

## CENOTAPHS AND CYPRESS TREES: COMMEMORATING THE CITIZEN- SOLDIER IN THE YEAR II

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**Abstract**—Much of the scholarship on commemoration and collective memory has identified World War I as the decisive event in the making of ‘modern memory’ in Western Europe. However, this article contends that many of the cultural practices that historians have singled out as specific to the twentieth century, the commemoration of the common soldier, the erection of *monuments aux morts* inscribed with the names of the dead and the honouring of unknown soldiers, had already emerged during the Revolutionary wars of the 1790s, and more particularly, during the Revolution’s most ‘democratic’ phase, the Terror. By examining the evolution of these commemorative practices within the Jacobin club network in 1793 and 1794, this essay explores the interaction between the Revolutionary politics of mass mobilization and the customary culture of commemoration and argues that the ‘modern’ culture of memory may not be quite as modern as historians assume.

In November 1793 the popular society of Châteaudun in the Eure-et-Loir dispatched a petition to the National Convention. For too long, the *sociétaires* insisted, glory had been the preserve of the victorious general and it was high time that the common soldier received his share of the honours of war along with its risks.<sup>1</sup> To this end, they proposed that every commune in the Republic should raise some form of memorial, though they did not specify what, in honour of the men who had given their lives for liberty. In one sense, this petition seems little more than an amalgam of two of the Jacobin clubs’ abiding obsessions: their fixation with military matters and their preoccupation with propaganda. Like the collections of boots, bandages and saltpetre that formed such a staple of *sociétaire* activity throughout the Terror, and the club’s campaign to recruit and equip a contingent of Jacobin cavalrymen, Châteaudun’s call for cenotaphs was very much in keeping with the crusading *civisme* of the Year II.<sup>2</sup> Yet, if the *clubistes*’ concerns conformed to type, their proposal went well beyond merely undoing an affront to equality or easing the recruiting officer’s task. On the contrary, Châteaudun’s petitioners were angry and their appeal was unusually

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<sup>1</sup> A[rchives] N[ationales] F17a 1007, no. 1217, ‘Adresse de la société populaire de Châteaudun ... 16 brumaire an II’.

<sup>2</sup> M. Kennedy, ‘Jacobin cavalrymen’, *Fr Hist Stud*, 17 (1992), 683.

bitter for they spoke in the name of outraged decency as well as offended idealism. Imagining the ghosts of fallen soldiers crying out ‘from the depths of their tombs’, the *clubistes* heard ‘the plaintive voices’ of the dead accuse the Republic of a cruel neglect: ‘Our names are no longer known, there is no memorial to remind our fellow citizens: must our death be eternal?’ In order to appease those restless shades, Châteaudun’s Jacobins insisted that each town’s monument should be inscribed with the names of ‘those who had died defending the Republic’. The Convention awarded Châteaudun’s petition a ‘mention honorable’, referred it to committee and the matter was never heard of again.<sup>3</sup>

The Convention never implemented Châteaudun’s suggestion, any more than it had acted on a very similar letter it received a few weeks earlier when the *citoyenne* Boulliand, a Parisian widow, presented her plans for a war memorial to the Committee of Public Safety. The design in question is a clumsily written, crudely illustrated, description of the *Place de la Révolution* transformed into a garden of remembrance dedicated to ‘those heroes who had died for the cause of freedom’.<sup>4</sup> In many respects, Mme Boulliand’s blueprint is utterly unremarkable. As proof of her political orthodoxy statues of the Montagnard martyrs, Lapeletier and Marat, figure prominently in her plan and the poplars that dot her design were a familiar feature of the eighteenth-century’s architecture of death. The focal point of Mme Boulliand’s garden is, however, different. At its centre, a statue of *Liberté* rises above the trees with, at its base, an urn bearing the remains of an unknown soldier who has died in defence of freedom. Seven columns stand around this statue, each one engraved with the names of those who ‘spilled their blood in defending freedom’. It was a simple enough plan, and the expense, she insisted, would not be great. Stone would suffice for the statuary; bronze, after all, had more urgent uses in the Year II, and her own rough sketch could be forwarded to ‘the celebrated artist David’ to put the finishing touches in place. He never did.

## I

A call for memorials bearing the names of the nation’s dead and a design for a monument honouring an unknown soldier at one end of the Champs-Élysées: both issued in the midst of a European war of unprecedented intensity, a war that would eventually see one-third of all adult Frenchmen enrolled in the army and end with over a million French dead.<sup>5</sup> The parallels seem obvious. And yet, even the most cursory glance at the immense literature on the commemoration of the Great War’s dead leaves one with the very clear impression that these two petitions should, perhaps even could, never have been written. Indeed, for most

<sup>3</sup> *A[rchives] P[arlementaires], Recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises* (Paris, 1867–), lxxx, 139.

<sup>4</sup> AN F13 207, Citoyenne veuve Boulliand to the Committee of Public Safety, 26 vendémiaire II.

<sup>5</sup> A. Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford, 1989), p. 20; A. Corvisier, ‘La mort du soldat depuis la fin du Moyen Âge’, *Rev Hist*, 515 (1975), 16.

historians of 'modern memory', the concerns these letters express belong more properly to the twentieth century, the 'era of the common soldier's name' to borrow Thomas Laqueur's phrase, the era of the *monument aux morts* in every village in France and the Unknown Soldier entombed under the Arc de Triomphe.<sup>6</sup> According to this view, World War I represents an extraordinary watershed in Western European commemorative culture, a caesura between a largely undifferentiated early modern era where only an elite of monarchs, generals and great statesmen were ever honoured with state funerals and statues and a modernity where the great mass of soldiers and civilians finally forced their way into the politics of collective memory.

There are, of course, occasional exceptions to this consensus. Jay Winter's work on the Great War presents a much more nuanced picture than most, while a handful of scholars have suggested that the commemoration of the Franco-Prussian war anticipated some of these changes.<sup>7</sup> However, for most historians of memory, the names engraved on Lutyens' Monument to the Missing at Thiepval, the vast ossuary at Douaumont, and the massive military cemeteries scattered across Flanders all stand in stark contrast to the absence of any similar memorials at Malplaquet, Fontenoy or Waterloo. Accordingly, Daniel Sherman's study of remembrance in the interwar years insists that 'modern commemoration, with the listing of names as its central practice, originates in the aftermath of World War I', while Antoine Prost has ruled out any comparison between the memorials that appeared after 1870–71 and those built after 'the greatest' of all wars.<sup>8</sup> More emphatically still, Avner Ben-Amos has argued that 'the concept of the Unknown Soldier could come into being only as a result of modern warfare': a modernity he defines in peculiarly twentieth-century terms as a consequence of the 'democratization' and 'brutalization of war' combined with the 'popular cult of the dead' that emerged around cemeteries like Père Lachaise over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, this analysis offers a seemingly sophisticated but ultimately rather uncomplicated account of the making of modern memory in which the nineteenth-century's sentimental and increasingly secularized cult of the dead,

<sup>6</sup> P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975); T. Laqueur, 'Names, bodies and the anxiety of erasure', in *The Social and Political Body*, eds T. Schatzki and W. Natter (New York, 1996), p. 123.

<sup>7</sup> J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995); G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990). On 1870–1871: D. G. Troyansky, 'Monumental politics: national history and local memory in French monuments aux morts in the department of the Aisne since 1870', *Fr Hist Stud*, 15 (1987), 121–41; A. Becker, 'Monuments aux morts après la guerre de sécession et la guerre de 1870–1: un legs de la guerre nationale', *Guerres Mondiales Conflits Contemp*, 162 (1992), 23–40; K. Varley, 'Under the shadow of defeat: the State and the commemoration of the Franco-Prussian War, 1871–1914', *Fr Hist*, 16 (2002), 323–44.

<sup>8</sup> D. Sherman, 'Bodies and names: the emergence of commemoration in interwar France', *Am Hist Rev*, 103 (1998), 444. For the claim that the memorials that appeared after these two conflicts are 'très différents': A. Prost, 'Les monuments aux morts: culte républicain? Culte civique? Culte patriotique?', in *Les lieux de mémoire*, ed. P. Nora, 3 vols (Paris, 1997 edn), i, 200.

