"*Mais il faut le savoir:*" An Embedded Course Journal about France and the Holocaust

This journal was produced by the seventeen students and two instructors who participated in a one-week embedded course, in Paris (March 1-9 2019). This short-term education abroad experience was linked to the residential course taught by Dr. Willa Z. Silverman, entitled "France and the Holocaust in Film and Literature."

Prologue: The Never-Ending Cry

Willa Z. Silverman

They cry out to us from beyond death, from wherever their souls may reside. They have no graves, as the bodies of all but 2,500 of the approximately 76,000 Jews deported from France in seventy-nine convoys between March 1942 and August 1944 disappeared, as the Nazis had decreed, into "night and fog."[1] Their history, and their memory, made us stop – ("Passant, souviens-toi!") – at the site of the former Vélodrome d'hiver, an indoor cycling stadium in Paris' 15th *arrondissement* where, on July 16-17 1942, 12,884 (Zuccotti 107) mainly foreign Jews, rounded up entirely by the French police, were crammed for days in sweltering heat and unimaginably inhumane conditions before being transported to their deaths in Auschwitz. The plaque at the site of this central event of France's experience of the Holocaust, though, is small, innocuous, dwarfed by the new office complex behind it. Similarly hidden is one of the first French memorials to the "martyrs of the deportation," erected in 1962 and tucked away in a small square behind the towering presence of Notre-Dame. "Mais il faut le savoir," writes Jean Cayrol in the masterful screenplay to Alain Resnais' iconic 1956 film, *Night and Fog.* With a

[1] According the historian Susan Zuccotti, "more than 77,000 [Jews in France at the end of 1940] were murdered in deportation, executed in French prisons, or killed from starvation, exhaustion, and disease in French internment camps." This represented about 24% of Jews living in France at the end of 1940. The majority of those Jews who perished were foreign-born. Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 280.

double meaning that served as a directive to our group during our week in Paris, the phrase means both "but you need to be tipped off, to know where to look" and "you are obligated to know about this." Committed to memory work, our group took both these meanings to heart as we roamed the memoryscapes of Paris and its environs.

The history and memory of the Shoah called on us more visibly in Père-Lachaise cemetery where, accompanied by Rachel Jedinak, who narrowly escaped deportation by seizing the slightest opportunity to flee a Parisian police station (her mother was not as lucky), we contemplated monuments to those who died in Buchenwald, Dachau, Gross-Rosen, and other camps. The Mémorial de la Shoah, fronted by the massive stone blocks bearing the names of each deportee from France, also stands as a powerful public monument to history, memory, education, and justice.

Yet unlike other forms of historical and literary memory, Holocaust memory is peculiar. To the French novelist and Nobel laureate Patrick Modiano, whose haunting 'memory-book,' *Dora Bruder* (1997), sparked lively class discussions, the memory of the Shoah is "much less sure of itself, engaged as it is in a constant struggle against amnesia and oblivion."[2] Indeed, the willful downplaying in France of Vichy collaboration; the reticence of some survivors to relive trauma combined with, in certain cases, the indifference of their own families (as recalled by Marceline Loridan-Ivens in her haunting memoir, *But you did not come back* [2015]); the destruction or disappearance of crucial archival materials; and the chilling reinvigoration of anti-Semitism – brazenly announced by the swastika recently carved into the memorial deportation wagon at Drancy – all imperil the survival of historical memory. And what happens when, in the coming years, the survivors die out? Several of those my students met on three previous study

[2] Patrick Modiano, Nobel lecture, Stockholm, Sweden, 7 December 2014. (https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2014/modiano/25238-nobel-lecture-2014/).

tours are now gone. Ginette Kolinka, Esther Senot, and Raphaël Esrail, whom we were privileged to meet on this trip, are indeed, as reminds a documentary series preserving interviews with them, "les derniers."[3]

Faced with what Modiano terms the "sentinels of oblivion" we try to search out -- *mais il faut le savoir* -- "fragments of the past, disconnected traces, fleeting and almost ungraspable human destinies" (Modiano, Nobel lecture). Yet try we must, faced with "new executioners," as a monument in Père-Lachaise cemetery to victims of the Rwandan genocide, in close proximity to those erected to the memory of the Shoah's victims, signifies. Although in 1955 Jean Cayrol was writing amidst the first rumblings of the Algerian War, his call to vigilance in the final lines of *Night and Fog* is still timely, indeed timeless:

> Who among us keeps watch from this strange watchtower to warn of the arrival of our new executioners? Are their faces really different from our own? With our sincere gaze we survey these ruins, as if the old monster lay crushed forever beneath the rubble. We pretend to take up hope again as the image recedes into the past, as if we were cured once and for all of the scourge of the camps. We pretend it all happened only once, at a given time and place. We turn a blind eye to what surrounds us, and a deaf ear to humanity's never-ending cry.

Militants for memory and justice, we should use our free will as a force for good -- especially when we benefit from a level of freedom unknown to those living in France under the occupation, not to mention in the camps. In Louis Malle's autobiographical film, *Au Revoir, les enfants* (1987), the admirable Père Jean, later designated a Righteous among the Nations, tells the boys under his supervision at the Petit Collège Sainte-Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus in Avon (Seine-et-Marne), that he wishes to teach them to use their freedom wisely, not, for example, by involving themselves in the black market but by helping those less fortunate than themselves, specifically the Jewish boys that Father Jean bravely shelters, at great risk. That exercising one's

[3] *Les Derniers* (https://www.lesderniers.org/).

freedom ethically, even in the most straitened circumstances, can mean the difference between life and death is also illustrated by the closing, parable-like scene of Marcel Ophüls' monumental documentary, *Hôtel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie* (1988). Returning to the site of her childhood home in Lyon, from which she was deported in 1944, Simone Lagrange recalls two neighbors present the day she and her family were arrested. One neighbor, Madame Serre, still lives in the building and converses briefly with Ophüls and Lagrange, who tells the filmmaker that while her family was being led downstairs by the Gestapo Madame Serre remained ensconced safely behind her locked door. The other neighbor, Madame Bontout -- "a good neighbor" to whom, as we learn before the final credits roll, the film is dedicated – opened her door and tried to pull Lagrange inside, only to receive a slap that sent her staggering backwards.

Let each of us strive to be "a good neighbor."

Plaque at the site of the former Vel' hiv. Photo: Willa Z. Silverman

Buchenwald memorial, Père-Lachaise cemetery. Photo: Willa Z. Silverman

Willa Z. Silverman, Esther Senot, and Raphaël Esrail at the Maison d'Auschwitz, Paris. Photo: Willa Z. Silverman

Day 1

Elinor Farber, Maria Fleck

Our Parisian adventure began with a tour of various locations around Paris central to the history of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in France. Our guide, Flora Goldenberg, was an incredible source of information throughout the first half of the day and we are beyond thankful to her for sharing her time with us. Her family is Jewish and, although she said that her family got off comparatively easily during the Shoah, she still felt, and continues to feel, the effects of anti-Semitism today. As Flora said later in the day, "the most important part is to never forget," and the purpose of this journal is to do just that.

We started our guided tour at the Notre-Dame cathedral. The reasons for starting here were to discuss the history of anti-Judaism reflected in the architecture of Notre-Dame herself. Ile de la Cité has been a part of Paris since 300 B.C. When Romans came and settled on the left bank, Jews began living in what is Paris today as well. Jews then were pushed to assimilate to the Catholic religion or were expelled from France. There is a long time period – about 500 years – during which Jews were expelled from France, allowed back in, expelled again, etc., back and forth for centuries. Even back then Jews often held professions like bankers that created stereotypes and assumptions about Jewish people. Jews have a long but tumultuous history in France.

Evidence of this is shown in the architecture of Notre-Dame. Without knowing what one is looking for, most individuals would not understand the hidden symbols of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism that existed in France during and before the cathedral was built in 1163 and for the two centuries during which it was being built. The symbols we looked at pertained to the front entrance to the cathedral itself. If you are standing and looking at the doors, the right one

represents the story of Mary's parents. In this tableau, Mary's father, who was Jewish, is depicted with a pointed hat. This hat was a symbol similar to the Jewish star that Jews were forced to wear during the Shoah to identify that they were Jewish. During this time, these hats would have been yellow as well. Yellow is a color that symbolizes betrayal and has been associated with the Jews throughout the history of France, including the Shoah. Another symbol is the statue of the woman to Jesus' left, representing a female allegory of the Synagogue. The side of Jesus is meant to symbolize hell and those not in heaven, so that alone is telling about the placement of this female statue. Her eyes are covered because she is blind to the message of Jesus, she bears a broken stick of the Kingdom, and the Torah scrolls she is holding are slipping from her grip. Our tour guide informed us that she represents, in part, the betrayal and killing of Jesus that the Jews were historically accused of. All these symbols would have been easily understood by those in France at the time. This architecture of Notre-Dame exemplified anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish propaganda during the Middle Ages.

Our second stop on our tour was the hidden memorial behind Notre-Dame. Built in 1962 and inaugurated by President Charles de Gaulle, this memorial was created for the so-called 'martyrs' of the Shoah, not just Jews. It was originally believed that around 200,000 individuals were deported but that number was discovered to be closer to 160,000, so the number on the memorial is incorrect. The memorial is built to look like a prison with cramped spaces so that visitors can feel confined and imprisoned like those deported did. There are also lights lit for each of the deportees. Writing on the walls inside the crypt of the memorial appears written as if by fingernails scored with blood. This was one of the most striking images of the memorial and reminded me of the scene depicting fingernail scratches in the gas chambers from the film *Night and Fog.*

In the 1960s following the war, many Jewish organizations wanted a memorial in remembrance of those who had died, but France was still strongly in denial about the Vichy government's complicity in deporting Jews from France, and indifferent to the impact of that fact on the Jewish population. Instead of an individual memorial, one was created for all deportees; it does not mention the French collaboration during the war at all, blaming the Nazis and not the Vichy regime. At the time of its creation, this memorial was an example of the taboo topic of deportation as much of France had difficulty talking about the war. This may be one of the reasons this memorial is hidden, as it is in the shadow of Notre-Dame.

One of the recurring words debated throughout our trip, and which will be discussed later as well, is the term 'martyr.' This memorial is for the 'martyrs' of deportation. However, there are many people who have issues with this term today as martyr insinuates that the Jews chose to die for a cause.

Following the walk through the memorial, we moved to the Hôtel de Ville, or city hall of Paris. At this site we went back in time again to the history of the Jews during the Revolution of 1789, during which Jews and Protestants were 'emancipated' by receiving French citizenship, and to the Napoleonic era. In 1808 Napoleon created the Consistory (*Consistoire*), which organized Jewish worship and administrative structures under state control, and which exists to this day. He built synagogues that also stand in Paris today. During this time some Jews were bankers, the cause of some persistent prejudice against them. Jumping forward from the Revolution to the Second World War, our guide pointed out bullet holes in the Hôtel de Ville from Resistance fighting during the Liberation of Paris. The Resistance in Paris was well organized thanks in part to Charles de Gaulle and Jean Moulin. Paris would go on to survive the war in almost entirely one piece because Hitler was cautioned from bombing the city, and it was

eventually liberated in 1945. This site exemplifies multidirectional memory in that we see how one location could have an impact on, and re-present, several different moments in France's history.

Next to the Hôtel de Ville is the Marais, or "the swamp" in French. It is so named because it used to be a swampy area of Paris, but in the 1500s it was paved over and became the nicer area of the city for the wealthy. It boasted the first sidewalks in the city and large mansions. After the Revolution, when aristocratic citizens fled the city, this area then transformed and became the Jewish section. Many of the large mansions were converted into apartment buildings where Jewish immigrant families lived, and the downstairs became workshops for Jewish businesses. Jumping forward to the 1960s again, the Marais again transformed to become a more expensive area and also a center for the LGBTQ community. While many Jews have left, the Marais is still considered the Jewish section of the city with some Jewish shops having lingered. It is one of the oldest parts of Paris and was never torn down and rebuilt like many other sections.

It was within the Marais that we visited a hidden synagogue, tucked out of sight because of the Jews' desire not to signal their presence too visibly. We were permitted to enter this synagogue, which has a plaque over the door in memory of the rabbi who was deported and killed during the war. Inside we saw Torah scrolls; many of these were hidden during the war because of the possibility that they might be confiscated and possibly destroyed. We also discussed two different ethnic divisions of Jews: Ashkenazi or European Jews and Sephardic or Spanish and African Jews (today representing the majority of Jews in France). Many of the synagogues in the Marais are unused today because these Jews have left.

