of Deputies had decided in 1840 that Napoleon would not be the last person buried in Les Invalides. Others have since joined him under the dome, from the Emperor's brothers—Jérôme and Joseph—to his son—whose body Hitler returned to France in 1940—and illustrious soldiers—notably, Marceau, Lyautey, Leclerc, Juin, Giraud; but even surrounded by this diverse cortege, it is as if he lay there alone. To be sure, their presence enhances his incomparable grandeur, it provides a setting for him, it does not compete with him. Napoleon is alone at Les Invalides the way Charles de Gaulle is alone in the little cemetery where he lies alongside members of his family and the dead of his village, under a tombstone whose simplicity bears witness, better than any speech, to the lofty solitude that was his lot during most of his life, from the beginnings of Free France to the difficult months that followed his departure from the Elysée in 1969. Despite its monumental character, Napoleon's tomb does not lack simplicity, either. The sarcophagus is located directly below the apex of the dome, in the crypt whose perimeter is ornamented by ten bas-reliefs in white marble celebrating the great achievements of the Consulate and the Empire, and by twelve Victories whose gaze is focused on the coffin. "The floor of the crypt is entirely covered with colored marble. An immense, yellow gold star, through whose points runs an oaken crown, has been inlaid in mosaic."[162] In the intervening spaces, there are the names of the great victories won by the Napoleonic armies. In this marble setting is the sarcophagus—the "monolith" as its architect, Visconti, called it—which is dark red, an unusual color for a funerary monument;[163] it "rises up in the center, on a double base, in its majestic and imposing simplicity." Steven Englund has rightly compared it to the enigmatic black monolith in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey;* like the latter it is "immobile and powerful," even seeming "conscious and alive," dominating "the majestic setting that surrounds it."[164] There is nothing simpler and at the same time stranger than this tomb. It surprises us by its color and by its form: it is "an enormous mass," Visconti writes, "that is not loaded down with useless sculptures, and has no ornaments other than rounded groins [and] whorls of a severe regularity"[165] that remind us of the movement of life—an incomparable life and not the immobility of death.[166]

Time has not fulfilled the somber predictions made by Chateaubriand, who considered the return of Napoleon's ashes "a crime against renown," and saw nothing great in wrenching the Emperor away from his splendid isolation on Saint Helena, a rock battered by the waves, in order to place it in the middle of the "filth of Paris": "Instead of vessels saluting the new Hercules, [. . .] the laundresses of Vaugirard will roam around with invalids unknown to the Grande Armée."[167] Hegel, lost in the crowd, saw the Emperor pass by him in Jena, and afterward wrote: "It makes a singular impression on us to see such a man on horseback soaring, at a given point, over the world and dominating it."[168] We might say in unison that it makes a singular impression on us to visit a place that so powerfully condenses not only a history, the extraordinary history of a man, but also of a century, a world, or, as Joseph de Maistre put it, an *epoch.* It is not a tomb that people come to visit in Colombey or at Les Invalides. It is something else, a soul, that the heroes of Maurice Barrès's *Les Déracinés* come to seek under the dome:

> The five young people head through the long courtyards toward the majestic chapel that holds the hero's body. Usually the visitor, suddenly becoming aware of his anonymity, is intimidated by the echo that his steps on these sonorous floor tiles awaken in the vast spaces of the funerary dome. But these young pilgrims do not imagine that they are disturbing the repose of the man whose lofty teaching they have come to seek [. . .]. For French twenty-year-olds, the Emperor's tomb is not a place of peace, the philosophical grave where a poor body that has striven so hard is decomposing; it is the intersection of all the energies that we call audacity, will, appetite. For a hundred years, the imagination dispersed everywhere has been concentrated on this point. Fill in by thought this crypt where something sublime has been deposited; level out history, do away with Napoleon: you annihilate the condensed imagination of the century. What is heard here is not the silence of the dead, but a heroic rumble; this well beneath the dome is the epic clarion in which swirls the spirit that makes all young people's hair stand on end.[169]

Today's visitors are surely no longer as inspired by this "spirit." In Barrès's time, Zazie's reply to her uncle Gabriel[170] when he proposes that they go see "the true tomb of the true Napoleon" would still have been inconceivable: "Napoleon my ass. He doesn't interest me at all, that bombastic swell with his stupid hat."[171] Or the front page of *Hara Kiri* on the day after Charles de Gaulle's funeral: "A tragic dance in Colombey, one dead."[172] The passions that Napoleon and de Gaulle embodied were still very much alive: glory, heroism, patriotism, the cult of political will and the state, the military virtues, even war, and the spirit of sacrifice. That is no longer the case. If General de Gaulle escaped the catastrophe, he owed that only to the process of canonization that erased his rough, intransigent side. Almost half a century after his death, he has donned the garb of the Charlemagne in the old school textbooks, that of the "emperor with the flowing white beard." But Napoleon and de Gaulle are such romantic figures, and so closely linked to the history of the French nation, that the air still resounds a little with the echo of what they incarnated: what Bainville called the belief in "indefinite possibilities,"[173] paraphrasing a famous maxim of Tocqueville's according to which "within his vast limits, man is free"[174] and, ultimately, master of his fate. While everywhere "tiny, flattened-out societies"[175] are triumphing, it is this little music, now fading away, that we think we still hear around these two tombs.

Notes

Preface to the English-Language Edition

1. Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* vol. I, pp. 250–251. Complete references for works cited are given at the end of the volume.
2. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. I, pp. 1552–1553.
3. Chateaubriand, *Voyage en Amérique,* in *De l'Ancien Régime au nouveau monde,* pp. 45–48.
4. Furet, "Bonaparte," in F. Furet and M. Ozouf, *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française,* p. 216.
5. Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship,* Lecture 6, "The Hero as King."
6. Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (2013), p. 21.
7. Grierson, *Carlyle and Hitler.*
8. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* pp. 493–494.
9. Tardieu, *La Révolution à refaire (1. Le souverain captif; 2. La profession parlementaire).*
10. Ostrogorsky, *La Démocratie et les partis politiques;* Roberto Michels, *Les Partis politiques, essai sur les tendances oligarchiques des démocraties.*
11. Michelet, "Le Tyran," *Histoire de la Révolution française,* vol. II, p. 1022.
12. Mitterrand, *Le Coup d'État permanent,* pp. 90–91.
13. Bagehot, *The English Constitution,* pp. vii–lxxiv.
14. Foa and Mounk, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect" and "The Signs of Deconsolidation."
15. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism,* pp. 3–4.
16. Melman, *L'Homme sans gravité, jouir à tout prix.*
17. I refer to Stefan Zweig's famous memoir, *The World of Yesterday.*

Introduction

1. Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques,* pp. 63–95.
2. *The Prince,* chapter 7.
3. Thomas Carlyle, *Lectures on Heroes,* Lecture 1, May 5, 1840, in Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History.* In Mauriac's *De Gaulle* we read: "It's a commonplace of public meetings, a journalists' cliché used to denounce personality cults. The same holds for personalities as for the nation: two idols against which left-wing consciences are warned [. . .]. The personality cult? If I had to sum up the history of France in ten words, I would say: 'There has always been someone at a given time . . .' Or else: 'At that time, there was no one.' [. . .] Well, yes! Everything has always depended on an individual: those who armed Ravaillac knew that; and Charlotte Corday believed it. Had Mirabeau not died in [1791], the monarchy might have been saved" (pp. 69–70).
4. *Translator's note:* "Candidates for the providential [election]," playing on "presidential [election]."
5. *Télérama,* 15 February, 2012.
6. Carlyle, *Lectures on Heroes.*
7. See in particular Jean Garrigues, *Les Hommes providentiels, histoire d'une fascination française* (2012).
8. See, for example, the recent essay by Eric Brunet, *L'Obsession Gaulliste* (2016).
9. Bainville, *Histoire de France,* p. 21.
10. Furet, *Fascisme et communisme: correspondance avec Ernst Nolte (1996–1997),* in F. Furet, *Penser le XX^e^ siècle,* p. 1130.
11. Maistre, *Oeuvres complètes,* vol. XII, p. 468.
12. Jean-Claude Passeron, quoted by François Hartog in his introduction to the latest French edition of Plutarch's *Vies parallèles,* p. 13.
13. Quoted by Marc Ferro in his preface to the French translation of Bullock, *Hitler et Staline,* vol. 1, p. xi.
14. De Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée,* p. 103.
15. Louis XIV incarnates a royal mysticism of power that has become alien to us because it is based on heredity, faith, and tradition, three pillars that were torn down between 1789 and 1793.

Chapter 1. Two Comebacks

1. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* opening paragraph.
2. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 429.
3. Tardieu, *La Révolution à refaire.*
4. Lacouture, *Pierre Mendès France,* and Roussel, *Pierre Mendès France.*
5. Nicolet, *Pierre Mendès France ou le Métier de Cassandre,* Julliard, 1959.
6. Roussel, *Pierre Mendès France,* pp. 480–495. It is worth listening to Mendès France's embarrassed, tortuous explanations in reply to Pierre Viansson-Ponté, who still ques-

tioned him about this episode, on 23 January 1976 (Bernard Pivot, "Apostrophes": archives de l'INA, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfrBaNtbDTE).

7. See Valance, *VGE, une vie.*
8. Buchanan, *The Greatest Comeback,* and Coppolani, *Richard Nixon.*
9. Ortoli, *Indira Gandhi ou la Démocratie dynastique.*
10. That is the thesis defended by Christian Delporte, who, giving numerous examples of comebacks that were successful, or more often failed, reduces them to an "art" (though he denies neither the importance of circumstances nor the arbitrating role played by public opinion, or by universal suffrage): "A comeback in politics," he writes, "is first of all a matter of circumstances, of a set of circumstances. A politician's ability to analyze them and adapt to them determines his success or failure. The victors are those who, through their ability and daring, are able to grasp opportunities and take advantage of them. But how many missed opportunities, how many errors of timing, how many tactical mistakes that suddenly transform the dream of imminent reconquest into a dreadful nightmare!" (*Come back!,* p. 13). "From Napoleon to Sarkozy," the publisher adds. But in moving from Napoleon to Sarkozy, we have changed to a different world, with the result that any comparison of the two is irrelevant.
11. Musso, *Berlusconi,* and Lazar, *L'Italie à la dérive.*
12. Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 4, pp. 974–975.
13. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 815.
14. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 569.
15. Ibid., p. 577.
16. Delage, Peschanski, and Rousso, *Les Voyages du Maréchal.* Most of the documents collected in this film are found on the INA site or on YouTube. See also Nicolas Mariot, "Foules en liesse et *maréchalisme* des populations (article online: http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID_ARTICLE=SR_012_0143). On the day of 25 April 1944, see Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 4, pp. 331–337.
17. Rémond, *Le XX^e siècle,* p. 281.
18. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 583.
19. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 837
20. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 593.
21. The title of an editorial published by François Mauriac in *Le Figaro* for 25 August 1944 and reprinted in Mauriac, *Journal, Mémoires politiques,* pp. 780–783.
22. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 462.
23. Pompidou, *Pour rétablir une vérité,* pp. 127–128. See also Belin, *Lorsqu'une République chasse l'autre,* pp. 199–200 (later remarks made in 1959).
24. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 585.
25. *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er},* vol. 30, p. 303.
26. Bourrienne, *Mémoires,* vol. 3, p. 19.
27. Bainville, *Le Dix-Huit Brumaire,* p. 18.
28. Bourrienne, *Mémoires,* vol. 3, p. 19.
29. *Réimpression de l'ancien* Moniteur, vol. 29, p. 853.
30. See the testimony of the future General Boulart, *Mémoires,* pp. 67–68.
31. Marbot, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 67–72.

32. On the episode of The Hundred Days, see Lentz, *Nouvelle Histoire du Premier Empire,* vol. 4, *Les Cent-Jours, 1815,* and Branda, *La Guerre secrète de Napoléon.*
33. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1411.
34. Madelin, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 15, p. 301.
35. Houssaye, *1815,* vol. 1, pp. 147–149, and Branda, *La Guerre secrète de Napoléon,* pp. 134–147.
36. Houssaye, *1815,* vol. 1, p. 174.
37. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives* (Loeb Classical Library), "Pompey," 79, 4.
38. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, pp. 1372–1373.
39. Madelin, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 14, p. 360.
40. Villepin, *Les Cent-Jours ou l'Esprit de sacrifice.*
41. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1411.
42. The expression is Ferrero's, *Pouvoir,* p. 45.
43. Madelin, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 15, p. 316.
44. Houssaye, *1815,* vol. 1, p. 255.
45. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1414.
46. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 301–310.
47. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 1465.
48. Constant, *Mémoires sur les Cent-Jours,* pp. 232–236.
49. Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française,* pp. 498–499.
50. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 189.
51. Scott, *Mauriac et de Gaulle,* pp. 101–143.
52. Mauriac, *De Gaulle,* p. 52. Jacques Laurent, less kindly, was to say that de Gaulle needed "catastrophes," because he found the justification of his destiny only in the French people's misfortune (*Mauriac sous de Gaulle,* pp. 53–67).
53. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 2, p. 402. "On ne vient pas ici pour rigoler," he said (Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 207).
54. Andrieu, Braud, and Piketty, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 663.
55. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 885.
56. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 156.
57. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 144.
58. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 446.
59. Ibid., p. 321.
60. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 2, p. 1243 (letter of 11 March 1957).
61. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 43.
62. Roussel, *De Gaulle,* pp. 565–567.
63. He said this again to Jacques Reboul in late 1957 (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 2, p. 328).
64. *Translator's note:* "Politichiens," lit. "polit-dogs."
65. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 177.
66. The quip is Bernanos's (quoted in Le Bihan, *Le Général et son double,* p. 206).
67. "Elbe devient Sainte-Hélene," writes Gaston Bonheur apropos of the period between 1946 and 1958 (*De Gaulle,* in *De Gaulle, portraits,* p. 148).
68. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* pp. 572–573 (press conference, 12 November 1953).

69. Lentz, "L'ultime retour," p. 64.
70. Quoted by Georges Pompidou in a letter of 16 May 1946 (*Lettres, notes et portraits,* p. 219).
71. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 73.
72. On 5 May 1946, by a vote of 10,584,359 against and 9,454,034 for (Godechot, *Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1789,* pp. 357–369).
73. 16 June and 29 September 1946.
74. Nine million voted yes, eight million no, but there were six million abstentions.
75. Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e République,* p. 155.
76. It grouped together la SFIO, the UDSR, the Radical party, and the MRP.
77. This law allowed the electoral lists presented by the different parties to make agreements among themselves. If the sum of the votes they obtained exceeded 50 percent of the votes cast, they were awarded all the seats to be filled in the circumscription. If the total did not reach 50 percent, then the seats were distributed among the different lists that had made these agreements in accord with the rule of the greatest average: the PCF and the Gaullists, which had no allies, were necessarily disadvantaged by this arrangement.
78. With 121, the RPF held the largest number of seats, but it had won only 22.3 percent of the votes, far less than in the 1947 municipal elections (38.7 percent), and less than those won by the PCF (26.4 percent).
79. Crémieux-Brilhac, *L'Etrange Victoire,* p. 196.
80. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 165.
81. In municipal elections of April and May 1953, the RPF lost most of the large cities it had won in 1947.
82. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 294 and 442.
83. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 128.
84. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 2, p. 423.
85. See Rémond, *Le XX^e siècle,* pp. 349–359.
86. See the very detailed and fascinating chronology with commentary published by Anne Simonin and Hélène Clastres, *Les Idées en France, 1945–1988,* which helps us gauge the scope of the change.
87. Manent, *Situation de la France,* pp. 8–12.
88. *Translator's note:* A 1966 French comedy originally released in the United States as *Don't Look Now . . . We're Being Shot At!*
89. *Le Figaro* for 18 May 1946 (Mauriac, *Journal, Mémoires politiques,* pp. 836–837). Mauriac is alluding to the speech broadcast on 31 December 1944, in which de Gaulle said: "It is only too easy for everyone to discover the errors and faults of others. For who was exempt from them? Except for a tiny number of wretches who consciously preferred the enemy's triumph to France's victory, and whom the state's judicial system must fairly punish, the immense mass of the French people never wanted anything but the country's good, even if many of them sometimes went astray" (de Gaulle, *Discours d'Etat,* p. 26).
90. Thiers notes this when he tells how, shortly after proclaiming the Empire, Napoleon took care to show consideration for Cambacérès, his former consular colleague. He knew that Cambacérès had not been in favor of transforming the consular republic

into a hereditary empire, and he feared that a title of arch-chancellor might not be enough to console him. Napoleon and Josephine had just received a deputation from the Senate led by Cambacérès: "While the senators were leaving, Napoleon held [Cambacérès] back and asked that he stay and dine with the imperial family. The Emperor and the Empress showered attention on him and tried to make him forget the distance that now separated him from his former colleague. Besides, the arch-chancellor could take consolation; in reality, he had not declined in rank: his master had risen alone, and had made everyone rise with him" (*Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 5, p. 130).