<sup>9</sup> A. Ben-Amos, *Funerals, Politics, and Memory in Modern France* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 215–16.

the Third Republic's 'statuomanie' and the sheer scale of the carnage of 1914-18 all combined to produce a real rupture in the ways Western Europeans commemorated their casualties of war.<sup>10</sup> Laqueur's analysis of this rupture is a little more imaginative, and his emphasis on the heightened sense of individual identity fostered by nineteenth-century fiction adds a novel dimension to the discussion, but even so, the argument remains essentially the same.<sup>11</sup> In the apparent absence of any similar sites of memory from earlier conflicts, he assumes that the naming of the dead and the very idea of an Unknown Soldier constitute 'a distinctly twentieth-century constellation of sensibilities and practices', the emergence of which, conveniently enough, can be dated to January 1915.<sup>12</sup> Such precision might give pause for thought, but the sheer self-confidence of Laqueur's claim is representative enough. Indeed, he probably speaks for most twentieth-century historians when he concludes that 'Until our time, "none else of name" as the herald after the battle of Agincourt intoned in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, was an acceptable response to mass death.'<sup>13</sup>

## II

So for the five centuries between 1415 and 1915, 'none else of name' remained an acceptable response to the common soldier's death. Well, it was evidently not acceptable to the Jacobins of Châteaudun in 1793. Nor, indeed, was it acceptable in October 1792 when Jacques-Louis David devoted his maiden speech in the National Convention to demanding the erection of a massive granite monument, 'either a pyramid or an obelisk', bearing the names 'inscribed in bronze' of all those who had died during the defence of Lille and Thionville.<sup>14</sup> Three weeks later, as news of the battle of Jemappes reached Paris, Bertrand Barère put a similar proposal before the Convention. Responding to Jean Debry's suggestion that the Austrians' defeat outside Mons be celebrated with a national festival, Barère indignantly reminded his colleagues that victory had come at a heavy price: '300 Frenchmen have left widows and orphans in our midst and we are talking about celebrations! Let us talk instead about a funeral monument and a public oration for our saviours.'<sup>15</sup> In 1792 these appeals went unanswered, but as the war continued and the casualty figures mounted, such calls became increasingly common. From the Jacobins of Verdun's terse demand that the names of the dead be engraved on columns 'in every commune' in France, to Alexandre Pochet's rather more extravagant design for an amphitheatre adorned with obelisks 'to honour those Warriors who have died defending freedom',

<sup>10</sup> M. Agulhon, 'La "statuomanie" et l'histoire', in idem, *L'histoire vagabonde*, 2 vols (Paris, 1988), i. 135-85.

<sup>11</sup> Laqueur, 'Names, bodies and the anxiety of erasure', p. 136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 123. For the same argument: T. Laqueur, 'Memory and naming in the Great War', *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. J. R. Gillis (Princeton, 1994), pp. 150-67.

<sup>13</sup> Laqueur, 'Names, bodies and the anxiety of erasure', p. 127.

<sup>14</sup> *AP*, lii. 687.

<sup>15</sup> M. J. Guillaume (ed.), *Procès-verbal du Comité d'Instruction Publique*, 7 vols (Paris, 1889), i. 49.

calls for the commemoration of ordinary soldiers were heard throughout the Terror.<sup>16</sup> Finally, during the great *concoures* of Floréal Year II, the Committee of Public Safety responded with its own variation on this theme, a contest for a black marble cenotaph 'in honour of the warriors who died for the patrie' to be raised in the recently completed Panthéon Français.<sup>17</sup>

The problem, of course, with all these plans is that they remained just that, ambitious but unrealized plans. Even the Convention's own initiative, the Panthéon's black marble cenotaph, came to nothing after Thermidor intervened to ensure that it, like most of Floréal's other projects, was abandoned in Prairial Year III.<sup>18</sup> With the reaction in full swing that spring, the designs that had been submitted for this cenotaph had, quite simply, been overtaken by events, but the Convention's earlier inaction was due to a more complex mix of political and cultural considerations. In purely political terms, the line army, with its foreign regiments, elitist officer corps and even more aristocratic ethos, had been suspect in Revolutionary circles ever since the Royal-Allemand regiment had charged the Parisian crowds on 12 July 1789. Félix Faulcon's revulsion on encountering these 'ferocious foreigners', these 'barbarians', captured the mood of most civilians that summer and this unease endured long after the fall of the Bastille.<sup>19</sup> 'The military spirit', as the *Révolutions de Paris* reminded its readers that September, 'is an oppressive spirit' and, from the regimental dinner that ignited the October days a few weeks later to the widespread mutinies that climaxed in a massacre at Nancy the following year, the state of the army remained a source of concern throughout the early Revolution.<sup>20</sup> At best, it was believed to be in chronic need of reform, at worst it was seen as the cutting edge of the counter-revolution, and despite the patriotic volunteering that followed Varennes and the outbreak of hostilities in 1792, this wariness only intensified once the war began as a steady succession of defeats and desertions fuelled fears that the officer corps was not to be trusted. Such suspicions certainly contributed to the uproar that undid the Legislative Assembly's plans to commemorate General Dillon in June 1792, and they remained in place until a combination of aristocratic emigration, political purges and the *levée en masse* culminated in the creation of a citizen army over the course of the Terror.<sup>21</sup>

There were, then, significant political reasons for the Convention's apparent lack of enthusiasm for David's initiative in 1792, but the deputies' inaction may have owed as much to cultural conditioning as it did to any political preconceptions. Heirs to an

<sup>16</sup> AP, lxxv. 510 and AN F1cI 84, f. 2701, A. Pochet, 'Projet pour l'institution des fêtes nationales'.

<sup>17</sup> Guillaume (ed.), *Procès-verbal*, iv. 250.

<sup>18</sup> AN F17 1057, no. 3. *Extrait du Procès-verbal du Jury des Arts ou Rapport fait au Comité d'Instruction Publique sur les prix que le Jury a décernés aux ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture et Architecture soumis à son jugement ... 21 prairial III.*

<sup>19</sup> F. Faulcon, *Correspondance, 1770-1789*, ed. G. Debien, *Archives Historiques du Poitou*, 51 (1939), 53.

<sup>20</sup> *Révolutions de Paris*, 11, 26 Sept. 1789, p. 27. On attitudes towards the army during the early Revolution: J.-P. Bertaud, *La Révolution armée: les soldats-citoyens et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1979); T. C. W. Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802* (London, 1996); R. Blaufarb, *The French Army 1750-1820: Careers, Talents, Merit* (Manchester, 2002); A. Forrest, *The Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham, NC, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> AP, xlv. 37-48, for the heated debate following Carnot l'ainé's call for a memorial to Dillon.

enlightened tradition that repeatedly denounced 'the mistaken glory of conquest' as a perversion of true patriotism and dismissed the courage of the common soldier as 'a type of wild and uncivilized heroism', the *conventionnels* had been raised in a cultural climate in which conflict was no longer something to celebrate.<sup>22</sup> Condemnations of armed conflict echoed across the eighteenth century from Fénelon's critique of warfare as 'the shame of humankind' at the turn of the century, and the abbé de Saint-Pierre's vision of 'a perpetual peace', to the *Encyclopédiste* onslaught on war as a scourge visited upon Europe by rapacious despots:

War stifles the voice of nature, justice, religion and humanity. It only engenders brigandage and crime; it marches hand in hand with dread, famine and desolation; it breaks the hearts of mothers, wives and children; it ravages the countryside, depopulates whole provinces and reduces cities to dust.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, for most enlightened authors and, one presumes, for many of their readers as well, martial exploits were only redeemed, if at all, by other, more pacific attributes: the philosophic reflection of La Harpe's *Catinat*, the persecuted integrity of Marmontel's *Bélisaire*, or the 'enlightened' virtue of Thomas *Jumonville*.<sup>24</sup>

Inevitably, this opprobrium was not universal, and some, inspired by Rousseau, saw martial virtue as a force for moral regeneration, but its influence was widespread nevertheless, especially in the visual arts where the disorder of war was increasingly seen, as Prendergast has argued, as 'incompatible with the "dignity" that was supposed to characterize the elevated and elevating arts'.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, by the mid-1760s, even courtiers like Charles-Nicolas Cochin appear to have internalized this all-encompassing critique and reorientated the direction of royal artistic commissions accordingly: 'We have mightily extolled military activity, which only contributes to the destruction of humankind; is it not reasonable, now and again, to highlight actions full of generosity and humanity which have spread happiness among the people?'<sup>26</sup> Where both royal patronage and public opinion led, most artists sensibly followed, and despite a brief revival of interest in the wake of the American war, battle scenes had all but disappeared from the Salon on the eve of the Revolution. It might be an extreme example of the Enlightenment's attitude towards the armed forces, but Voltaire's blunt dismissal of the common soldiery as 'murderers' cast a long shadow across the eighteenth century and, in the early stages of the war at least, this weighed against the commemoration of the Revolution's men at arms.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Marmontel, 'Gloire', in *Encyclopédie*, vii. 718; A.-L. Thomas, *Essai sur les éloges*, in *Œuvres de Thomas*, 2 vols (Paris, 1819 edn), i. 225.

<sup>23</sup> Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, 2 vols (Paris, 1717 edn), i. 230; De Jaucourt, 'Guerre', in *Encyclopédie*, vii. 995. For an interesting recent account of pacifism and eighteenth-century public opinion: D. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as we know it* (New York, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> A.-L. Thomas, *Jumonville, poème par M. Thomas ...* (Paris, 1759), p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> C. Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau* (Oxford, 1997), p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in J. Locquin, *La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785* (Paris, 1912), p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique* (Geneva, 1764 edn), p. 210.