While walking through the Marais, our group encountered several other memory sites that really stood out in coming to terms with the reality of the Shoah. These included a school built in the mid-1800s for Jewish children who could not attend public schools as the French state did not give students off on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath; moreover, children from families of foreign Jews sometimes could not speak French well enough to attend mainstream public schools. The school was public, though, and not solely for Jewish children. During the Shoah approximately 260 children attending the school were deported to their deaths. However, the plaque outside the school mentions neither death camps nor French collaboration; on the other hand, the street the school resides on was recently renamed after the children deported from the school. One person who helped and saved dozens of children from the school and surrounding area was Joseph Migneret. For his actions he was named a Righteous Among the Nations and the park near this school in the Marais is named after him. It was at this park that we saw one example of plaques bearing the names of children deported from the neighborhood, along with their ages. This particular plaque named a child deported at 27 days old. It was at this location that we discussed the current state of anti-Semitism in France today, in part in the context of the *gilets jaunes* movement. Anti-Semitism continues to be a serious problem in France today, even following the events of the Shoah.

The final stop on this incredible walking memory tour that was a synagogue designed by the famous French Art nouveau architect, Hector Guimard. It was built for the orthodox community but was bombed in 1944 by French collaborators. At the end of the war it did survive to be used again. It sits beyond a fence and undercover soldiers and police guard it during Jewish holidays.

Finally, some reactions to the first half of the first day in Paris, France. As you have read above, this day was jam packed with information about all eras of French history and it was all a bit overwhelming. There were many different instances of multidirectional memory, where one individual site has played host to many different events and memories, not only within French and Jewish history but within other histories too. The beginning of the tour at Notre-Dame was a bit difficult to pay attention to because it was extremely windy that day and the bells of Notre-Dame are especially loud when you are close to the doors looking at architectural details. I believe that the most powerful thing I saw this day, out of many powerful moments, was the name, inscribed on a plaque, of the little boy, only 27 days old, who was deported and subsequently murdered. But not everything was sad, as our guide brought us pastries from a bakery and we got to experience the vibrancy of the Marais.

As one of the reporters for the Day I was in charge of capturing the various moments through photography. Below you will find a description and images of the day's activities.

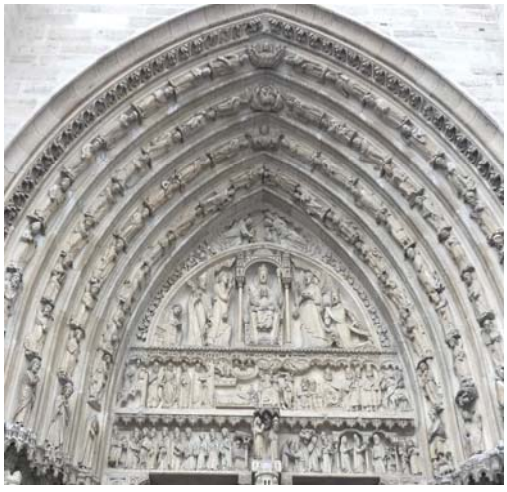
Notre-Dame Cathedral - Jesus sitting on his throne at the top of the middle door of Notre-Dame Cathedral. The city of Jerusalem rests under him. Below him there is an angel and the devil holding a scale to decide whether the people surrounding them go to heaven or hell. Everyone below the angel and devil is looking up in hopes of going to heaven. To the left of Jesus is bad while to the right is good. Visitors enter on the left side and exit on right side to symbolize their souls being washed during their time in church.

Notre-Dame Cathedral - Representation of the triumphant Catholic Church.

Notre-Dame Cathedral - Symbol of the Synagogue.

Notre-Dame Cathedral - Mary holding Jesus. Adam and Eve outside the cathedral because they were forced to leave Heaven.

All sculptures are original surrounding this entrance door to Notre-Dame Cathedral.

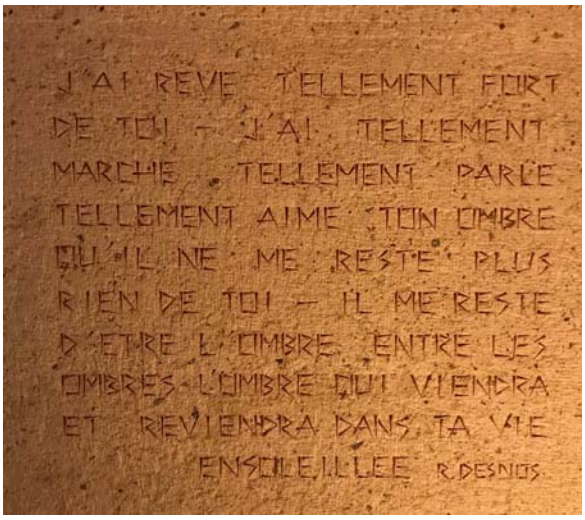


Hôtel de Ville - Paris Mayor's headquarters and City Hall.

In the Deportation Martyrs Memorial behind Notre-Dame Cathedral these stairs leading to the memorial are very narrow. They are meant to symbolize the lack of space in the deportation carts as it feels like the walls are closing in on you.

Deportation Martyrs Memorial - 200,000 lights representing 160,000 Jews deported. The crypt houses remains of someone found in the camp as well as ashes from the death camps. Charles de Gaulle approved this monument, but it doesn't include acknowledgment of the collaboration of the Vichy regime with Nazi Germany.

Deportation Martyrs Memorial – In this view through the window you can see part of the Seine, but not the horizon. This gives the illusion of being trapped with no view of the future.



Deportation Martyrs Memorial - These words (in this case a poem by Robert Desnos, himself deported to numerous concentration and extermination camps) are written as if words are carved into walls of a prison and written in blood.

Hôtel de Ville.

Le Marais - "The Swamp." Henry IV decided he wanted the swamp cleared; as a result, wealthy individual families, mainly aristocratic, built beautiful private mansions there. When these aristocratic families left the Marais following the Revolution, Jewish families lived in the mansions, often splitting them into private apartments. This trend was especially strong in the late 19th century and during the interwar period.

Most of Paris was torn down and rebuilt except for le Marais. Therefore, the streets are original as they are narrow and curvy. One effect of this is that it facilitated the building of barricades during the many revolutions in France during the 19th century.

Hidden Synagogue. Orthodox synagogue as female and male children are separated. A young boy recited the Torah with the help of an older man.

Elementary school in le Marais – For many Jews, France was reputedly the best place for them because it was the first to emancipate them. Jews wanted to send their children to French schools so they could assimilate. However, French schools required attendance every day except Thursdays and Saturdays; Jewish children, on the other hand, couldn't attend school on Saturdays, the Jewish sabbath. This was the first school in Paris open every day except Saturday and Sunday.

Joseph Migneret, Righteous Among the Nations, former teacher and director of this school. Thanks to his courage, he saved children from deportation.

Menu for the week. Four course meal every day. Menus were made no matter the culture and background of children due to separation of church and state and the strong French Republican tradition of secularims. Every school served pork weekly until recently.

Street named after children who were deported

Goldenberg restaurant in the rue des Rosiers, bombed in 1982. Six people were killed and 22 others injured. Many of them were tourists, including Americans.

Hector Guimard designed this Art nouveau synagogue (1913) along with several of Paris' iconic metro entrances.

Students visit the Mémorial de la Shoah, where they listen to the testimony of Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor, Ginette Kolinka

In the afternoon of our first full day in Paris, we went to the Mémorial de la Shoah to meet with Ginette Kolinka, a 94-year-old survivor of the Holocaust. She recounted her story to us in detail, beginning with the effect that the racial laws had on her and her family. Her father could no longer own a business, and they were warned in 1942 that they should move to the unoccupied zone in France to escape deportation. By 1943 all of France was occupied, and Ginette's family was hiding in southern France. In March 1944 when she was home from work for lunch, a member of the Gestapo came to her family's door. Although they had forged false papers, they were denounced as Jews and sent to the Drancy transit camp. They were taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where her father was killed.

Ginette continued to describe the horrors of the camps and the effect that it had on her both physically and emotionally. She left Auschwitz-Birkenau in November 1944 and was taken to Bergen-Belsen, where she stayed until February 1945 before being transferred to Theresienstadt, which had just been liberated by the Russians. The awful conditions of the camps are indescribable, and it was heartbreaking listening to what she had to do to survive and how it affected her emotionally. She said that she left her feelings in Birkenau, and because of everything that she had to endure, she is not a very emotional person anymore. Her lack of emotions really stuck with me because it demonstrates the depth of the horrors that pushed her to this point. Her mother and sisters survived the war, and she was able to be reunited with them after returning from the camps.

During the question and answer session, a few of her perspectives intrigued me, including her stance on France. The collaborationist Vichy regime played a large role in the deportation of Jews and did not do much to try to help them, especially foreign-born ones. One of our classmates asked Ginette how she felt about France during and after the Shoah and if she had

forgiven it for what it did to the Jews. I was expecting her to say that she had been mad at France and its collaboration during the second World War because after reading Susan Zuccotti's book on the subject I think I would have been upset with France if I had been a Jew during this time. However, she stated that she was never mad at France; she was only angry with the Nazis and the people who denounced her and her family. This answer really surprised me, but I also understand that she might have had a lot national pride, or she could have realized that not all of France was collaborating with the Nazis even though the government was. It made me realize that even though I might have perceptions of what people might have been thinking at the time when I read about history, there are always different perspectives and opinions that I might never have thought about, and I should try to consider them when analyzing historical events.

One of the most important parts of this afternoon, which I will take with me for the rest of my life, was Ginette's outlook on prejudice and her emphasis on accepting everyone. Throughout her story, she highlighted the fact that the Nazis and Vichy collaborators were able to do what they did because of hate, and hate needs to be eradicated to prevent events like these from happening. When someone in our group asked her why she thinks there has been an increase in anti-Semitism in France with the recent yellow vest protests, she attributed this rise to inherent prejudices that still exist. She elaborated by telling us a story about when she was speaking to a group of children and asked why the Jews were targeted in the Shoah. A little boy answered her saying that it was because they're all rich, and she realized that these biases still exist today because of the way that he was so quickly able to answer her question. After her story, Ginette highlighted the importance of trying to get rid of inherent biases and accepting everyone regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or any other factor. This moral and her

emphasis on eradicating hatred were the most important lesson from her story to me and will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Day 2

Rachel Bruning, Melanie Kovacs, and Journey Matos

The first stop on the second day of our trip was to the Mémorial de la Shoah. The tone for the day was set as our group walked through the rain and entered through the gate, speaking in hushed tones. Our guide, Thierry Flavian, introduced himself to us with some humor and brevity.

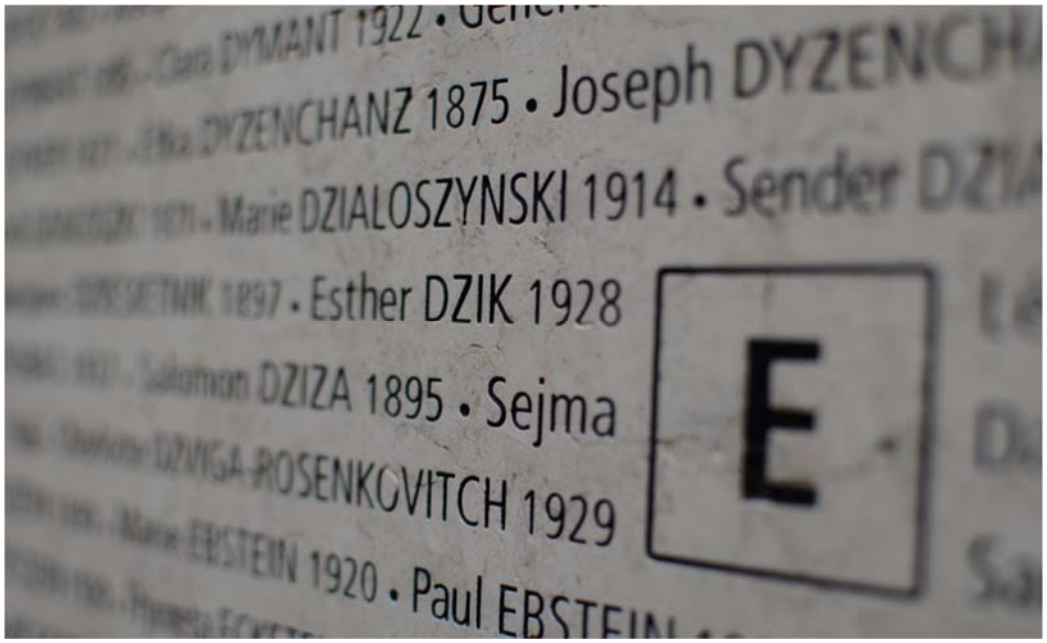
[Image: Our tour guide, Thierry Flavian, standing in front of a section of the Wall of Names. Thierry spoke at length about the individual names on the walls, statistics related to the Shoah, and efforts to memorialize France's lost Jewish population.]