91. De Gaulle made these remarks to his aide-de-camp, referring to the liberation of Paris in 1944 and his not very successful efforts to reinforce the troops of the Second Armored Division.
92. After 1969, those who might be called "romantic Gaullists," for whom the General was less the father of a regime or the supervisor of a kind of politics than a myth that ennobled France, the eternal France, saw in the victory of the "no" voters in the constitutional referendum the revenge of a modern France that had emerged from the disaster of 1940, and which, ultimately, did not deserve de Gaulle and had rallied behind him only intermittently, long enough for him to save it from plunging into the abyss. For example, in his book *Mon Général, adieu, avec amour et colère* (May 1969), Romain Gary, expressing his distress and describing this ungrateful France in his book *Mon Général, avec amour et colère,* strikes notes that remind us of the collaborationist Lucien Rebatet's *Les Décombres*: "Filled with legendary figures, kings and heroes, and seeking above all to pursue an ideal of grandeur, de Gaulle's country was more than a thousand years old. But the new country, France, was no older than the first refrigerators, credit systems, the family car, social security, and salary increases. France was composed of fifty million mini-French people, in themselves rather weak and all of them sick of History, of words like *grandeur, destin, devoir.* Above all, they were tired of competing with de Gaulle's country and trying to seem greater than they were. [. . .] [With the referendum] ended a very long period in which people had not yet stopped pretending. De Gaulle's country was pulverized, the new country took over and announced that henceforth it would answer to the unprecedented name of Mini-France."
93. By 1945, the French national income had fallen to half that of 1938.
94. Hélie de Saint Marc, *Mémoires,* p. 207.
95. Ibid., p. 169. We could also cite certain pages in Colonel Argoud's memoirs (*La Décadence, l'imposture, la tragédie,* pp. 164–165).
96. Thiers, *Discours parlementaires,* vol. 3, p. 545 (speech given on 10 June 1836).
97. Concerning North America, see Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts,* pp. 369–414.
98. Sent to Algeria in 1836, General Bugeaud (1784–1849) became its governor-general in 1840. Known for having ordered wide-ranging plundering raids and smoking rebels out of the caves where they had taken refuge, he also opened, in 1837, the first negotiations with Abdelkader. It was General Lamoricière (1805–1865) who accepted, in 1847, the Arab leader's surrender. Lamoricière often quarreled with Bugeaud; he frequented Saint-Simonian groups, and in 1832 he assumed the direction of the first "Arab bureau" assigned to organize relations with the conquered peoples. This dichotomy remained constitutive of French policy in Algeria.

99. Napoleon III went to Algeria twice, in 1860 and in 1865. Algeria was an important part of his policy that sought to transform the Mediterranean into a "French lake." But he deplored the way its conquest had been made. He considered Algeria an "Arab kingdom" whose vocation was to join the French empire, but which could not be treated like a colony. He took steps to halt the confiscation of lands and to limit the number of colonists; he narrowed the jurisdiction of the civil administration, which had been too favorable to the colonists, granted the indigenous peoples civil and political rights (the right to vote and eligibility for local offices), and placed Algeria under the government of "Muslim law," but he granted full French citizenship only to Algerians who chose to live under the empire of French laws.
100. Saint Marc, *Mémoires,* p. 169.
101. Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e^ République,* pp. 52–81.
102. This slogan was used by Mendès France in his speech of 12 November 1954, shortly after the All Saints' Day attacks (see the exact terms in Roussel, *Pierre Mendès France,* pp. 351–352); it was almost immediately adopted by François Mitterrand: "Algeria is France [. . .] from Flanders to the Congo, there is the law, one nation, one parliament" (Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e^ République,* p. 50).
103. The European population, which represented 14 percent of Algeria's total population in 1926, had fallen to 10 percent in 1958, or to one million Europeans out of ten million inhabitants.
104. Baverez, *Raymond Aron,* p. 347.
105. However, as Arnaud Teyssier reminds us, "it was in no case a question of abandoning Algeria, but only of reaching a compromise solution acceptable to the French, the Muslims, and international opinion" (*Histoire politique de la V^e^ République,* p. 31).
106. On the campaign against "torture" orchestrated by the left-wing intelligentsia, see the very severe commentaries by André Rossfelder, who points out that it served to legitimize the National Liberation Front in the war the latter was waging not only against France but also against Algerians (*Le Onzième Commandement,* pp. 428–435).
107. On the events of May 1958, I have used first of all the works of Jean Ferniot, *De Gaulle et le 13 Mai;* Jean-Raymond Tournoux, *La Tragédie du Général;* Michel Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e^ République;* Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IV^e^ République: La fin* et *De Gaulle à Matignon;* Georges Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle;* the biographies of General de Gaulle by Jean Lacouture and Eric Roussel already cited, and Christophe Nick, *Résurrection.*
108. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* pp. 22–23.
109. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 198.
110. Ibid.
111. Merry and Serge Bromberger, *Les 13 Complots du 13 mai.*
112. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* p. 161.
113. De Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée,* p. 102.
114. Roussel, *De Gaulle,* p. 574.
115. Guy Mollet having been overthrown on 21 May 1957, Bourges-Maunoury had succeeded him, only to be overthrown in his turn in favor of Félix Gaillard (5 November). Gaillard had himself just fallen and was waiting for the Assembly to confirm Pierre Pflimlin as his successor.

116. Schneider, *De Gaulle/Mitterrand,* p. 104.
117. *Translator's note:* From 1830 to independence in 1962, the whole Mediterranean region of Algeria was administered as an integral part of France.
118. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* pp. 268–269. See, for example, Debré's article "SOS de Gaulle!," published on 8 May 1958 (Debatty, *Le 13 Mai et la presse,* Paris, pp. 42–43).
119. Schneider, *De Gaulle/Mitterrand,* p. 107; Scott, *Mauriac et de Gaulle,* pp. 172–174.
120. "Many people think," Maurice Duverger wrote, "that the question is not whether de Gaulle will come back to power or not: because that question has been settled. The real question is *when* de Gaulle's second government will begin" (Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e République,* p. 134). A few days later, in the same newspaper, François Mitterrand followed Duverger's lead (Schneider, *De Gaulle/Mitterrand,* p. 107).
121. Léon Delbecque (1919–1991), a former member of the Resistance, had been one of the RPF's executives. As the head of Jacques Chaban-Delmas's cabinet when the latter was Defense minister from late 1957 to 14 May 1958, he played a decisive role in the events that led to de Gaulle's return to public life. Close to Jacques Soustelle and a partisan of French Algeria, he later distanced himself from the General.
122. Interview reproduced in Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e République,* pp. 159–160. His attitude is the same in an interview with Raymond Triboulet, the leader of the Social Republicans (what remained of the former RPF) on 20 March (ibid., p. 160).
123. Rudelle, *Mai 58, de Gaulle et la République,* p. 118.
124. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 2, p. 1266.
125. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 307.
126. Gaston Bonheur, in Rioux, *De Gaulle, portraits,* p. 154.
127. Agulhon, *La République, 1880 à nos jours,* p. 410.
128. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. II, p. 447.
129. Roussel, *De Gaulle,* p. 580.
130. General Ely, the chief of staff, resigned his post on 16 May and two days later, General Beaufort confirmed that the regiments in Metropolitan France would refuse to march on their comrades in Algeria. On 3 March, policemen had marched in mufti in front of the Palais-Bourbon (the seat of the French National Assembly) to protest against the government's passivity with regard to the Algerian National Liberation Front's attacks in Metropolitan France. Some people shouted: "Throw the representatives in the Seine!"
131. Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e République,* p. 276.
132. This does not lack piquancy when one knows that some of the General's supporters, and Michel Debré first of all, had perhaps been involved in the bazooka attack on 16 January 1957 that almost killed Salan, as was noted by his most recent biographer, Pierre Pellissier.
133. Andrieu, Braud, and Piketty, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 253.
134. The quip is Raymond Tournoux's, *Secrets d'Etat,* p. 273.
135. Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e République,* pp. 259–260. The day before, General Nicot, an aviator, had had a long consultation with the Gaullist leaders at Rue de Solferino (Jouhaud, *Serons-nous enfin compris?,* p. 61). Here we are far from the simple opera-

tion of misinformation mentioned by Pierre Guillain de Bénouville when questioned by Jean Lacouture (*De Gaulle,* vol. 2, p. 488).

136. The text of President Coty's message will be found in Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e^ République,* pp. 268–269.
137. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 29.
138. In the summer of 1957, he had stated that he was in favor of a constitutional revision, privately not concealing the name of the person he was thinking about to carry it out.
139. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* pp. 313–317. On 5 May 1958, Coty had already sent an emissary to the general (Roussel, *De Gaulle,* pp. 584–585).
140. Quoted in my book *Bonaparte,* p. 492. The Luxembourg Palace was the seat of the government.
141. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 435.
142. Roederer, *Oeuvres,* vol. III, p. 295.
143. Barras had been one of the first to single out Bonaparte at the siege of Toulon, in late 1793. Later on, during the royalist insurrection of 13 Vendémiaire (5 October 1795), he had assigned Bonaparte to direct the repression, and had subsequently rewarded him for his valuable help by having him named to command the Paris military division, and later having him made commander-in-chief of the Army of Italy.
144. Fierro, Palluel-Guillard, and Tulard, *Histoire et dictionnaire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* p. 8.
145. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 2, pp. 510–512.
146. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* pp. 65–66 (5 March 1959).
147. This sally did in fact leave Peyrefitte stunned, but not at all in the way we would imagine today: it was, he said, classic de Gaulle, "freedom of expression," "formulations gushing forth," and "extra-lucid predictions read in a crystal ball."
148. Jean Daniel, "De Gaulle et l'Algérie: la tragédie, le héros et le témoin," in Rioux, *De Gaulle, portraits,* p. 260.
149. Ibid.
150. See what he said to Alain Peyrefitte regarding the difference between British colonization, which allowed "differences in race and culture" to remain, and French colonization, which denied differences and dreamed of a "republic of a hundred million similar and interchangeable French people" (*C'était de Gaulle,* pp. 68–69).
151. See Ozouf, *Jules Ferry,* pp. 71–86.
152. The physiocrats of the Enlightenment period had developed an economic theory that saw a country's wealth as coming from its land. Generally hostile to investments in movable assets or trade, they thought it more important to improve the yields of the kingdom's lands than to let them lie fallow in order to invest in the acquisition of a colonial empire that would enrich the colonists instead of increasing the wealth of the nation.
153. See the famous dispute in 1885 between Clemenceau and Jules Ferry (Winock, *Clemenceau,* pp. 128–139, and Gaillard, *Jules Ferry,* pp. 539–548 and 589–598).
154. Letter to lieutenant-colonel Emile Mayer, 30 June 1930 (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 728).
155. Speech on 15 May 1947 (De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* appendices, p. 354).

156. See Soustelle, *Vingt-huit ans de gaullisme,* pp. 432–441.
157. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 19.
158. See, for example, what he said to Louis Terrenoire on 10 September 1957 regarding what a strong government could try to do to prevent an independence that at present seemed to him ineluctable (Roussel, *De Gaulle,* pp. 576–577). As early as 1955 he had told Geoffroy de Courcel that the only practical option was to guide a movement toward independence that nothing could stop, but that one might be able to use, and divert it to the benefit of a form of association that would guarantee the continuing French presence in Algeria (Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. II, pp. 511–512). See also the collection of his remarks in Ferniot, *De Gaulle et le 13 Mai,* pp. 131–134; Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e^ République;* and Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* pp. 239–240. On 30 May 1958, in the presence of Guy Mollet, and then of Vincent Auriol, he sometimes spoke about a federation in which no community, even one that was in the majority, would have the means of oppressing the others—on the model of the American federal state—and sometimes about a "confederation of associated peoples" (Winock, *L'Agonie de la IV^e^ République,* pp. 277, 281). Much later, in one of his last interviews, he assured François Goguel that his Algerian policy had followed a preconceived plan (Mauriac, *Mort du général de Gaulle,* p. 118).
159. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* pp. 43–44.
160. Ibid., p. 43. See Guy Pervillé's study, which is inclined, perhaps definitively, to assume a carefully thought-out plan in the General's mind even before he returned to public life (*Pour une histoire de la guerre d'Algérie*).
161. Soustelle, *La page n'est pas encore tournée,* p. 123.
162. Raymond Aron later claimed that he had it from a reliable source that de Gaulle had said he agreed with his [Aron's] analysis of the Algerian problem (*Mémoires,* vol. 1, p. 523).
163. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 2, p. 515.
164. Ayache, *Le Retour du général de Gaulle,* p. 441. He told Pierre Lefranc the same thing when the latter came to pick him up at the Villacoublay airport on his return from Algeria: "They're dreaming. They forget that there are nine million Muslims for a million Europeans. Integration would mean eighty Muslim representatives in the Assembly. They would rule. [. . .] Fraternization is an illusion. If the French of Algeria were told: fraternization means equality between you and the Muslims, they'd be furious! They'd soon send the Arabs back to their shacks!" (Clerc, *De Gaulle-Malraux,* p. 206).
165. Laurent, *Mauriac sous de Gaulle,* pp. 95–96.
166. Roussel, *De Gaulle,* pp. 603–604, and Jean Daniel's commentaries. Shortly after 4 June 1958, Jean Amrouche told Daniel that the announcement of a single electoral college, which the French of Algeria had always rejected, meant that henceforth only Muslims, who were nine times more numerous, would have a voice ("De Gaulle et l'Algérie," in Rioux, *De Gaulle, portraits,* pp. 258–259).
167. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 37.
168. Daniel, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie,* in Rioux, *De Gaulle, portraits,* p. 257.
169. Soustelle, *La page n'est pas encore tournée,* p. 111.

170. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 196.
171. On 22 May 1958, even before the crisis was over, he had sharply retorted to André Philip—who had joined him in London in 1942 and sat on the French National Liberation Committee—when the latter reproached him for involving the name of the man of 18 June in a seditious enterprise: "My declaration did not respond to anyone's *calls,* not even yours. There are factions in Metropolitan France and in Algeria. You yourself belong to one of these factions. I am not appealing to factions, I am not responding to their appeals, I am appealing to the French people as a whole" (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 2, p. 1278).
172. He called the situation in Algeria a *boîte à chagrin,* a Pandora's box (cf. Vaïsse, *La Grandeur,* p. 58).
173. *Translator's note:* Native Algerians who had served as auxiliaries in the French army.
174. *Translator's note:* The Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (Secret Army Organization,) a paramilitary group that sought to prevent Algeria from gaining independence.
175. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 268. See ibid., pp. 263–268.
176. Ibid., p. 268.
177. This resentment seems almost incontestable, even if Jean Lacouture has denied it (*De Gaulle,* vol. 2, pp. 510–511).
178. In an article that appeared in the *London Times,* 3 November 1970 (Perrier, *De Gaulle vu par les écrivains,* p. 104).
179. The assassination attempt at Petit-Clamart (22 August 1962) is a special case. While the General refused to pardon its main instigator, Jean-Marie Bastien-Thiry, who was executed by firing squad on 11 March 1963, he did pardon the two shooters. In response to those who deplored his lack of magnanimity, the General pointed out that Bastien-Thiry knew that Mme de Gaulle would be in the car that was riddled with bullets, that the arrival from the opposite direction of another vehicle carrying children did not prevent the attackers from opening fire, and finally that Bastien-Thiry had not personally put himself in harm's way, which de Gaulle interpreted as cowardice. See the recent book on this matter by Jean-Noël Jeanneney, *Un attentat. Petit-Clamart, 22 août 1962.*
180. It was only starting in 1968 that these tests took place on the atoll of de Mururoa.
181. Hegel, *Reason in History,* p. 47.

Chapter 2. The Place of Great Men

1. See Chapter 3.
2. Lamartine, *Le Civilisateur,* 3^e année, pp. 131–132.
3. Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?,* p. 26.
4. Ibid.
5. Centlivres, Fabre, and Zonabend, *La Fabrique des héros,* p. 1.
6. Ibid.
7. See Jeanneney and Joutard, *Du bon usage des grands hommes en Europe,* pp. 45, 181, 189, 191.

8. Jeanneney and Joutard, *Du bon usage des grands hommes en Europe.*
9. In 1944 (Valéry, *Cahiers,* vol. 2, p. 1541).
10. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. V, pp. 135–136.
11. Michelet, "Le tyran," *Histoire de la Révolution française,* vol. 2, p. 1019. Taine, in the famous portrait of Robespierre as the model of the "prig" (*cuistre*) that he devotes to the Incorruptible in his *Les Origines de la France contemporaine,* completely missed this point (vol. 2, pp. 112–130).
12. See Jean-Clément Martin, *Robespierre, la fabrication d'un monstre.*
13. Debray, *Madame H,* p. 107.
14. Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine,* vol. 2, p. 372.
15. Jean Guitton, quoted in Perrier, *De Gaulle vu par les écrivains,* p. 127.
16. Whately, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte,* p. 40.
17. I am paraphrasing Nietzsche, in a fragment from the autumn of 1887 (*Oeuvres philosophiques complètes,* vol. 13, p. 123).
18. Here I am paraphrasing Guizot: "La France [issue] de la Révolution n'est point assise ni constituée" (*Des moyens de gouvernement et d'opposition,* p. 3).
19. Amalvi, *Les Héros des Français.*
20. Nora, "Lavisse, instituteur national: le *Petit Lavisse,* évangile de la République," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, pp. 239–275.
21. Nora, "*L'Histoire de France* de Lavisse: *Pietas erga patriam,*" ibid., vol. 1, p. 891.
22. Nora, "Lavisse, instituteur national," ibid., vol. I, p. 27; italics in original.
23. Job and Georges Montorgueil, *Louis XI.* This picture book can be consulted at this address: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6566485d.r=job%20et%20montorgueil%20louis%20xi. See in particular Louis XI visiting Cardinal La Balue imprisoned in a cage, p. 35.
24. *Translator's note:* Annexed by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.
25. Centlivres, Fabre, and Zonabend, *La Fabrique des héros,* pp. 283–284.
26. Ibid., p. 276.
27. These maps have recently been reproduced in a picture book edited by Jacques Scheibling and Caroline Leclerc, *Les Cartes de notre enfance: Atlas mural Vidal-Lablache.*
28. Mauriac, *De Gaulle,* p. 271.
29. Maurice Lévy (1914–1980) had been arrested and deported to Auschwitz in February 1944 (http://www.afmd-allier.com/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1009587).
30. *Translator's note:* Teachers in the secular, egalitarian public schools instituted in the 1880s under the guidance of Jules Ferry.
31. Published by Delagrave as late as 1946.
32. Montmorillon, Rossignol, 1954.
33. A diplomat and historian, Léon Noël (1888–1987) was to become the first president of the Constitutional Council (*Comprendre de Gaulle,* pp. 16–17). Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac reports a similar anecdote in his memoirs: in October 1941, in London, his cousin, seeing General de Gaulle appear during a parade, leaned toward him and whispered: "That's Charles IX" (*L'Etrange Victoire,* p. 196).
34. Mauriac, *De Gaulle,* p. 15. See also Rémy Rieffel's note on Mauriac in Andrieu, Braud, and Piketty, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* pp. 738–740.

