

Connecting Origin and Innocence

Myths of Resistance in European Memory Cultures after 1945

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My contribution aims at reflecting the characteristics that constitute European memory cultures of Resistance during the Second World War: What are the specific features of these memory cultures? Which modes of relating to a resistant past play the most important role in the process of making these memories? In order to approach these questions, I will pay particular attention to memory cultures in France and Italy, and especially to the time period after 1945. My concept of Resistance concentrates on both Resistance as a political, oppositional movement and individual acts against National Socialism and fascism: *Résistance*, *Resistenza*.

In order to focus systematically on this topic, I will give a short outlook on my main lines of argument and, at the same time, on what I consider to be the four particularities of remembering Resistance:

1. Remembering Resistance as history vs. remembering Resistance as myth; in this section, I will focus on the question of how different modes of memory, i.e., the different ways of relating to the past, can be distinguished.
2. Resistance as a national and transnational narrative of origin; here, I would like to discuss in how far and why Resistance can be understood as, on the one hand, a national, and, on the other hand, a transnational narrative of origin.
3. Stability and persistence: Networks of Resistance myths; in this section, my contribution explores the relationship between modern myths and their seeming 'inflation': What preserves myths of Resistance, what makes them durable and flexible enough to survive?

4. Evidence and ambivalence of Resistance; the last part of my contribution focuses on the aesthetical conditions and consequences of the mythical dimensions of Resistance in Italy and France. Which relationships between origin and innocence are constructed by memory cultures about Resistance, how do they try to reach their mythical 'evidence' and 'naturalization' (Barthes) of their impacts?

1. REMEMBERING RESISTANCE AS HISTORY VS. REMEMBERING RESISTANCE AS MYTH

Individuals, groups, and institutions can be considered as agents of Resistance. Dealing with the mythical remembering of Resistance, I firstly would like to roughly define what I mean by this, and which alternative or competing modes of remembering there are. To be precise, apart from mythical memory, there is historical memory. What are the characteristics of myth on the one side and history on the other then?

Myth and history can be defined as two different modes of remembering/memory (cf. Wodianka, *Zwischen Mythos* 38-41), which, in turn, can be understood as a way of relating to the past that is characterized by three cognitive constituents: First, a specific relation of time the remembering subject establishes to the remembered object; second, a specific identification process within the group of remembering subjects and, third, a specific relation to the act of memory itself—as it is depicted in the model of closeness and distance of memory.

I would like to argue as follows (cf. Wodianka, "Closeness" 51-65): Myth and history—as illustrated by the model—are two different forms of memory, which imply different constellations of closeness or remoteness of memory: with regard to the subjects, to the objects, and to the process of remembering.

The *historical mode of memory* denotes a relation to the past that focuses on a specific relation of events that is described as history. Firstly, it is based on a static distance between remembering subject and remembered object, a historical time frame, for example, between a subject in present time and a remembered act of Resistance, e.g., the attempted assassination of Hitler in 1944. In this mode of memory, the objectively measurable distance in time ideally corresponds to the awareness of temporal distance. Secondly, the historical mode of memory is simultaneously marked by

its self-reflexivity, i.e., by the actual doubt (of the remembering subject) whether or not this ideal is achieved: The question whether it is possible and necessary to establish an objective relation to the remembered object, pointed out by historical scholarship since Johan Gustav Droysen, Max Weber, and Marc Bloch, especially when discussing historicism, essentially refers to the awareness of time in the historical mode of memory (cf. Oexle 31, 34, and 39). Thus, thirdly, the historical mode of memory is characterized by a distinctly self-reflexive distance of the remembering subject to the very ways of establishing historical memory in the first place in that the mode of memory is constantly and explicitly being rendered conscious. For instance, remembering subjects relativize their representation of events by referring to or quoting other representations and justify why theirs is more accurate. Therefore, the historical mode of memory can be said to be marked by a modal distancing, reflecting itself regularly. This modal distance, then, implies consequences for the level of identification of the remembering subjects, as it results in an affirmative, relativizing, and critical, but not at all per se identificatory self-locating process in interaction with other historically remembering subjects—i.e., the remembering subjects do not necessarily identify themselves with other subjects only because they are ‘working’ on the same historical object.