There had been scant place for the celebration of conflict in the enlightened public sphere, and there was scarcely anymore scope for militarism in the National Assembly that renounced all wars of conquest in May 1790.<sup>28</sup> Obviously, once war got under way in 1792, most deputies overcame these reservations quickly enough and, by the summer of 1794, Barère's distaste for 'celebrations of massacres' had ceded to his anxiety to make political capital out of the patriotic self-sacrifice of Republican soldiers and sailors.<sup>29</sup> And yet, aside from that never-built cenotaph in the Panthéon, this anxiety never translated into monumental form anymore than it ever put a name to the anonymous ciphers the *conventionnels* extolled so enthusiastically in their speeches and victory celebrations. Indeed, for all their willingness to exploit the propaganda potential of the troops in print and pageantry, many deputies appear to have shared Robespierre's conviction that, in comparison to those who had died fighting tyranny at the Tuileries, 'those heroes who lose their lives combating foreign enemies only occupy the second rank'.<sup>30</sup>

Certainly, there were individuals who transcended this odd hierarchy of heroism, and no one promoted the memory of the boy martyrs, Joseph Bara and Agricole Viala, more ardently than the Incorruptible himself. So too, a few especially edifying soldiers' exploits, and even more inspiring last words, were recorded in the Convention's chief propaganda publication, the widely distributed *Recueil des Actions Héroïques et Civiques des Républicains Français*.<sup>31</sup> However, these deaths were the exemplary exceptions rather than the more mundane rule of battlefield mortality, and in the main, the *conventionnels*, like their predecessors in the National Assembly, showed a much greater enthusiasm for the Revolution's *Grands Hommes*, its martyred politicians and the *philosophes* they perceived to be the Republic's founding fathers, than they ever did for its common soldiers. For all their assertions that 'the sans-culottes represented true genius', the men of the Year II remained the heirs to an ancien régime that had honoured the extraordinary but overlooked the everyday, the undistinguished.<sup>32</sup> Even if this intellectual inheritance had been tempered by an Enlightenment that privileged philosophic virtue over martial valour, commemoration nevertheless remained the preserve of an exemplary elite.<sup>33</sup>

A variety of political and cultural considerations can be cited to explain the Convention's failure to raise Châteaudun's cenotaphs or honour the widow Boulliard's Unknown Soldier. In the end, however, the reasons for this failure were probably more prosaic. Put simply, such schemes were creditable, but in

<sup>28</sup> AP, xv. 651–62.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., lii. 330. By way of contrast: B. Barère, *Rapport fait au nom du Comité du Salut Public sur l'héroïsme des Républicains montant le vaisseau le Vengeur, le 21 messidor an II* (Paris, an II).

<sup>30</sup> *Le Défenseur de la Constitution*, 12, p. 367.

<sup>31</sup> For Bara, see *A[n]cien M[on]iteur*, 100, 10 nivôse II, 81. According to Thibaudeau, the *Recueil* was designed to be both 'une occasion journalière d'émulation et ... un monument glorieux': *Rapport au nom du Comité d'Instruction Publique sur la rédaction du recueil des actions héroïques des Républicains Français* (Paris, an II), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> H. Grégoire, *Rapport ... présenté au nom du Comité d'Instruction Publique à la séance du 8 août* (Paris, 1793), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> For the cultural background to the Revolutionary cult of *Grands Hommes* and its political implications: J. Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead in Revolutionary France: Revolution and Remembrance 1789–1799* (Cambridge, 2007).

1793 and for much of 1794, there were always more pressing demands on the authorities' attention. Confronting invading armies on four fronts, a civil war in the West and a revolt against the Convention across half a dozen major cities, most deputies were probably more concerned with simply conducting the war than commemorating its casualties. Admittedly, they were willing to honour the troops when this could be seen to contribute to the cultural mobilization of the nation in arms, especially if this could be accomplished on the cheap, but with the Republic's survival at stake, cenotaphs and gardens of remembrance were a luxury that a *patrie* that was perpetually *en danger* could ill afford. Years later, Antoine Thibaudeau recalled this extraordinary crisis and reflected on its legacy of unbuilt statues and unraised monuments:

Since the outbreak of war, before and after the 9 Thermidor, we had plenty of other things to do ... The rapid train of events, the continual clash of party strife, the instability of government and the cost of war did not leave us either the time to think about creating fine monuments, nor the means to erect lasting ones.<sup>34</sup>

Thibaudeau's reasons sound like so many rationalizations, but they still ring true. Money, and above all, time, the Revolution never had enough of either and, in this respect, the contrast between the Revolutionary war and its twentieth-century counterparts could not be more marked. Whereas the carnage of 1914–18 was undoubtedly catastrophic, it was contained, in chronological terms at least, and the process of commemoration could begin while the memories of the dead still held meaning to those they left behind. Just as importantly, World War I left the Third Republic intact, unashamed of the victory it had won and more than willing to honour the men who had secured it. By contrast, the Revolution unleashed a war that would not end: a war that engulfed an entire generation and consumed every available resource, a war that only ended with a Restoration dedicated to putting the Revolutionary past behind it, a war, in short, that afforded no respite to remember.

So, in the absence of anything more concrete than the two petitions with which we began, it would seem that the scholarly consensus is correct. In honouring its soldiers, when it honoured them at all, as an 'anonymous mass', the French Revolution contributed little to the creation of a modern commemorative culture and 'the era of the common soldier's name' would only begin with the mass culture of the twentieth century and the mechanization of modern warfare.<sup>35</sup> Yet, if we look beyond the Convention and its failure to commemorate the Republic's war dead, a quite different, and in many ways, recognizably modern culture of commemoration comes into view. It is a culture in which cenotaphs were built, ordinary soldiers honoured and unknown casualties of war commemorated and that culture emerged, not in the Convention or its committees, but in Jacobin clubs and *sociétés populaires* throughout France.

<sup>34</sup> A.-C. Thibaudeau, *Mémoires sur la Convention et le Directoire*, 2 vols (Paris, 1824), i. 118.

<sup>35</sup> Ben-Amos, *Funerals, Politics, and Memory*, p. 50.

## III

Reims' *société populaire* was one of the first to raise a memorial to the Revolution's war dead. In May 1793 as details of the first battalion of the Marne's losses during the fighting around Valenciennes reached Reims, Bastien-Tonus, constitutional cleric turned Jacobin journalist, began compiling a list of the city's fallen.<sup>36</sup> For the moment, Bastien's list was merely intended for publication in his newspaper, the *Manuel du Citoyen*, but a few weeks later one of his fellow Jacobins, Jean-Jacques Ranxin, took the enumeration of Reims' war dead a step further and called on the club to raise a monument 'to the memory of our brothers, who have died defending the patrie' in the city centre.<sup>37</sup> Ranxin's proposal was rapturously received and after a brief debate on the mechanics of the matter the club agreed to set about building a memorial bearing the names of the dead upon the pedestal that had until recently borne Pigalle's statue of Louis XV on the former Place Royale. A committee was immediately appointed to liaise with the municipality on the project and in the weeks that followed, the club was inundated with letters of support, from both soldiers recounting 'the avid impression' the decision had made in the ranks and their families expressing identical feelings from the home front.<sup>38</sup> Donations to help raise the memorial arrived too, albeit less abundantly than the club had anticipated, and by early August, the club's pyramid was in place, ready to be unveiled during the city's *fête de la Réunion*.

Elsewhere across the Republic, the first anniversary of the monarchy's overthrow on 10 August was celebrated in a carnival atmosphere, but in Reims, the celebrations gave way to solemnity as an immense cavalcade wound its way through the city to the pyramid on the renamed Place Nationale. Led by eight battalions of the city's National Guards and with the *sociétaires*, sections and local authorities all in attendance, it was an imposing display of Revolutionary zeal, but in the midst of so many banners and badges of office, the cortège's centrepiece struck a more sombre note. With the families of the dead dressed in mourning around it, 'a funeral urn, draped with crêpe' bearing 'the names of the intrepid defenders of the Patrie' was carried slowly through the streets in a haze of incense and cannon smoke.<sup>39</sup> With the city's church bells pealing out a death knell in accompaniment, it was, witnesses agreed, a particularly solemn spectacle, and when the procession finally came to a halt before the new memorial, the church bells fell silent and the speeches, inevitably, began.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Manuel du Citoyen*, 16, 8 May 1793, p. 128.

<sup>37</sup> A[rchives] M[unicipales] Reims, FR R13, Registres de la Société Populaire et Régénérée de Reims, 7 July 1793.

<sup>38</sup> AM Reims, FR R218, f. 37 and FR R14, Délibérations du Conseil Général, 15 and 30 July and 4 Aug. 1793.