The first thing that we discussed were the statistics regarding the Shoah. Understanding the numbers was essential for establishing a foundation for our later discussion and viewing of the museum. By relaying to us, among other statistics, that 76,000 Jews out of the 340,000 living in

France were deported, and that 1,500,000 children from all over Europe were murdered, Flavian made sure we each fully comprehended the magnitude and severity of the impact the Shoah had on the Jewish population of France and of Europe as a whole.

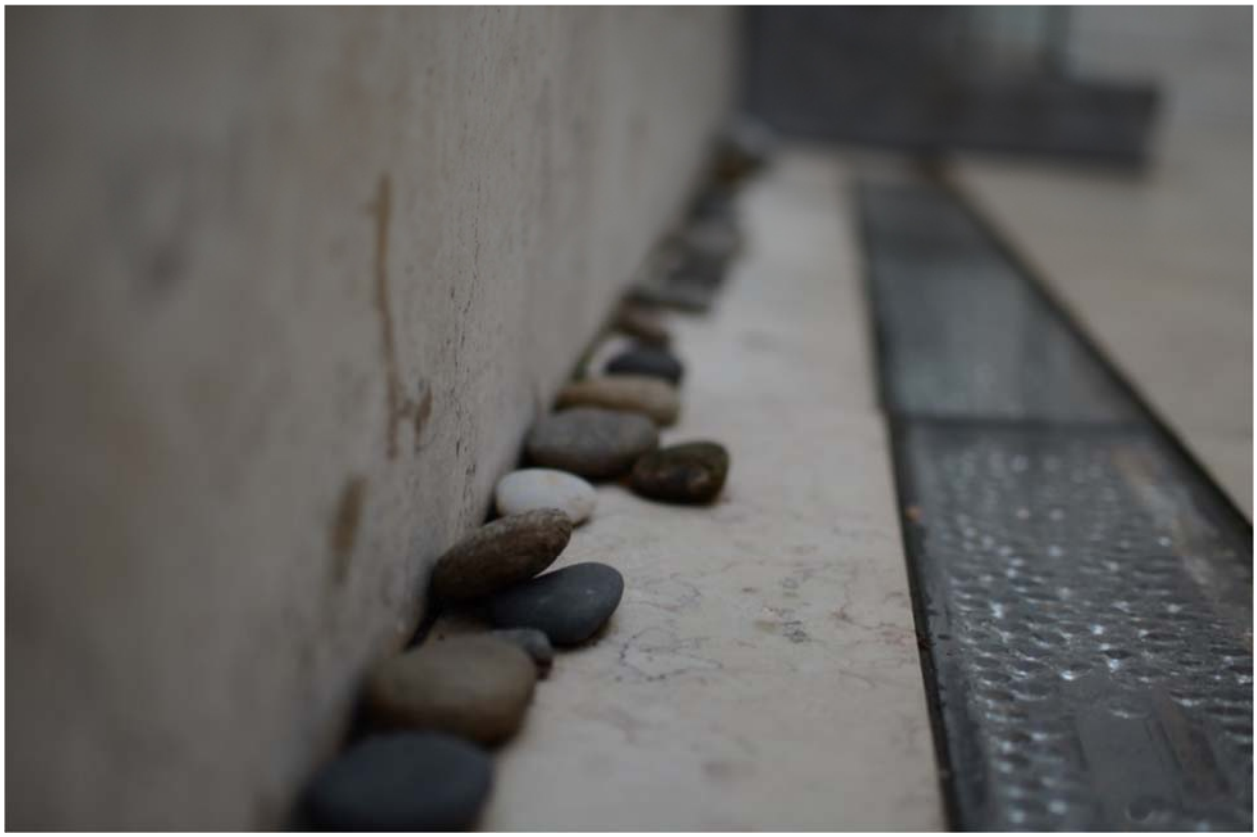
Thierry assigned us the task of finding the names of the survivors with whom we would be meeting over the course of the trip among the tens of thousands engraved on a maze of stone walls. As we struggled to find the various names, the deeper meaning of this exercise became clearer. It was difficult to find the name of any specific survivor because of the sheer volume of the names of those deported. It took trying to find a single name to truly appreciate the number of deportees, and additionally, to remember that every name on the wall represented an individual instead of the numbers he had relayed to us a few minutes prior to our search. As we were wrapping up our discussion after finding the names, our guide pointed us specifically towards looking at the birth year of some of the deportees. Joseph Jozefowicz, one of 42,000 French Jews deported in 1942, was born the same year he was deported. He was two and a half months old when he was sentenced to death because he was born Jewish. Thierry stressed the fact that the Nazis' policy of killing children was purposeful; he said that the children were targeted "to be absolutely certain that no Jews would be left…," and to ensure that Jewish children, if allowed to survive, would not later return to avenge their families or their people. Even though we had seen the plaques that named the deported children and listed their ages in the Marais the day before, it was nearly impossible for us to comprehend that anyone could so systematically and indiscriminately take the lives of so many innocent children.

[Image: The group searches through the Wall of Names to find the names of individual survivors. We searched for the names of survivors we would meet over the course of the trip.]



[Image: Esther Senot née Dzik, born in 1928, is the survivor we would meet later in the day. We searched for Esther's name amongst the thousands of Jews deported in 1943 alone. Esther was one of the 3,943 Jews who returned to France after the Liberation. We were privileged to hear Esther's story and gained crucial context that reminded us that each name on the wall was an individual, not a number, embodying the concept of victims of the Holocaust as 1+1+1 instead of 6,000,000.]

As our time outside amongst the names on the walls ended, someone asked about the stones placed around the area. Thierry explained that pebbles were traditionally placed on Jewish graves because they were a humble symbol of acknowledgement, because any Jewish person, poor or rich, could always find a pebble to offer in memory. It was a reminder that Jewish people of all walks of life were impacted by the Shoah, and also a touching gesture of humility.



[Image: Pebbles were present throughout the Wall of Names, serving as a reminder that the museum was a memorial site for the Jewish community to mourn and pay their respects to the approximately 76,000 Jewish people who were deported from France and did not return. It is a tradition in the Jewish culture to place stones on grave sites as a sign of respect. Because most, if not all, of these Jews do not have known grave sites, the Mémorial de la Shoah serves as a location where respects can be paid to those lost.]

Inside, the museum holds The Memorial of the Unknown Jewish Martyr. It is important and interesting to note the rhetoric of this particular phrase, specifically concerning the idea of a "martyr," and calling Jewish victims of the Shoah, in particular, *martyrs*. During our trip, we also

encountered the same term at another Shoah memorial in Paris, The Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation. There, we also had the opportunity to discuss the use of the word *martyr* when describing memorials dedicated to victims of the Shoah. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a martyr is "a person who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty of witnessing to and refusing to renounce a religion." For many reasons, we struggled with the use of the term martyr in describing the victims of the Shoah. It seems as though the most problematic word used in the definition of a martyr is the idea that anyone who died in the Shoah died "voluntarily" on their own terms, choosing to do so. The Shoah was a genocide, and the idea that a victim of genocide voluntarily died for some cause they cared deeply about is nearly impossible to digest, because the ideas simply contradict one another.

After discussion with Thierry Flavian and Flora Goldenberg, our tour guides for both the Mémorial de la Shoah and the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation respectively, we discovered that the use of the term martyr in these memorials was originally thought of as a way to garner public support for such a memorial, making it seem as though the people who died in the Shoah were martyrs of their faith. While many Jews who were horribly mistreated during the Shoah retained their pride in their Jewish background, this courageous pride, despite a system created to eradicate their people from the earth, is not the same thing as being a martyr for their faith. Jews were persecuted in a genocide; they did not "voluntarily" die.

In many ways, the harsh reality of the Shoah, and especially the Vichy regime's involvement and cooperation in the deportation of more than 76,000 Jews from France, seemed too difficult for a healing nation to digest when public discussions about the Shoah originally began in France, decades ago. In 2019, however, almost 80 years after the Shoah, using the term *martyr* seems, to us at least, obsolete and ineffective. How could we possibly compare the

victims of the Shoah, murdered mercilessly and viciously because of their Jewish backgrounds, to someone who voluntarily died for a cause they believe in? In this case, it is again important to remember the specific time period in which the memorial was created, and better understand the symbology of the memorial, as well.

The memorial was created in 1956 and includes six funeral urns filled with ashes of Jews murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto, Auschwitz, and other death camps. The six urns, placed in line with the six points of the Star of David that forms the monument, are meant to represent the 6,000,000 Jewish people murdered in the Holocaust. Much like the stones placed outside to honor those deported, Jewish tradition is also prevalent within this memorial. Each urn's ashes are mixed with soil from Israel, because Jewish law mandates that no Jewish corpse can be unburied unless it is re-buried in Israel. By including Israeli soil within the urns, the memorial respects Jewish tradition while giving the ashes a resting place in the French memorial. At the center of the star, an eternal flame burns, much like the eternal light placed above the arcs holding the Jewish holy texts in synagogues. The flame, which never dies, symbolizes God's presence. In this context, it also symbolizes that this is an event that can never be forgotten. The flame burns at the center of all of the urns and is situated under a lamentation from Jeremiah, which reads, "Look and see if there is a pain that is as deep as my pain. Young and old, our daughters and our sons slaughtered by the sword." This lamentation, which also adorns the monument at the Drancy concentration camp, was a prediction that something terrible was coming to Jerusalem. The Biblical feeling of pain for the suffering of the Jews is eerily applicable to the experience of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, which makes Jeremiah's lamentation pertinent and appropriate for the memorials. Additionally, the memorial's name is based off of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Arc de Triomphe in the heart of Paris,

which successfully unites French and Jewish tradition within the monument and symbolizes that French and Jewish identities were entwined in the Jews of France.

[Image: The Memorial of the Unknown Jewish Martyr stands in the center of a large dark room under a lamentation from Jeremiah. Each urn placed around the flame represents one million Jewish victims for a total of six million. The flame in the center burns eternally to symbolize that this event must be remembered forever so that it does not happen again.]

Interestingly, the atmosphere while we were listening to our guide added another layer to the experience. We heard a lot of clanging and slamming from some construction going on in the museum; even though it was unintentional, we were reminded of stories of the chaos of the Shoah and how the Jews did not know what was going on.

As we walked around the museum with Thierry, we began to dodge large groups of loud and excitable students, touring the museum with their teachers and another museum guide that same morning. Seeing so many of these groups provided the perfect impetus for Thierry to

explain to us how the Shoah is taught to school-aged children in France, and his own views on the best way to do so as a museum guide. After guiding us to a quieter area of an exhibition, away from the large groups that crowded the hall a short distance from where we were standing, Thierry explained his views on how we should talk about and teach the Shoah. In a self-deprecating tone, he brought attention to the fact that he often gives tours of the museum in a far more jovial manner that one might expect from a tour guide at the Mémorial de la Shoah, taking opportunities to tell stories that are almost light-hearted in nature. He explained that, in his opinion, the story of the Shoah is so incredibly and incomprehensibly sad and difficult that there is no need to place that burdensome weight on visiting students' shoulders. He would rather the students leave the museum with an understanding of the importance of remembering and learning about the events of the Shoah, than to have them leave trembling from fear and sadness.

In this case, Thierry believes that humor helps. He explained that in his experience meeting survivors of the Shoah, he found it to be a common belief that survivors of the Shoah do not want people traumatized by the history of the Shoah; rather, they want them to be informed about these events, and use that information in a healthy, proactive manner in order to become witnesses to the Shoah and transmit their "témoignage," or testimony, to others. He went on to explain that we will never feel what the survivors felt, never be able to understand the trauma that they lived through, so we should not preoccupy ourselves with such a task, especially if it means putting such a heavy burden on the shoulders of students visiting the museum. As museum visitors and witnesses to survivors sharing their stories with us throughout the week, we took this idea to heart. As Thierry explained, perhaps the best way for us to pay our respects to the survivors of the Shoah is to live our lives to the fullest and listen to everything survivors and

other witnesses have to tell us and share with us, transmitting that information and knowledge to others so that, through us, the memory of the Shoah persists.

In explaining this, Thierry also mentioned that he does not want to feed into the morbid curiosity of some of the visiting students, because feeding into that curiosity about the goriest parts of the Shoah would trivialize the Shoah as a whole. Understanding that the Shoah is not just about viewing gory images from camps or being interested in events that garner the biggest shock value is important. Generally speaking, many of us had never considered this as a reason for showing restraint when it comes to representing the Shoah and teaching others, especially impressionable school-age children, about the Shoah. However, after speaking with Thierry, it makes sense that we should be cautious in how we describe and talk about the Shoah with others. Finding a balance between accurately portraying the events of the Shoah and carefully censoring some of those events so that the shock value does not diminish the importance of understanding the Shoah is paramount.