The *mythical mode of memory* is a mode of reception which—following Barthes’ understanding of myth (cf. 213-68)—can relate to different forms of narration and narrative objects, even in modernity. By myth, I understand a *subjective* mode of perception and memory with a *collective* impact. Firstly, it is marked by an apparent evidence: The signification of a myth is a subjective ‘fact’ which can even contradict other concurring subjective significations—that’s what Claude Lévi-Strauss called the “ambivalent structure of myth” (242). Mythical memory transfers history into nature (cf. Barthes 213-68), it transforms history into a narrative which seemingly does not have an identifiable narrator, it is, in other words, quasi without narrator (cf. Ricoeur 57). For the remembering subject, then, myths provide an individual and a collective potential of identification (cf. Nora). Knowledge of a mythically remembered event as, for instance, the Resistance during the Nazi regime, integrate the individual into a community constituted by a shared, identity-making memory. Myths function as frames for interpreting the world in order to convey norms and values (cf. Assmann 76). In this sense, then,

mythical remembering creates a particular closeness of memory on the level of identification, i.e., between the different remembering subjects 'consuming' the myth. Furthermore, the mythical mode of memory creates a time level that undermines temporal distance.¹ On the one hand, mythical events are located on a cloudy and remote temporal horizon; on the other, by repeating and revising them, they are drawn into the present, into the proximity of memory, in order to transform their signification into experience. Finally, on a modal level, myths are also characterized by a relative lack of (self-reflexive) distance between the remembering subject and the process of remembering. In other words, the mythical in contrast to the historical mode of memory does not become conscious as such, it is a mere experience of evidence: Mythical figures and heroes seem to evidently represent certain norms and values (even if these norms and values contradict each other): A myth is not being subjectively remembered, a myth *is* (cf. Cassirer 125-26 and 130-31; Eliade 42).

Against this backdrop, I would like to argue that the memory culture of Resistance can draw upon two competing modes of memory: Resistance as history, and Resistance as myth. And it is my contention that the signification of Resistance in European memory cultures as well as its interpretation can be seen as a consequence of the two competing modes of memory. In the post-war period both modes mutually influenced each other. This is to be illustrated in the remaining part of my contribution.

2. RESISTANCE AS A NATIONAL AND AS A TRANSNATIONAL NARRATIVE OF ORIGIN

The precondition for the national and transnational conception of the Resistance against the Nazi-regime as a foundation myth was its predominantly collective dimension, the concentration on a 'heroic' collective rather than on the engagement of resistant individuals.

In 1945, France had already been dominated by narratives of *Résistance* in politics, literature, and film for more than ten years, which had created a mythological French people of partisans. Post-war France,

1 | Regarding this, Astrid Erll also differentiates between communicative and cultural memory by means of the time consciousness, not by means of the objectively measurable interval to the memory (cf. 48-49).

hence, became a remembering collective that, through memory, identified itself as a collective of Résistance. A similar development can be traced in Italy. Here, too, during the immediate post-war period, multiplying acts of memory that represented Italy as the nation of Resistenza, led to a downplay of Mussolini as a dilettante and gave way to the myth of the ‘good Italian.’² This mythological mode of memory was disturbed by a historical one, the Paxtonian revolution, *la révolution paxtonienne*, when in 1972, the American historian Robert Paxton published his study *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* and caused—particularly after the English translation in 1973—a wave of memory narratives that also considers French collaboration and attentism and, as a consequence, focuses the memory of Résistance on individual agents of Résistance.³

Since 1945, Résistance and Resistenza have been at the core of both national and transnational narratives of origin in the collective memory. Already on 18 June 1940, Charles de Gaulle, when addressing the French people in his radio report from London, spoke about “the flame of French

2 | In post-war Germany, in contrast to France and Italy, a different memory culture is created: Contrary to the French nation of partisans, Germany, according to Hans Mommsen, seems to remember Resistance without a people. Whereas memory cultures of German Resistance seem to be impossible shortly after the war, the remembering gaze later turns to German Resistance fighters—not in order to downplay German fascism, but to contradict the legitimizing hegemonic narratives of the system, which were disabling German Resistance (cf. Danyel 227).