<sup>39</sup> *Ordre de la Marche de la Fête Civique qui aura lieu à Reims le 10 Août 1793, 2e [année] de la République Française une et indivisible, arrêté par les citoyens administrateurs du district, les membres du conseil général de la commune et propose par la société populaire de Reims* (Reims, 1793), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Manuel du Citoyen*, 44, 14 Aug. 1793, pp. 355-6.

They were, for a Revolutionary festival, surprisingly short affairs and, after the by-now customary commonplaces about *liberté* and *la patrie* had been said, the mayor read out the 'sacred names' of the dead and promised their families that those names would live for evermore.<sup>41</sup>

Twenty-seven Rémois had died by that day, but as more and more men joined the colours after the *levée en masse* was decreed a fortnight later, so the numbers of the dead grew and their commemoration continued to occupy Reims' revolutionaries. Predictably enough, a stop at the pyramid on the Place Nationale occupied pride of place along the route of the city's subsequent *fêtes civiques*, while tributes to the fallen, 'funeral urns', commemorative banners and cypress branches, along with deputations of the widowed and wounded featured prominently in Reims' civic ceremonies throughout the Year II.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps more tellingly, the remembrance of the city's war dead was not confined to the ceremonial sphere and, having already conceived this first, very public commemoration, the Jacobins soon brought the remembrance of the citizen-soldier into their own meeting hall as well. With the war effort escalating and military matters occupying ever more of their time, Reims' Jacobins learnt of the first death from within their own ranks in Floréal. News of Lieutenant Deligny's death during the retreat from Arlon on 27 Germinal—a mortar shell had blown his leg off and he died within hours—provoked a host of emotional tributes at the end of which the *sociétaires* resolved to inscribe his name, along with the 'precious list' of all of the city's war dead, in letters of gold on a roll of honour in their meeting hall.<sup>43</sup> With the 'sacred names' of the fallen engraved on the most prominent monument still standing in the city and the list inscribed in the city's Jacobin club, Reims' war dead were anything but anonymous, anything but forgotten.

As one of the earliest and most elaborate of its kind, Reims' *monument aux morts* was unusual in many respects, but as the Year II progressed and bad news began to arrive from the front in towns and villages throughout the Republic, so similar monuments and identical lists began to appear on streets and squares across France. In Pluviôse II, Saint-Brieuc's popular society consecrated a 'cenotaph' in memory of the locals who had died in the Vendée the previous year, while in the Drôme a few months later, Tain's *sociétaires* inscribed the names of their dead on a pyramid in the town centre.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the Terror, stone cenotaphs had also appeared in Valence and Vesoul and on Suresnes' Place d'Armes, although such expenditure was often beyond the means of smaller societies.<sup>45</sup> The less affluent clubs, like Artonne's in the Auvergne, had to make

<sup>41</sup> *Discours prononcés par le citoyen Galloteau-Chappron, maire de Reims, le 10 août 1793 ... à la place Nationale, au moment de l'inauguration du monument que la société populaire de Reims y a fait élever ...* (Reims, n.d.), p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Fête Civique en l'honneur de la Raison, provoquée par la société populaire de Reims ... pour le 30 frimaire* (Reims, an II), pp. 3, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Journal des Jacobins de Reims*, 10 floréal II, p. 275 and 18 floréal II, p. 305.

<sup>44</sup> AN F17 1010a, no. 2673; *Journal de la Montagne*, 52, 30 prairial II, p. 424.

<sup>45</sup> Bertaud, *La Révolution armée*, p. 211; E. Boudier, 'Au sujet du monument élevé Place d'Armes en 1793', *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Artistique de Suresnes*, 5 (1933-1934), 212-3.

do with commissioning plaques for their meeting halls, inscribed with ‘the names of those martyrs of liberty to whom the commune had given birth’.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere, even this level of expenditure sometimes proved too much, and many scrambled to make ends meet when it came to raising a memorial. On the outskirts of Paris, Belleville’s ‘obelisk’ was made entirely of wood although, as one observer noted, this did not diminish the ‘witness’ it bore the dead, while the *sociétaires* of tiny Cucuron in the Vaucluse had to settle for a ‘funeral service’ and a tree planted in memory of the locals ‘who had perished at the siege of Toulon’ the previous winter.<sup>47</sup>

Many memorials were raised over the course of the Year II, although few of them were very impressive. Beyond Reims, and the ‘fine statue of liberty’ that presided over the pedestal upon which the names of Auch’s war dead were inscribed ‘in big letters’, most of these monuments were pretty unsophisticated affairs.<sup>48</sup> Cenotaphs or steles with the names of the dead engraved, or even, as in Belleville, merely painted upon them, were the norm, a norm that probably owed more to the desire to make a political point than it did to the asceticism of the eighteenth-century architectural avant-garde. For all that these memorials recall the stark severity of Boullée’s *architecture des ombres*, the simplicity of their design was more often justified by reference to the imagined austerity of the ancients, and the belief that ‘Republicans have no need for pompous and magnificent monuments to honour the deeds of their heroes’, than it was explained by any more modern aesthetic agenda.<sup>49</sup> In the end, however, the thinking behind this symbolic self-restraint may have been more mundane. Having promised to pay for the pyramid on the Place Nationale in July 1793, the problem of finding the funds to finish it dogged Reims’ Jacobins throughout the Year II and the cost of commemoration loomed equally large elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> The constraints of a war economy, like the multiplicity of demands on club finances, afforded little opportunity for either investment or invention in such matters, and most clubs simply cut their commemorative cloth to suit their measure, even if that meant honouring their dead with a wooden cenotaph or cheaper still, a tree. With their limited resources already at full stretch, the *sociétaires* honoured their dead as best they could, with the money and the materials they had to hand. The resulting monuments were often crude, but they were no less capable of inspiring patriotic pride and a genuine ‘feeling of pity’ for all that.<sup>51</sup> In any case, in the midst of a Terror when austerity, both moral and economic, was so emphatically the order of the day, the severity of this commemorative aesthetic was almost a virtue in itself.

<sup>46</sup> F. Martin (ed.), *Les Jacobins au village* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1902), p. 227.

<sup>47</sup> *La Décade Philosophique*, 10, 10 nivôse VII, pp. 55–6; *Journal Républicain de la Commune Sans-Nom, ci-devant Marseille*, 53, 2 pluviôse II, p. 438.

<sup>48</sup> *La Décade Philosophique*, 13, 10 pluviôse VII, p. 243.

<sup>49</sup> *Journal des Jacobins de Reims*, 10 floréal II, p. 275.

<sup>50</sup> AM Reims, FR R13, 7 July 1793; *Journal des Jacobins de Reims*, 18 ventôse II, p. 66 and 18 germinal II, p. 188.

<sup>51</sup> *La Décade Philosophique*, 10, 10 nivôse VII, pp. 55–6.

From planting trees and unveiling cenotaphs to commissioning plaques for their meeting halls and composing laments for their ceremonies, the Jacobins' commemoration of the war dead assumed many guises in the Year II.<sup>52</sup> Yet, if few clubs enjoyed the luxury of being able to conscript a Pigalle plinth to their commemorative cause, even the crudest cenotaphs bore witness to a similar desire to fill the void left by the emblems of the old order in the name of the new régime. In 1792 David had insisted that his memorial to the dead of Lille should be embellished with marble and bronze seized from the royal statues that had been toppled that August, and many *sociétaires* shared his conviction that the 'first monuments erected by the new Republic' should be built with the 'debris' of a discredited ancien régime.<sup>53</sup> In recycling the remains of a royal statue, Reims' Jacobins had applied this agenda to full effect and, not content with simply erasing the emblems of the political past, the unveiling of their memorial was preceded by an *auto-da-fé* of feudal titles as well.<sup>54</sup> Beyond Reims, few towns had royal statues to regenerate but the remnants of the feudal regime were more commonplace and the cenotaph that appeared in Suresnes, for example, replaced the pillar against which convicts had been scourged after sentencing by the seigniorial courts.<sup>55</sup> The physical reminders of feudalism had been a focus for Revolutionary retribution ever since the summer of 1789, but elsewhere in the Year II, the relics of religious 'fanaticism' offered a more obvious, and more immediate, target for symbolic substitution. Just as Marat's bust dislodged saints' statues and crucifixes from squares and street corners throughout France, so an equally iconoclastic agenda almost certainly inspired the decision to place Belleville's 'obelisk' squarely in front of what had once been a parish church, or even, as in Auch, inside it.<sup>56</sup>

These were, of course, practical places to put a monument, for as the widely read *Journal de la Montagne* advised in July 1793, it was imperative that the Revolution's memorials to its martyrs should be 'exposed to all eyes' if they were to achieve the desired effect.<sup>57</sup> To be seen and to inspire was the monument's *raison d'être*, and the same pragmatism that had planted royal and religious statues in the most prominent positions possible under the ancien régime inevitably dictated Republicans' attempts to honour their dead in equally eye-catching style. Verdun's *société populaire* recognized as much in October 1793 when it urged the Convention to provide for the erection of a column bearing the names of the war dead on the 'main square' of every commune in the Republic.<sup>58</sup> However, the choice of where to commemorate the fallen could be as telling as the choice of when or how to do so and in such cases the convenience

<sup>52</sup> AN F1cI 84, no. 1193, the société populaire of Nancy, 'Hymne aux mânes des défenseurs de la liberté', for a typical lament.