The final part of our visit to the Mémorial de la Shoah was a group discussion. During the discussion, the Shoah's continuous impact on France emerged as an especially prevalent theme. Earlier in the tour, Thierry described to us the Nazis' views on the Jewish "race." In the eyes of the Nazis, Judaism was not a religion but the Jews were a parasitic race that needed to be destroyed as efficiently and quickly as possible so that it could no longer 'infect' Europe's population. Conversion was not an effective means to eliminate the race, evidenced by the 17,500 Catholic victims in Europe murdered because they had Jewish grandparents and were therefore Jewish under Nazi law. This idea of racial discrimination had such a profound impact on France's psyche that the concept of race is essentially illegal in France, on censuses for example. After the war, President Charles de Gaulle requested that all the Jewish files collected

during the war in order to more effectively persecute them be destroyed so that no instance of racial persecution, especially to such an extent, could occur in France again. The sentiment against defining race has lasted until the present time as well. Thierry mentioned that the French do not see things based on race, and that they see every human as equal. Because of this, race cannot be discussed on applications, censuses, or any other form of documentation. This was a concept difficult for the group to even comprehend due to the way that race functions as an identifier in the United States, but demonstrated for the group the direct and extreme impact that the Shoah had on France.

In the afternoon, we had the opportunity to bear witness to Esther Senot's testimony about her experience as a survivor of the Shoah. Esther, the child of Polish immigrants who came to France to escape antisemitism there, faced astounding trials during the war. She was subdued in her testimony. Her story was incredibly unique and moving in a manner that is truthfully hard to convey. She echoed many of Thierry's words. She spoke about how, in her childhood, she remembers parks being prohibited locations for "dogs and Jews," and the dehumanization that came with being classified on the same level or even below animals. She spoke about the trust that her family had put in the French police, their subsequent willingness to participate in the census, and her brother's readiness to go to the police station when he was called for a "family issue" that led to his being placed on the fourth train to leave Paris in 1942. He was immediately killed in a gas chamber in Auschwitz.

Esther's family avoided the infamous Vélodrome d'Hiver roundup, but while she and her sister were sent out to check on her family that lived in the neighborhood, the French police returned and arrested her parents and her younger brother. With her parents and younger sibling arrested, and separated from her sister, Esther was alone in Paris at fourteen years old. She went

in search of her sister-in-law, whom the concierge of her sister-in-law's building explained had been taken to a safe place. Sensing Esther's fear, the concierge took her in. What followed was a stressful and dangerous attempt to reach her older brother in the south of France that involved a "passeur" meant to smuggle her and other Jews into the Free Zone, who abandoned her and the others in Bordeaux.

Multiple times in Esther's story, she mentioned that her freedom, while it lasted, relied on the help of others. The concierge of her sister-in-law's building housed her and fed her for two weeks while she had virtually no one left in the city. After she was abandoned by the *passeur* in Bordeaux, a bus driver saw that she was alone and drove her to the south of France, where he enlisted his friend to assist Esther in crossing the Franco-Spanish border to where her brother was located. Then, when she became lost in the forest and came across a farm, a peasant farmer helped her by feeding her and taking her in his carriage to a bus stop that would eventually get her to her brother's barracks in Spain.

At only fourteen, Esther bore the heavy task of telling her elder brother that her entire family was arrested and that she was unaware of her sister's whereabouts. In addition, since her brother was living in army barracks, she was unable to stay with him. Her brother gave her money to find a family to stay with. Thinking that her parents might be back in Paris, she returned to the city to find her apartment still sealed. This was a stark reminder for us, as listeners, that the French Jews, especially someone as young as Esther, were truly in the dark about what was happening to them. She, as well as many others, did not understand that arrests meant deportation, and deportation meant little chance of ever returning to France alive. As mentioned earlier, many believed that they could trust the French police and therefore did not believe that they were in any danger.

[Image: Esther Senot, one of very few survivors of Auschwitz left in France, spoke to the group about her harrowing experience during the Shoah. Esther's unique story reminded us all about the individuality of Holocaust victims and gave us an important perspective into the post-Shoah experience of survivors.]

Esther's return to Paris saw her staying again with the concierge for a brief period before going to an orphanage, where she was able to stay during the day but not at night. Esther slept on the streets and in stairwells and worked in an office separating the clothing of people who, at the time, she did not know were deported from Drancy. She remained in the orphanage until mid-1943, when she was asked by police for her papers outside of a metro station. A trip to the police station revealed her Jewishness, and she was deported to Drancy. Her experience at Drancy lasted a month. Esther recounted to us the experience of being fifteen years old and having to strip in front of strange men so that they could take her clothing and valuables. She also spoke about the thoughts inside the camp, stating that the women and children believed that they were being deported to a "German work camp," meaning that they would be working during the day

and would be reunited with their families at night, again emphasizing how unaware the public was to the atrocities being committed over the border.

Esther was eventually deported from Drancy in September 1943 on convoy #59. She said that the transport to Auschwitz was "like hell," packed into a wagon with 70 other women, elderly people, and screaming babies. She recounted that several died during the journey, that they ran out of water in the first day, and that there was human waste sloshing out of the small bucket they were given to use as a restroom. Her version of this event is one that is echoed amongst most survivors, and was similar to Ginette Kolinka's account, which we heard the previous day.

Esther was one of the 106 women and 230 men from the transport of over 1,000 to be selected for work. All the remaining Jews on the transport were murdered in gas chambers upon arrival. Her arrival at the camp is the second thing she describes as hellish. She recounted that the odors, smoke, bodies, and dogs attacking people were what she imagined Hell was like. In the camp, Esther worked at a construction site outside the camp. She recalled standing in the rain and snow for roll call, lifting and moving heavy stones for twelve hours a day, being terrified by the SS and its dogs, and the daily selections of those too weak to continue working by Nazi standards. By December, only fifty remained from convoy #59. Esther said that when the kapos tried to take their dignity by spilling the daily ration of soup into the snow and watching them fight for it like dogs, she and the other women from her transport refused to let their dignity be taken and would not eat the soup out of the snow. For Esther, it appeared from her testimony that maintaining her dignity was essential to her survival.

The camp bathrooms were Esther's source of news. It was the only time of the day when different barracks of women would interact, get news about the war, and look for people they

knew. It was in the bathrooms that Esther found her sister, from whom she was separated after the Vel' d'hiv roundup. She found her aunt at the same time. She and her sister were fortunate to be moved from the worksite inside to sew and mend clothing, work which was much easier to survive. For a moment, survival was not such a bleak concept.

Unfortunately, Esther's luck did not last, as her sister was bitten by a dog in April 1944 and was selected for death when she began spitting up blood after the dog bite. Her sister was seventeen years old. Esther, fifteen at the time, says that she became indifferent to everything after her sister's death. She existed in the camp for nine months after the death of her sister until January 1945, when the Nazis began evacuating the camp in response to the approaching Russian forces. Esther survived the subsequent death march, walking over one hundred miles in the bitter cold of the Polish winter. Her liberation did not come with the liberation of the Auschwitz. Instead, she was boarded onto a train destined for Bergen-Belsen. She remained there, suffering typhus and covered in vermin and lice, until the English liberated the camp in April 1945. Even this liberation did not bring her freedom, as she was transported to another German factory, where she worked for six to seven weeks before being transported again to Mauthausen. The camp was liberated on May 6, 1945. Esther was liberated weighing 32 kilograms and suffering from typhus. She spent three weeks in a military hospital before being repatriated to France.

Esther's telling of her homecoming was by far the most difficult part of her testimony, because we expected a happy ending after liberation. If anything, her homecoming was more painful than her experience. Esther was only seventeen years old when she arrived in France again. There was no one to claim her, and since she was not an adult she was trapped in an orphanage until the only other woman who returned from her convoy took her in to stay with her

and her fiancé. She said that her time in the orphanage felt like a camp; she felt forgotten and ignored. She felt that people treated her as if the pain she had suffered was impeding on their happy lives, and they wanted her negativity to go away. Her time with the other woman from her convoy made her feel "burned alive," which was striking since she had survived being literally burned alive in several death camps. She did not speak about her experience for 30 years because in the period immediately following the war people accused her of lying or being crazy, and she was made to feel guilty for surviving. Esther shared with us that since she had achieved her goal of surviving, she felt that she had nothing left to live for, and she attempted to end her life. Listening to her, it felt as if Esther was never truly liberated from her ordeal. She might have been physically liberated, but until she started speaking about her experience she was never truly mentally free. Realistically, she still probably is not.

Our day came full circle at the end of Esther's testimony. She told us that she had three children, six grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. She said she had them as revenge, which was exactly what Thierry told us the Nazis wanted to avoid and is how they justified murdering children. It was fascinating to see that Jewish people fought back against what happened to them by ensuring that they would repopulate the earth with the Jewish population that the Nazis had attempted to decimate as a final act of defiance.

During the question and answer portion of our time with Esther, I asked her for her reaction and thoughts on the resurgence of anti-Semitism in France today. Her response was one that I will never forget. She said that she feels like she is right back in the 1940s during Nazism, and that it terrifies her. This type of the sentiment moves me to want to shoulder the responsibility of sharing her story, yet I feel deprived of a way to effectively do so.

Day 3: Fighting for Memory: Hidden Children, Hidden Meanings, Hidden History

Shara Chopra, Alice Lin, Kelly Powers; Photos: Kelly Powers

Using a small steel fence as their makeshift goal, young kids kicked an orange soccer ball across the grass beside a large horseshoe-shaped building. Whether they understood the weight of the past surrounding them was impossible to see, as the ball got stuck in the bush bordering the monument just feet away. Perhaps unknowingly, the three children posed an aggressive contrast to the history the class would come to learn more deeply — a dark history that transcended age, sex, social class, nationality, and borders.

Part 1 | Rachel Jedinak

Under soft light of the cloudy morning, the class made its way to the municipal building (*mairie*) of the 20th arrondissement to meet with Rachel Jedinak and her friend, Jacques Klajnberg, on March 5, 2019. Rachel had lost seventeen family members in the Shoah, although as a hidden child she herself managed to escape. Jacques, also a hidden child, later fought in the Resistance.

As a conscious tourist, it seemed like everywhere the class went it encountered some kind of memorial or monument dedicated to the first half of the 20th century, either specifically relating to World War I, World War II, or the Shoah.

And this municipal building of the 20th arrondissement was no different.

Here, a World War I and World War II monument built into the wall displayed a broad plaque flanked by two statues mounted above a smaller golden plaque stating "JEUNE, SOUVIENS-TOI." This call on the younger generation to remember these wars intrinsically ties into the lessons we heard repeatedly during the trip: As the future of society, we are responsible for remembering and transmitting memories so that they may never be lost. This monument served as an appropriate reminder as we started our tour with Rachel.

Rachel chose to take us on a walking tour of the Belleville *quartier* in the 20th arrondissement, as it is where she grew up and experienced the most impactful moments of the Shoah. Along with Jacques, we retraced some of Rachel's steps to learn about her memories of the Shoah in an experiential way.

The first stop of our tour was the Square Édouard-Vaillant, a small park with a few benches and paths — reminding many of New York City. In this seemingly unremarkable square, Rachel drew our attention to a plaque that read:

> Arrêtés par la police du gouvernement de Vichy, complice de l'occupant Nazi, plus de 1100 enfants furent déportés de France de 1942 à 1944, et assassinés à Auschwitz parce qu'ils étaient nés juifs. Plus de 1000 de ces enfants vivaient dans le 20º arrondissement. Parmi eux, 133 tout-petits n'ont pas eu le temps de fréquenter une école.

This plaque was the result of years of hard work Rachel and Jacques spent trying to establish a public plaque commemorating the children not even enrolled in school but deported nevertheless from the 20th arrondissement. It was finally placed in the square in on November 28, 2004. The children's names and information were arranged in alphabetical order, and their ages ranged from 19 days to 7 years. This plaque was reminiscent of Serge Klarsfeld's work, *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial*. This volume uses extensive archival evidence to give

testimony to over 1,500 children who were deported during the Shoah through photographs and brief biographies. Like the plaque in the Square Édouard-Vaillant, these biographies include the children's names and ages, in addition to their place and date of birth, home address, and deportation circumstances.

Particularly striking was the call to action between these names and the aforementioned inscription. Its English translation states: "Passersby, read their name, your memory is their only sepulcher." By acknowledging their names, the memories of these children are brought back into existence so that they may be commemorated and properly "buried." It was particularly inspiring how determined Rachel and Jacques were to have a plaque placed here to honor the children who would otherwise have gone unrecognized. This demonstrates that uncovering and remembering those who lost their lives during the Shoah is still a very ongoing process — the fight that never stops. When asked for her opinion on delivering justice, Rachel noted that it is never too late to "*éclater la vérité*" or "make the truth burst forth." For Rachel, delivering justice involves perpetuating memories of the Shoah and its victims.