35. Laurent, *Mauriac sous de Gaulle,* p. 2.
36. In *Comme un roman* (1992), Daniel Pennac also recalls having discovered *War and Peace* at about the same age, in the same series—which no longer includes, of course, Tolstoy's novel. Haven't the marvelous novels by Enid Blyton (the *Famous Five* series) and Georges Chaulet (*Fantômette*) been re-written to simplify the syntax and remove everything that is now considered "politically incorrect"? See for example http://celeblog.over-blog.com/articlele-club-des-5-et-la-baisse-du-niveau-85677083.html.
37. Esme, *De Gaulle,* p. 236.
38. Conseil supérieur des programmes, *Projet de programme pour le cycle 3,* 9–15 April 2015, p. 9.
39. See Borne, *Quelle histoire pour la France?,* pp. 32–37.
40. *Figaro Magazine,* 20 October 1979.
41. Amalvi, *Les Héros des Français,* p. 284.
42. At the same time, in late 1969 he complained to his minister of Education, Olivier Guichard, about the teaching of history: "There's only one thing that counts: the syllabus, the syllabus! Our students no longer learn anything" (Jean Mauriac, *L'Après de Gaulle,* p. 38). But in 1973 he let Joseph Fontanet strike the first blows against the teaching of history.
43. Borne, *Quelle histoire pour la France?,* p. 43.
44. The word *discipline* seeming still too strong, in 1978 it was renamed *introductory activity.* See François-Xavier Bellamy, "Vie et mort du roman national," and more generally the issue of *Figaro Histoire,* from October to November 2012, in which Decaux's article was republished ("La vérité sur l'histoire à l'école").
45. *Translator's note: Le Cheval d'orgueil* (1975) is Pêr Jakez Helias's autobiographical account of peasant life in Brittany; it was made into a major film directed by Claude Chabrol (1980). *Montaillou, village occitande 1294 à 1324* is a study of a medieval village in the Pyrenees written by the historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1975).
46. On the 1970s and 1980s, also see Bédarida, Bercé, Aymard, and Sirinelli, *L'Histoire et le métier d'historien, 1945–1995,* pp. 49–51, and Chambarlhac, "Les prémisses d'une restauration? L'histoire enseignée saisie par le politique," pp. 187–202.
47. Maistre, *Oeuvres complètes,* vol. 1, p. 187.
48. Julliard, *L'école est finie,* p. 91.
49. See in particular the works of Suzanne Citron, who has for the past thirty years been indefatigably putting the history of France on trial, and especially her *Le Mythe national, l'histoire de France revisitée* (1987).
50. "What do you expect," said de Gaulle, "the history of France is tragic" (Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 86).
51. *Le Chagrin et la Pitié,* by Marcel Ophüls, was released in 1971. Robert Paxton, *La France de Vichy, 1940–1944* (1973), Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite révolutionnaire (1885–1914), les origines françaises du fascisme* (1978), and Bernard-Henri Lévy, *L'Idéologie française* (1981). In a less heated register, Jean-Claude Milner, *Les Penchants criminels de l'Europe démocratique.*
52. I allude, of course, to Pascal Bruckner's book *Le Sanglot de l'homme blanc. Tiers-Monde, culpabilité, haine de soi* (*The Tears of the White Man: Compassion as Contempt,* 1986), which the reader might supplement with another work by the same

author, *La Tyrannie de la pénitence, essai sur le masochisme occidental* (*The Tyranny of Guilt,* 2010).

53. When General de Gaulle was asked about the misdeeds of colonialism, he replied by taking the example of the Gauls: "Only moronic peoples fail to recognize colonization, even if it has not always been kind to them because of their own barbarity. They forget that they were colonized because they themselves were incapable of doing the same [colonizing other peoples]." And he cried: "Long live the Romans" (Ph. De Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, p. 578.
54. Borne, *Quelle histoire pour la France?*
55. Borne, *Quelle histoire pour la France?,* pp. 170–178.
56. Dumézil, *Des Gaulois aux Carolingiens,* pp. 17–20.
57. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 1, p. 44.
58. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 2, pp. 2567–2568.
59. The debate went back in particular to Boulainvilliers, the author of an *Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France* (1727) and to the Abbé Dubos, who in 1734 had replied to Boulainvilliers' Germanist thesis with a *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie française dans les Gaules.* Claude Nicolet sums up the two theses this way: "For one side (the Germanists), there was a genuine military conquest over the Roman armies and populations, and such are the origin and the legitimacy of the Frankish royalty, and of the predominance of the victors over the vanquished, which is reflected essentially in the nobility's privileges. For the other side (the Romanists), on the contrary, the Frankish warriors, their kings and their generals, had intervened in Gaul, even before the reign of Clovis, only with the agreement and at the request of the Roman government; whence two consequences: first, the legitimacy of the monarchy ultimately goes back to that of the Roman Empire. Second, if there was no conquest, then there was no appropriation of lands by the Franks, nor any reduction of the Gallo-Romans to slavery" (*La Fabrique d'une nation,* p. 58).
60. See Fustel de Coulanges, "L'invasion germanique au V^e^ siecle, son caractère et ses effets," and his *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France,* 2: *L'invasion germanique et la fin de l'Empire.* On this unjustly forgotten historian, see Hartog, *Le XIX^e^ siècle et l'histoire. Le cas Fustel de Coulanges,* and particularly, on the question of Fustel's conception of the feudal system, pp. 78–95.
61. See above all the works of Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* and *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West.* See also Dumézil, *Des Gaulois aux Carolingiens* and, by the same author, *Servir l'Etat barbare dans la Gaule franque.*
62. Avezou, *Raconter la France,* p. 25.
63. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization.* In Lavisse we can already read: "It has sometimes been maintained that the arrival of these new occupants was not violent, that the pillaging and abuses were only isolated facts. That is to set aside contemporaries' testimonies that depict for us the time when they lived as a period of terrible trials and ruins" (Lavisse, *Histoire de France,* vol. 3, p. 77).
64. All these quotations are taken from Pierre Chaunu, *Eglise, culture et société,* pp. 55–71. On all these questions, see Michel de Jaeghere, *Les Derniers Jours. La fin de l'Empire romain d'Occident,* pp. 28–42.

65. It includes the twenty-four volumes published by Georges Bordenove between 1980 and 2002 (Editions Pygmalion).
66. Mézeray, *Histoire de France,* vol. 1, p. 194. According to legend, Pharamond reigned around 420. Godefroid Kurth, without absolutely denying his existence, refused to see in him the Merovingians' ancestor: *Histoire poétique des Mérovingiens,* Brussels: Société belge de librairie, 1893, pp. 135–136.
67. Mézeray, *Histoire de France,* vol. 1, p. 188.
68. Ibid., vol. 1, Preface (unpaginated).
69. Solnon, *Louis XIV, vérités et légendes,* p. 15.
70. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi,* vol. 8, p. 232.
71. In fact, it was not before the reign of Philip II Augustus (1180–1223) that *Rex franciae* began to supplant the old Frankish formula.
72. Bainville, *Histoire de France,* p. 51.
73. Ibid., p. 61.
74. Theis, "La mort très obscure d'un roi de peu, Hugues Capet, 996."
75. Mézeray, *Histoire de France,* vol. 3, p. 826.
76. On this generation of historians, see Walch, *Les Maîtres de l'Histoire,* and Gauchet, *Philosophie des sciences historiques. Le moment romantique.*
77. Thierry, preface to *Dix ans d'études historiques,* p. 13. Paul-François Velly (1709–1759), whose l'*Histoire de France depuis l'établissement de la monarchie jusqu'à Louis XIV* was published long after his death, in 1770.
78. Tocqueville, "De quelques tendances particulières aux historiens dans les siècles démocratiques," *De la démocratie en Amérique,* 2 (Part 1, chap. 20), pp. 485–488. Tocqueville returns to this question in his *Souvenirs,* where he contrasts not periods, but "men of letters who have written history without being involved in affairs" and "politicians who have always been concerned to produce events without thinking about describing them." Whereas "the former saw general causes everywhere," to the point of erasing, "so to speak, human beings from the history of the human race," the latter, "living amid the disjointedness of daily events, liked to imagine that everything had to be attributed to particular incidents, and that the little motives that they constantly manipulated were the same as those that make the world go round." Points of view on history that are equally false, Tocqueville adds, since one of them prevents us from recognizing history's short-term unpredictability, the other from recognizing what is (relatively) predictable in it (*Lettres choisies. Souvenirs (1814–1859),* pp. 797–798). For example, if the Nazis' seizure of power in Germany belongs to the first dimension, because while no one could have seriously bet on Hitler a few years before the elections of 1933, the catastrophe, though it was not known what form it would take, was already implicit in the clauses of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.
79. François Guizot (1787–1874), Augustin Thierry (1795–1856), Jean Sismonde de Sismondi (1773–1842), and Prosper de Barante (1782–1866) published in the same years, between 1820 and 1840, essays on French history and French Revolution.
80. Augustin Thierry got things going with his *Lettres sur l'histoire de France* (1820), followed by the *Histoire des Français* by Jean Sismonde de Sismondi (1821–1844), the *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois* by Prosper de Barante (1824–1826), the *Histoire des Gaulois* by Amédée Thierry (1828), and the *Histoire générale*

de la civilisation en Europe (1828), and the *Histoire de la civilisation en France* (1830) by Guizot.

81. Thierry, *Dix ans d'études historiques,* p. 7.
82. Sieyes, *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?,* p. 32.
83. Guizot, *Du gouvernement de la France depuis la Restauration,* p. 1. The Duke of Berry, the eldest son of the heir to the throne, the Count of Artois (the future Charles X), had been assassinated in Paris on 14 February 1820 by Louis-Pierre Louvel, a Bonapartist worker.
84. Royer-Collard, quoted in Remacle, *Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII à Paris,* p. 38.
85. Barry, "Discours sur les dangers de l'idolâtrie dans une république."
86. See Michelet, "Le Tyran," *Histoire de la Révolution française,* vol. 2, pp. 1004–1022. Cloots's remark, modifiéd par Michelet, is taken from the *Appel au genre humain* that Cloots wrote in prison, shortly before his execution. The Prussian baron Jean-Baptiste Cloots (1755–1794), known as Anarcharsis and nicknamed "the orator of humankind," was one of the most fervent proponents of exporting revolutionary ideas into Europe and beyond. Naturalized as a French citizen in 1792 and elected to the National Convention, his involvement in the de-Christianizing movement in 1793 cost him his life when Robespierre turned against "atheism."
87. Jules Michelet, preface to his *Histoire du xixe siècle* (1872), in Michelet, *La Cité des morts et des vivants,* pp. 447–448. Michelet adopts an observation made by Mme de Staël in her *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* (1817). Referring to 18 Brumaire, she writes: "It was the first time, since the Revolution, that a proper name was on everyone's lips. Up to that point people said: 'The Constitutive Assembly, the people, the Convention, did this or that; now, they speak of nothing but this man who is supposed to put himself in the place of everyone, and make the human species anonymous by monopolizing celebrity for himself alone, and by preventing any other living being from ever being able to acquire any" (p. 357).
88. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française,* preface to the 1868 edition, vol. 2, p. 999.
89. Barthes, *Michelet,* pp. 57–58.
90. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française,* vol. 2, p. 1022.
91. Furet, "Michelet," in Furet and Ozouf, *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française,* p. 1034.
92. Nora, *Recherches de la France,* pp. 71–72.
93. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* preface to the 1869 edition, vol. 1, p. 13.
94. This fragment was published in 1888 in *La Revue bleue;* it is reproduced at the end of the Pléïade edition (*Histoire de la Révolution française,* vol. 2, pp. 992–996).
95. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 995.
96. This quotation and the preceding ones are taken from the preface to the 1869 edition of *Histoire de France,* vol. 1, pp. 35–36.
97. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 34–36. He had begun writing his *Histoire de France* in 1830, in "the lightning bolt of July," publishing the first volume in 1833. In 1844, having published

the six volumes of the *Moyen Age,* he passed directly to the history of the Revolution (1847–1853, 7 vols.) before returning to the history of *Les Temps modernes,* from the Renaissance to the Revolution (1857–1967, 7 vols.), and then finishing up with a *Histoire du XIX^{me} siècle* in three volumes (1872–1875).

98. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 7.
99. Febvre, *Michelet créateur de l'histoire de France,* pp. 44–45. "Although MM. Guizot, Sismondi and Barante found enthusiastic readers, Velly and Anquetil had over him the advantage of having many more customers," Augustin Thierry recalled (*Dix ans d'études historiques,* p. 25). On Velly, see above, n. 74; Louis-Pierre Anquetil (1723–1808) was the author of an *Histoire de France* published in 1805 that went through many reprints up to the middle of the century.
100. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 1, pp. 10–11, 21.
101. Ibid., vol. I, p. 161.
102. Lavisse, *Histoire de France,* vol. 3, pp. 305–309.
103. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 1, p. 434.
104. See ibid., vol. 1, pp. 246–247.
105. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 252.
106. See Morrissey, *L'Empereur à la barbe fleurie,* pp. 349–381.
107. Viallaneix, *La Voie royale,* p. 227. On Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), whose work, and particularly *La Scienza nuova* (1725), is considered the precursor of modern philosophies of history, see the recent studies by Olivier Remaud, *Les Archives de l'humanité. Essai sur la philosophie de Vico,* and Alain Pons, *Vie et mort des nations. Lecture de la Science nouvelle de Giambattista Vico.*
108. Michelet, *Histoire romaine,* vol. 1 pp. vi–vii. Trans. W. Hazlitt, London: David Bogue, 1847, p. 4.
109. Michelet, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle,* p. 135. *Introduction to World History,* trans. F. Kimmich', in Michelet, *On History,* p. 58.
110. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 2, p. 2882.
111. Paul Viallaneix, quoted by Paule Petitier in his preface to vol. 5 of *Histoire de France,* p. 7.
112. *Introduction à l'histoire universelle,* pp. 127–128. Trans. Hazlitt, p. 52.
113. Ibid., p. 133. Trans. Hazlitt, p. 57.
114. 30 March 1842, quoted in Viallaneix, *La Voie royale,* p. 331.
115. Michelet never ceased trying to reconcile the two principles of the people as an actor in its own history and the history assumed and accomplished through the intervention of the "hero." In his *Histoire de la Révolution* he still maintained that "France has the right [. . .] to make the final judgment regarding its men and its events. Why? Because she is not a fortuitous observer of them, a witness who sees from the outside; she was in them, drove them, imbued them with her spirit. They were in large part her work: *she knows them, because she made them.* Without denying the powerful influence of the individual genius, there is no doubt that in these men's acts the principal part is attributable to the general action of the people, of the time, of the country. France knows them in this action that was hers, as their creator knows them. They derived from her what they were" (vol. I, p. 287).

116. See Gerd Krumeich, *Jeanne d'Arc à travers l'histoire,* and Paul Viallaneix, "La *Jeanne d'Arc* de Michelet, une légende romantique." See also Contamine, "Jeanne d'Arc dans la mémoire des droites," in Sirinelli, *Histoire des droites en France,* vol. 2, pp. 399–436.
117. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 5, p. 135.
118. Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 135–136.
119. Thomas de Quincey, *Joan of Arc,* p. 215.
120. Viallaneix, *La Voie royale,* p. 334.
121. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 5, p. 67.
122. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 139.
123. The "Tableau de la France" is found in vol. 2 of the *Histoire de France,* pp. 7–90.
124. Paule Petitier, introduction to Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 5, p. ix.
125. Chaunu, *Eglise, culture et société,* p. 36.
126. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 5, pp. 7–19, and P. Petitier's observations, p. x.
127. Michelet, *La Cité des morts et des vivants,* p. 413.
128. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 5, pp. 69–70.
129. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 76.
130. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 41.
131. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 42.
132. Quentin Durward (1823) and Notre-Dame de Paris (1831).
133. Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 6, p. 50.
134. "In the great drama of the liberation and recovery of France in the fifteenth century," Charles Petit Dutaillis wrote, "the people long played the principal role. The person of the king hardly appeared during the first acts, an inert toy of destiny, a miserable shadow: in the last acts, he remained dull, effaced. It is true that after the Treaty of Arras and the recovery of Paris (1435–1436), Charles VII regained a little confidence. He organized his schedule and worked punctually with his councilors; he decided to appear, in a few expeditions, at the head of his army. But he still spent long months of careless idleness in his châteaux on the Loire, where he remained hidden, inaccessible, among his favorite men and soon his favorite women" (Lavisse, *Histoire de France,* vol. 8, p. 228).
135. Letter of 29 April 1864 to Ernest Havet (*Hippolyte Taine, sa vie et sa correspondance,* vol. 2, p. 301).
136. Boutmy, *Taine, Schérer, Laboulaye,* p. 23.
137. Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux lundis,* vol. 8, p. 69. See also *Causeries du lundi,* vol. 13, pp. 249–284.
138. Wyzewa, *Nos maîtres, études et portraits littéraires,* pp. 195–196.
139. On Taine, see in particular Evans, *Taine, essai de biographie intérieure,* and Cointet, *Hippolyte Taine, un regard sur la France.*
140. See Gauchet, "Changement de paradigme en sciences sociales?," pp. 472–480. On the *Annales* School, see Burguiere, *L'Ecole des Annales. Une histoire intellectuelle.*
141. Furet, *Le Passé d'une illusion,* pp. 199–201.
142. Stéphane, *Portrait de l'aventurier,* pp. 40–41.
143. Duby, *L'Histoire continue,* p. 10. These principles had been set forth by Fernand Braudel in 1958, in "Histoire et sciences sociales: la longue durée."