<sup>53</sup> *AP*, lii. 687.

<sup>54</sup> *Ordre de la Marche de la Fête Civique* ... p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Boudier, 'Au sujet du monument', 212-3.

<sup>56</sup> *Journal de la Montagne*, 162, 21 brumaire II, p. 1010.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 19 July 1793, p. 277.

<sup>58</sup> *AP*, lxxv. 510.

of an empty pedestal or the centrality of a church square was as politically eloquent as it was purely expedient. Colonizing the civic spaces left vacant by the deposition of royal statues, the dismantling of feudalism and the dechristianization of public life, these sites were carefully selected to make an explicitly ideological statement. In squares and churches across the Republic, commemorating the citizen-soldier and conducting the last rites of the old régime were two sides of the same ceremonial coin.

Having displaced the debris of a despotic past, these cenotaphs and the ceremonies that accompanied their unveiling proclaimed the virtues of the new regime even more insistently. Inherently democratic in their desire to see the universalism of the *levée en masse* translated into commemorative form, these commemorations were also avowedly egalitarian in their anxiety to see every soldier honoured regardless of rank. Echoing the enlightened eulogists' longstanding complaint that previous panegyrists had prostituted their talents before thrones and titles, Châteaudun's *sociétaires* had insisted that all soldiers 'must be equal in the eyes of a grateful patrie' and most of these memorials echoed this demand in their very designs.<sup>59</sup> In its most obvious form, the presence of a list of names inscribed without reference to birth or title, but united by their shared sacrifice, was both an assertion of the 'equality' that now underpinned Republican citizenship and a very unambiguous demonstration of the duties that its defence imposed. This theme was emphasized repeatedly during these inauguration ceremonies, but for some, the cenotaph's very shape was an almost literal expression of Republican ideology itself. Indeed, for the *sociétaires* of Saint-Brieuc, the stark lines of their cenotaph appeared to embody the 'masculine virtue and republican energy' that a nation at war so urgently required.<sup>60</sup> Elsewhere, the symbolic significance of a stele was less obviously graphic but it was no less explicit. Insisting that 'among them [Republicans] everything must be simple and grand at the same time', Reims' revolutionaries saw in the severity of their memorial the embodiment of a particularly self-denying brand of citizenship, an uncompromising civic virtue that took its cue directly from Horace's *Dulce et Decorum est* and willingly embraced death in the name of the *patrie*.<sup>61</sup>

In this very tangible sense, these cenotaphs exemplified the Republican ideal in its most militant form: the *levée en masse*'s ideal of an entire nation mobilized 'in permanent requisition for army service'.<sup>62</sup> Politically engaged and avowedly egalitarian, these commemorations were also aggressively patriotic in the anathemas they hurled against the Republic's adversaries: the 'royalist traitors' and 'overweening priests' of the West and, above all, their 'perfidious' foreign

<sup>59</sup> Thomas, *Essai sur les éloges*, i. 225; 'Adresse de la société populaire de Châteaudun'.

<sup>60</sup> AN F17 1010a, no. 2673, 'Discours funèbre prononcé par le président de la société populaire de Saint-Brieuc, 20 pluviôse an II'.

<sup>61</sup> *Journal des Jacobins de Reims*, 10 floréal II, p. 275. For a reworking of Horace for a Revolutionary audience: J.-J. Ranxin, *Hymne funèbre pour l'inauguration du monument élevé dans la ville de Reims, en l'honneur des hommes libres, morts pour la Patrie, le 10 août 1793* (Reims, 1793).

<sup>62</sup> AP, lxxii. 674-5.

allies.<sup>63</sup> However, if denunciation inevitably played a part in the unveiling of these cenotaphs, their long-term purpose was more constructive than this. For all that these speeches were intended to inspire the present generation with a burning desire for revenge against ‘those Kings who have ganged up against our freedom’, these monuments aimed to address a distant ‘posterity’ as well, to ‘recall to our children the glorious memory of your deeds’.<sup>64</sup> They were inspired by the same certainty that had informed so many designs for edifying civic statuary since 1789, the belief that the urban space was a vast canvas upon which a monument might imprint ‘the sacred glow of love of country’.<sup>65</sup> As urban planners had argued since the Revolution began, these were places where ‘the good father and the sensitive mother’ could lead their son—and it was always a son—and await the inevitable question: ‘Why this stone?’ ‘For you, my son, if you enjoy the good fortune to render a great service to your patrie and to distinguish yourself among those who must live and die for her.’<sup>66</sup> For the Jacobins of the Year II, these cenotaphs were sites of memory and schools of civic virtue combined, and like so many village Panthéons, they were intended both to honour the Republic’s dead and inspire those they left behind.

From displacing the emblems of the old order to proclaiming the principles of the new régime, these monuments served a variety of political purposes. Perhaps more importantly, the emotions that accompanied their unveiling were just as wide ranging, and in this respect, the clubs’ commemorative endeavours were qualitatively quite different from the speeches that honoured the soldiers’ sacrifice in the Convention. With the exception of the handful of representatives who died on mission, few deputies had any direct knowledge of the dead and, while they regularly acclaimed the heroism of fallen soldiers, they rarely mourned them.<sup>67</sup> However, in the towns and villages that raised these memorials, the *clubistes* knew precisely who the dead were. They were local men, friends, neighbours and frequently fellow Jacobins, and as a result their commemoration was a much more complex matter than it ever could be for the *conventionnels*. For them, commemoration was essentially a ceremonial counterpoint to the *levée en masse*: another means towards mobilization and an essentially political concern. In the close-knit world of the small-town *société*, by contrast, these cenotaphs and the ceremonies that took place around them called for consolation as often as they cried ‘to arms’. Collapsing the distinction between the political imperatives of a nation at war and the social, moral and even spiritual obligations of communities in mourning in a way that no other Republican ritual ever could,

<sup>63</sup> *Journal Républicain de la Commune Sans-Nom, ci-devant Marseille*, 53, 2 pluviôse II, p. 438.

<sup>64</sup> *Discours prononcés par le citoyen Galloteau-Chappron*, pp. 3, 4; ‘Adresse de la société populaire de Châteaudun’.

<sup>65</sup> A.-G. Kersaint, *Discours sur les Monuments Publics prononcé au conseil du département de Paris* (Paris, 1792), p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> Barère’s tribute to the crew of the *Vengeur* is typical: ‘Ne plaignons pas les Français composant l’équipage du Vengeur, ne les plaignons pas: ils sont morts pour la patrie’: *Rapport fait au nom du Comité de Salut Public*, p. 5.

these commemorations employed the language of Revolutionary citizenship to full effect, but the emotions and attitudes they expressed, their moral substance in fact, was more firmly rooted in the customary culture, the corporate structures and sociability, of the old regime.

Historians have long recognized the important continuities that exist between the ancien régime's dense network of tradesmen's corporations and religious confraternities and the popular societies of the Year II.<sup>68</sup> Revolutionary ideology rapidly proved inimical to these traditional forms of artisanal and religious sociability, and both had been abolished by the end of August 1792. Yet, just as the popular societies were frequently manned by former *compagnons* and *confrères* and often occupied the latter's chapels after their abolition, so they were also heirs to many of their customs and attitudes. While the clubs' political horizons had clearly expanded beyond the particularism of the *compagnonnage* and the parochialism of the *confrérie*, the fraternal spirit of the brotherhood was common to both, as was the sense of moral community that membership entailed and many of the social and charitable obligations that went with it.<sup>69</sup> Crucially, in this respect, that sense of social solidarity and many of those obligations extended to the grave. As William Sewell has noted, the trade corporations showed a 'seemingly obsessive concern with funerals for their members' while many confraternities existed for no other reason than to preside over the last rites of their own members or the poor of the parish.<sup>70</sup> Obviously, for the *confréries*, this concern was primarily a pious one, but it was not exclusively so, especially for *compagnons* like Jacques Ménétra who, for example, had no difficulty accommodating his outspoken anticlericalism with his punctilious attendance at funeral masses for his fellow tradesmen.<sup>71</sup> Such behaviour might appear inconsistent to scholars accustomed to thinking of secularization as a sharply defined process, but in the corporate world of the *compagnonnage* ensuring that a colleague was buried with due respect was a social and moral duty as much as, perhaps even more than, a religious one. For a former *compagnon* and future *sans-culotte* like Ménétra, a 'decent funeral' was an assertion of individual identity and an expression of social solidarity combined, a ritualized form of recognition that the community of the corporation owed its members and their families regardless of their personal beliefs.