Further along our walking tour we came to a police depot where Rachel had been arrested a second time after initially escaping the Vel' d'hiv roundup in July 1942. On February 11, 1943, Rachel, her sister, and her grandmother were taken to this police station, but as chance may have it, she and her sister escaped a second time in the chaos of the event. Rachel pointed out a small window located on the ground, which she noted was the very window she and her sister used to escape. It is hard to imagine how this seemingly insignificant window was a source of light and in fact a matter of life and death for a child like Rachel during the darkness of the Shoah.

The final stop featured the Père-Lachaise cemetery. This cemetery was unlike anything many students had seen in the United States. Rather than mostly uniform tombstones and plaques, this cemetery was littered with extravagant sculptures, sarcophagi, and mausoleums. Among this eclectic ensemble were several large Holocaust monuments, some dedicated to the memory of those who perished in specific camps, to which Rachel helped draw our attention. She added that she sometimes brings her chorus group to sing Yiddish songs around these monuments. One detail that particularly struck about these Holocaust monuments was the abstract nature of some versus the realistic nature of others.

For example, one monument dedicated to the children of the Holocaust featured a dozen empty silhouettes of children. Rachel interpreted this monument as depicting these children leaving by smoke in the crematoria. On the other hand, a monument commemorating the victims

interned at the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp include a realistic oversized skeletal figure whose individual ribs protrude from his emaciated chest. This figure clearly demonstrates the deathly, inhumane conditions internees endured during the Shoah.

And they leave an impact on the beholder.

It was also for the first time during our tour with Rachel that some of us learned of the Jewish tradition of leaving pebbles rather than flowers at monuments, memorials, or tombstones. Pebbles are a great equalizer. One does not have to be rich to find a pebble like one might need to be to buy a beautiful, ostentatious bouquet of flowers. Touched by this idea, we thought it demonstrated a sense of unity and equality among the Jewish community. Because pebbles are also more durable than flowers, which eventually wilt and die, many thought they better represent eternal solidarity so that such memories will never die.

Finally, while strolling through Père-Lachaise, several monuments dedicated to victims of the Rwandan genocide and the terrorist bombing aboard the UTA flight 772 in Niger, among other historical catastrophes, caught our attention. The fact that these monuments were interspersed among those of the Holocaust, in addition to tombstones for both famous and ordinary French people, was a clear example of multidirectional memory in action. Rather than competing with one another, these monuments worked in conjunction to commemorate all these events and people at once.

Part 2 | Drancy

Stepping off the crowded bus, the first impression of the area surrounding Drancy was that we were certainly not in Paris anymore. The buildings were much lower and did not have the Paris aesthetic that typically comes to mind, despite our incredibly close proximity.

The first stop was the former site of the Drancy internment camp.

The building was constructed during the 1930s in a unique horseshoe shape considered quite modern for its time. Its original purpose was as affordable housing, although the government did not have enough money to finish its construction, and it was left with the exterior completed but the interior simply comprising many large halls and corridors.

In summer 1941, the building was taken over by the Germans as a camp that would serve as a sort of "hub" for arrestees prior to deportation.

Following the war, as we also learned, Nazis were actually kept in Drancy prior to their judgement. There was not enough money left to rebuild the camp, so it was finished and people began living there in 1948. The building is now used as an "HLM" or subsidized housing in France. The individuals who live there, many with low incomes, are largely immigrants or families who do not come here by choice but are assigned an apartment. Typically, it takes four

years to receive subsidized lodging so if people reject living at Drancy they may not receive another housing assignment for a very long time.

It's interesting to think of the circularity of it all. While Drancy's main purpose was always affordable housing, you have people living there who did not choose this fate. While visiting the site, one student noted the plastic grocery bags caught in the trees of the garden and said, "It's almost as if France has forgotten about this place" — thus a strong parallel to France's internment of so many Jews, including French and foreign and among them women, children, and the elderly.

While exploring the site of the former internment camp, we encountered two monuments, the first of which is the wagon. This wagon was initially part of a museum prior to the construction of the now-larger museum just across the street. While this is perhaps not a wagon actually used to deport Jews, it was installed in 1988 and is representative of one that would have

been used. Typically, a wagon of this size would hold 8 horses or 40 people. However, to deport individuals from Drancy to concentration and extermination camps in Poland during a three-day trip, eighty people would be crammed in without light, food, water, breaks, or access to a toilet. This incredibly dehumanizing situation was often the first point of extermination. Less than 3 percent of the 76,000 Jews deported from Drancy survived.

And the most striking feature of the wagon was not necessarily intentional.

Carved on the wagon is a swastika that appeared only a few years ago. While the culprit of this act of anti-Semitism is unknown, after showing us the carving our tour guide began describing the climate of Drancy today, perhaps implying the inhabitants to be responsible. Again, those living in this HLM in Drancy did not choose to and there are anti-Semites living there. In the film *If the Walls Could Speak,* directed and produced by Daniela Zanzotto in 1998,

only one anti-Semite is actually shown while most other inhabitants are unaware of Drancy's history and are portrayed as simply living their daily lives. Thus, perhaps the insinuation that the swastika was carved by an inhabitant of this HLM is not necessarily fair, but we must understand that it is certainly possible. It is interesting to note that on our tour we had a security guard with us, a first for our tours. It was when we saw the swastika that one realized we very much could be in danger, just for trying to uncover traces of the past and remember. The presence of this swastika stood as a stark reminded of the very real existence of anti-Semitism today. This is a hatred that has not dissipated despite the horrible events of history, a reality that struck me the most and something impossible forget.

The next monument built on the site of the camp is the sculpture built by Shelomo Selinger, a survivor himself of nine concentration camps as a teenager as well as the only survivor in his family. The monument was inaugurated in 1976. When you encounter it there are three large blocks and through the gaps of each you can see the apartment building that was the camp, as our tour guide said, the first step of death. The first block commemorates the "100,000" Jews lost in France to the Holocaust, a number that we now know to be overestimated — actually coming in at about 76,000.

The third block remembers the victims of the Nazis, not mentioning the French collaborators. It is important to remember the historical context in which this monument was inaugurated. Prior to President Chirac's speech in 1995 taking responsibility for France's involvement in the Holocaust, taboo surrounded the subject. Some of the text on this block is in Yiddish without a French translation. The text pays homage to all Jews deported and killed, and we can wonder if the choice to keep this text in Yiddish was in order to keep it private, for only Jews to share and use to mourn those they lost who today have no graves.

The central block is abstract in design, depicting ten faces in total, the number required for collective prayer (minyan) in Judaism. We see the faces of an old man with a beard and a woman with a child in her arms. As well, we see faces right-side up, portraying dignity, and upside down, portraying suffering.

Leading up to the statue are seven steps symbolizing the number of degrees in the inferno. These steps become increasingly narrow so by the last one only the soul of the murdered Jew remains. The soul will live on forever. In addition to being informative, this monument possesses several symbolic references related to the Jewish religion and interestingly is one of few monuments we saw in Paris that takes this approach.

The final monument on the site of the camp is the French flag, financed by the Fondation du Mémorial de la Shoah. While not explicitly written about anywhere on the site of the camp,

this flag is a painful, but necessary, reminder of France's involvement in the atrocities that took place exactly where we were standing.

Leaving the site, we encountered what today is the Couscous Maison. During the beginning of the internment at Drancy, male internees had no access to phones and their loved ones could not visit. Profiting from this tragedy, the owner of a restaurant in place of today's Couscous Maison struck a deal with families, allowing them to pay money and in exchange go to the top floor of the restaurant where they could see their sons, their fathers, their husbands. Indeed, *le malheur des uns fait le bonheur des autres.*

And just across the street also is located the Mémorial de la Shoah à Drancy.

We ended our trip at Drancy by visiting the museum, receiving an in-depth history of the site. It was shocking to learn that amongst the 70,000 to 80,000 interned at Drancy, internees came from many different countries (56 in total, even the United States). While photographic evidence of the Drancy camp is lacking, we do have drawings from internees that give us a more personal vision of life at the camp — though photography was not permitted within the museum. Some drawings are those of Jane Lévy, who unfortunately did not return. She showed how there was no privacy and men and women were simply separated into halves of the huge halls they were kept in, as at the time the apartment building was only partially constructed. The drawings of Georges Horan, who was not deported because of his non-Jewish wife, are also presented. He depicts the horrible starvation experienced, showing individuals searching for food in the trash. Daily life at the camp is also depicted, with individuals reading, children in a makeshift school, and people trying to wash up the best they could. Despite the horrible circumstances, life tried to go on.

In the same way, life today goes on in Drancy. And the young boys tumble in the grass before their home in the horseshoe-shaped building.

Day 4: Multidirectional Memory in Paris

Dhruv Rao, Marissa Scott, Casey Sennett

(I) Background/Introduction

Some of the topics covered in our classwork, which appeared as main themes in Paris:

- Multidirectional memory
- Historiography of the Holocaust
- Deportation of children
- Is it in vain that we try to remember? ~~~ *Night and Fog*
- Representation of the Holocaust via film → *La Rafle, Les Violons du Bal, Au revoir, les enfants…, Les Voix de la Muette etc.*

(II) Le MAHJ (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme)

To begin our day, we met with historian Vincent Duclert, an expert in French Jewish history, at the Jewish art and history museum. Vincent discussed with us how the historic Dreyfus Affair related to not only the Holocaust but also to present day anti-Semitism. He has worked tirelessly to try and get Alfred Dreyfus moved into the Pantheon, as it would be a symbol of France's fight against anti-Semitism. So far, he has been unsuccessful. Vincent advocates that to fight anti-Semitism, we must study it. I feel that this particular sentiment expressed by Vincent sums up exactly what our trip was about. We were tasking ourselves with learning about the deep history of anti-Semitism in France to give us tools to fight and advocate against anti-Semitism today.

Following our discussion, we were led on a guided tour of the museum. Madeline, our guide, took us on the "highlights" tour of the museum. In one of the rooms are models of different synagogues from the rural and urban centers of France. More interestingly, in the room with these models was a painting of Jewish gravestones being decimated. Unfortunately, Madeline did not include this on our tour as it is not considered one of the highlights of the museum. I was entranced by the painting because of its timeliness to what is occurring worldwide. In New York, London and other places around the world (including France), Jewish cemeteries are being vandalized. Although the painting is portraying a much older community (Munich 1892), the same things are happening today. I could not take my eyes off the dark,

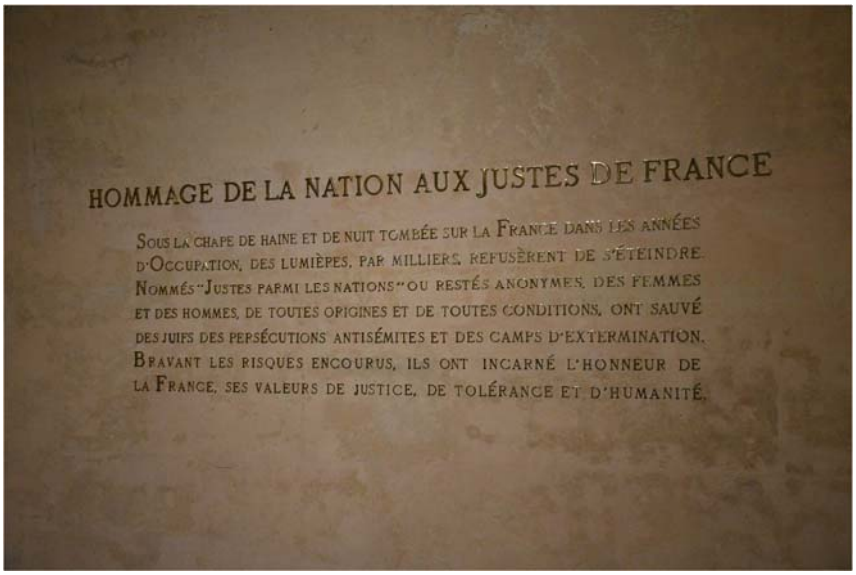
dreary painting as I began to think about how nothing has changed. There is still anti-Semitism today. There are still acts of violence. There are still cemeteries being decimated because of their Jewish name. You can see the horrified and devastated faces of the people whose loved ones' final places of rest have been destroyed. I remember when a Philadelphia Jewish cemetery was vandalized in 2017. Earlier, I said we were tasking ourselves to learn about anti-Semitism in order to fight it, but how can we learn when we skip over some of the most relevant and timely pieces necessary to understanding the fight? Decimation of cemeteries is obviously not new, yet we are not doing anything to make sure that it ends. From Munich in 1892 to St. Louis and Alsace, France, in March 2019, it is happening. We are not talking about it but it is time to do so. It is time it stops. Let our families lay peacefully, as we let yours.