3 | “[...] La *France de Vichy* a proposé tout d’abord une interprétation globale du régime, de son idéologie et de son action concrète, qui a mis en lumière la profonde cohérence du projet vichyste. Celle-ci s’articule autour de l’idée centrale selon laquelle les élites dirigeantes du régime ont eu une assez claire conscience du lien qui existait entre les choix de ‘politique extérieure’ et de politique intérieure, entre la collaboration d’État—un concept mis en avant par Stanley Hoffmann et consacré désormais par l’usage—, qui croyait redonner à la France une part de souveraineté perdue dans la défaite, et la Révolution nationale, une idéologie et une pratique qui visaient à la constitution d’un régime en rupture avec l’héritage républicain. La grande originalité de ce livre est d’expliquer de manière concrète et argumentée en quoi la collaboration d’État constituait une condition nécessaire (mais non suffisante) à la réalisation de la Révolution nationale [...]” (Rouso).

Resistance must not and shall not die” (“The Flame”). He thus relates to the metaphor of light of the French Enlightenment period, the *siècle des lumières*. At the same time, he remembers the French Revolution and its tough struggle for values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, on which the national self-definition of France is based. Consequently, the Résistance becomes a prolonged French foundational narrative. This narrative is still alive and reaches to our times: In a speech on 31 March 2012, Nicolas Sarkozy did not only continue De Gaulles’s metaphor of light, but also relocated the heritage of Résistance in a diffuse European context (Spain, Greece) as well as in contexts of globalization. He calls the French Résistance a ‘generation’ (“Cette génération-là, cette génération,” “Pendant”), which fulfilled her duty and followed a quasi-natural necessity to resist: “ces jeunes Français qui en juin 1940 se retrouvèrent à Londres parce qu’ils ne supportaient pas de voir la France occupée et vaincues, ces jeunes Français de vingt ans” (“Pendant”). He implores his young public to follow their model and to fight for their (human?) rights (“parce que les droits, vos droits ne se reçoivent pas comme un dû, vos droits se méritent,” “Pendant”), and a transnational, more abstract and generational level of interpretation of the Résistance is called into being.

Also in Italy, the Resistenza becomes a foundational narrative—here, it is especially the connection to the so-called Risorgimento of Italy in the 19th century which signifies the Resistenza as a national founding myth and gives it the historical depth: As Italy freed itself in the Risorgimento self-confidently from the bonds of particularism and the lack of sovereign self-determination, it freed itself also from the bonds of collaboration and fascism. Here, especially 25 April 1945, named as the *giorno della liberazione*, is of memory-cultural importance. On this day, the national committee called for the uprising of northern Italy against the German occupying forces, big northern Italian cities were freed, and “[t]hus, 25 April can be seen as a central Italian *lieu de mémoire* on which party political legitimization and identity constitutions intensify”⁴ (Brandt 237; translation: Lea Brenningmeyer), as a national feast which, since 1949, has been, in the broadest sense, dedicated to a national “myth of dignity

4 | Original: “Der 25. April kann so als ein zentraler italienischer Erinnerungsort gesehen werden, an dem sich parteipolitische Legitimations- und Identitätskonstitutionen verdichten.”

and decency”⁵ (Campani 174; translation: Lea Brenningmeyer) and to the democratic demarcation from fascism. Democracy and antifascism are equated, and accordingly, the Italian self-definition after 1945, as can be found in the constitution, follows the spirit of the Resistenza (cf. Petersen 5-17). Moreover, the equalization of ‘democratic’ and ‘antifascist’ is not only an Italian but a European phenomenon, which, consequently, serves as a basis for a transnational narrative of Resistance. Jennifer Roger gives the following summary of this ‘European’ process of mythification: “Resistance as a concrete movement is replaced by a moral self-understanding, the national construction by European meaning-making”⁶ (320; translation: Christoph Behrens).