Seen from this perspective, the commemoration of the *citoyen-soldat* was as much a reflection of the traditional moral order of the corporate world so many *sociétaires* had once been part of as it was an expression of Revolutionary ideology. By the Year II, of course, this moral order no longer included any explicit

<sup>68</sup> For example: M. Agulhon, *Pénitents et francs-maçons de l'ancienne Provence* (Paris, 1968); M.-H. Froeschlé-Chopard, 'Pénitents et sociétés populaires du sud-est', *Ann Hist Révol franç*, 267 (1987), 117-57; M. Bée, 'Dans la Normandie, entre Seine et Orne, confrères et citoyens', *Ann Hist Révol franç*, 306 (1996), 601-16.

<sup>69</sup> On these cultural continuities: Froeschlé-Chopard, 'Pénitents et sociétés populaires' in particular.

<sup>70</sup> W. H. Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: the Language of Labour from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 36.

<sup>71</sup> J. Ménétra, *Journal de ma vie*, ed. D. Roche (Paris, 1982), pp. 87, 124.

reference to religious beliefs or rituals. By the time most of these cenotaphs were raised, the dechristianization of public life had effectively broken the link between the conventional Catholic ceremonial of death, the requiem mass, and the commemoration of the Revolution's dead, a link that had done much to define the Revolution's rites of memory up to that point.<sup>72</sup> From the winter of 1793 onwards, however, with the *sociétaires* busy closing churches and celebrating the new cults of Reason and the Supreme Being, there would be precious few repetitions of the requiem mass Limoges' Jacobins had staged in memory of their 'fallen soldiers' in the cathedral of Saint-Etienne in June 1792, although it must be admitted that the 'funeral service' Cucuron's club organized in Nivôse does sound suspiciously traditional.<sup>73</sup> Old habits died hard in the remoter reaches of the Vaucluse, but elsewhere, these commemorations were resolutely, even defiantly, secular affairs. Yet, they were still marked by much the same sense of moral responsibility towards the memory of the dead that had defined the Revolution's earlier rites of memory. The popular society of Bergerac's decision to provide a fitting funeral for any *défenseur de la patrie* who died in their midst is a case in point. This resolution was provoked by the death of an unidentified soldier from the Spanish front in the town's hospital in September 1793 but, more immediately, it was inspired by the realization that his unclaimed body would be unceremoniously bundled into a pauper's grave in the absence of any assistance from the club.<sup>74</sup> In the artisanal world of the *société populaire* where a pauper's funeral marked the last dividing line between respectable poverty and utter destitution, this realization prompted an immediate undertaking to pay for all future funerals of 'our brothers in arms' along with the promise that a delegation from the club would be in attendance for the occasion.

Bergerac's *clubistes* gave their unknown soldier a decent funeral, in part simply because the alternative inspired them with an almost visceral revulsion but also because, in a sense, death had transformed him. In life, he had been an outsider, just another stranger invalided into the club's presence by chance, a worthy case no doubt, but no different from any of the other wounded soldiers who passed through the town's military hospital en route from the front. In death, however, this anonymous corpse had been transfigured; he had become a brother-in-arms, a representative of the thirty-six *sociétaires* who had already answered the call of the *patrie*, and a replacement, a proxy even, for the colleagues the *sociétaires* now feared they would never see buried themselves. Bergerac's first casualty of war was not a local man, but with so many *sociétaires* already enlisted and one recently reported missing in action, he might easily have been, and this realization invested the phrase our brothers in arms with an immediacy that transcended the normal routine of Revolutionary rhetoric. In honouring their unknown outsider, Bergerac's *sociétaires* were not simply

<sup>72</sup> On this theme, see Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead*, pp. 49–87.

<sup>73</sup> A. Fray-Fournier (ed.), *Le club des Jacobins de Limoges, 1790–1795, d'après ses délibérations, sa correspondance et ses journaux* (Limoges, 1903), p. 53.

<sup>74</sup> H. Labroue (ed.), *La société populaire de Bergerac pendant la Révolution* (Paris, 1915), p. 277.

celebrating equality in the abstract or even honouring some intangible ideal of the *patrie*, they were paying their respects in the only way they still could to the first of their own fallen, their ‘fellow citizen Aromagnac’.<sup>75</sup>

Bergerac’s unknown soldier was an everyman, and as such he was honoured both as a symbol for a generation and a stand-in for an absent comrade, but in most of these cases the clubs were commemorating their own in a much more direct sense. Their bodies might be missing, but the names they engraved on their memorials were familiar ones and the family and friends they left behind were still in their midst. Inevitably then, the hope that creating a lasting monument might offer some comfort to the bereaved suffused these ceremonies. The prospect that ‘in reading the name of his son, the elderly father would find consolation and say to himself, “my son bears the sorrow of his compatriots”’ had furnished the sentimental climax to Châteaudun’s petition to the Convention, and this expectation was repeated again and again as these monuments were unveiled.<sup>76</sup> At the inauguration of Saint-Brieuc’s war memorial, for example, the popular society’s president, citizen Huette, devoted the bulk of his address to acclaiming the Republic’s impending victory over the combined forces of royalism and religious fanaticism. However, if ‘the blood of your brothers’ cried out for ‘vengeance’ throughout his speech, this was more than just another rallying cry, and Huette’s speech acknowledged ‘the grief, gratitude ... the outpouring of our hearts’ that had brought a ‘a great gathering of *citoyens* and *citoyennes*’ together for the occasion.<sup>77</sup> The inauguration of Saint-Brieuc’s memorial was an act of mobilization, but it was also a moment for mourning and, with family and friends of the fallen present among the crowd on 20 Pluviôse, the ‘tears’ and ‘sorrow’ that pervaded this ‘touching spectacle’ may well have overshadowed the more obviously propagandist aspects of the ceremony. They certainly existed alongside them because for some of those present Huette’s claim that ‘we have lost our brothers’ was as much a statement of fact as it was an expression of Republican fraternity.

For the *sociétaires* who raised it, and just as importantly, for the crowds that joined them for its unveiling, Saint-Brieuc’s cenotaph constituted, therefore, both a call to arms and a symbol of the community’s sympathy for, and solidarity with, the bereaved, and the same combination of seemingly contradictory sentiments characterized the clubs’ commemoration of the dead *défenseur* throughout the Year II.<sup>78</sup> When news of Dominique Diettmann’s death reached Lunéville’s Jacobins in March 1794, for instance, the club’s first response was to send a delegation offering their sympathy and what support they could to his family before deciding to drape their hall in mourning and prepare an *éloge funèbre* in

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 296. Scarcely a month later, news arrived that Aromagnac had not been killed but captured and imprisoned at Pamplona instead.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Adresse de la société populaire de Châteaudun’. See also, *Discours prononcés par le citoyen Galloteau-Chappron*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> AN F17 1010a, no. 2673, ‘Discours funèbre prononcé par le président de la société populaire de Saint-Brieuc, 20 pluviôse an II’.

<sup>78</sup> For example: *Discours prononcés par le citoyen Galloteau-Chappron*, p. 3.

his memory, and the reaction of Artonne's *clubistes* to the death of Pierre Thiat's son was effectively the same.<sup>79</sup> In other cases, of course, the *clubistes*' concern in commemorating the dead was less with comforting the bereaved than with encouraging enlistment among those who remained behind, but even then, their motives remained mixed. In Prairial II, for example, Tain's Jacobins anticipated that their new memorial would 'increase, if that were possible, the ardour and devotion of the intrepid defenders of the patrie', but even this rather utilitarian rationale was still tempered by the claim that the names it bore had been 'engraved ... in a spirit of love and gratitude'.<sup>80</sup>

The words *amour* and *reconnaissance* are, of course, easily uttered. And yet, in towns and villages where the Revolution's heroes were no longer merely names from the newspapers or portraits etched on cheap prints, the significance of these words should not be lightly dismissed, especially as they frequently translated into a very active concern for the welfare of those left widowed and orphaned by the war. Sometimes, as at Lunéville, this amounted to no more than a club promising to place the orphaned son of a local hero 'under its special protection', but elsewhere, such expressions of symbolic solidarity were accompanied by much more substantial measures of support as the clubs threw themselves into organizing an extraordinary array of schemes to assist the families 'of citizens who have taken up arms to defend the Republic'.<sup>81</sup> From the impromptu whip-round that produced 66 *livres* among Orthez's Jacobins to help a soldier's orphaned son return to his family in Toulouse to the 18,000 *livres* that Bergerac's club collected to assist the families whose men had 'flown to the aid of the patrie', the welfare of the *défenseurs*' dependants occupied the clubs constantly throughout the Terror.<sup>82</sup>

With so many *clubistes* either enlisted themselves or with family members in uniform, these measures probably owed as much to a sense of communal self-help as they did to any more exalted notions of civic duty, but whatever their precise motives, these schemes do attest to the variety of commitments in which the death of a *citoyen-soldat* involved the clubs. A political opportunity, a moral obligation and a social responsibility at one and the same time, the remembrance of the Republic's war dead was, perhaps above all else, a time for a community to come together in sorrow and solidarity. A club's minute book can never fully express what the loss of a local boy meant to its members, but in a village like Artonne, where everybody knew everybody else and where many *clubistes* already had family at the front, the death of Pierre Thiat's son was a genuine

<sup>79</sup> H. Baumont, 'La société populaire de Lunéville, 1793-1795', *Annales de l'Est*, 3 (1889), 371; Martin (ed.), *Les Jacobins du village*, p. 227.