(II) The Pantheon

During the afternoon, we visited the Pantheon, a secular mausoleum honoring distinguished French citizens. The design of the building is quite particular, as it was originally built as a church to Saint Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris. The importance of the building is heightened by the buildings that symmetrically surround it - the law school of the Sorbonne and the *Hôtel de Ville* of the fifth arrondissement - while giving a clear view of a downward slope from which one can see, in the

distance, the Eiffel Tower. Furthermore, at its entrance, in big gold letters the words '*Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante'* (To the great men the nation is grateful) are embossed at the top of its facade, whereupon entering the site visitors must look up to revere the importance of the building and the people honored there.

The two sites of memory I wish to focus on are the memorial to *les Justes* and to Simone Veil, both of which are fascinating due to the multidirectional nature of both memorials. The title of *les Justes*, officially the Righteous Among the Nations, is a nomination determined by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, which officially recognizes the efforts of non-Jewish people in rescuing Jewish people without the expectation of a



reward. The plaque was a reminder of the *good* in France during the Holocaust as well as its importance when demonstrated by regular people such as the residents of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and Izieu who helped shelter Jewish children out of altruistic motivations. The plaque itself reminds us of the importance of the Pantheon by underscoring universal values historically associated with the French Republic: justice, tolerance, and humanity. The ambiance of the room around the plaque, which describes the Righteous as the *lumières* in France when it was occupied by hatred and darkness, heightens the experience of receiving this information since the hallway is quite dark, with a spotlight shone on the plaque.

Simone Veil is buried just feet away from this plaque with her husband. An Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor, Veil is an inspirational figure not just because of her resilience, which led to her survival, but also because of her determination to redefine her own reputation. She is currently buried in the Pantheon for her extensive work as a politician, as a health minister who help pass legislation that legalized abortion, and as the leader of the European Parliament.

Forever she will be remembered as the fifth woman buried in the Pantheon, adding to her memory as a survivor of an extermination camp. This grave specifically reminded me of Esther Senot's testimony, where she declared that her large family and rewarding life following her return from Auschwitz-Birkenau constituted her ultimate revenge on the Nazis, who were determined to end her existence. Once again, on our way out of the Pantheon, the importance of the memorials we saw during our week in Paris was

underscored, as alongside these memorials are those to Marie and Pierre Curie, to Emile Zola, and to Victor Hugo, all household names in France, and in French and Francophone studies. The proximity of these tombs and plaques permanently places, for all posterity, *les Justes* and Simone Veil on the tallest of pedestals.

(III) Cojot

The last activity of the day was a screening of a rough cut of the film *Cojot*, by Penn State Assistant Professor of Journalism and Film, Boaz Dvir. The film followed Michel Cojot-Goldberg, a child survivor of the Holocaust, and explored how the Holocaust and the deportation of his father impacted his life. Throughout the class and the trip, we talked about how the Holocaust has impacted child survivors and their families. In her article on the "1.5 Generation," literary critic Susan Suleiman explores the various "generation-units" of the Holocaust, specifically those considered child survivors. I would categorize Michel Cojot-Goldberg as a child during the Holocaust who was old enough to remember but not old enough to understand. As a result, he developed irrational guilt over not being deported with his father. He seemed to feel he had a responsibility to stay with his father and be deported; however, he was too young to understand what was happening.

The child survivor narrators of some of the books we have read, including *W, or the Memory of Childhood* and *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, explain how they have used writing to cope

with their traumatic childhood experiences and also as a way to give voices back to those they lost. In Paris, we also learned about the efforts by one of our tour guides, Rachel, also a child survivor, to put a plaque on the police station from which she was arrested and almost deported. She also showed us a plaque in a nearby park that she helped put up that named the neighborhood children murdered in the Holocaust who were too young to go to school. Cojot-Goldberg's initial coping mechanism was to avenge his father; however, he found himself unable to kill the man that deported his father. He was able to cope later on, however, by saving his son and other people aboard a hijacked Air France flight.

The man who deported his father was Klaus Barbie, a German SS official stationed in Lyon, whom we learned about extensively in class. We watched the documentary film *Hotel Terminus*, in which various people who knew or were tortured by Klaus Barbie are interviewed. The film spans multiple continents and explores Barbie's life from childhood to his trial in Lyon. The film paints "the butcher of Lyon" in contradictory ways: some individuals interviewed explain how great he was, including a man who always referred to him as "Sonny." Others, however, recount how he tortured them. One victim talks about her torture at the hands of Barbie, who also killed her husband and son. In *Cojot*, we see the latter perspective of Barbie. Cojot-Goldberg expresses his desire to kill Barbie to "Nazi-hunters" Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, whom we also learned about in class. The Klarsfelds are one of the primary reasons for Barbie's extradition from Bolivia to France. They advocated for his arrest and advised Cojot-Goldberg to not kill him. While Cojot-Goldberg did go against their warning, he found that he could not pull the trigger when he had the ability to kill Barbie.

His inability to kill Barbie made him feel as though he did not have purpose, but he was able to find his purpose again when the Air France Flight 139 one which he and his son were

passengers from Israel was hijacked and rerouted to Uganda. The second part of the film focuses on the hijacking and while Cojot-Goldberg was unable to do anything for his father, he was able to influence those holding him hostage to secure needed supplies for all the passengers and eventually to negotiate the release of most of them. He was also cognizant enough to make sure that passengers with Israeli passports disposed of them, reducing the number of individuals still in danger when the others were released. We see the multidirectional memory shared between the Holocaust and the hijacking in this part of the film. Cojot-Goldberg might have been unable to fulfill his mission to avenge his father, but he was able to save himself, his son, and undoubtedly some of the other passengers. One of the men holding them hostage had the opportunity to kill the remaining hostages with a grenade when Israeli forces came to rescue them; however, he did not, possibly due to Michel interacting with him. We also saw the existence of multidirectional memory in Paris at Père-Lachaise cemetery. Many memorials in the cemetery were dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust and various camps, but there was also a headstone dedicated to the victims of the Rwandan genocide.

One of the students on the trip was involved in the making of *Cojot*. Marissa Scott, a junior in Archaeological Science and Jewish Studies, has worked with Boaz Dvir for the past year and a half to aid in publicizing the various rough cut screenings; she has also provided notes and comments throughout the documentary making process. As soon as she knew of the screening in Paris, she asked for it to be part of the embedded course itinerary. She is incredibly honored and was ecstatic to have her peers and professors see and comment on this incredible work about justice, grief, and family.

(IV) Conclusion

Throughout the trip we considered many forms of multidirectional memory. At the Jewish Art and History Museum, we noted the persistence of anti-Semitism in Europe and at the Pantheon we saw the burial place of a famous Shoah survivor among other beloved French heroes. At the showing of *Cojot*, we also were made aware of the Shoah's relationship with other traumatic events, such as the hijacking of Air France Flight 139. Within France and across the globe, the Shoah is connected to other events and people because of shared experiences in the form of multidirectional memory

Day 5

Christina Bethman, Yamiya Fowlkes, Lauren Jackson

Memorial of the Vel' d'Hiv

On Thursday, we started our day doing some digging around of the past on our own. No tour guide, no script, just us exploring the landscape of Paris, looking for traces of history. Our goal was to find the three memorials commemorating the roundup of the Vel' d'hiv: the metro board, the plaque and the monument. We took the metro to the stop Bir-Hakeim to view the first. I mention the name of the stop because the name triggered no questioning for me until we arrived. Identically across the tracks, on the other platform from the Vel' d'hiv display, there was one for the Battle of Bir-Hakeim (May-June 1942). They were the same size, the same format, the same coloring and design just depicting different events. Yet, the metro stop was given the name of Bir-Hakeim, commemorating a victory of Free French forces over a more dominant Axis force in the Libyan desert. Why? Would it have been inappropriate to name the stop after the Vel' d'hiv because of the connotation of deportation and death? It is questions and reflections like these that I have learned to make during this trip. I have picked up more on my

surroundings. I'm learning that we do not have to accept things as they are; rather, it is our duty to question why and why not. The location of this board also intrigues me. For us to be able to appropriately view it we had to completely cross under the metro and come up on the other side. I cannot imagine that people going about their lives would make this effort, and they would not know the plaque is there. In addition, it is placed where you have to stand behind a railing to take it in because right below is an escalator. Is it intended to be scanned as you are mounting the

escalator, or while you are waiting for your train? The location truly intrigues me. As we were leaving the metro station I realized that I had actually been to this stop twice before and neither time had I noticed this board. Is this due to my lack of observance or does this sign not draw attention? I think it might be both.

Next we went to look for the plaque at the site of the former Vel' d'hiv. It took Dr. Silverman some time to locate it, which says something about the site. It's not easily found, but I feel as if it should be. Finally we found it, almost blending into the wall it is on. The physical aspects jump out at you first. The plaque is shielded by thick, impenetrable glass, which leads me to believe this glass is protecting it from something. Seeing the swastika carving on the memorial wagon at Drancy I infer that it is being protected from anti-Semitic vandalism. Next, the plaque is almost exactly the same color as the wall it is embedded in. How will this draw attention to it? Dr. Silverman informed us that the site where the plaque is located was actually renovated. The

differences in the old versus the new are astounding to me. The images reveal the contrast between the old site and what is currently there.

With the old site, I see a highly thought out memory site with beautiful landscaping. This to me is a place where someone would want to go to take in what happened here and learn about the past. You can place flowers or rocks here if you so desire to honor the past. In addition, this site is very noticeable to the common eye. On the other hand, the new "site" (if you can even call it that) integrates the plaque so much into the wall that you can easily glance over it. One of our classmates, Melanie, actually described her emotions towards the current plaque as "underwhelming." Do people actually stop and look at this plaque? While we were surrounding the plaque and looking at it, I noticed people noticing us and looking to see what we were looking at. It is a human instinct that when a large group of people are focused on something, it draws attention as well. Is our group enough to get passersby to want to look at it too? Even if they look for a second and think "Wow, that's what happened here," do we need more groups like ours to stop and look? What

will get this the attention it deserves? The “downgrade” of the plaque evokes thoughts of how our memory works. Do we lose and diminish memories such as these over time? How long until something is forgotten? As the metro stop is called Bir Hakeim, I noticed that all the stores around it are named after it as well, and not the Vel d’Hiv. Is this overpowering the memory of the Vel’ d’hiv?

Today the velodrome is no longer standing. Now, in its place, are buildings that house apartments and offices. It was an uneasy feeling seeing the space where such a momentous event in history happened. It was even hard to imagine the velodrome there. People walking by quickly, coming in and out of the complex, going about their lives -- it’s like it never happened. But it did.

After taking in the space, I began to analyze the text on the plaque. It specifies that this raid was conducted by “the police of the Vichy government under the order of the Nazi occupants.” While it does mention Vichy complicity in the act, we know that there is more to it than just this one line. This was facilitated by French police. We also know that Vichy officials even refused to let the Nazis conduct the raid because they wanted to do it themselves. Zuccotti mentions in our textbook that “the majority performed their unpleasant duties with neither zeal nor compassion” (p.106). So these officers were for the most part willingly, or at least indifferently, arresting innocent families. Throughout the trip, we made a point to see if signs or plaques pointed out Vichy complicity. At the least, this one did. The text of the plaque also mentions and thanks the helpers and their efforts. It became apparent to us that within the monuments there was a theme of thanking those who offered a hand, because their actions should not go unnoticed. As seen in the film we viewed for class, *La Rafle*, one neighbor urgently ushered two of her small children into the home of one of her elderly neighbors to

protect them during this raid. Despite the acts of helpers including the Righteous among the Nations, this horrific event did happen.

At the bottom of this plaque there is a small phrase in Hebrew. None of us could decipher what it means and I still do not know to this day. But is this phrase for me? Memory sites have many purposes and I see this phrase in Hebrew as targeting a specific Jewish audience. This reaches out to them especially and draws them into the memory site in a different, more personalized manner.

Lastly, the plaque has the message "passant souviens-toi," which calls out to the viewer of the plaque to remember. More specifically, "passant" means "passerby." This plaque is aware of its passing audience. Its use of "toi," the French informal "you," is very direct, to grab your attention. Many plaques in France about the Shoah contain this statement, but this differs in its "passant." It is this last call to action to engage with the present to remember the past.

Next, we walked down the street to try to find the memorial sculpture. We crossed the street to walk down a picturesque, serene promenade along the Seine. In the middle of it was the statue commemorating the Vel' d'hiv roundup. We began by getting hung up on the wording of the statue. It explained that this happened "under the authority of the de facto 'government of the French State.'" We were perplexed by this word "de facto" and sought many meanings for this phrasing. It does not say the Vichy government on this statue, but it is also important to recognize that this was erected before the famous 1995 speech by Jacques Chirac claiming France's responsibility for complicity in enacting the Nazis policies. Rather, "de facto" implies that this government was created for the special circumstance of the period.