3. STABILITY AND DURABILITY: INTERCONNECTION OF RESISTANCE MYTHS

The third section will deal with the stability and durability of the myth of Resistance: In how far do processes of inflation and canonization do interact with modern myths? What preserves Resistance myths as modern myths, what makes them persistent in European memory cultures? In the case of the Resistance against fascism, it is noticeable that it is strongly connected to other modern myths. One could even speak of a system of myth and sub-myths or a mythical cluster that gives evidence to the Resistance myth, stabilizes it, and anchors it within cultural memory. A first example from the Italian context was given in section two, concerning the interconnections between the Resistenza collectively and ritually remembered every 24 April as *giorno di liberazione* and the myth of the Italian 19th-century-Risorgimento as movement of national self-constitution, fighting for Italy as political and cultural unity. That this Italian ‘myth-connection’ is not a unique case, but reflects a tendency of modern mythology and its strategies in the struggle for stability, and that it is also observable in French memory cultures about Resistance will be shown in the following.

5 | Original: “Mythos von Würde und Anstand.”

6 | Original: “Der Widerstand als konkrete Bewegung weicht damit einem moralischen Selbstverständnis, die nationale Auslegung einer europäischen Sinngebung.”

Firstly, it is Charles de Gaulle as a political protagonist, who established the myth of French Resistance and in so doing, constituted the platform for various myth-connections. His speech that was broadcast by the BBC from London and directed to the French people on 18 June 1940 can be seen as a cultural text in its own right, the photograph, which shows him standing at the microphone, iconically creates the nucleus of the mythical narrative (cf. Flood 220-24).⁷ A further dimension of its interconnectedness was laid out by Charles de Gaulle himself with his appeal: “Quoi qu’il arrive, la flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s’éteindre et ne s’éteindra pas” (“Pendant”). The flame of Résistance relates to the light metaphor of the French Enlightenment, which found its socio-political expression in the French Revolution of 1789, which constituted a historical and foundational event in French national history as already outlined above. Hence, Résistance is not only a historical phenomenon but stands in close connection to the already established French national myth as a historical event. Following De Gaulle’s words, the French people has the duty to carry on the spirit of revolution in their Résistance. Résistance and French Enlightenment or respectively the French Revolution are thus turned into parts of one and the same mythical network.

In 1942, the mythical cluster of Résistance is further connected to the expansion of the Matière de Bretagne, King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. In his poems of “Les Yeux d’Elsa,” the French Résistance-poet and partisan, Louis Aragon, associates the situation of the Vichy regime collaboration with the forests in the threatened realm of King Arthur, the partisans with the virtuous knights. In retrospection, according to the poet himself, history does not seem to *repeat* the myths but to *confirm* them:

Even more than in 1941, in 1942 France resembled Brocéliande. In the forest, the witches of Vichy and the dragons of Germanie, gave to every word an enchanted and perverted value, nothing was called by its name anymore, and every grandeur was undermined, every virtue ridicules, and persecuted. Its way a time of enchanted ladies and imprisoned princesses. And when time went by, more and more knights without name took up arms, whose exploits, for all the armed

7 | https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appeal_of_18_June. The picture shows a later, similar event, because no picture was taken during de Gaulle’s 18 June speech on BBC radio—the icon has been created retrospectively.

men and hangmen, and the orgs and giants, spread from mouth to mouth in the French forest, even though, history confirmed the retold legend, it happened to me, Brocéliande written, to find in the poem a reality that I had never dreamed of, a precision in the painting that would have been impossible for me to consciously attain in July and August of 1942. (translation: Christoph Behrens)⁸

Significantly, the quotation was printed in a journal called *De l'exactitude historique en poésie (Of historical precision in poetry)* in 1945 (cf. Aragon 189-217). This is an example of the productive interplay between the historical mode of memory and the mythical mode of memory outlined above. The mythical mode of memory—which Aragon can be said to draw upon here—allows for an increase in historical precision. And the postulate of historically exact paintings authenticates the truth of the Résistance myth. In his works, Louis Aragon transforms Arthur's knights into partisans (or the other way around) in order to prevent them from being appropriated by Nazi Germany or the Vichy Régime. He confronts Wagner's Parsifal with the best of French knights: Chrétien de Troyes' Percéval and Lancelot.