<sup>80</sup> *Journal de la Montagne*, 52, 30 prairial II, p. 424.

<sup>81</sup> Baumont, 'La société populaire de Lunéville', 371; M. Henriot, *Le club des Jacobins de Semur, 1790-1795* (Dijon, 1933), p. 318. For a range of similar initiatives: E. Chardon (ed.), *Cahiers des procès-verbaux des séances de la société populaire de Rouen (1790-1795)* (Rouen, 1909), p. 157; Fray-Fournier, *Le club des Jacobins de Limoges*, pp. 75, 76, 83, 87.

<sup>82</sup> A. Plante (ed.), 'Les Jacobins d'Orthez: livre pour la transcription des délibérations de la Société des Amis de la Constitution réunis au réfectoire des ci-devants Capucins d'Orthez', *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences de Pau*, 29 (1901), 255-6; Labroue (ed.), *La société Populaire de Bergerac*, p. 337.

tragedy and the decision to inscribe his name 'in indelible letters' was a mark of patriotic pride and real respect.<sup>83</sup> However, just as Artonne's Jacobins' first response to the death of Thiat's son was to offer what comfort they could to his father, so the claims of kith and kin frequently took precedence over those of the *patrie*.

## IV

As the sequence of events that followed the arrival of the first casualty reports in Artonne illustrates, the death of a citizen-soldier evoked a complex range of reactions among the Jacobins of the Year II. Artonne's example is, however, revealing in another respect, and this may go some way towards explaining why so many historians seem so confident that this type of commemoration only emerged in the twentieth century. Unlike Reims' pyramid and Saint-Brieuc's cenotaph, Artonne's commemorative plaque was never put in place. Pierre Thiat's son died in Vendémiaire III and, within a matter of weeks, Artonne's Jacobin club had effectively ceased to exist. Like the majority of clubs, it simply stopped meeting that winter, and its final closure the following spring was a mere formality. The collapse of the Jacobin club network early in the Year III called a halt to these spontaneous acts of commemoration, and crucially, it also signalled an end to the celebration of ordinary soldiers like Thiat's son. After Thermidor, there would be no more unprompted initiatives in honour of these unexceptional casualties of war because by the middle of the Year III, there were no clubs left to organize them, and, just as importantly, no political appetite in Paris for honouring such undistinguished heroes.

In theory, the remembrance of 'our brave warriors' remained 'a duty' during the Directory, but as the commemorative initiative passed from the clubs to the Legislative Councils, that duty was progressively stripped of the moral and social resonance it had possessed for the Jacobins of the Year II.<sup>84</sup> Instead, the Republic's rites of memory became the preserve of its political elite, a matter for ministerial instructions, official invitations and state funerals for the select few, dashing young generals like Hoche and Joubert, men to rival Scipio and Turenne, men who merited commemoration on the grounds that, as one minister put it, 'the remains of a single hero produce a thousand more'.<sup>85</sup> In Paris at least, these were extravagant occasions, but for the officials charged with honouring Hoche or Joubert in the provinces, the resulting ceremonies were a shabby reflection of the 'majestic' martial spectacles that took place on the Champ de Mars in the Years VII or VIII.<sup>86</sup> Overrehearsed and underattended, they rarely amounted to

<sup>83</sup> Martin (ed.), *Les Jacobins du village*, p. 227.

<sup>84</sup> F. Daubermesnil, *Rapport sur les honneurs à rendre aux guerriers morts les armes à la main* (Paris, an IV), p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> For a comparison between Hoche and past heroes: *Eloge de Hoche prononcé à Meaux le 30 vendémiaire an 6, lors de la célébration de la pompe funèbre à l'occasion de la mort de ce général, par le citoyen Raoult* (Meaux, an VI); AN F1c1 113, no. 89, 'Le ministre de l'Intérieur aux administrations centrales'.

<sup>86</sup> *La Décade Philosophique*, 20 vendémiaire VI, p. 110.

more than a parade by the local Guardsmen, a few perfunctory speeches and perhaps a banquet for the local bigwigs.<sup>87</sup> Admittedly, a few of the more enterprising local administrations raised makeshift memorials to embellish the afternoon's events in the autumn of the Year VI, but in stark contrast to the *sociétaires'* cenotaphs, these bore only a general's name and made no mention of the men they had led.<sup>88</sup>

Promises were still made, of course, to inscribe the names of the nation's dead on bronze 'books of glory' and yet more *concours* were launched in the Years IV and VII, but these never came to anything.<sup>89</sup> With the clubs closed and the Directory more concerned with exploiting the memory of its generals to bolster its own very uncertain authority, the political will was lacking to translate these promises into reality. In its absence, and the time for 'toadying to the people' was emphatically over from the Year III onwards, the Republican elite casually returned to the old routine of honouring its illustrious generals only to ignore the majority of the nation's dead.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, there could be little place for memorials to men like Lieutenant Deligny in a Directory that showed more interest in the fate of Turenne's tomb than it ever did in the memory of its own men at arms.<sup>91</sup>

After Thermidor, the Republic's rites of memory rapidly reverted to type. So, as the *sociétaires* returned to the 'social obscurity' from which they had so briefly emerged and the *bonnêtes gens* picked up the reins of government once more, what happened to the war memorials that had appeared during the course of the Year II?<sup>92</sup> Its origins may have been unique but the fate of the pyramid on Reims' Place Nationale was typical. Having taken the place of Pigalle's statue of Louis XV in 1793, it was supplanted by a statue of Liberty during the Directory, which was, in turn, replaced by a Consular trophy in 1803 and a great globe surmounted by an Imperial crown in 1809. Finally, on Saint-Louis' day in 1819, a replica of Pigalle's statue was hauled atop that much-abused pedestal and the last trace of the Revolution finally disappeared from the renamed Place Royale.<sup>93</sup> Ironically, Belleville's more modest wooden cenotaph lasted longer. Still standing

<sup>87</sup> For the tenor of these ceremonies and the provincial public's rather underwhelming response to them: AN AD VIII, 19, 'Procès-verbal de la cérémonie funèbre qu'a eu lieu le 30 vendémiaire en exécution de l'arrête du Directoire exécutif du 10 du même mois dans la commune de Valence, chef-lieu du département de la Drôme en mémoire de Charles-Lazare Hoche'; N. Rogue, *Souvenirs et Journal d'un bourgeois d'Evreux, 1740-1830* (Evreux, 1850), p. 126.

<sup>88</sup> For one such memorial: *Détails de la cérémonie funèbre qu'a eu lieu à Mauriac ... le 28 vendémiaire an VI en mémoire de Hoche* (Aurillac, n.d.), p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Daubermesnil, *Rapport*, p. 12. See also P. Benezech, *Appel aux artistes* (Paris, an IV) and J. Eschassériaux et al., *Projet de résolution sur les honneurs à rendre aux défenseurs de la patrie ...* (Paris, an IV).

<sup>90</sup> *AM*, 295, 25 messidor III, p. 196.

<sup>91</sup> For the flurry of official activity concerning the relocation of Turenne's tomb in the Year IV: *AM*, 323, 23 thermidor IV, p. 379 and A. Debidour (ed.), *Recueil des actes du Directoire exécutif: Procès-verbaux, arrêtés, instructions, lettres et actes divers*, 4 vols (Paris, 1910-1917), iii, 255.

<sup>92</sup> Cited in R. Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789-1820* (Oxford, 1970), p. 172.