The most striking part of this statue is the individualization and detail in the figures. I could clearly see the somber eyes of the women, the wrinkles on the man's face, the wedding

rings on the couple's fingers and the star of David that the man wore. These details humanized these people. Giving them curves, slumping over in despair and exhaustion, leaning on each other for support -- you almost feel like you know them and want to reach out and help them. The statue includes Jews of all ages from different categories to depict the wider population affected by this round up. I noticed the little girl with pigtails holding a doll, and all you can see is pure innocence in this child. It's heartbreaking to think of the horrors awaiting her. We also observed there was distance between the people; however, this space didn't exist in real life. In one scene from *La Rafle*, we saw the main family practically sitting on top of each other in dirty, disgusting conditions inside the velodrome. While the statue shows distance, we figured that this

is more of a psychological distance between the people. Many of them are not interacting with each other. They look lonely and lost and scared. They were frightened and miserable. Initially, before I picked up on these details, I felt no impact from this monument. I felt as if it would have been more effective to show the immense size of this roundup, thinking of my shock when I saw it in the film. Upon reflection and really getting up close to the statue, however, I realize that the intent was to convey individualization, inviting the viewer to look into their faces and see how this affected people. Like the work of the Klarsfelds producing the book containing photographs of over 2,000 children deported from France, the goal is to humanize and individualize the Shoah, to see it as 1+1+1 6 million times.

In taking in my surroundings, I realized that no one had walked by in the long time period that we were there. This statue is in fact off the beaten path and not visible from the street. How would you know how to find it? I've been to Paris many times and this was the first time I've visited this statue and learned about its existence. As our theme for the trip goes -- taking its cue from a line in Roland Cayrol's screenplay for Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* -- "Il faut le savoir" or "you must be tipped off" (or, alternately, "you must know about this"). Further, I noticed two very juxtaposing interactions with the statue. One person had broken a bottle on it and another had placed flowers on it. Often, monuments are interacted with in inappropriate ways. People hang on them, children play and run and jump on them. Do people use this site to "hang out" on and leave their remains? Did someone drunkenly walk by and decide that was a good place to throw his or her empty bottle? But then, I look at the flowers someone bought and took time out of their day to place in remembrance. This is what these sites are for. Remembering, honoring, reflecting. It warmed my heart to know that someone engaged with this amazing monument in the right way and that people do care. I didn't notice it at first, but behind us was a beautiful view of the Eiffel Tower. I realized that the people in the statue were directed towards looking at it. It was such a beautifully warm and sunny day, everyone started taking pictures with the scenery in the background. Looking at the statue of these persecuted people in the middle of a gorgeous Paris day reminded me of how much was taken from them, and how much this country did not protect them.

Fort Mont-Valérien

I found our visit to Mont-Valérien extremely compelling as it offered us a very rich history of the site and enlightened us further on the tactics of warfare used by the Nazis during the Second World War. Unfortunately, we were forbidden to include any pictures of the inside of the fort. There were many powerful and moving aspects we saw inside that are still very personal to the victims' families. This particular site was a 19th century military fort, located outside Paris, which was occupied by the Nazis during World War II. Here, Nazi soldiers executed more than 1,000 Resistance fighters and hostages (60% Resistance fighters and 40% hostages), making Mont-Valérien the site with the most executions in one place in all of France during the war. It is essential to note that Mont-Valérien was used both intentionally and strategically by the Germans because of its placement and seclusion. The Nazis took their victims there because they could kill them quietly and discreetly, without creating public concern or turmoil. We walked the entirety of the fort and the first area that we stopped at was the Chapel in which the Nazis kept the Resistance fighters before their execution. The Chapel was used by the Nazis to hold the Resistance fighters before they were sent to execution under these standards: If there were five or less Resistance fighters they would be taken right to their execution; if there were more than five, the first five were taken to their execution and the others stayed in the Chapel. The inside of the chapel was originally blue, and some parts of the original wall were upkept. We saw heart wrenching carvings in the walls of last messages by prisoners. The most common message we saw said "Vive la France." In their last moments these fighters never lost their fire and passion for their country. The most interesting aspect of the chapel concerned the chaplain, Franz Stock. Franz Stock, known as "Hell's chaplain," was a German chaplain who worked to aid the Resistance fighters in their final hours. He made it a point to document all the individuals who

entered and exited the chapel, and because of this we now know almost all the names of the individuals executed at Mont-Valérien. The Nazis buried all the Resistance fighters in mass graves so that their bodies could not be identified, but because of Franz Stock, along with many letters the fighters wrote to their families in their final hours, we know who they were. After the war Franz Stock was imprisoned as a prisoner of war, but was later released for his altruistic actions. He is now a well-known symbol of Franco-German reconciliation.

Inside the Mont-Valérien military fort is a monument put up in 2003 by Robert Badinter, the son of a deportee and a former French Minister of Justice responsible for legislation abolishing the death penalty in France. This monument, sculpted by Pascal Convert, is in the shape of a bell. A bell symbolizes the gathering of people (in churches or in schools), but this bell is placed on the floor, the sound silenced to pay respects. The sound is silent, like the people who were executed. Across the surface of the bell are the names of almost all those executed at Mont-Valérien. There is seemingly no beginning or end to the names. They are sorted by the year of execution, and the year 1942 covers over half the bell. During that year, if Resistance fighters attacked a German soldier, around 150 hostages would be executed in reprisal. This tactic, put forth by the Nazis to dissuade people from joining the Resistance, backfired. The Resistance became more organized. While the Resistance grew stronger, the French had to find

other means to comply with the quotas set by the Nazis. In lieu of arresting and sentencing, they started to deport people in the middle of the night, as seen in *Night and Fog*.

Perhaps what is most intriguing about this bell monument is that all the people executed are represented as being of equal importance. The executed represented 22 nationalities (including German), ranged from 16 to 72 years of age, and came from different religions and political parties. For example, Henri d'Estienne d'Orves, a major Catholic Gaullist Resistance hero, and Gabriel Péri, a Communist, were executed in the same year and are listed right next to each other on the bell. These two men would have had drastically different social and political positions in France at the time, but both are represented with equal importance on the bell.

One aspect of the bell that stood out to me was that there were no executed women. During the war in France, shooting someone made them equal as fighters, and since women did not have fighting status, a woman was not to be shot. A woman's role was to take care of the family, so many of the female members of the Resistance were deported, humiliated, and beheaded in Germany.

The part of the visit to Mont-Valérien that struck me most was standing at the place where over a thousand people were executed. While we were just over 2 kilometers from Paris, not a single sound from the city could be heard at this execution place. The legacies of the executed were brought alive in the moment when we read some of the letters of the executed to their families, stating they were going to die for France. A quote from the letter by Tony Bloncourt in March 1942 reads as follows:

> I die with courage, I am not afraid of death. What I have done, I do not regret, if it has served my country and freedom. I deeply regret leaving this life, because I feel I could have been useful. All my willpower has been focused on ensuring a better world. I have understood how hugely unfair the current social structure is. I have learned that freedom is just a word and I wanted it to change...beloved Mummy, I love you as I have never loved you…

The entire group was taken aback by these quotes, and we took a couple minutes in silence to take in the deaths of the executed. During this moment, I looked up at the trees, which were the very last thing the executed had seen before being murdered. It was very difficult to comprehend that young men my age were executed in that exact spot, and I will never forget the emotions of bravery and heroism I felt at that moment.

It must be noted that on the large commemorative stone there are several wrong inscriptions. It states that 4,500 people were executed, but we know that at least 1,008 people were executed at Mont-Valerién, and 5,525 in the rest of France. In addition, it dates the executions from 1940 to 1944, but they in fact took place from 1941 to 1944. This poses the question of why the site would allow these inaccurate inscriptions, which relates to this quote from *Night and Fog* we discussed in class: "is it in vain that we try to remember" (in this case, in the face of inaccuracies in the historical record)? Mont-Valérien has opened the execution place up to the public, yet the public is presented with inaccurate information. How are we supposed to transmit memory if it wrong?

After standing at the execution site, we were led outside the fort. At the center of this large ground is the Cross of Lorraine, as pictured below. This two-barred cross was a Gaullist Resistance symbol during the war. In the same picture are sixteen sculptures that represent France's involvement in the war, the Liberation and the Shoah. The first sculpture depicts the liberation of the Alsatian city of Colmar, and the last portrays the liberation of Strasbourg. The sculptures in between illustrate other victories of the French army.

The one sculpture that caught my attention is the one below. The sculpture portrays France's betrayal of its own citizens during the Shoah. France was actively aiding the Nazis and initiating the deportation of French (and foreign) Jews, and thus betrayed its citizens. The sculpture depicts the skinny hands of a Jew intertwined with barbed wire, symbolizing the deportations. At the center is the heart of a Jew, also engulfed by barbed wire, symbolizing the French Jews' patriotic heart being torn apart by its own government. This moving and powerful sculpture, to me, perfectly represents the sentiments of the Jews in France at the time of the Shoah.

Day 6

Meghan McNicholas, Nicholas Mikolinis, Rosa Padt

LGBT Center

On March 8th, 2019, we visited the LGBT Centre located in the 3rd arrondissement of Paris and spoke with Matthieu Chaimbault about the Mémorial de la Déportation homosexuelle (MDH) and LGBT life in Paris today. There are currently around 500 LGBT organizations located throughout France, with about 100 of them in Paris alone. These organizations are of varied types and sizes and are mostly managed by volunteers and some paid employees. Open seven days a week, this particular center, open since the 1990s and in its current location for ten years, shelters approximately eighty smaller organizations. Many of these do not have set meeting places and their meetings therefore alternate among apartments belonging to different members.

The Center is located in the Marais, the current location for a large portion of the LGBT community in Paris. The community is very receptive to the Center, which is funded publicly. As support for the LGBT community increases, so does its security and acceptance. In middle school, students take an "introduction to sexuality" class in which the fight against sexism and

discrimination are stressed. The LGBT Center also offers information sessions for those wishing to learn more about LGBT education as well as the MDH.

After France lost the war, President Charles de Gaulle wanted to restore pride in the nation. In 1954, a wreath was placed in remembrance of the political figures deported from France. Over time, France engaged in other wars (in Indochina and Algeria), yet there was still only one wreath to remember the political deportees. During the 1970s and 1980s, the public realized that political figures were not the only ones deported, and it was at this time that Jewish deportees were starting to be considered. The idea of homosexual deportees being remembered did not arise until 1989 because there was no one to speak on their behalf, and there was resistance on the part of the French government.

The idea of homosexuals being deported from France was still suppressed until Pierre Seel, who became a major LGBT figure in France, gathered the courage to share his testimony. He decided to share his story after receiving a letter saying he was a political deportee, and he knew this was not the correct description. Prior to Seel going public, homosexuals would have private functions in buildings and risk having their events cancelled if the owners found out and did not support them. Although bars and other public venues slowly started to accommodate the LGBT community, the community encountered much oppression. During the 1990s, an annual ceremony was started by veterans and fellow deportees to honor those deported from France. Homosexuals were not allowed to partake in the ceremony because there were few homosexual deportees that survived and most of the veterans and deportees where homophobic. Homosexual deportees were required to stand outside the ceremony because they did not have proof/research to support their deportation, even though Seel had testified.

After a few ceremonies occurred, the LGBT community was able enter the ceremony, but its members had to stay quiet and wait until the regular ceremony was over before they could have theirs. At this point, no one would stay long enough attend the ceremony held by the LGBT community. Everything changed for the LGBT community in France in 2005, when the Prime Minister and President of France publicly acknowledged the deportation of homosexuals. This happened as politicians started supporting the homosexual deportees, and even began placing pink triangles on walls with yellow stars. Information about homosexual deportees was also added to high school textbooks.

Since the French Revolution, no laws specifically targeted homosexuals in France. This was another reason that made it difficult for French citizens to believe that homosexuals were deported during the war. Unlike France, Germany did have a law – the infamous "Paragraph 175" in place since 1871 -- that prohibited sexual relations between two males. Females were not targeted by this law because Himmler stated women could be raped and impregnated for the demographic benefit of the 'fatherland'. Although male homosexuality was criminalized under this law, Berlin was well known for its LGBT population. The LGBT movement was very strong in the 1930s in both France and Germany. It was during Hitler's reign that the police started to enforce Paragraph 175 in Germany. This law was then extended to the French citizens during the German occupation. Seel was personally targeted by the Germans because of this. He filed a complaint about a missing watch three years before the occupation, and at this time the French police noted he was homosexual on the complaint card. In 1941 he was transferred to a concentration camp near Strasbourg where he was tortured and forcibly sodomized, and where he witnessed the death of his best friend, Jo, mauled to death by Nazi guard dogs.