Another myth connected to the French Résistance is Joan of Arc. She is said to be the icon of the *esprit de la résistance*, which she had to prove in the liberation of Orléans, and in the processes held against her. How complex these interconnection can be is best expressed in the 1999 film *Joan of Arc: The Messenger* by Luc Besson, a French-American co-production starring Mila Jovovich and Dustin Hoffmann, which became a French

8 | Original: “Plus encore qu'en 1941, en 1942 la France tout entière ressemblait à Brocéliande. Dans la forêt, les sorciers de Vichy et les dragons de Germanie avaient donné à toutes les paroles une valeur incantatoire pervertie, rien ne s'appelait plus de son nom, et toute grandeur *était* avilie, toute vertu bafouée, persécutée. Ah ! c'était un temps de dames enchantées et de princesses prisonnières [...]. Et plus il avançait, ce temps, plus nombreux s'armaient les chevaliers sans nom [...] dont les exploits, malgré les hommes d'armes et les bourreaux, et les ogres et les géants, se répétaient de bouche en bouche d'un bout à l'autre de la forêt de France ; [...] si bien que, l'histoire confirmant la légende reprise, il m'arriva, Brocéliande *écrit*, de trouver à ce poème une réalité que je n'avais pas rêvée, une exactitude dans la peinture qu'il m'eût été bien impossible de consciemment atteindre en juillet et août 1942.”

and international blockbuster.⁹ In the film, Joan of Arc is represented as a partisan in many different ways: She frees Orléans from English occupiers, and simultaneously frees the myth from being appropriated by Anglo-American memory cultures: “L’histoire de France nous appartient!” (Gandillot and Grassin 6) (“French history belongs to us!”), the French director Besson expressed in an interview before the film’s premiere. Jeanne d’Arc belonged to French history, and with the help of the film, Besson sets out to reclaim its French rootedness. So the Résistance myth, on the one hand, is connected to Joan of Arc, and connected to the fight for French cultural patriotism against the occupying Anglo-American film industry on the other (cf. Wodianka, *Zwischen Mythos* 411-15; Knabel 146). That this battle is fought out, of all things, in a French-American co-production with a Hollywood cast, is a paradox that only mythical reception is able to explain. It is striking that Besson does not identify Joan of Arc as a French national myth, but as French history—he tries to put the mythical dimension in the rear and instead favors the historical mode of memory. Joan of Arc is represented as a national myth only on a secondary level. As I have shown at the beginning of my contribution, any self-reflexive distance to the mythical mode of memory would destroy that mythical remembering he actually aimed at.

Last but not least, the French Resistance is connected to the myth of a small Gallic village, which, ever since 1961, has been fighting against the Romans through the medium of the Comic: *Asterix* de René Goscinny.¹⁰

In the year 50 BC Gaul is occupied by the romans—nearly. But one village full of unconquerable Galls still resists the intruders. And life is not the easiest for the Roman soldiers on the battles fields of *Babaorum*, *Aquarium*, *Laudanum* et *Petibonum...* (Goscinny and Uderzo 48; translation: Christoph Behrens)¹¹

9 | Cf. the French theatrical release poster: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Messenger:_The_Story_of_Joan_of_Arc.

10 | The first volume has been published in 1961, two years before, in 1959, Goscinny had presented for the first time one page of Asterix-Comics in his journal “Pilote.” For further information about the first volume, cf. <http://www.asterix.com/la-collection/les-albums/asterix-le-gaulois.html>.

11 | Original: “Nous sommes en 50 avant Jésus-Christ. Toute la Gaule est occupée par les Romains... Toute? Non! Un village peuplé d’irréductibles Gaulois résiste encore et toujours à l’envahisseur. Et la vie n’est pas facile pour les garnisons de

The Romans do not only remind us of the German occupiers because of their character and habitus (representatives of discipline and order), but they also wear the same khaki uniforms and perform the same salute. In France, the Résistance has always been center stage, only the media, the contexts, and the means have changed over time—this has been the message of Asterix and Obelix until today (cf. Hörner). Being famous on a global scale, translated into many different languages, the Résistance myth as rendered in the shape of the comic can thus also be conceived of as a transnational myth promoting a special habitus of Resistance, with the ‘good’ and appealing fighting against the not so clever and smart ones, i.e., those who only seem to be superior. This central position of the Résistance in French memory culture, as I have thus illustrated, is upheld by a mythological network that guarantees dynamic actuality, plurimedial distribution, and stability.