<sup>93</sup> *AM* Reims, FR C943, liasse 455; P. Tarbé, *Reims, ses rues et ses monuments* (Reims, 1844), pp. 178-80.

in Nivôse VII, it withstood the onslaught of the elements better than Reims' too prominent pyramid could ever resist the politics of the reaction, but if it survived the Empire, it almost certainly succumbed to the Restoration's policy of *oubli*, just as Suresnes' cenotaph eventually did. Capped with a cross under the Restoration, the memorial on the Place d'Armes was reclaimed in the name of Church and King only to be condemned as an obstacle to traffic and demolished during the Second Empire though, by 1868, its original purpose had long since been forgotten.<sup>94</sup> There was no place for the nation's dead in nineteenth-century Reims or Suresnes, and the same pattern was repeated throughout France as the desire to remember the Republic's dead was replaced by the urge to forget the Revolution, and with it, the memory of the men who had died in its defence.<sup>95</sup>

And yet, these towns had raised their cenotaphs, however ephemeral they proved to be, and this raises important questions concerning the current consensus on the making of 'modern memory'. Throughout the Terror, the Jacobins had seen their soldiers off with 'tender and patriotic farewells' and promises that they would 'never forget them'.<sup>96</sup> In the end, these promises were undone by the upheaval of Revolutionary politics, but the fact remains that they had been honoured in the Year II. Right across the Republic, cenotaphs had been built and ordinary soldiers' names inscribed by men who believed that those names would endure long enough to allow 'our children to proclaim them with enthusiasm'.<sup>97</sup> And all of this occurred before anyone discovered 'the anxiety of erasure' by reading Dickens or Balzac, though not before Rousseau had inspired an eighteenth-century audience with his own reflections on individual identity, and before the opening of Père Lachaise ushered in, as Ariès claimed, 'a new religion, the religion of the dead'.<sup>98</sup> It even occurred before the 'brutalization of war' supposedly began on the Somme, although in this last respect, one wonders whether being decapitated by a cannon ball cast in an artisan's forge, as Barthélemy Devic was in Prairial II, is any less brutalizing an experience, for either the victim or those around him, than being blown apart by a factory-produced artillery shell.<sup>99</sup>

All of this happened, rather, in the midst of a Revolution that had opened up politics to the public as never before. In so doing, and this happened more by accident than by design, the Revolution also democratized a debate on remembrance that had raged within the Republic of Letters throughout the eighteenth century. To a large extent, this process of democratization had already begun in 1789 when ordinary Parisians packed their parish churches to hear masses said in memory of the tradesmen and shopkeepers who had 'left their

<sup>94</sup> Boudier, 'Au sujet du monument', pp. 212-3.

<sup>95</sup> On the Restoration's policy of *union et oubli*, see S. Kroen, *Politics and Theatre: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830* (Berkeley, 2000).

<sup>96</sup> *Journal des Jacobins de Reims*, 8, 16 ventôse II, p. 57.

<sup>97</sup> *Discours prononcés par le citoyen Galloteau-Chappron*, p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Laqueur, 'Names, bodies and the anxiety of erasure', p. 136; P. Ariès, *L'homme devant la mort*, 2 vols (Paris, 1977), ii. 226.

<sup>99</sup> Ben-Amos, *Funerals, Politics, and Memory*, p. 215; A M Reims, FR C860, liasse 267.

shops and workshops, with all their tasks, to fly to the aid of the patrie' in order to storm the Bastille.<sup>100</sup> However, it developed more decisively as a result of a war that revolutionized the Revolution itself, a war that, especially after the *levée en masse*, reached into cities like Reims and villages like Artonne and made its presence felt, in one way or another, in virtually every household in France.

This extraordinary experience, the experience of mass mobilization in an increasingly literate and politicized society, the experience of total war in effect, redefined the very nature of Revolutionary citizenship. Whereas the early Revolution had merely claimed that 'every citizen must be a soldier and every soldier a citizen', the wartime Republic effectively dissolved the distinction between soldiers and civilians and insisted emphatically and to all intents and purposes for the first time that citizenship involved responsibilities as well as rights and that those responsibilities were potentially limitless.<sup>101</sup> Obviously, many Frenchmen and women rejected these new responsibilities outright when they were first imposed in February 1793, but when the more equitable *levée en masse* was decreed in August more did not. The *sociétés populaires* in particular embraced this more militant vision of citizenship wholeheartedly and threw themselves into the war effort with unrelenting zeal. However, in return for accepting these responsibilities and the sacrifices they entailed, they also demanded recognition, or as Châteaudun's *sociétaires* put it, 'marks of esteem and veneration that will last forever' for the 'brothers' and 'friends' who had given their lives 'for all of you'.<sup>102</sup> When the Convention failed to act on this demand, the clubs took matters into their own hands. The resulting cenotaphs may not have survived, but in 1793 and 1794, as ordinary men and women inscribed ordinary soldiers' names on *monuments aux morts* across the Republic, the politics of memory did become 'modern'.

In purely political terms then, 'the era of the common soldier's name' began, not in 1915, but over a century earlier, when a new type of politics and a new kind of warfare first appeared. The problem is, however, that the remembrance of the dead is rarely a purely political matter. Commemoration is more complex than this, and for that reason, to emphasize the modernity of these war memorials to the exclusion of all else would be profoundly misleading. It would be to overlook the extent to which, as Richard Cobb once observed, 'the borders between private life and political militancy' remained blurred throughout the Revolution, and this distinction was especially uncertain when the *clubistes* came together to commemorate their 'brothers', their 'dear friends', and it would be to ignore the 'tears' that were shed in their memory.<sup>103</sup> It would, above all, be

<sup>100</sup> Anonymous, *Les lauriers du fauxbourg Saint-Antoine* (Paris, 1789), p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> AP, x, 521. For a particularly clear account of implications of the *levée en masse*: A. Forrest, 'The French Revolution and the first *levée en masse*', in *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution*, eds D. Moran and A. Waldron (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 8–31.

<sup>102</sup> 'Adresse de la société populaire de Châteaudun'.

<sup>103</sup> R. Cobb, 'The French Revolution and private life', in *Historical Studies VIII: Papers Read before the Irish Conference of Historians*, ed. T. D. Williams (Dublin, 1971), p. 16.

to underestimate the cultural ambivalence of these commemorations, their ability to reconcile a radically changed consciousness of what it meant to be a citizen of the new Republic with some very traditional ways of thinking about the dead and about society's duties towards them. The recurrence of the phrase 'our brothers' throughout these ceremonies exemplifies this ambivalence. These repeated references to the ideologically charged language of Republican *fraternité* appear strikingly modern, but that same language owed much of its moral authority and even more of its emotional urgency to an older tradition of fraternity, one embedded in the rites and responsibilities of the corporations and *confréries* and rooted in the collective identity of the communities of which they had been so much a part. In this respect, these commemorations express a very traditional view of the world, one in which the living owed the dead, and the families they left behind, a just measure of recognition, not simply for the propaganda message their deaths might be made to convey but because this was the moral code that eighteenth-century communities were accustomed to live by.

During the first year of the war, it was still possible for provincial Revolutionaries to discharge this debt to the dead in time-honoured style. A requiem mass, like that Limoges' Jacobins organized in June 1792, or those the *sociétaires* of Lille, Rouen and Bergerac staged for the *fédérés* of 10 August, remained the clubs' principal means of honouring their dead until early 1793.<sup>104</sup> However, the crusade against *le despotisme sacerdotal* that climaxed in the dechristianization of the Year II brought these masses to an abrupt end. The forced closure of churches and the frenetic repudiation of the clergy that began that winter compelled the *sociétaires* to find new means—rituals, places and above all, personnel—with which to remember their dead, and many responded to this challenge with considerable creativity. Some, like Reims' *sociétaires*, had not needed to wait that long to cast aside their ritual reliance on their *curés*, although significantly, even here it was a *ci-devant prêtre* who first raised the question of commemorating the city's war dead. However, if dechristianization stripped the Revolution's rites of memory of their explicitly religious content, it did not fundamentally alter the *sociétaires*' sense of moral responsibility towards the memory of the dead or diminish their concern for the families they left behind.

The Revolution had wrought many changes but, as the radical journalist, Jacques-René Hébert grumbled in August 1793, it 'had not changed men'.<sup>105</sup> It was a common enough complaint at the time, but Hébert's recognition that the Revolution had transformed the political order that governed French men and women's lives, but left many of their attitudes and assumptions intact, seems especially relevant in this instance. For the clubs and communities that raised these cenotaphs, the remembrance of the Republic's war dead wove the modern politics of patriotism and the customary values of community and kinship

<sup>104</sup> Fray-Fournier, *Le club des Jacobins de Limoges*, p. 53. Also 'Un obit solennel pour les sans-culottes de Lille, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, clvii (1959), p. 272; Chardon, *Procès-verbaux*, p. 82; Labroue, *La société Populaire de Bergerac*, p. 220.

<sup>105</sup> *Le Père Duchesne*, 277, 26 Aug. 1793, p. 2.

together in an intricate weft of ideology and emotion. And yet, for all the talk of *liberté* and *la patrie* that accompanied their unveiling, these cenotaphs were raised chiefly to satisfy a very traditional conviction that the dead deserved to be commemorated and the bereaved to be consoled. In the end, this essentially moral imperative is all that can really explain the outburst of anger and shame with which this paper began, the *sociétaires* of Châteaudun's sense, in November 1793, that 'we have been found wanting' before the accusing voices of the Republic's dead.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>106</sup> 'Adresse de la société populaire de Châteaudun'.