144. Braudel, *L'Identité de la France,* vol. 2, pp. 486–487. See also Braudel, *The Identity of France,* pp. 678–679.
145. Herotodus, *Histories,* pp. 45–46.
146. Braudel, "Personal Testimony," pp. 453–454.
147. Himmelfarb, *On Looking Into the Abyss,* pp. 46–47.
148. I refer the reader to the works of D. Madelénat, *La Biographie,* F. Dosse, *Le Pari biographique,* and S. Loriga, *Le Petit X.*
149. Gauchet, "Changement de paradigme en sciences sociales?," p. 474.
150. Arnaud, "Le retour de la biographie: d'un tabou à l'autre," p. 42.
151. Guenée, *Entre l'Eglise et l'Etat.*
152. Le Goff, *Saint Louis,* pp. 13–27.
153. Duby, *L'Histoire continue,* p. 123.
154. Ibid., p. 152–153, 192.
155. Febvre, *Michelet créateur de l'histoire de France.*
156. Ibid., pp. 34–35.
157. Ibid., 4th lecture, pp. 81–99.
158. A testament published at the end of *L'Etrange Défaite,* pp. 209–212.
159. Febvre, *Michelet créateur de l'histoire de France,* pp. 46–47.
160. "The history of our country is one long series of marvels: the marvel of Joan of Arc, the marvel of the soldiers of Year II, the marvel of the heroes of the Marne and of Verdun—that is France's past. My mission this evening is to pay homage to those through whose marvels France retained a present and a future, those who died fighting for France. Of all the dead whose endless series constitutes our treasury of glory, these latter more than any others will embody, in its pure selflessness, the spirit of sacrifice. For they did not die as conscripts; a scrap of paper signed, in a mockery, in the clearing at Rethondes, had exempted them from the duty to perform military service. They did not die as volunteers for a mission they were given; a usurped government asked for volunteers only in order to abdicate. They are men to whom death had been prohibited on pain of capital punishment, and who had first to defy it in order to be able to seek it. One day, history will say what each of them had to do before rediscovering in Fighting France his right to death and to glory. It will tell us what Odysseys they had to make in order to immortalize themselves in their Iliads. Stowaways on the last boats that left France on its knees, humble fishermen traveling in frail craft through the storms of the English Channel, sailors and colonials forming convoys ravaged by torpedos, daredevils scaling the Pyrenees, prisoners who had escaped the enemy's camps, detainees who had escaped penal colonies for traitors, in those June days whose anniversary we celebrate, it sufficed that one man cried out to them: 'I ask you to join me in action, in sacrifice, and in hope' for them all to rise up, for those who no longer sought death only as a deliverance to hasten to seek in it an achievement, and, by a single, extraordinary act, to enter into the sublime" ("Hommage aux morts de la France combattante," 18 June 1943: http://www.pierrebrossolette.com/textes-de-pierre-brossolette/hommage-aux-morts-de-la-francecombattante-18-juin-1943/).
161. Maurois, *Histoire d'Angleterre,* p. 116.

162. See especially the remarkable study by Jacques Krynen, *L'Empire du roi* (1993).
163. See Myriam Yardeni, *La Conscience nationale en France pendant les guerres de Religion, 1559–1598.*
164. See Colette Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France.* See also Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *L'Etat royal, 1460–1610,* particularly chapter 14, "Le sens national," pp. 341–347, and Robert Descimon and Alain Guéry, "Fondations l'Etat monarchique et la construction de la nation française," in Burguiere and Revel, *Histoire de la France,* IV. La longue durée de l'Etat, pp. 361–394.
165. The most recent attempt was probably that of Louis Chevalier in his *Histoire anachronique des Français* (1974).
166. Jullian, "L'ancienneté de l'idée de nation" pp. 102–103.
167. "The basic need of this essentially heterogeneous (and undisciplined) country is unity," Paul Valéry noted in his *Cahiers:* "Unification, even excessive, is thus the work that is always going on—and in crises it is the solution that reconstitutes and most easily ensures the *unity* that wins out. That is the law. Hence the growth of the central power" (vol. 2, p. 1477).
168. On Saint-Helena, Napoleon told Dr. O'Meara: "In France, with four times as much territory [as England], and a population four times larger, I would never have been able to raise half your taxes. I cannot understand how the English *popolazzo* bears it. The French would not have put up with one-fourth as much" (*Napoléon dans l'exil,* vol. 1, p. 180).
169. Maistre, "Mémoire à consulter sur l'état présent de l'Europe" (*Oeuvres complètes,* vol. 9, p. 125).
170. See Stephanie Barczewski, *Heroic Failure and the British.*
171. Centlivres, Fabre, and Zonabend, *La Fabrique des héros,* pp. 271–272.

Chapter 3. The Best among Us?

1. Amalvi, *Les Héros des Français.*
2. *Translator's note:* An annual program offering opportunities to visit buildings, monuments, and sites of historical importance that are not usually open to the public.
3. The results of these polls carried out in 1949 and 1999 are given in Amalvi, *Les Héros des Français,* pp. 410–415.
4. In the latest such poll, published on 3 June 2015 on the *Figaro-Vox* site, Napoleon preceded Charles de Gaulle. But that was just before the bicentenary of Waterloo, which was given a great deal of attention in the media. The following names on the list were Joan of Arc . . . Coluche, and Louis XIV. In 2012, *L'Internaute,* a website dedicated to history, organized its own competition. Coluche's name does not appear there, but rather, in this order: Napoleon, de Gaulle, Louis XIV, Henri IV, Pasteur, Hugo, Francis I, St. Louis, Jean Jaurès, and François Mitterrand. Let us note an exception to the "reign" of the Napoleon–de Gaulle pair: in November 2009, the magazine *Historia,* drawing up a list of the "100 figures who have made France," mentioned neither Napoleon or General de Gaulle!

5. See Philippe Joutard, "Une mémoire nationale plus fragile?," in Bédarida et al., *L'Histoire et le métier d'historien en France,* pp. 51–55.
6. Ibid., p. 53. The younger the respondents, the more marked this phenomenon is, as is shown by the inquiry carried out by Anne Muxel among secondary school students. Except for Louis XIV, Napoleon, de Gaulle, and Jean Moulin, the names cited, out of almost 700, all belong to the contemporary period. Even in the author's opinion, the list reflects the "current humanitarian ideology." It includes no war criminal, no one suspected of social or racial discrimination. The battle against discrimination (Mandela, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X) comes first, followed by the battle against poverty (Mother Teresa, Abbé Pierre) and . . . the Palestinian cause (Arafat). For 17 percent of the respondents, the true hero is anonymous, their father or their mother. Only 3 and 5 percent of them, respectively, associate the word "hero" with the ideas of the nation or the homeland. The only consolation for these distressing results is that the idea the least associated with heroism is "revolution" (Centlivres, Fabre, and Zonabend, *La Fabrique des héros,* pp. 80–100).
7. Zola, *L'Assommoir,* in *Les Rougon-Macquart,* vol. 2, p. 445. See 2009 translation, p. 77.
8. *Translator's note: Le tout à l'égo* is an expression coined by Régis Debray that plays on *le tout à l'égout,* the public sewage system, to which he compares social networks flooded with excrement.
9. Hegel, *Reason in History,* pp. 42–43.
10. See Julliard, *Que sont les grands hommes devenus?,* pp. 30–36.
11. Chateaubriand: "Apres avoir subi le despotisme de sa personne, il nous faut subir le despotisme de sa mémoire" (*Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1552).
12. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 1543–1544.
13. See Chateaubriand's letter to Jean-Jacques Ampère of 18 July 1831, quoted in ibid., vol. I, p. 1544, n. 8, and an article that he published in *Le Conservateur* in August 1819, from which Jean-Paul Clément reproduces long extracts in his collection *Chateaubriand politique,* pp. 382–388.
14. Chateaubriand, *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons,* pp. 72–73.
15. Quoted in Sorel, *Nouveaux essais d'histoire et de critique,* p. 138.
16. Goncourt, *Journal,* vol. 3, p. 15 (16 February 1887). On 15 February 1887 Taine had published, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* the first version of his study on Bonaparte. In it we read: "His mother, Laetitia Ramolino, whom he resembles in character and in will far more than he resembles his father, is a primitive soul whom civilization has left untouched, simple and straightforward, unsuited for the flexibility, pleasures, and elegance of society life, unconcerned about well-being, *or even cleanliness,* without literary culture, parsimonious like a peasant, but energetic like the leader of a party" (*Revue des Deux Mondes,* 15 February 1887, p. 735). When Princess Mathilde accused him of having in fact sought to get at the son by sullying the memory of his mother, he wrote to her, on 19 February, a long letter in which he presented less an apology than a justification, marshaling a whole arsenal of quotations and references (Taine, *Correspondance,* vol. 4, pp. 227–230). People don't change. The princess let him know he was no longer welcome. For his part, he refused to delete from his "Portrait de

Bonaparte" the allusions to Laetitia's "parsimony," but he did omit the phrase cited above in italics (*Origines de la France contemporaine,* vol. 2, pp. 373–374).

17. Cointet, *Taine,* pp. 135–137.
18. Arthur-Lévy, *Napoléon intime,* pp. xi–xii.
19. This "Etude," which first appeared in *Le Journal* for 9 March 1893, was republished in 1902 at the beginning of the Nelson edition of Arthur Lévy's book.
20. Lemaître, *Les Contemporains,* 4th series, p. 186.
21. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* p. 1, 17.
22. *Cinna,* Act V, Scene 3.
23. General Pierre-Augustin Hulin had presided over the military tribunal assigned to try the Duke of Enghien.
24. Mme de Rémusat, *Mémoires,* vol. I, pp. 320–323.
25. Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon,* pp. 27–29.
26. *Translator's note:* The *biens nationaux* were properties owned by the Church or by émigrés that were confiscated during the French Revolution and sold off. In 1804 Napoleon guaranteed that these sales were irrevocable.
27. Geyl, *Napoleon, For and Against.*
28. On these metamorphoses and on the successive and contradictory legends concerning Napoleon, see especially Hazareesingh, *La Légende de Napoléon.*
29. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, pp. 1552–1553.
30. Jospin, *Le Mal napoléonien.* See also *Napoléon Bonaparte, le noir génie,* by Gérard Grunberg.
31. On the history of this comparison, see the excellent clarification by Thierry Lentz, "Napoléon et Hitler," in his work *Napoléon et la France,* pp. 196–198.
32. Since 1909, Churchill had bought a great many works on Napoleon, and in 1934 he wrote: "I really must try to write on Napoleon before I die. But work piles up in front of me and I wonder if I shall have the time and the strength." Events did not give him the leisure to devote a book to the man whom he once described as "the greatest man of action born in Europe since Julius Caesar" (Allen Packwood, "Churchill et Napoléon 1er," in *Churchill/de Gaulle,* pp. 48–49).
33. Geyl, *Napoleon, For and Against,* pp. 8–11. Sebastian Haffner also questions the possibility of comparing the two men; see his *Considérations sur Hitler,* pp. 22–23, 38–39.
34. Dominique de Villepin, *Les Cent-Jours ou l'Esprit de sacrifice.*
35. It was on the occasion of this anniversary, cast into oblivion out of respect for received opinion, that Pierre Nora published, in *Le Monde* for 13 December 2005, his "Plaidoyer pour les 'indigènes' d'Austerlitz." De Gaulle once refused to keep in his library a book on *Les Grandes Batailles terrestres* whose author had omitted Austerlitz (Ph. De Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, pp. 573–574). This was an essay collection edited by Cyril Falls, with a preface by General Jean-Etienne Valluy, published in 1964 by Les Editions du Pont-Royal.
36. A film by Nina Companeez (1995), based on a novel by Françoise Chandernagor.
37. Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV,* pp. 510–512.
38. *Translator's note:* The expression refers to a situation in which the head of state and the head of the government belong to different political groups.

39. Three books marked this rehabilitation: the biographies of Louis XIV by François Bluche and Jean-Christian Petitfils, and *Le Règne de Louis XIV* by Olivier Chaline.
40. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 2, pp. 2489–2490; italics in original. The cartoon books of Jean-Yves Ferri, *De Gaulle à la plage* and the following works, provide vivid testimony to this reversal.
41. *Le Rebelle* (1984), *Le Politique* (1985) and *Le Souverain* (1986). The quotation is taken from Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 6.
42. Debray, *A demain de Gaulle,* p. 764.
43. Ibid., p. 766.
44. Ibid., p. 765.
45. Broche, *Une histoire des antigaullismes,* p. 9.
46. Madelin, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 1, p. 53.
47. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 121.
48. In 1934, after *Vers l'armée de métier* was published, de Gaulle wrote to a friend: "I am sending you my book. People want to make it a certain success, but this encounters resistance, all on the right, would you believe it?" (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 760). The political heterodoxy of de Gaulle, who was seen in 1938 at the Vél d'Hiv listening to Malraux in a meeting supporting the Spanish republicans or adhering to the "Amis du *Temps présent,*" a left-wing Christian magazine, has been well analyzed in Léon Noël, *Comprendre de Gaulle.*
49. Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre,* vol. 1, p. 60. On 18 June and its significance, see Pierre Manent, 'De Gaulle as Hero."
50. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 845.
51. Ibid., p. 77.
52. *Translator's note:* Slang for Germans; "Krauts."
53. Guichard, *Un chemin tranquille,* p. 53.
54. Ph. de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, p. 199.
55. Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre,* vol. 1, p. 113.
56. Bloch, *L'Etrange Défaite,* pp. 157–158.
57. That is why we must not believe de Gaulle when he claims that he was ready to put himself at the disposition of anyone higher ranking in the army or more highly placed in the state hierarchy: he proposed this to General Nogues, who was in Morocco, as early as 19 June, and to Weygand on 20 June. The same goes for the assurance he initially gave to the French embassy when he arrived in London on 17 June, and then to Weygand on 20 June, after the latter had sent him a summons. At that point, the armistice had not yet been signed; thus, there remained an outside chance that Marshal Pétain's government would resume fighting if the negotiations failed, and if that happened, de Gaulle, who knew he could count only on friends in Bordeaux, preferred to be protected against an accusation of insubordination that would have made it possible to sideline him, even if he knew that that was very unlikely.
58. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 10.
59. "Je dois dire que ma prime jeunesse imaginait sans horreur et magnifiait à l'avance cette aventure inconnue" (ibid.). ("I have to say that in my early youth I imagined this unknown adventure without horror and magnified it in advance.")

60. Alfred Fabre-Luce himself, though he seldom compliments de Gaulle, recognizes his courage in combat (*Le Plus Illustre des Français,* p. 18).
61. Although de Gaulle shows his feelings very little, in his book on the First World War, *La France et son armée* (pp. 257–280), he left an account, in impersonal form, of his experience in the trenches.
62. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 337. On the preceding 23 March, he wrote to his mother: "My fate is without interest since I am good for nothing" (ibid., p. 427). Other bitter reflections on his captivity are found on 1 November and 8 December (ibid., p. 437).
63. Letter to his mother, September 1918 (ibid., vol. 1, pp. 421–422).
64. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 128. See also Pierre Servent, "Philippe Pétain et Charles de Gaulle, un drame shakespearien," in Brézet and Buisson, *Les grands duels qui ont fait la France,* pp. 293–324.
65. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 139.
66. To Marcel Jullian, in 1968 (ibid., vol. 1, p. 136).
67. See also the portrait of Pétain in *La France et son armée* (1938), which makes the Marshal the incarnation of the leader described in *Le Fil de l'épée* (1932) (*La France et son armée,* p. 291).
68. In 1926 (Lottman, *De Gaulle/Pétain,* p. 23).
69. Tournoux, *Pétain et de Gaulle,* p. 100, and Ph. de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, p. 555 (on the other hand, contrary to a tenacious legend, he was not the godfather of the General's eldest child).
70. On this episode, see Lottman, *De Gaulle/Pétain,* pp. 21–22. Philippe de Gaulle asserts that this is a fable intended, like the others, to "prove" his father's lack of gratitude (*De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, pp. 540–545).
71. Tournoux, *Pétain et de Gaulle,* p. 127.
72. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 2, p. 49.
73. See de Gaulle, *La Discorde chez l'ennemi,* p. 17, and "Doctrine *a priori* ou doctrine des circonstances," a study published in the *Revue militaire française* in March 1925, pp. 306–328. This same theme opened the lectures of 1927: "The action of war takes on essentially the character of contingency." See also, in *Le Fil de l'épée* (1932), the chapter entitled "De la doctrine" (pp. 119–146).
74. See de Gaulle, "Rôle historique des places françaises," *Revue militaire française,* no. 54, 1 December 1925, in de Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée et autres écrits,* pp. 503–525.
75. *Vers l'armée de métier* has been included in a recent edition of military works by Charles de Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée et autres écrits.*
76. His work amounted to a history of the Battle of Verdun written by his aide-de-camp, Colonel Laure. In 2006, a 350-page manuscript entirely in the Marshal's hand was discovered. It deals with the First World War and may have been intended for the history of *Le Soldat à travers les âges.* Had Pétain written it, or simply copied it? We do not know (*La Guerre mondiale, 1914–1918*).
77. For example, to contest the interest of the *Observations sur l'armée française de 1792 à 1808* that the Marshal and his entourage advised him to use for writing the chapter on "The soldier of the Revolution and the Empire." De Gaulle, who did not know this

work, which he attributed to a former officer of the Revolution who was supposed to have opposed Napoleon—perhaps Moreau, he said—refuted it point for point, notably on a question close to his heart and that he sums up this way at the end of this long note: "What has to be emphasized, to explain the unprecedented success of the imperial army, is this: first of all, Napoleon's peculiar genius and the power he exercised over the army's morale. Then the quality of this army, which allowed him to act boldly and with incomparable speed. [. . .] Going beyond that would become arbitrary. Because in the end one cannot claim—like General Camon—to codify Napoleon's military system. The Emperor himself said in advance that that would be a waste of time" (BnF, manuscripts, Nouvelles Acquisitions françaises 28590, *A propos du soldat de la Révolution et du soldat de l'Empire*). General Hubert Camon was the author of numerous strategic studies of the Napoleonic wars from which, in fact, he sought to derive a "system" that, applied by the Emperor, would explain his victories. The work de Gaulle criticized was written not by Moreau but by an officer, Theodor von Faber, who had published it anonymously in 1808. It was reprinted in 1901 and attributed to General Dragomirov.

78. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 702 (16 January 1928).
79. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 704–706 (23 January 1928).
80. Letter to de Gaulle reproduced in Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 146.
81. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 707 (1 January 1929).
82. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 136. It was then, he also told another interlocutor, Georges Duhamel, that he had seen appear in the Marshal "two phenomena, equally strong and yet contradictory: the senile lack of interest in everything and the senile ambition [to achieve] everything" (Roussel, *De Gaulle,* p. 45).
83. Quoted in the *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 901 (letter of 4 August 1938).
84. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, pp. 858–859.
85. Broche, *Une histoire des antigaullismes,* p. 39. The two men are supposed to have agreed, during a conversation at Pétain's home on 28 August 1938, on the principle that a dedication to the Marshal would be included, in which his contribution to the work would be acknowledged (there are three accounts of this meeting, two by the General, and a third by his son. On the first two, see Roussel, *De Gaulle,* p. 73, and for the third, see Ph. De Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, pp. 552–554). One week after this meeting, Pétain sent the colonel a draft dedication in which we read: "To Marshal Pétain, who was so kind as to help me with his advice." The Marshal was disagreeably surprised when the book came out on 27 September. A different dedication appeared on the flyleaf that mentioned only that he was behind the project but made no personal contribution to it: "To Monsieur le Marshal Pétain, who wished this book to be written" (Tournoux, *Pétain et de Gaulle,* pp. 165–175, and Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, pp. 273–281). Further protests and bitter exchanges ensued, and finally de Gaulle agreed to restore the Marshal's version of the dedication in subsequent editions of *La France et son armée.* The year 1940 resolved the problem: all mention of Pétain later disappeared from the flyleaf.
86. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 61.
87. Ibid., p. 66.

88. Roussel, *De Gaulle,* pp. 66–67. He did not obtain this promotion until the following year.
89. Gracq, *Le Rivage des Syrtes,* pp. 34–35.
90. J. Mallet du Pan, *Mercure britannique,* no. 30, vol. 4, pp. 339–406.
91. Quoted in Leys, *Protée et autres essais,* p. 59.
92. Colin, *L'Education militaire de Napoléon,* pp. 321–322.
93. Bainville, *Napoléon,* p. 61. Napoleon later acknowledged this: "Vendémiaire and even Montenotte [12 April, at the beginning of the Italian campaign] still did not lead me to believe that I was a superior man" [. . .]. It was only after Lodi that it occurred to me that I might well become, after all, a decisive actor on our political scene. Then was born the first glimmer of high ambition" (quoted in Ludwig, *Napoléon,* p. 62).
94. I remind the reader that these are the first lines of Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme.*
95. Montholon, *Récits de la captivité,* vol. 2, p. 126.
96. Marmont, *Mémoires,* vol. 2, p. 126.
97. In Henri Troyat's novel *La Malandre* (1967), one of the heroes, Alexandre, is asked how difficult it was to be "part of a postwar generation." He replies: "I'll have you know that since pre-history, each new generation has been a postwar generation!" (p. 84).
98. Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 1, p. 7.
99. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* pp. 18–19. In 1937—that is, after de Gaulle—the German General Heinz Guderian published his book on tanks, poetically titled *Achtung, Panzers!* On De Gaulle's precursors, see Messmer and Larcan, *Les Ecrits militaires de Charles de Gaulle,* pp. 313–332.
100. General von Thoma, in Liddell Hart, *The German Generals Talk: Startling Revelations from Hitler's High Command,* New York: William Morrow. 1948; new ed. 1971, p. 91. Guderian later confirmed these remarks; he had read de Gaulle's book in 1937, in any case too late to be influenced by it, since by that date, he says, "the organization of the German panzer divisions was already established" (ibid.).
101. In the article that bore the same title and was published in 1933 in the *Revue politique et parlementaire,* before the appearance of *Vers l'armée de métier,* de Gaulle warned at the outset: "My study systematically omits any reference to technology" (Messmer and Larcan, *Les Ecrits militaires de Charles de Gaulle,* p. 314).
102. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 18.
103. Frieser, *Le Mythe de la guerre-éclair,* pp. 602–603.
104. Ibid., pp. 79–104. On 10 May 1940, the French had 3,254 operational tanks, as compared with 2,439 for the Germans. But, and this is what particularly made the difference, the Germans had 2,589 operational airplanes, while the Allies, French, Belgian, and British had only 1,453.
105. Liddell Hart, *Stratégies,* 2nd revised ed., p. 218.
106. Bloch, *L'Etrange Défaite,* pp. 66–67.
107. De Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* pp. 306–307. After the war, a polemic flared up. Having become aware in 1940 of this oversight (in his *Memorandum* of 26 January he stressed the preponderant role played by the German assault aircraft during the invasion of Poland [pp. 803–806]), de Gaulle is supposed to have decided to "bring *Vers*

l'armée de métier up to date. Thus, an edition in which several passages were revised was published in Algiers in 1944 by a "French publishing office." Was de Gaulle responsible for these changes which, ex post facto, made the book seem more prophetic than it had been? We do not know. It was Alfred Fabre-Luce, an indefatigable detractor of the General, who started this hare (*Le Plus Illustre des Français,* pp. 47–49). Since then it has become a classic theme of anti-Gaullism. But in *Vers l'armée de métier* there is a passage on the future role of aviation that was in fact included in the original edition. In it, de Gaulle refers to the "capital role" that aviation would play "in the war of the future," in coordination with tanks which it absolutely needs, because it is capable of destroying, but "does not constrain, does not conquer, does not occupy" (*Vers l'armée de métier,* pp. 310–311). Critics exaggerate when they assert that he was wholly unaware of aviation's future role. "Thus De Gaulle never neglected air power before the war," Alain Larcan and Pierre Messmer concluded; "what he did not deal with, or dealt inadequately with, was the role played by air power, through their guns and bombs, in fighting on land: neither the attacks of dive bombers nor carpet bombing by heavy bombers are mentioned" (*Les Ecrits militaires de Charles de Gaulle,* p. 310).

108. See the letter sent to Paul Reynaud on 17 December 1934 (de Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 766). On de Gaulle's conversations with Blum, who had become head of government in 1936, see *Mémoires de guerre,* pp. 26–29.
109. De Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* in de Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée et autres écrits,* p. 325.
110. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 21.
111. See his "Note sur l'organisation des chars" (September 1939) and another, "relative aux modifications à apporter aux règlements concernant l'emploi des chars," from 11 November 1939 (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, pp. 893–896, 901–908).
112. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 911–913.
113. Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle,* pp. 38–40.
114. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 928.
115. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 38.
116. Frieser, *Le Mythe de la guerre-éclair,* pp. 453–454.
117. See, for example, Argoud, *La Décadence, l'imposture et la tragédie,* p. 37, and Dominique Venner, *De Gaulle,* p. 49. It was General Perré who made the first accusation, after the war (his remarks are reported in Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante jours qui ébranlèrent l'Occident,* p. 210). Perré is not a very reliable judge: he had sat on the tribunal that, after the armistice, sentenced de Gaulle to capital punishment.
118. Letter of 15 May 1940 to Commander Louis Yvon (de Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 929).
119. On these battles, see de Wailly, *De Gaulle sous le casque,* and Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 1, pp. 392–399.
120. Thus for lack of radio connections, on 28 May at Abbeville, only 19 of his 57 light tanks took part in the attack on German positions. The others had gotten lost (de Wailly, *De Gaulle sous le casque,* p. 111).
121. See especially the remarkable study by Henri de Wailly. See also the testimony of Lieutenant Galimand, quoted at length by Benoist-Méchin (*Soixante jours qui*

ébranlèrent l'Occident, pp. 119–120), De Gaulle's *Mémoires de guerre,* pp. 37–47, and Ph. de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, pp. 141–142.

122. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 39.
123. Ibid., p. 46, and de Wailly, *De Gaulle sous le casque,* p. 308.
124. Ibid., p. 210.
125. Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 1, p. 400.
126. Ibid.
127. The "Mémorandum" is reproduced in toto in de Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée et autres écrits,* pp. 797–810. The appeal of 18 June was indeed an ultimate outcome of this memorandum, as is shown by a text written on 21 May 1940 at the request of the propaganda office of the French General Headquarters. Several passages from it come from the "Memorandum" and were used one month later in the emblematic message of 18 June (Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 42).
128. "Pour briser la force mécanique," he wrote, "seule la force mécanique possède une efficacité certaine" (*Mémorandum,* p. 804).
129. Ibid., p. 809.
130. Guichard, *Mon général,* pp. 66–67. On Weygand, see the ferocious portrait that de Gaulle paints of him in *Mémoires de guerre,* pp. 47–49.
131. *Mémorandum,* p. 805.
132. The title of François Kersaudy's book *De Gaulle et Churchill, la mésentente cordiale.*
133. Aron, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 246–248.
134. De Gaulle, *Les Grands Discours de guerre* (18 June 1941), pp. 45–46.
135. Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle,* pp. 227–228.
136. Pétain had authorized the authorities to go to North Africa, explaining that he himself would not leave French soil. Darlan had chartered the ship. Did the admiral send a counter-order? On 24 June, the situation had changed; the armistice had been signed. When they arrived in Casablanca, the thirty passengers were confined to a hotel. On 31 August several of them, including Mendès France and Jean Zay, were arrested and sent back to France to be put on trial there for "desertion."
137. On Barthélemy, see Broche, *Une histoire des antigaullismes,* p. 85; see also Colonel Rémy, "La justice et l'opprobre," published in the magazine *Carrefour* on 11 April 1950, and *Dans l'ombre du Maréchal.*
138. For a time, Napoleon had considered depriving the Hohenzollern of their throne.
139. On Prussia's recovery, see Kérautret, *Histoire de la Prusse,* pp. 277–318.
140. *Translator's note:* On 24 October 1940, Marshal Pétain met with Adolf Hitler at Montoire, in a prelude to the armistice and collaboration with Nazi Germany.
141. Pétain was born in 1856, Weygand was, it was said, the illegitimate son of the ephemeral emperor of Mexico, Maximilian of Hapsburg, and Gamelin was born in 1872, just after the Paris Commune! "All of these officers had remained, though not always to the same extent, dominated by their memories of the *last* war. Nor can that be wondered at. Not only had they relived those glorious days a hundred trimes in books or lectures [. . .]. Thoughts of the last war clung to them because they were the thoughts of their youth. Those long-dead days had all the brilliance of things *seen.* A chord was struck in the minds of those men which called forth a resonant echo from the emo-

tional recollection of their past. Incidents which, for others, served merely to illustrate some objective lesson in strategy were, for them, as for all of us who had known those years of fighting, unforgettable reminders of personal dangers faced and overcome, of friends killed at our side, [. . .] of the intoxication which had taken hold of us when we saw the enemy in flight. [. . .] Ill-prepared by the instructions they had received or had given to others, to understand, instinctively, the working of the irresistible law of change, only a rare elasticity of mind could have enabled them to fight free from the influence of things once seen and deeds once accomplished" (Bloch, *Strange Defeat,* pp. 121–122).

142. De Gaulle, *Les Grands Discours de guerre,* pp. 70–71.
143. Ibid., p. 71.
144. Ibid.
145. Maistre, *Correspondance diplomatique* (1–3 February 1811), vol. 1, pp. 2–5.
146. Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er}, vol. 30, p. 303.
147. Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle,* p. 163.
148. *Translator's note:* The Rally of the French People, a short-lived political party founded by de Gaulle on 13 April 1947. It advocated a constitutional revision to establish a presidential regime.
149. Guichard, *Un chemin tranquille,* pp. 21–22. Georges Pompidou also rejected any idea of comparing de Gaulle with Napoleon. He preferred to compare him to Joan of Arc: "In both cases, a person who was initially without any power made it possible to resurrect France by drawing, essentially and almost exclusively, on moral strength and premonitions of the future" (*Lettres, notes et portraits,* p. 619).
150. *Translator's note:* Charles Maurras (1868–1952) was closely associated with the reactionary Action Française movement and advocated nationalism, monarchism, and corporatism, while opposing democracy, liberalism, and capitalism.
151. "He is an enemy of the French people and its freedoms," Monnet added; "he is an enemy of the reconstruction of Europe in order and peace; consequently, he must be destroyed in the interest of the French, the Allies, and peace" (Roussel, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, p. 502).
152. Broche, *Une histoire des antigaullismes,* pp. 185–186. On André Labarthe and Raymond Aron in London, see the rather unflattering portrait sketched by Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac in his memoirs, Aron dining in chic restaurants or discoursing in a luxury hotel in London, the Dorchester, where he "held forth on a little couch covered with pink silk brocade (*L'Etrange victoire,* p. 103), Labarthe "serving as a paid informer for the Soviet secret service" and an unrepentant anti-Gaullist conspirator (p. 106).
153. On the hypothesis of a fascism of French origin, developed notably by Zeev Sternhell in *Ni droite ni gauche* (1986), see the remarkable analysis by Michel Winock in his *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France,* pp. 217–330.
154. Aron, "L'ombre des Bonaparte," in *Chroniques de guerre,* p. 775.
155. Aron, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 246–250.
156. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 250–254. On the conflict with Muselier, see Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre,* vol. 1, pp. 359–378.
157. Broche, *Une histoire des antigaullismes,* p. 188, n. 38.

158. Aron, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, p. 245.
159. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 245–257.
160. Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre,* vol. 1, p. 246. On Aron and Gaullism between 1940 and 1944, see Bonfreschi, *Raymond Aron e il gollismo,* pp. 42–61 and in particular the letter that Raymond Aron sent to Roger Caillois on 16 August 1943, which shows that de Gaulle's desire to evict Giraud from the leadership of the CFLN strengthened his fears (letter quoted on p. 60).
161. Aron, "L'ombre des Bonaparte," in *Chroniques de guerre,* p. 776.
162. Aron, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 254–257.
163. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 256. See Aron, "L'Empire parlementaire." The leaders of the internal resistance, from Henri Frenay to Claude Bourdet, shared this point of view, accusing de Gaulle of having had only one thought, to present himself as "a unique redeemer" on whom the fate and future of France would henceforth depend (Broche, *Une histoire des antigaullismes,* pp. 169–170).
164. Aron, "L'Empire parlementaire," in *Un homme du XX^me^ siècle,* pp. 719–720.
165. Testu, *Le Bouquin des méchancetés,* p. 423. And to Pompidou he said: "In London he was already not Free French, he was afraid I was going to draft him" (Pompidou, *Pour rétablir une vérité,* p. 83).
166. Jean-François Revel's *Le Style du général* has been reprinted in Jean-Pierre Rioux, *De Gaulle, portraits.*
167. On François Furet and Gaullism, see Prochasson's analysis, *François Furet,* pp. 378–387.
168. Furet, *Penser le XX^me^ siècle,* p. 53.
169. For Furet, the history of Gaullism in London or Algiers was that "of a lone man imprisoned in a nationalist megalomania aggravated by his exile and Anglo-Saxon hesitations" (12 November 1959, ibid., p. 14).
170. 12 November 1959, ibid., p. 18.
171. Ibid., p. 15.
172. 11 May 1961, ibid., p. 33.
173. Nora, "Gaullistes et communistes," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 2, pp. 2503–2504. This passage is reproduced in *Recherches de la France,* pp. 259–319. In "L'historien devant de Gaulle," Pierre Nora writes that the General's role also made possible "the right's in-depth acculturation to the republican idea," which even led to a "refoundation of the Republic" (*De Gaulle en son siècle,* vol. 1, p. 177).
174. *La République du centre,* the title of a book published in 1988 by François Furet, Jacques Julliard, and Pierre Rosanvallon.
175. Furet, "La France unie . . . ," in ibid., p. 18.
176. Ibid., p. 20.
177. Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 1, p. 626.

Chapter 4. The Pen and the Sword

1. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 21.
2. Mauriac, *La Mort du général de Gaulle,* pp. 111–112.

3. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* pp. 102–104.
4. Ph. de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, pp. 561–562.
5. Here I am paraphrasing Joseph de Maistre insisting that his son Rodolphe must study the French poets, whom the young man had a tendency to neglect: "Let him lodge them in his head, especially the inimitable Racine: it doesn't matter that he doesn't yet understand him. I didn't understand him when my mother came to recite them at my bedside, and when she put me to sleep with her beautiful voice, to the sound of this incomparable music. I knew hundreds of verses long before I was able to read; and that was how my ears, having *drunk* of that ambrosia at an early age, have never been able to tolerate ordinary wine" (*Oeuvres complètes,* vol. 9, p. 305, undated letter written to his daughter Adèle in 1804).
6. See, for example, the lectures given by the future Marshal Foch, then a lieutenant colonel, *Des principes de la guerre.*
7. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, pp. 524–542.
8. Mauriac, *La Mort du général de Gaulle,* p. 154.
9. See Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* pp. 1833–1835.
10. De Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée,* p. 98.
11. Ibid., p. 102.
12. Ibid., p. 103.
13. Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* ed. Fugier, vol. 2, p. 869.
14. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* no. 91, vol. 1, p. 107.
15. O'Meara, *Napoléon dans l'exil,* vol. 2, p. 163.
16. Ludwig, *Napoléon,* p. 56.
17. On these records of the current situation of the various corps, updated every day, see Baron Fain's *Mémoires,* pp. 74–91.
18. Chaptal, *Mes souvenirs,* p. 151.
19. Yavetz, *César et son image,* p. 184.
20. Stéphane, *André Malraux,* p. 122.
21. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi,* vol. 13, p. 326.
22. Amouroux, *La Grande Histoire des Français sous l'Occupation,* vol. 1, p. 398. Nor was he joined by any of those who worked under his command at the ministry of War from 6 to 17 June, with the exception of Geoffrey de Courcel (Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle,* p. 69).
23. On Rommel, see Benoît Lemay, *Erwin Rommel.*
24. "Eight months of playing cards and six weeks of foot race," according to the standard formula? An accusation that is both unjust and odious, as Claude Quétel rightly notes (*L'Impardonnable Défaite,* p. 360).
25. Huard, *Le Colonel de Gaulle et ses blindés,* pp. 295–304. See the testimonies collected by Jean Lacouture (*De Gaulle,* vol. 1, pp. 316–318), which all point in the same direction. Jean-Jacques Becker notes that this insensitivity already characterized de Gaulle in 1914 (*Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 1078).
26. Roussel, *De Gaulle,* vol. 1, pp. 82–83. See also de Wailly, *De Gaulle sous le casque,* pp. 87, 141–142, 225–226, 261–262, 316.
27. De Wailly, *De Gaulle sous le casque,* p. 117.