4. EVIDENCE AND AMBIVALENCE OF RESISTANCE: THE DYNAMICS OF ORIGIN AND INNOCENCE

The last section covers the afore mentioned self-mythification of a whole ‘Nation of Partisans’ in France and Italy, which dominated political discourses during the immediate post-war years, partly up until the 1950s, and which was functionalized as narration of origin to construct new national or transnational identities. This last argument is also inspired by the awareness of the discursive variety and the processes of transformation which characterize memory cultures about Resistance in France and Italy, and which therefore have to be considered here as well: Remembering Resistance is not a stable and uniform phenomenon, but it depends on various interests, modes and media of memory. In how far is even the very beginning of remembering Resistance in the years around 1945 characterized by the dynamics of constructing or deconstructing the possibility of collective ‘innocence’? And—to link my interest in modes of memory to the special interest in the impact of the dynamics of origin and innocence—in how far is the mythical potential of transforming

légionnaires romains des camps retranchés de Babaorum, Aquarium, Laudanum et Petitbonum...”

ambivalence and complexity into apparent evidence also reflected in literary and filmographical fiction about Resistance?

If we only looked at one of the most known films of post-war-cinematography in France, our first impression of a dominant narrative of collective Resistance would be almost confirmed. The film *La Bataille du Rail* by René Clément, which won an award at the film festival in Cannes, 1946, makes the audience remember a French Résistance that metonymically represents the attitude of the whole nation. In the first part, the film shows various acts of Resistance and sabotage of railroaders as well as the brutal counteractions of German occupying forces. The second part tells the story of the successful sabotage of an armored train, which, under the name “Convoi Apfelkern,” was supposed to bring supplies to the Norman front. The film ends up with the liberation of France: A train with cheering people, labeled with the slogan “Vive la France! Et la Résistance! Honneur aux Cheminots!” and accompanied with festive music, rides on the restored tracks toward a glorious future.¹² Technical and moral-patriotic competences are symbolically united in the closing scene, and the Resistance against the German occupation is inscribed in the French Enlightenment’s myth of progress. Superficially, limiting the Résistance to the railroaders seems to suppose a socially limited movement and to take the opportunity from the French people to identify, as a collective, with the Résistance against the German occupying forces. Taking a closer look, however, it becomes apparent that the focus on the group of railroaders virtually allows for the contrary: The involvement in the *Bataille du rail* ranges from the simple conductor and train driver to the technical engineer; the broad social embeddedness of the Résistance in all social classes of France is thus even emphasized. The film’s striving for authenticity, historical factuality, and testimony¹³ (cf. Langlois 67) increases the persuasiveness of this interpretation of the Résistance. The French appear as an absolutely positive counter-image to the fascist

12 | Cf. the screenshot which became an icon for the Résistance: http://www.cinema-francais.fr/images/affiches/affiches_c/affiches_clement_rene/photos/rail04.jpg.

13 | “La Bataille du Rail a répondu à l’ambition qu’a nourrie la critique envers le cinéma dans l’immédiat après-guerre, c’est-à-dire créer des témoignages qui pourraient s’apparenter à des sources historiques. [...] L’authenticité est ici un concept-clef” (Langlois 67).