Similar to the Jewish population during the occupation, homosexual males were forced to wear pink triangles (instead of yellow stars) and have their identity cards stamped. Although lesbians were not targeted by Paragraph 175, they were required to wear black triangles. Black triangles were worn by those that 'did not fit into society' (i.e. lesbians, beggars, homeless, etc.). To stay hidden from the Germans, male homosexual would often marry lesbians and lesbians would marry and have children.

In France today, through the efforts of Seel, several plaques honor homosexuals but there is no monument yet. In 2008, a street was named "Rue Pierre SEEL" in Toulouse to honor his efforts. A plaque was then placed in Toulouse in 2010 to honor the homosexuals that were deported. Lastly, a plaque was place in Toulouse in 2012 to honor Pierre as well as the street that was already named after him. The MDH is currently continuing to fight for the creation of a

monument to homosexual deportees, with the cooperation of the city of Paris. Interestingly, in Paris' 2nd arrondissement there a plaque honoring the last two people burned in 1750 for being homosexual. In Amsterdam, the Homomonument consists of three triangles (past, present, and future); it was created to honor all those who have been victims of discrimination. In Berlin, a monument to homosexual deportees features a block with sixty other blocks around it.

In conclusion, throughout the discussion with Matthieu Chaimbault, we were able to address both past and current efforts being taken to honor the homosexuals deported during a dark time in history. We reflected upon how the actions of one person can change the lives of many, for better or worse. All it took was for one person to denounce someone or make false accusations for him or her to be arrested. The LGBT community continues to gain public support and to fight for a monument. Lastly, we discussed how we are now living survivors of Pierre Seel who bear an obligation to share his testimony in order to keep spreading awareness about intolerance and discrimination.

Final Discussion

We started off our final discussion with a broad focus: sharing any key takeaways from our final day in Paris at the LGBT Center. The first point brought up by our peers was the idea of the *action d'un citoyen*. We discussed in length the idea that a citizen in a democracy should feel a certain responsibility to strive for a more perfect union – in the case of the work done at the LGBT Center, it's not even for the sole purpose of preserving memory alone, but for doing the right thing and helping to make the "invisible" visible. Throughout our trip, we had learned about how survivors and advocates like the Klarsfelds fought for years after the Holocaust to make Jewish victims more visible to the general public. With this visit we saw the same thing, but as a group agreed less progress had been made and that there was certainly still a fight left in honor of LGBTQ Holocaust victims.

This observation initiated a shift in the focus of our conversation to the question of whether or not France "ranked" (or continues to rank) its victims. Through our study of the Holocaust this semester, we have traced the evolution of France's acceptance of its complicity and discussed at length how France's harsh resistance to accept its culpability gradually gave way to an increasingly large movement to preserve the memory of Shoah victims and admit collaboration. This focus, however, has been largely centered on Jewish victims, with limited public acknowledgement of LGBTQ and other victims. Depending on how one interprets this decision, some of us agreed that one could argue that focusing on just one group of victims is an "easier pill to swallow" for society. Using the Vel' d'hiv monument or the Mont-Valérien monument to further emphasize this point, many of us agreed that while the French have made strides in openly discussing the Shoah, there is still a tendency for them to focus on those who died fighting rather than those they helped to kill. As we saw throughout the trip on our various

walking tours and in discussions with survivors and their relatives, the decision-making process regarding who has been or hasn't been memorialized still does not represent all those impacted by the Shoah and France's role in it. The general consensus was that our visit to the center reemphasized that LGBTQ victims have very much been ignored (sometimes as the result of purposeful action, sometimes as the result of accidental action) and it was not until the dedication of organizations such as this one that we have seen a gradual broadening of those defined as Shoah victims.

This part of our conversation ultimately transitioned into a continuation of the conversation we have been having in class since the beginning of the semester: the debate over whether or not there comes a point at which it is too late; to quote from Cayrol's screenplay for *Night and Fog*, "is it in vain that we try to remember?" Since January, the majority of our class has agreed that we do have a duty to at least try and remember: while we will never know or experience the Shoah first-hand, and while we live in an era of "post-memory," we do have the opportunity to continue the conversation for those who can't. Almost all of us agreed that, if nothing else, this trip confirmed and strengthened our sense of commitment to sharing our studies of the Shoah. Meeting with survivors and their relatives or colleagues touched every single one of us, and the general sentiment was that these interactions motivated us to be even more active voices in promoting and transmitting Holocaust memory. In particular, knowing that many survivors felt as if the current climate was comparable to that of their younger lives was (and still is) deeply troubling to many of us, and was cited repeatedly as the reason why so many us walked away from the trip with a newfound sense of responsibility. Many of us connected this directly back to our visit to the LGBT Center – after having a conversation with Matthieu about how much progress is still needed in fighting for LGBT victims of the Shoah, much of the class

seemed to reiterate that the biggest takeaway was just how important each of our roles is in memory transmission (in relation to all groups of victims).

For the final part of our discussion, we shifted away from discussing the day's takeaways and towards our general reactions to and lessons learned from our trip. It was an interesting conversation to be part of because each of us was impacted by different moments or specific experiences, and hearing about these diverse opinions was helpful as it gave us broader perspectives on the trip as a whole. Some highlights of our classmates' takeaways included:

- **The Snowball Effect**: This is another ongoing course theme, reiterated during the trip. The "snowball effect" is the idea that 1 + 1 + 1 …. adds up. With every Jewish victim, we learn a little bit more about the Shoah and its impact. This is why we are so critical to memory transmission – we can be the "+1's" who share stories that otherwise wouldn't be told.
- **Multidirectional Memory Frameworks:** As students and educators, we make the links between all of the unique, moving parts of Shoah narratives and memories. We help connect these experiences and stories to the rest of our world's history and contemporary society. We saw evidence of this throughout the course of this week, for instance in the Rwandan Genocide memorial at Père-Lachaise Cemetery and the plaque for the individuals burned for being gay. This trip reminded us that we have the job of "seeing these spaces" and becoming the links in the spatial field of memory.
- **"Martyrdom":** Another ongoing question that wasn't quite answered is related to the use of the word "martyr." Some plaques/memorials did identify Jews as martyrs; others did not because of the connotation of willing sacrifice that it carries. We briefly discussed this issue and how it could be resolved in the future.

- **Intersectionality of Victims:** The Shoah touched millions of people, and continues to do so today. Remembering that there is more than one type of victim and that a variety of factors (for example: social class, sexual orientation, gender, age and nationality) influenced who was impacted by this tragedy is critical to our pedagogy. Finding the space to acknowledge each of these individuals is essential, and will remain a challenge for years to come if we do not continue to work towards doing so.
- **Impact of the Past on the Present, the "Ever-Present Past:"** Certain aspects of our trip emphasized how much the past in general as well as specifically in regard to the Shoah influences the present. Conversely, the present can inform us about the past. The wreath at Mont-Valérien from the German ambassador symbolizing the strong Franco-German postwar partnership was an image that stuck with us in particular. We almost unanimously agreed it symbolized the concept that to understand the past is to understand the present.
- **Memorialization:** Our trip to Drancy in particular struck a chord with several people. The juxtaposition of kids playing soccer outside two major monuments and a museum dedicated to the Shoah symbolized how history continues to collide with our present world in ways that we should pay attention to. This again reiterated the idea that the present is shaped in part by our past, whether we want it to or not.

To conclude, we wish to note that even with these unique, individual takeaways, there were parallels between each of her/his individual experiences. Even though each of us experienced this trip in her/his own way, we all agreed that there were certain universal elements that exemplify how this trip shaped our study of the Holocaust, and will continue to do so. Three major themes emerged in our discussion:

- ***"Il faut le savoir:"*** While the Shoah is very much a part of French history, it was also clear to many of us that we had to know what we were looking for in order to understand it. The plaques, memorials, and other sites throughout the city are not always prominent or well-known; we had the benefit of studying them and their context, and as a result could both identify and contextualize their importance. It begs the question as to how we can continue to remember and teach if comprehension also relies on a pre-existing knowledge base.
- **Overwhelming Emotion:** This trip was emotionally draining and overwhelming at times. Many of us discussed how easy it is to oversimplify tragedies like this, and to overlook each of the small details that together make up the narrative of the Shoah. Each of us agreed that speaking to survivors and visiting these sites was difficult at times, but entirely worth it. Getting to walk through the streets of Paris and connect what we had only read on textbook pages to what we were experiencing was the chance of a lifetime.
- **Responsibility:** One of our classmates commented that the survivors we met never tried to make us feel lesser or scared; they simply told their stories and recounted how lives were lost or destroyed. In this way, they very much became a symbol of living, and fighting the good fight in the aftermath of unspeakable tragedy. Everyone in the room would agree that she/he walked away with a new understanding of herself/himself as a memory transmitter.

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As we were concluding our discussion, Dr. Silverman asked us to consider how we would move forward and carry the experiences of the past week with us in order to transmit the memories of the Shoah. Our answers varied, but each was characterized by a shared motivation,

and dedication to this newfound responsibility. In reflecting upon this past week, and in particular our final thoughts as described above, the opportunity to step outside the classroom allowed each of us to fully apply her/his knowledge to a real life world not filled with worksheets and reaction papers. We returned from France a couple of pounds heavier, a bit more jet lagged, and without a doubt more committed to sharing the stories and knowledge entrusted to us by survivors – throughout the rest of this semester and beyond.

Our group after falafel dinner in the Marais with the actor and filmmaker David Drach, who plays both himself and his father in his father Michel Drach's 1974 film, *Les Violons du bal,* which depicts the family's struggles as Jews in France under the Occupation.

Afterword: The Necessary Work of Remembrance

Morgane Haesen

As several students' journal entries indicate, the thought-provoking question from Jean Cayrol's screenplay for the film *Night and Fog* – "is it in vain that we try to remember?" – lingered in the background of our class and trip discussions. While the answer was always a resounding "no," identifying and articulating the justification of our answer proved more difficult than we imagined and contributed to the question's persistence in our conversations. Before we can ask ourselves about its efficacy or futility, what does remembering even entail? What stakes are at play when we study the memory of the Shoah through literature and film? What are our own obstacles to understanding the memory of the Shoah?

Historians Richard Terdiman and Michael Rothberg have theorized memory and remembrance as the past made present.[4] This concept implies that remembering is a form of work, an active engagement with history. This journal reflects the students' work of remembrance through their assiduous engagement with the history and the memory of the Shoah. As the entries above recall, in class we thoroughly studied activists and historians' work – such as Serge Klarsfeld's and Susan Zuccotti's – on the Shoah.[5] We analyzed various critically acclaimed films such as Alain Renais' *Night and Fog* (1955) and Michel Drach's *Les Violons du Bal* (1974). We shared our impressions of first-hand accounts such as Hélène Berr's diary and we debated our interpretations of literary works such as Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder*.[6] On the trip, in the style of Michel de Certeau, we got to know and feel the narrow streets of the Marais

[4] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[5] Serge Klarsfeld, *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial,* tr. Glorianne Depondt, Howard M. Epstein and Magda Bogin (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
[6] Hélène Berr, *Journal of Hélène Berr,* tr. David Bellos (Berkely: University of California Press, 2008); Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder*, tr. Joanna Kilmartin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

and experience the evocative journey from the city center to Drancy. We had the privilege to not only meet but also lengthily exchange with several survivors of the Shoah. We learned about and met other persecuted groups and individuals such as Resistance fighters and LGBTQ deportees. We dissected contemporary representations of the Shoah embodied by monuments and narrated by museums. In short, in the figurative and literal footsteps of Professor Silverman who has taught and organized this embedded course several times throughout her career at Penn State, we all became "passeurs et passeuses de mémoire" - oral/living historians.

By the end of the semester and after our trip to France, we all – Professor Silverman and myself, the graduate intern for the class, included – had listened and learned from others, and had respectfully challenged and critiqued each other in productive and meaningful dialogue. Warned of the rise of hate in our societies and called to action by Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor Ginette Kolinka – "La haine! La haine! Tout cela a commencé par la haine" ("Hate! Hate! All of it started with hate!") – we examined and reflected on today's societal issues such as incidences of anti-Semitism and hate crimes, while discussing the possible pedagogical tools and social actions to combat these issues. As evinced by our classroom discussions, experiences in Paris, and the entries in this journal, we all furthered and nuanced our critical stance and a sense of justice regarding the history and memory of the Shoah in France, as well as the Shoah's repercussions in our own contemporary communities.

Indeed, it is not in vain that we try to remember. The multitude of informed and engaged perspectives that result from each individual's act of remembering, perspectives which dialogue in meaningful and necessary ways, is precisely the reason we do try to remember.