28. Letter of 2 June 1940 (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 935).
29. De Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée,* p. 76.
30. On the debates during the war concerning de Gaulle's "republicanism," see Crémieux-Brilhac, *De Gaulle, la République et la France libre.*
31. Mahoney, *De Gaulle.*
32. Ibid., pp. 1–5.
33. Debray, in De Gaulle, *Les Grands Discours de guerre,* p. 11.
34. Ibid., p. 35.
35. Régis Debray refers to "a deliberately idiotic referendum" that allowed de Gaulle to withdraw before the end of his term of office (*Madam H.,* p. 103).
36. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 79. He also told Jacques Foccart: "I'm on stage, and I pretend to believe, I make people believe [. . .] that France is a great country. It's a perpetual illusion" (Vaïsse, *La Grandeur,* p. 682).
37. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* pp. 39–40.
38. Mauriac, *La Mort du général de Gaulle,* p. 125.
39. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* pp. 131–132.
40. Mahoney, *De Gaulle,* p. 5.
41. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 102.
42. http://napoleon1er.perso.neuf.fr/Discours-Georges-Pompidou. html and http://www.ina.fr/video/CAF94060529/.
43. *Translator's note: Borgia gentilhomme,* a play on the title of Molière's play *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme,* which mocks the pretensions of middle-class mediocrities. Moreover, after 1968 de Gaulle considered Pompidou a traitor.
44. Duhamel and Santamaria, *Les Flingueurs,* p. 84.
45. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 104.
46. Bainville, *Napoléon,* p. 608; italics in original.
47. Larcan, *De Gaulle, inventaire,* p. 421.
48. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 9.
49. Braud, "Grandeur et rang," *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* pp. 575–577.
50. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 9.
51. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 232.
52. Vaïsse, *La Grandeur.*
53. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 683 (22 March 1964).
54. Foch, *La Bataille de Laon (mars 1814),* pp. 32–34. Foch repeated this claim in the eulogy he gave at Les Invalides on the occasion of the centenary of the Emperor's death (*Eloge de Napoléon prononcé le 5 mai 1921 devant le tombeau de l'Empereur*).
55. Lefebvre, *La France sous le Directoire,* pp. 349–350.
56. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1534.
57. Delécluze, *Journal,* p. 330.
58. Bainville, *Napoléon,* p. 250.
59. He had already experienced failure below the ramparts of Acre in 1798. Not having been able to take the city, he had been forced to lift the siege and return to Egypt.
60. Regenbogen, *Napoléon a dit,* p. 25.
61. Ibid., p. 27.

62. De Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée,* p. 43.
63. Letter of 12 December 1804 (*Correspondance générale,* vol. 4, pp. 968–969, no. 9439).
64. Quoted in Colson, *Napoléon, de la guerre,* p. 53.
65. See Jomini, *Précis de l'art de la guerre,* vol. 2, pp. 26–27. On Napoleon's strategies and tactics, see Stéphane Béraud, *La Révolution militaire napoléonienne,* and Bruno Colson, *Napoléon, de la guerre.*
66. Regenbogen, *Napoléon a dit,* p. 45.
67. Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 5, p. 372.
68. Jomini, *Tableau analytique des principales combinaisons de la guerre,* p. 47.
69. On the French columns' "oblique march" to the Danube, see Béraud, *La Révolution militaire napoléonienne,* vol. 1, pp. 127–135.
70. Rey, *Alexandre Ier,* p. 333.
71. Hamilton-Williams, *The Fall of Napoleon,* p. 58.
72. Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 17, pp. 23–37. On the acceptance of the Allied conditions and then the Allies' flat refusal on 4 December, see also pp. 58–62, 108–129.
73. De Gaulle, *La France et son armée,* pp. 166–167.
74. Ibid., p. 146. In 1969, he told Malraux that the tipping point came in 1812, not before (*Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 106).
75. *Translator's note:* A law had lowered the minimum age of military service; some of these recruits were not yet fifteen years old.
76. De Gaulle, *La France et son armée,* p. 177. On Napoléon and de Gaulle, see also Larcan, "Napoléon jugé par le général de Gaulle."
77. De Gaulle, *La France et son armée,* pp. 181–182.
78. *Translator's note: Rassemblement du peuple français,* a French political party led by de Gaulle (1947–1955).
79. Le Bihan, *Le Général et son double,* p. 207.
80. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 861 (letter of 23 August 1938 to Lieutenant-colonel Mayer).
81. De Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier,* pp. 265–268; italics in original. This prediction should be compared with the memoranda that de Gaulle was assigned to write for the general secretariat of National Defense, which he had joined in late 1933. In a "proposed law relating to the organization of the nation for wartime" that dates from that period, he wrote lines that echo what he said in *The Army of the Future:* "France has decided not to resort to war as an instrument of national politics. But if some conflict were to be forced upon it, France could not fail to take advantage of it to improve its situation. [. . .] Nevertheless, France would have no interest in pursuing a complete overthrow of the world order, and in particular a hegemony that it could not maintain" (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. p. 755).
82. Where Félix Faure had also died.
83. *Translator's note:* Faure had been president of the Council of Ministers.
84. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* p. 252.
85. Bernanos (Perrier, *De Gaulle vu par les écrivains,* p. 30).
86. See Maurice Vaïsse, *La Grandeur.*

87. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 137.
88. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 168.
89. The *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe* written by the abbé de Saint-Pierre (1713–1717) was reproduced by Simone Goyard-Fabre in the "Corpus des oeuvres philosophiques de langue française" in 1986. On projects of perpetual peace, see Arcidiacono, *Cinq types de paix.*
90. Maurras, *Kiel et Tanger,* pp. 200–211.
91. Quoted by Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution française,* vol. 1, p. 314. This was also more or less Talleyrand's project.
92. It has often been pointed out that de Gaulle never quoted Bainville or even referred to him (Larcan, *De Gaulle, inventaire,* p. 558). Nonetheless, as Olivier Guichard stresses, "everything we know about his thinking on France and on Europe, on the prospects of peace and war, convinces me that he was very close to the views that the marvelous Jacques Bainville, until his death in 1936, developed day after day in the columns of Maurras's newspaper. If being a Maurrassian means privileging the political precondition, Captain or Colonel de Gaulle was not a Maurrasian; but he was certainly a Bainvillian" (*Mon général,* pp. 69–70). De Gaulle was Bainville minus Action Française (Hoffmann and Hoffmann, *De Gaulle artiste de la politique,* p. 13).
93. Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* ed. Fugier, vol. 4, pp. 545–549.
94. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, *Des idées napoléoniennes,* pp. 174–186.
95. Godechot, *Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1789,* p. 231; italics in original.
96. Napoléon, *Vues politiques,* p. 312.
97. Ibid., p. 361.
98. Ibid., p. 312.
99. Ibid., p. 362.
100. Arcidiacono, *Cinq types de paix,* p. 54.
101. Regenbogen, *Napoléon a dit,* p. 134.
102. Quinet, *La Révolution,* p. 726. In his *De Monarchia,* written between 1313 and 1318, Dante had stated his preference for a universal monarchy, according to him the sole system capable of keeping the peace. He proposed to entrust to the Roman people, the heirs to ancient Rome, the power to supervise temporal affairs. The too glaring distinction between the pope's powers and those of the civil authority later led this treatise to be put on the Index, where it remained until 1881.
103. Bainville, *Napoléon,* p. 305.
104. Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* ed. Fugier, vol. 4, p. 545.
105. To protest against a decision that, starting in 1966, majority rule would be imposed in decisions made by the European Economic Community, de Gaulle decided, in July 1965, to stop participating in the CEE's discussions: "What I want to change is very simple," he told Alain Peyrefitte. "Under cover of the agricultural crisis, I want to get rid of the measure, which is in the Treaty of Rome (1957), by virtue of which no later than next January 1, decisions will be made by majority vote. Far more: the Commission's proposals, if they are not unanimously rejected, will be accepted! From that moment on, we'd be entering lunacy, It's impossible! We can't allow that! How was a French government capable of accepting it? That is why we don't want essential deci-

sions that concern us to be made by others, our destiny determined by foreigners" (*C'était de Gaulle,* pp. 892–893).

106. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 112.
107. Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine,* vol. 2, pp. 372–382.
108. Mme de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française,* p. 357.
109. Mme de Rémusat, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 252, 274.
110. Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine,* vol. 2, p. 372.
111. Aron, "La V^{e} République ou l'Empire parlementaire," in R. Aron, *Une histoire du xx^{e} siècle,* p. 712.
112. Jean Lacouture, Pierre Nora, and Eric Roussel, "Qui était Charles de Gaulle?" *Le Débat,* no. 134, March–April 2005.
113. *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* pp. 68–70, and the biographies by Jean Lacouture and Eric Roussel.
114. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 885.
115. Tournoux, *La Tragédie du général,* p. 15.
116. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 42.
117. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* pp. 13–14.
118. Paupert, *De Gaulle est-il chrétien?*
119. Larcan, *Inventaire de Gaulle,* pp. 752–753. On de Gaulle and Catholicism, see especially Charles Bardy, *Charles le Catholique.* On his love for his disabled daughter, see Jean-Raymond Tournoux, *Pétain et de Gaulle,* p. 163.
120. See Philippe de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 2, pp. 474–475.
121. Larcan, *De Gaulle, inventaire,* p. 753.
122. *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 173.
123. Regarding the MRP, he said: "I hoped that this new party, consisting of decent, patriotic men, was going to purify political life. . . . The sharks devoured the apostles" (Tournoux, *La Tragédie du général,* p. 31).
124. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 3, p. 781 (letter of 7 February 1966).
125. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* pp. 183–184.
126. That is why he spoke with such deference to the heir to the throne, the Count of Paris. That does not mean that he was a royalist—as his parents had been—or that he dreamed of reestablishing the monarchy; it means that for him, the Count of Paris represented a great history, that of royal France, which he refused to separate from the history of contemporary France.
127. See Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle.*
128. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 85.
129. See for example the letter he sent Thierry d'Argenlieu on 4 January 1962 to give him his best wishes and urge him to take care of his health (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 3, pp. 441–442). See also the letter of 20 June 1960 (ibid., p. 243).
130. Stéphane, *André Malraux,* p. 124.
131. Le Bihan, *Le Général et son double,* p. 199.
132. Bainville, *Lectures,* p. 257.
133. Zweig, *The World of Yesterday.*

134. Agulhon, *La République, 1880 à nos jours,* pp. 280–281. See also, by the same author, *De Gaulle, histoire, symbole, mythe.*
135. A speech published as an appendix to *Mémoires d'espoir,* pp. 311–312.
136. That is why one cannot go more wrong than Stanley and Inge Hoffmann when in their *De Gaulle artiste de la politique* they attribute to the General an "aesthetic talent applied to politics (p. 7). That formula applies better to Napoleon.
137. Mauriac, *Bloc-notes,* vol. 4, p. 398.
138. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1593.
139. Anne Simonin, *Le Déshonneur dans la République, une histoire de l'indignité nationale.*
140. Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital,* pp. 46–111. See also Bernard Vincent's biography of Lincoln.
141. Mauriac, *Bloc-notes,* vol. 4, p. 398.
142. See Chapter 1.
143. The original notice of the law of 19 Brumaire can be seen here: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6940357s.
144. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 32.
145. A procedure deviating from the one foreseen by Title XI of the Constitution of 19 April 1946, which was very restrictive.
146. In 1830, it was the ordinary assemblies that, as in 1871–1875, wrote the new charter and presented it to Louis-Philippe for his approval. The charter of 1814, promulgated after Louis XVIII's accession to the throne, is very different, because, far from being the expression of the nation's will, whether as interpreted by its representatives or as manifested by a referendum, it was "granted" by the king, in conformity with the absolutist tradition that made the king the sole holder of sovereignty.
147. According to *La Gazette de France,* quoted in Aulard, *Paris sous le Consulat,* vol. 1, p. 55. On the drawing up of the Constitution of Year VIII, see Lentz, *Le Grand Consulat,* and Gueniffey, *Bonaparte,* pp. 509–514.
148. See Elgey, *De Gaulle à Matignon,* pp. 90–134, and, for a detailed judicial analysis, Debré, *Les Idées constitutionnelles du général de Gaulle,* pp. 148–169.
149. In 1802 and 1804, it was the parliamentary assemblies, endorsed and ratified by the *chambre haute* (the Senate), that introduced the changes to the constitution that were later approved by referendum. In 1815, Napoleon named a "Constitution Commission" which, having declared that revision was in order, appointed Benjamin Constant to draw up the new text. The preliminary draft was subsequently submitted to the Constitution Commission and to the Council of State. As in 1799, the new Constitution was promulgated, without waiting for the result of the referendum. Regarding the 1852 text, an initial plebiscite held on 21–22 December 1851, soon after the coup d'état of 2 December, ordered that "the authority of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte [the president of the Republic since December 1848] would be maintained," and delegated to him "the powers necessary to establish a new constitution." A commission undertook to do this. The new constitution was promulgated on 15 January 1852; in this case, the referendum was held before rather than after. On the other hand, a few months later, in November 1852, the additional act concerning the reestablishment of

imperial dignity was made subject to the people's approval. On the various French constitutions, see the convenient collection edited by Jacques Godechot (*Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1789*), which includes very clear notes on the procedure followed in each case.

150. Elgey, *De Gaulle à Matignon,* p. 75.
151. Roussellier, *La Force de gouverner,* p. 571.
152. The most reliable sources regarding Napoleon's art of governing remain the memoirs of Bourrienne and Fain, and Méneval, *Napoléon et Marie-Louise, souvenirs historiques.*
153. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* pp. 87–88.
154. Mauriac, *Bloc-notes,* vol. 4, p. 400.
155. Gaudin, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 44–45.
156. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 285; italics in original.
157. Georgette Elgey has drawn up a list of these decrees in *De Gaulle à Matignon,* pp. 489–517.
158. Quoted in ibid., p. 305.
159. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 32.
160. Rémond, Les Droites en France, p. 317.
161. Charlot, "Le gaullisme," in Sirinelli, *Histoire des droites,* vol. 1, pp. 654–669.
162. Rémond, *Les Droites en France,* p. 327. See also Francis Choisel, *Bonapartisme et gaullisme.*
163. *Translator's note:* "Neither red bonnet nor red heel," that is, neither revolutionary nor reactionary aristocrat.
164. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française,* vol. 1, p. 762.
165. The decisive role played by Italy in the history of Napoleon, first in 1796–1797, then in 1800, and finally in 1805, is shown by Ferrero, *Bonaparte en Italie.*
166. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* p. 1188.
167. Quotations taken from Peyrefitte, ibid., pp. 1200–1208.
168. According to Burin des Roziers, the secretary general of the office of the president of the Republic, one of the General's closest assistants (ibid., p. 1205).
169. *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 416.
170. Letter of 29 December to General Catroux (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 3, p. 759).
171. Teyssier, *Histoire politique de la Ve République,* pp. 134–140 *passim.*
172. Schwartzenberg, *La Campagne présidentielle de 1965,* pp. 178–179.
173. *Translator's note:* In 2000, the president of the Republic's term of office from was reduced from seven to five years.
174. Whose efficacy, it is true, was significantly weakened by the dissolution manqué of 1997.
175. Bruckner, *La Tyrannie de la pénitence,* p. 189.
176. *Translator's note:* Graduates of the elite Ecole nationale d'administration (ENA).
177. Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution,* p. 1073.
178. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique,* p. 659.
179. Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes,* pp. 94–95. Napoleon, "ce *tourneur de têtes* de son siecle," Barbey d'Aurevilly called him (*Oeuvres critique,* vol. II, p. 1133).