German occupying forces, collaborationism is not mentioned as a topic. The failure of any intercultural communication underlines the distance between the non-fascist national-socialist Germans and the resisting French, who raise empathy by being portrayed as morally superior and through a range of close-ups. Christoph Vatter sums up, with reference to the film's underlying interest in memory

Clément's film establishes the filmic myth of the *résistancialisme*, although still with rather communist than Gaullist imprint [...]. The time of the *Occupation* is represented as a merely German-French conflict whereas inner-French lines of conflict are largely ignored. [...] With the representation of the Résistance as a collective movement of France, Clément answers with 'La Bataille du Rail' to the needs for social integration of the French society after the end of the occupation.¹⁴ (92; translation: Lea Brenningmeyer)

The myth of the collective and undivided Résistance of France is achieved and reinforced by the superficially historical mode of memory, which is already introduced in the opening credits of the film. It says in big letters which take up the whole screen: "Ce film qui retrace des scènes authentiques de la Résistance a été réalisé avec la participation de la COMMISSION MILITAIRE DU CONSEIL NATIONAL DE LA RÉSISTANCE / et grâce à l'effort considérable de la SOCIÉTÉ NATIONALE DES CHEMINS DE FER FRANÇAIS." Thus, the authenticity of the representation is claimed in a reception-guiding way, and, by the prominent acknowledgments of the 'French' railroad company in the film, the represented commitment of the railroaders is expanded from a regional to a national level. *La Bataille du Rail* not only celebrated success in the immediate postwar period—six of the numerous broadcastings of the film in France took place after 1982. The need to continue telling the Résistance as an origin myth and to free

14 | Original: "Clément's Film begründet den filmischen Mythos des *résistancialisme*, wenn auch noch eher kommunistischer als gaullistischer Prägung [...]. Die Zeit der *Occupation* wird als rein deutsch-französische Auseinandersetzung dargestellt, wohingegen innerfranzösische Konfliktlinien weitestgehend ausgeblendet werden. [...] Mit der Darstellung der Résistance als kollektive Bewegung Frankreichs antwortet Clément mit 'La Bataille du Rail' auf die Bedürfnisse nach sozialer Binnenintegration der französischen Gesellschaft nach Ende der Besatzungszeit."

the entire French nation from the complicity in collaborationism persists well past the immediate postwar years.

In Roberto Rossellini's neo-realist classic *Roma: Città aperta* from 1945—award-winning at the film festival in Cannes, 1945—evidence is preferred over ambivalence, too. However, in comparison to *La Bataille du Rail*, here the stereotypical antagonism between the 'good Italians' and the 'bad Germans' is less pronounced: for example, a German officer criticizes the actions of the Germans, and there are also Italian traitors of the Resistenza—these ambivalences, however, exclusively refer to marginal characters. Rossellini's film puts the cruelty of the German fascists even more in the center of the representation than René Clément's *La Bataille du Rail* and, in face of the represented brutality and inhumanity, makes the actions of the Resistance seem all the more heroic. The partisan Luigi, despite being tortured to death, remains steadfast and does not reveal his fellow campaigners, and the partisan Pina follows the car deporting her fiancée until she dies, in sight of her little son, in the hail of bullets of the German officers—one of the most affecting scenes of the film,¹⁵ which shows and, quite literally, makes visible the inhuman brutality of the members of the occupying forces in contrast to the very human but desperate commitment of the Resistenza figures—at least the protagonists in this film are evidently 'good' characters, martyr-like innocent heroes of Resistance.

Another kind of dynamics of origin and innocence was evoked by those narratives of Resistance which critically reflect on the self-proclaimed collective 'innocence' of France and Italy. In some texts and films of this kind, the idea of ambivalence is sometimes even metonymically incorporated in the shape of the fictional characters themselves. They represent a metonymy for the inhomogeneous and at times even contradictory attitudes towards holocaust and fascism, collaboration, and Resistance. In particular, when analyzing the fictional characters, who appear in texts and films which critically shed a light on Resistance, a tendency towards what I would like to call 'a medium hero' is observable. With 'medium hero,' I would like to characterize a protagonist

15 | A screenshot of the most famous scene of the film can be found at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roma_citt%C3%A0_aperta#/media/File:Roma_citt%C3%A0_aperta_corsaPina.jpg.

of Resistance who, in a tragic sense, is neither morally good nor morally bad: but morally ambivalent.