180. See Mascilli Migliorini, *Le Mythe du héros.*
181. Quotations taken from Hector Fleischmann, *Napoléon par Balzac,* pp. 14–27.
182. Quoted in Théo Fleischmann, *Napoléon et la musique,* p. 154.
183. In 1935, the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* edited by Gérard Walter, with a preface by André Maurois, was published in the Pléiade collection. General de Gaulle's *Mémoires* were published in the same collection in 2000, edited by Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, Marius-François Guyard, and Jean-Luc Barré.
184. *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France sous Napoléon, écrits à Sainte-Hélène, par les généraux qui ont partagé sa captivité, et publiés sur les manuscrits entièrement corrigés de la main de Napoléon.*
185. Tomiche, *Napoléon écrivain,* p. 237.
186. See Jean Prévost's introduction to Las Cases, *Le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* ed. Walter, vol. 1, p. xviii.
187. Tomiche, *Napoléon écrivain,* p. 238.
188. Chaptal, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon,* pp. 90–91, and Van Tieghem (quoting Bourrienne), *Ossian en France,* vol. 2, p. 6.
189. Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire,* vol. 4, p. 85.
190. Quoted in Tomiche, *Napoléon écrivain,* p. 187.
191. Montholon, quoted in ibid., p. 70. The Bibliothèque nationale holds the manuscript of the Egyptian campaign dictated to Bertrand, revised and corrected by Napoleon (Département des manuscrits, NAF 28822).
192. Tomiche, *Napoléon écrivain,* p. 243.
193. Ibid., p. 71.
194. Ibid., p. 156–160.
195. By Thierry Lentz, published by Tallandier, 3 vols. 2010–2011. On the composition of these *Memoirs,* see Lentz's introduction.
196. This unsigned article was published in the issue for 11 February 1806, and is reproduced in Périvier, *Napoléon journaliste,* pp. 308–318.
197. Jean Tulard, in his introduction to Napoleon's *Oeuvres littéraires et écrits militaires,* vol. 1, p. 22.
198. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1568.
199. Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann,* p. 245.
200. Martin, *Napoléon écrivain,* pp. 136–141.
201. On the witnesses at Saint Helena, see, finally, the study by Jacques Jourquin, "Ecrire à Sainte-Hélène," in the catalogue of the exhibit *Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène, la conquête de la mémoire* (2016), pp. 76–82.
202. Kauffmann, *La Chambre noire de Longwood,* p. 140.
203. See Jean-Pierre Gaubert's 2003 biography of this shadowy author.
204. An annotation made by Stendhal on the cover of the first volume of the 1830 edition of the *Memorial:* "M. de Las C. has no wit. So much the better, and a hundred times better, he does not mix Las Cases with Napoleon" (Boyer, "Stendhal et les historiens de Napoléon," p. 4).
205. The *Manuscrit venu de Sainte-Hélène,* forbidden by the French government, was soon republished in Belgium and Germany, and circulated clandestinely. The first

French edition was published in 1821, two years before Las Cases' *Memorial.* People were soon disabused regarding the authenticity of this text, which Napoleon was able to read on Saint Helena in 1817, and which he annotated to point out the implausibilities (these annotations are published at the end of the 1974 edition that I am using; they are also reproduced in vol. 31 of the *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* pp. 226–241). The author or authors have never been identified. The most likely line of investigation is the one that leads to Frédéric Lullin de Chateauvieux, who was from Geneva and was a friend of Mme de Staël and Benjamin Constant.

206. See in particular what he said to Las Cases on 10 April 1816 regarding the "irresistible ascendancy of liberal ideas" (*Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène,* ed. Fugier, vol. 2, pp. 494–495).
207. Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir,* Book I, chap. 4.
208. Bainville, *Napoléon,* pp. 28–29.
209. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1101. These early writings were published by Frédéric Masson in 1906 (*Manuscrits inédits, 1786–1791*) and later republished by Jean Tulard (*Oeuvres littéraires et écrits militaires*). On their history, see Tulard, ibid., vol. 1, pp. 15–17.
210. *Correspondance générale,* no. 68, vol. 1, p. 116.
211. This text has recently been republished by Emilie Barthet and Peter Hicks.
212. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi,* vol. 1, pp. 179–198.
213. Montherlant, *Tous feux éteints,* p. 111.
214. Letter to Josephine, 21 July 1804 (*Correspondance générale,* no. 9015, vol. 4, p. 775).
215. Ossian's poetry had been published in the early 1760s, shortly before Napoleon's birth.
216. On Napoleon and Ossian, see Paul Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France,* vol. 2, pp. 3–21.
217. About a collection of Napoleon's correspondence that he proposed to publish, Balzac said: "It would have been the most beautiful book in the world. In the eyes of the masses, this book will be like an apparition. The Emperor's soul will pass before them" (Périvier, *Napoléon journaliste,* p. 11).
218. Van Tieghem, *Ossian en France,* vol. 2, p. 9.
219. Letter to Josephine, 30 March 1796 (*Correspondance générale,* no. 439, pp. 310–311).
220. Jean Tulard, preface to his edition of the *Oeuvres littéraires et politiques,* vol. 1 (not paginated).
221. Quoted in Périvier, *Napoléon journaliste,* p. 5.
222. Ibid., p. 12.
223. This point is stressed by Gustave Lanson in his *Histoire de la littérature française,* p. 858, and by Albert Thibaudet in his own *Histoire de la littérature,* pp. 20–23.
224. Leys, *Quand vous viendrez me voir aux Antipodes,* p. 127.
225. J.-L. Barré, "De Gaulle, une vocation d'écrivain," in *Churchill-de Gaulle,* p. 197.
226. Ph. de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, p. 529.
227. Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine,* vol. 1, p. 144. See Le Bihan, *Le Général et son double,* pp. 152–153.
228. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 3.

229. Larcan, *De Gaulle, inventaire,* p. 236.
230. See David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (2004), and the same author's "Churchill mémorialiste," in *Churchill-de Gaulle,* pp. 194–197.
231. See in particular J. Mauriac, *Mort du général de Gaulle,* pp. 117, 139, 145–146.
232. Ph. de Gaulle, *De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 1, p. 528.
233. A former naval officer, Paul Chack (1876–1945) had become famous before the war by writing popularizing works on maritime history (particularly *Tu seras marin*). A member of Doriot's Parti Populaire Français (a fascist political party), and the founder and president of the Comité d'action antibolchévique, he was executed by firing squad on 9 January 1945.
234. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* p. 711.
235. *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 147. Or did de Gaulle want to make an example of him to defuse the criticisms of those who, after the punishment inflicted on Maurras and the pardon granted Henri Béraud, contested his right to pardon, arguing that he pardoned a little too easily? That is what Aude Terray suggests in *Les Derniers Jours de Drieu la Rochelle,* pp. 199–200.
236. Bainville, *Histoire de France,* p. 21.
237. Letter of 9 December 1963 (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 3, p. 602).
238. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 35.
239. Letter of 26 December 1797, *Correspondance générale,* vol. 1, pp. 1316–1317.
240. Quoted by Romain Gary in *A mon Général: adieu, avec amour et colère* (reprinted in Perrier, *De Gaulle vu par les écrivains,* p. 124).
241. *Translator's note:* A play on the double meaning of the word *tirer:* "I must be the man in history upon whom people have drawn/fired the most." De Gaulle is alluding to the multiple attempts to assassinate him.
242. This incident, which occurred on 21 February 1959, is reported at length by Alain Peyrefitte in *C'était de Gaulle,* pp. 55–59.
243. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 1180.
244. Stéphane, *André Malraux,* p. 97.
245. Malraux, *Les chênes qu'on abat,* p. 56.
246. See what Simon Leys says about the meeting between Malraux and Mao (1965) in Boncenne, *Le Parapluie de Simon Leys,* pp. 48–50.
247. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle,* pp. 1421–1422.
248. Stéphane, *André Malraux,* p. 121.
249. Duval-Stalla, *André Malraux-Charles de Gaulle,* pp. 224–225.
250. Cau, *Croquis de mémoire,* pp. 65–66.
251. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* p. 337.
252. Cau, *Croquis de mémoire,* p. 66.
253. On Malraux as a minister, see Duval-Stalla, *André Malraux-Charles de Gaulle,* p. 261–283, and especially Charles-Louis Foulon, *André Malraux, ministre de l'irrationnel.*
254. Testu, *Le Bouquin des méchancetés,* p. 422.
255. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 212.

256. Mme de Staël, *Correspondance générale,* vol. 4, pp. 302–303.
257. Villefosse and Bouissounouse, *L'Opposition à Napoléon,* p. 147.
258. Mme de Staël, *De la littérature,* pp. 76–82, 208–209. After writing that "the nation is annihilated when it is composed only of those who adore a single man" (p. 282), a barb that seems to be aimed at Bonaparte, she added that enthusiasm for an individual is not necessarily a bad thing, especially in a democratic society where the people can always revoke the trust that it grants to an extraordinary figure (pp. 328–330).
259. An allusion to the Concordat, of course (Berchet, *Chateaubriand,* pp. 377–378). On Chateaubriand and Napoleon, see the recent book by Alexandre Duval-Stalla, *François-René de Chateaubriand-Napoléon Bonaparte: une histoire, deux gloires.*
260. Heine, *De l'Allemagne,* p. 427.
261. On Mme de Staël's politics during the Revolution, see G. E. Gwynne's little-known study, *Madame de Staël et la Révolution française* (1969).
262. Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution,* p. 1040.
263. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, pp. 946–947.
264. Ibid., pp. 800–801. Chateaubriand is referring to Népomucene Lemercier (1771–1840).
265. Sainte-Beuve, "Madame de Staël," in *Portraits de femmes,* pp. 128–129.
266. Mauriac, *De Gaulle,* p. 103.
267. Le Bihan, Le Général et son double, p. 255.
268. De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre,* pp. 656–657.
269. Furet, *Le Passé d'une illusion,* pp. 322–324.
270. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi,* vol. 1, p. 186.
271. *Correspondance de Napoléon I^{er} publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* vol. 11, pp. 448–449 (no. 9541).

Chapter 5. The Heroes' Sepulcher

1. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* vol. 11, pp. 448–449 (no. 9541).
2. The proofs of Mirabeau's "treason" had been discovered in November 1792. It was only on 25 November 1793 that Marie-Joseph Chénier presented the inquest's conclusions at the rostrum of the Convention and demanded the expulsion of Mirabeau's remains and their replacement by those of Marat, who had been assassinated on 13 July of the preceding year.
3. On 8 February 1795, Marat's remains were not thrown into the sewer in Montmartre, as is sometimes said. During the days preceding the decree of 8 February, there were in fact demonstrations: Marat was hanged in effigy, dummies representing him were soiled with blood and one of them was in fact thrown into the Montmartre sewer. The coffin containing his remains was simply unceremoniously removed from the Pantheon and interred in the nearby St. Genevieve cemetery (Bougeart, *Marat, l'Ami du peuple,* vol. 2, pp. 327–337, and the studies collected by Jean-Claude Bonnet in *La Mort de Marat*).
4. *L'Ami du peuple,* no. 421, 6 April 1791, p. 8.

5. See *L'Ami du peuple,* no. 421, 6 April 1791, pp. 4–8.
6. Bougeart, *Marat,* vol. II, p. 329.
7. See the testimony of Francis William Blagdon, who visited the monument in early 1802 (*Paris sous le Consulat, lettres d'un voyageur anglais,* pp. 319–322).
8. *Correspondance générale,* no. 11441, to Champagny, 12 February 1806, vol. 6, p. 110.
9. Lanzac de Laborie, *Paris sous Napoléon,* vol. 3, pp. 378–384.
10. Nonetheless, Voltaire's and Rousseau's tombs were moved so that they were no longer visible for the public.
11. Mona Ozouf, "Le Panthéon, l'Ecole normale des morts," in Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, p. 155.
12. Gracq, *Lettrines 2,* p. 3.
13. Audiard, *La Nuit, le jour et toutes les autres nuits,* p. 92.
14. Presidential decree of 26 March 2002.
15. Zimmermann, *Alexandre Dumas le Grand,* p. 595. Dumas died in Puys, at the home of his son, on 5 December 1870. He was first buried in Dieppe, then transferred in 1872, to respect his last wishes, to the cemetery in Villers-Cotterêts.
16. Would he have died of sorrow had he lived until the First World War and noted the magnitude of the massacre to which his research had contributed? Léon Daudet called him "a disastrous genius to whom millions of amputees and mutilated men should bring their crutches and their bleeding stumps, because he invented the main explosives that are today the delight of humanity and the security of families" (*Le Stupide XIXme siècle,* in *Souvenirs et polémiques,* p. 1273).
17. Fourest, *Epître falote et testamentaire pour régler l'ordre et la marche de mes funérailles,* pp. 222–224.
18. Agulhon, *La République, 1880 à nos jours,* p. 26. In 1885 the Panthéon became once again a site for the burial of great men.
19. This text, which was published in *L'Evénement illustré* for 1 September 1868 and partially reprinted in *Nouveaux Contes à Ninon,* is quoted in Zola, *Les Rougon-Macquart,* vol. 1, p. 1546.
20. Péguy, "Notre patrie" (22 October 1905), *Oeuvres en prose complètes,* vol. 2, p. 28.
21. The only two precedents that could be mentioned had been the return of the remains of Byron—who had died in Greece—to London in 1824, and, of course, the return of Napoleon's body in 1840.
22. The Republic had already had occasion to celebrate its advent at the time of Thiers's funeral on 8 September 1877, and that of Gambetta, on 6 January 1883, as Hervé Gaymard points out in his study on the transfer of Hugo's ashes to the Pantheon (*Bonheurs et grandeur,* pp. 159–195).
23. On this speech, see Antoine Compagnon, "Les ennemis de Zola," in Pages (ed.), *Zola au Panthéon, l'épilogue de l'affaire Dreyfus,* pp. 17–31.
24. The funeral elegy Malraux delivered can be reread here: http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/la-memoire/symboles/la-resistance/la-pantheonisation-de-jean-moulin—1964.php.
25. Ozouf, "Le Panthéon," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, p. 174.
26. Ibid., p. 155.

27. For a more sympathetic view of the monument and the cult to which it is dedicated, see Olivier Le Naire, *Entrez au Panthéon!,* whose last two chapters, "Le temps des lobbies" and "Mémoire nationale 2.0," nonetheless demonstrate the impossibility of giving life to this "mechanism" without a soul.
28. Daudet, *Le Stupide XIX^{me} siècle,* p. 1273.
29. Maistre, *Considérations sur la France,* in Oeuvres, p. 228.
30. Raoul Girardet, "Les Trois Couleurs, ni blanc, ni rouge," in Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, pp. 49–66.
31. On *La Marseillaise,* see Michel Vovelle, "*La Marseillaise,* la guerre ou la paix," in Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, pp. 107–152.
32. Ozouf, "Le Panthéon," in Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, p. 174.
33. Dumont, "De l'individu-hors-du-monde à l'individu-dans-le-monde," *Essais sur l'individualisme,* pp. 33–67.
34. *Translator's note:* Louis II de Bourbon-Conde, called "le Grand Condé (1621–1686), a prince of the blood famed as a military leader.
35. Against the Spanish. See Simone Bertiere, *Condé,* pp. 132–151.
36. See in particular Olivier Chaline, *Le Règne de Louis XIV,* pp. 221–240, and Joël Cornette, *La Mort de Louis XIV,* pp. 154–226.
37. Letter to Nicolas-Claude Thieriot, 15 July 1735.
38. Ozouf, "Le Panthéon," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, p. 158.
39. As Edmond Dziembowski rightly points out in *La Guerre de Sept Ans,* p. 399.
40. La Harpe, quoted in the introduction to Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII,* p. xxix. The *Histoire de Charles XII* was published in 1731.
41. Letter of 1735 quoted in Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII,* p. v.
42. Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV,* pp. 267–268.
43. Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes,* 23: *Mélanges,* 2, p. 281.
44. See Hegel, *Reason in History,* and Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship.*
45. In his *Pensées* (quoted in Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII,* p. xxvi). See also *De l'esprit des lois,* book X, chapter xiii.
46. Manent, *Les Métamorphoses de la cité,* p. 66.
47. Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV,* pp. 83–84.
48. It survived notably in the exaltation of genius, which borrowed many of its characteristics from the classical representation of heroism (Centlivres, Fabre, and Zonabend, *La Fabrique des héros,* pp. 241–243). See also Menant and Morrissey, *Héroïsme et Lumières,* and McMahon, *Divine Fury, A History of Genius.*
49. Antoine-Léonard Thomas echoes these debates in his *Essai sur les éloges,* published in 1812.
50. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "D'un Elysée," pp. 375–403.
51. Birnbaum, "L'héroisme n'est plus ce qu'il était," pp. 123–124. See especially Bonnet, *Naissance du Panthéon,* and Daniel Fabre, "L'atelier des héros," in Centlivres, Fabre, and Zonabend, *La Fabrique des héros,* pp. 236–249.
52. Ozouf, "Le Panthéon," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 1, p. 158.
53. While visiting the monument with Aristide Briand, Jaurès said to him: "It is certain that I shall never be taken here. But if I had the feeling that instead of laying me to rest

in one of our sunny little cemeteries full of flowers in the countryside, they were going to bring my ashes here, I admit that the rest of my life would be poisoned by it" (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_personnes_inhumées_au_Panthéon_de_Paris).

54. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* pp. 620–622.
55. Blanqui, *Voyage d'un jeune Français en Angleterre et en Ecosse,* pp. 350–351.
56. Loftie, *Westminster Abbey,* pp. 312–316.
57. Most of the sovereigns who succeeded George II, who died in 1760, were buried at Windsor, and none of them in Westminster Abbey.
58. Blanqui, *Voyage d'un jeune Français en Angleterre et en Ecosse,* p. 350.
59. Decree of the Consuls, 27 November 1799 (*Correspondance de Napoléon Ier publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* no. 4402, vol. 6, p. 13). The following day, another decree designated the chateau of Versailles and its outbuildings as housing for disabled war veterans (ibid., no. 4404, vol. 6, p. 14). On 1 December, Bonaparte changed his mind: "I think it is pointless to hasten the execution of the project of transferring the disabled to Versailles. That already greatly worries them. We have to say and do everything we can to prevent them from thinking that we want to transfer them to Versailles" (ibid., no. 4410, vol. 6, p. 18).
60. On these projects, see Bausset, *Mémoires anecdotiques,* vol. 4, pp. 89–91, and Jourdan, *Napoléon, héros, imperator, mécène,* pp. 189–193.
61. Even if, in the *Précis* that he wrote about Turenne, he did not hesitate to say what he should have done (Napoléon Ier, *Précis des guerres du maréchal de Turenne,* in *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* vol. 32, pp. 90–160).
62. On this ceremony held on 22 September 1800, see Bronislaw Baczko, "Turenne au temple de Mars," *Politiques de la Révolution française,* pp. 492–534.
63. In *Les Déracinés,* Maurice Barrès noted that Les Invalides elicited in the highest degree "the feeling of administrative genius" (p. 164).
64. Morrissey, *Charlemagne, l'empereur à la barbe fleurie.*
65. See his letter to Ségur of 13 August 1804 (*Correspondance générale,* no. 9095, vol. 4, p. 815), and the observations of the architect Fontaine in his *Journal,* vol. 1, p. 85.
66. On the choice of the place for the ceremony, see Lentz, *Le Sacre de Napoléon,* pp. 31–35, and the same author's *Nouvelle Histoire du Premier Empire,* vol. 1 pp. 55–101.
67. The decision was officially made by a decree of 13 February 1806 written in accord with the instructions given by the Emperor the day before (*Correspondance générale,* no. 11441, 12 February 1806, vol. 6, pp. 110–112), but in early 1805 he ordered the restoration of Saint-Denis and asked that the chapel of Hilduin, the royal crypt, receive the tomb of the imperial family (Poisson, "Napoléon chez les rois de France à Saint-Denis").
68. "De ma race / Ce grand tombeau sera le port; / Je veux, aux rois que je remplace, / Succéder jusque dans la mort." Victor Hugo, "Les funérailles de Louis XVIII," *Odes et ballades,* p. 94.
69. See the letter of 22 June 1807 from the Emperor to Cambacérès (*Correspondance générale,* no. 15897, vol. 8, p. 905). Since the work of restoration was far from being com-

plete, the body of the little prince, who was hardly five years old when he died, was put in Notre-Dame. He was not buried at Saint-Denis but, later on, at Saint-Leu-la-Forêt.

70. Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire,* vol. 5, pp. 58–59. Mme de Staël had already stressed this paradox, writing in her *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* (1818): "His victories made him prince; it took his love of etiquette, his need for flattery, titles, medals, and chamberlains to bring out the parvenu in him (p. 395).
71. This formula of Napoleon's is quoted by Bausset, *Mémoires anecdotiques,* vol. 4, p. 91.
72. The flags exhibited in the Tuileries were all burned on the night of 30 March 1814, before the victorious Allies entered Paris (Biver, *Le Paris de Napoléon,* p. 252).
73. His legs had been smashed by a cannon ball on 22 March 1809, and he died as a result of his wounds on 31 March. His body, embalmed, had been brought back to France, to Strasbourg, only at the beginning of 1810. It left the frontier for Paris on 22 June the following year, on the anniversary of the Battle of Aspern-Essling.
74. Marbot, *Mémoires,* vol. 1, pp. 597–599. Napoleon mentions his "fond friendship" for Lannes in the 10th Bulletin of the Army of Germany, written on 23 May 1809, thus before the marshal's death (C*orrespondance de Napoléon I*^{er} *publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III,* no. 15246, vol. 19, p. 37), and the long duration of their relationship in the letter he wrote to the marshal on 31 May (ibid., no. 15282, vol. 19, p. 62).
75. Where he remained until 16 July.
76. For similar reasons, David's painting *The Consecration of the Emperor Napoleon and the Coronation of the Empress Josephine,* in which we see Napoleon crowning Josephine, and which had been presented to the public at the Salon of 1808, was no longer exhibited after the dissolution of Napoleon's marriage with Josephine and his remarriage to Marie-Louise.
77. On the death and funeral of Lannes, see Thoumas, *Le Maréchal Lannes,* pp. 331–354. Constant's valet gives a detailed description of the ceremony presided over by Cambacérès, in *Mémoires intimes sur Napoléon I*^{er} (vol. 2, pp. 142–146). Davout gave the marshal's funeral eulogy.
78. Le *Journal de Paris,* after Lannes's funeral.
79. Generals Béguinot, Choiseul-Praslin, and Mahler in 1808, Garnier de Laboissiere and Morard de Galles in 1809. Nine more, including Ordener, joined him between 1811 and 1815.
80. It is true that he liked Lannes, and even used the familiar "tu" with him, but although he willingly admitted that there was something of the "giant" in him, he immediately added that this "giant" had become one only thanks to him, and that he had earlier found him a "pygmy" (Regenbogen, *Napoléon a dit,* p. 363).
81. Guilhermy, *Monographie de l'église royale de Saint-Denis,* p. 39.
82. Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, "Louis XIV et la mort: l'hôtel des Invalides," pp. 59–67.
83. De La Tour, *Duroc,* pp. 199–201.
84. Masséna had died on 4 April 1817, and Marshal Lefebvre on 14 September 1820. Lefebvre had asked to be buried in Père-Lachaise, near Masséna.

85. Napoleon and Lyon, the history of their relations, consisting on one side in a neverfailing attention and on the other a loyalty that was manifested at each of the visits of the general, then of the First Consul, and finally of the Emperor, began upon Bonaparte's return from Egypt. Once he was in power, he saw to the resumption of the industrial activity of this center of the production of silk goods, and rebuilt the ruins left by the Revolution—notably the Place Bellecour. Compared with Paris, whose people had always been a little cool toward the regime and its head, the second city of France showed a support that hardly weakened before the end of the Empire, even if the conflicts with the papacy, starting in 1808, created tensions there. In 1804, the Emperor's architects, Percier and Fontaine, worked on plans for a vast imperial palace that would be built on the island of Perrache. Napoleon approved the project in 1810, but work had hardly begun when the Empire collapsed.
86. Bertrand, *Cahiers,* vol. 3, p. 137.
87. He had gone to Les Invalides for the last time during the Hundred Days, on 11 May 1815.
88. Bourrienne, *Mémoires,* vol. 3, p. 214.
89. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* pp. 391–393.
90. He died on 28 November 1947.
91. Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle,* pp. 363–364. A national funeral ceremony was organized in honor of Leclerc, whose coffin, accompanied by the Second Armored Division, lay in state under the Arch of Triumph before being interred at Les Invalides.
92. *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 678.
93. See his letter of 10 January 1952 to General Juin (*Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 2, p. 1053), and *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* pp. 669–670.
94. *Translator's note:* Edouard Herriot was the leader of the first *Cartel des Gauches,* formed in 1924.
95. Robert Aron, *Histoire de Vichy,* vol. 2, pp. 399–418, and André Brissaud, *La Dernière Année de Vichy,* pp. 491–503.
96. The General's remarks are reported in J. Mauriac, *Mort du général de Gaulle,* p. 172.
97. De Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets,* vol. 1, p. 1056. Maurice Agulhon has offered another explanation for the choice of Colombey. After remarking that as a military man, General de Gaulle could have been interred in Les Invalides, and, as the restorer of the Republic, in the Pantheon, he adds: "But de Gaulle the historian, de Gaulle the thinker, was sufficiently lucid to know that contemporary France consisted irreducibly of two camps, two *spiritual families,* and thus had two main sites of veneration [. . .] Les Invalides and the Pantheon. Les Invalides, a veritable *pantheon* of the right [?], and the Pantheon, a true *invalides* of the left; and in having himself buried elsewhere, he reunited them ideally because he refused to choose between them. That would fit rather well with everything he told us about his idea of France" (*Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 233).
98. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* p. 47.
99. "I was wounded in May '68, now they've finished me off," he told Jean Mauriac. "And now I'm dead" (*Mort du général de Gaulle,* p. 59).

100. On the return of his remains to France, see Jean Tulard, "Le retour des Cendres," in *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 2, pp. 1729–1753; Gilbert Martineau, *Le Retour des cendres,* and Georges Poisson, *L'Aventure du retour des cendres.*
101. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals,* trans. W. Kaufmann, 1, §16.
102. In the poem *A la Colonne.* Thus Hugo started down the long path that was to lead him, by stages, from the fervent royalism of his youth to republicanism, by way of Orleanism.
103. Thirty-one were presented between 1821 and 1840 (Humbert, *Napoléon aux Invalides,* p. 22).
104. See Rémusat, *Mémoires de ma vie,* vol. 1, p. 189.
105. Letter of 28 April 1814, in Antonetti, *Louis-Philippe,* p. 430.
106. See for example his letter of 13 May 1804 (ibid., p. 348).
107. Laumann, *L'Epopée napoléonienne: le retour des cendres,* pp. 15–16.
108. See in particular Tulard, *Le Mythe de Napoléon,* and Hazareesingh, *La Légende de Napoléon.*
109. Tulard, "Le retour des cendres," *Les Lieux de mémoire,* vol. 2, p. 1733.
110. Marx's portrait of Thiers is found in *The Civil War in France* (1871).
111. On 9 June 1840, four days after the promulgation of the law on the return of Napoleon's ashes, Thiers sold to the bookseller Paulin, for 500,000 francs, a very considerable sum, the rights to his *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (Poisson, *L'Aventure du retour des cendres,* p. 42).
112. *Translator's note:* Supporters of dividing up communal goods and lands in accord with the egalitarian principle of *per capita* distribution, rather than distribution by household.
113. See Antonetti, *Louis-Philippe,* pp. 820–825, and Valance, *Thiers,* pp. 188–196.
114. The foundations of this policy had been laid when the Quadruple Alliance treaty (with Britain, Spain, and Portugal) was signed, and it developed with Queen Victoria's visits to France in 1843 and 1845.
115. Letter of 18 June 1841 to John Stuart Mill, *in* Tocqueville, *Lettres choisies. Souvenirs,* p. 472.
116. Quoted in Aubry, *Sainte-Hélène,* vol. 2, p. 305, n. 1.
117. On 30 October 1836, Louis-Napoléon, crying "Long live the Emperor!," had tried to rouse the 4th artillery regiment to insurrection, as a result of which he was exiled. This time, the Chambre des Pairs sentenced him to life imprisonment. A law of 10 April 1832 confirmed the perpetual exile of members of the Bonaparte family that had been ordered after Napoleon's fall.
118. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1582. The Treaty of London, signed on 15 July 1840, reaffirmed the Sultan's rights and forced Muhammad Ali to return Syria to the Ottoman sovereign.
119. Antonetti, *Louis-Philippe,* p. 816.
120. The debate took place on 25 and 26 May 1840.
121. General Clauzel (1772–1842) was made a marshal in 1831, under the July monarchy, and not under Napoleon.
122. Quoted in Court, "Lamartine et la légende napoléonienne," p. 34 (article online: http://www.raco.cat/index.php/UllCritic/article/viewFile/207642/285472).

123. Lamartine, *Oeuvres complètes,* vol. 4, p. 451. Note that Lamartine nonetheless voted in favor of doubling the amount of the funds allocated (p. 457).
124. The ship left Toulon on 7 July. Having arrived at Saint Helena on 8 October, it immediately departed again after the exhumation of the Emperor's body, on 15 October, and reached Cherbourg on 30 November.
125. Officially, the head of the government was Marshal Soult, but Guizot was its strongman.
126. Aubry, *Sainte-Hélène,* vol. 2, p. 322, n. 1.
127. Hugo, *Choses vues,* p. 98.
128. Aubry, *Sainte-Hélène,* vol. 2, pp. 322–323.
129. Visconti, *Tombeau de Napoléon Ier,* p. 31.
130. Hugo, *Choses vues,* p. 99.
131. Ibid., p. 103. The catafalque was 11 meters high.
132. Hugo, who was in the courtyard of Les Invalides, reports, regarding remarks made by one of his acquaintances, B***, who was with the representatives inside the church of Saint-Louis: "He was seated behind the rostrum of the Chambre des députés. Schoolboys would have been spanked had they displayed, in this solemn setting, the behavior, dress, and manners of these gentlemen. Apart from a group that was excessively silent, grave, and serious, almost all of them acted indecently; most kept their hats on their heads until the coffin was brought in, and a few, taking advantage of the darkness, did not take them off at all. They were, however, in the presence of the king, the Emperor, and God; in the presence of living majesty, of dead majesty, and eternal majesty. M. Taschereau, wearing a buttoned-up frock coat, was stretched out on five seats, his nose pointing up at the vault above, the soles of his boots turned toward Napoleon's coffin. The others came and went, climbed on the seats, straddled the barriers, and ogled the women before the coffin arrived. M. Taschereau held forth at length; he was annoyed to have been brought there in advance, he nearly said, like Louis XIV: *I almost had to wait;* he added a great many witty remarks [among which was]: "I agree with Berryer, who said to Thiers, on the day when the announcement concerning Napoleon was made in the Chamber: *It's a fine joke, but it's a joke* (ibid., p. 107).
133. Dorothée de Courlande, duchesse de Dino, *Souvenirs etchronique,* p. 576. One of her correspondents also says that "no one was thinking of the Emperor's memory" (ibid.), at least in Les Invalides, even if the Duke of Noailles wrote, after mixing with the crowd that was watching the hearse pass by: "The curious mass of the crowd watched the procession go by more or less the way it would that of the Boeuf-Gras" [an image of a steer displayed by the butchers during a Carnival procession] (p. 577).
134. Hugo, *Choses vues,* p. 104.
135. Thackeray, "Les funérailles de Napoléon," pp. 227–228.
136. Victor Hugo reports the exchange quoted above as if he had heard it, but he could only have borrowed it from the following day's newspapers (*Choses vues,* p. 106). On this episode, see Aubry, *Sainte-Hélène,* vol. 2, p. 324, n. 2, and François Ferdinand Philippe d'Orléans, prince de Joinville, *Vieux souvenirs,* pp. 186–187.
137. Hugo, *Choses vues,* pp. 111–112.

138. Antonetti, *Louis-Philippe,* p. 816.
139. Thackeray, "Les funérailles de Napoléon," pp. 232–233.
140. See Visconti, *Tombeau de Napoléon Ier.*
141. The de Gaulles were in Ireland from 10 May to 19 June 1969, and later in Spain in June 1970. Charles de Gaulle, who said that old age was a disaster, but who enjoyed an iron constitution right to the end, planned to go to China the following year.
142. Philippe de Gaulle assures us that he took with him only the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (*De Gaulle, mon père,* vol. 2, pp. 638–639).
143. Joannon, *L'Hiver du Connétable.*
144. Morand, *Journal inutile,* vol. 1, p. 448. When Jacques Chancel asked him about his recently published book *Venises,* pointing out that he had always had a weakness for lost causes, Morand replied: "That's true. Listen: you know how much I detested de Gaulle; but when I saw him alone, on the beach in Ireland, with a hat that was too small and an overcoat that was too short, stooped and looking as if he had been abandoned by the gods, I was almost ready to love him" (letter to Claude Dulong of 11 October 1971, in Morand, *Lettres à des amis et à quelques autres,* pp. 108–109).
145. Lacouture, *De Gaulle,* vol. 3, p. 782.
146. See his will dated 28 March 1929, in Winock, *Clemenceau,* p. 536.
147. Ibid., p. 539.
148. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* pp. 29–31, J. Mauriac, *La Mort du général de Gaulle,* pp. 165–183.
149. "He has suffered so much over the past two years," she said (ibid., p. 162).
150. 17 January 1969 in Rome and 13 February in Geneva, less than three months before the referendum.
151. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir,* p. 262.
152. After the General's funeral, Olivier Guichard said: "For us Gaullists, Baudouin is the worst sort of man: the man of Salan, Lecanuet, Poher! The anti-de Gaulle!" (J. Mauriac, *L'Après de Gaulle,* p. 62).
153. Ibid.
154. *Dictionnaire de Gaulle,* p. 1108.
155. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* pp. 29–31.
156. J. Mauriac, *L'Après de Gaulle.*
157. Blanc, *De Gaulle au soir de sa vie,* p. 28.
158. One of de Gaulle's ministers from 1959 to 1966, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing later distanced himself from the General, musing in 1967 on the consequences of "the solitary exercise of power" before announcing in 1969 that he "did not approve of" the proposed law regarding the reform of the Senate and the regionalization submitted to referendum.
159. J. Mauriac, *L'Après de Gaulle,* p. 69.
160. Moll, *Yvonne de Gaulle,* pp. 427–439.
161. A claim repeated not so long ago in Georges Rétif de la Bretonne, *Anglais, rendez-nous Napoléon* (1969), and Bruno Roy-Henry, *Napoléon, l'énigme de l'exhumé de 1840.* The case, if there is one, was dissected in Thierry Lentz and Jacques Macé, *La Mort de Napoléon.*

162. Visconti, *Tombeau de Napoléon I^{er},* p. 99.
163. In reality, it is not made of porphyry, but of red quartzite extracted from a quarry in Finland that belonged to Czar Nicholas I.
164. Englund, *Napoléon,* p. 10.
165. Visconti, *Tombeau de Napoléon I^{er},* p. 99.
166. On the plans for Napoleon's tomb, see Thierry Issartel's study in Humbert, *Napoléon aux Invalides,* pp. 121–151.
167. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1586.
168. Schérer, "Hegel et l'hégélianisme," p. 817.
169. Barres, *Les Déracinés,* p. 165.
170. *Translator's note:* In Raymond Queneau's *Zazie dans le métro.*
171. Raymond Queneau, *Zazie dans le métro,* p. 16. However, at around the same time, in 1964, a sketch by Jacques Martin and Jean Yanne broadcast on television created a polemic: it showed Napoleon and his marshals taking part in a bicycle race through Europe that began in Jena and ended at Waterloo. At the last minute, they were defeated by Blücher. Jacques Martin later claimed that one of Murat's descendants wanted to lodge a complaint, and he had to go make amends at the Emperor's tomb. He was probably exaggerating, but this sketch shocked the great man's admirers. Today, a commentator for the radio station France Info rightly said that this sketch would not be made, not out of fear of scandal, but because Jena and Waterloo are events so little known that it would be impossible refer to them, even to make fun of them.
172. The newspaper was alluding satirically to a fire in a dance hall in Isère a few days earlier that had resulted in 146 deaths. This issue came out on 16 November; *Hara Kiri* was banned the following day.
173. Bainville, *Journal, 1901–1918,* p. 18.
174. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique, II,* Part 4, chap. 8, p. 659.
175. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* vol. 1, p. 1574.

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