In order to substantiate this claim, I would like to take a brief look at the ambivalence of Elio Vittorini's characters in the novel *Uomini e no* (1945). The title of the novel already indicates the ambivalence of human nature: There are no dichotomies of 'good humans' and 'bad humans.' Instead, human nature is characterized by its very ambivalence, its state of in-betweenness. The protagonist Enne 2 is a problematic character, who is rather characterized by reflection and doubt than by the determination to resist through action. 23 of the 136 chapters of the novel present metalepses, through which the author enters into a dialogue with the protagonist Enne 2 or comments on him as a character. Any unreflected-affirmative identification of the recipient with the protagonist thus becomes particularly difficult—any evidence of the Resistenza is impossible, both intra-diegetically and extra-diegetically. That Enne 2 (whose dualistic core is also expressed in the name), however, is no conventional hero in terms of the antique tragedy, becomes apparent in his romantic relationship with Berta: They do not die for each other, but witness fascist terror against old people and children. Even though both consider this experience as emblematic for their belonging together, Berta distances herself anew. In Vittorini's novel, there is thus no collectively shared memory, which could guarantee cohesion (not even between the two). *Uomini e no*, as the first Resistenza novel, becomes a narration of origin by means of a character who fails in the execution of an assassination attempt on German soldiers, because his gaze seems to him "troppo triste," and he recognizes himself in the soldier's eyes. The identification with the other 'as a human'—in his human inhumanity and inhuman humanity—is the origin myth which is told by this Resistenza novel and in which there is no room for innocence.

The last example discussed and analyzed here is the famous novella *Le Silence de la Mer* by Vercors (1942/1945), picturized in 1948 by Jean Pierre Melville.¹⁶ The novella was initially published by the Geneva Clandestines "Éditions des Minuit" in 1942, before it could be 'officially' published by the Paris publishing company "Éditions des trois collines" immediately after the end of the war in 1945. At the same time, the author as well as Résistants associated with him already referred to the literary text

16 | About the film adaptation of the novella by Jean Pierre Melville (F 1949), cf. Langlois 139-47.

as “patrimoine de la France” (Nogueira 32), which had to be prevented from a film adaptation. Only after tough negotiations between Vercors and Melville and with the agreement of a committee of former Résistants selected by Vercors, Melville’s film was released—a symbolic testimony of the novella as ‘authentic’ *Livre de Chevet* of the Resistance fighters, which, at the same time, attested and strengthened the novella’s mythical potential (cf. Langlois 141; Vercors and Plazy 37). In the novella, the memory-cultural dynamic of Résistance as a narration of origin in its relationship to innocence becomes apparent in a special way: not only because it belongs to the earliest literary texts documenting and remembering the Résistance at the same time, whose ‘innocence’ and authenticity seemed to be endangered by the medial transition to the format of a feature film, but also, because the novella *Le silence de la mer*, in its ambivalences, deals with ‘innocence due to silence’ and ‘guilt due to silence’ at the very same time. Silence, in Vercors’ stories, is no passive but an active act: Silence is even considered as an act and instrument of Resistance by both French protagonists. The German officer Ebrennac is accommodated as an occupying soldier in the house of the narrator and his niece—henceforth, without being asked, they are obligated to live together in a confined space. The German soldier ostentatiously strives toward a polite behavior, in no case utilizes his position as an occupier, and makes every effort to express his respect for the French culture.

The ritualized form of his behavior stands in a blatant contrast to the ‘disorder’ which rules occupied France. Every evening, he steps up to his two involuntary French hosts in the living room and, after his monologic reflections about the German-French relations, leaves with a ‘Good night,’ which remains unanswered. The French narrator and his niece never talk to their guest—a persistent silence defines their living together. Carried by the mythical-idealizing vision of a ‘marriage’ of Germany and France, which marks the beginning of an ‘enlightened’ Europe under their leadership (“le soleil va luire sur l’Europe” 12), Ebrennac reflects on French literature and German music, his love for France (“J’amaï toujours la France” 10), and his trust that “de grandes choses” will emanate from the war (12). Until the end of the novella, he experiences a process of enlightenment himself—initiated by his disenchanting experience in Paris, when he had to realize that the true motive of the German occupying forces is the destruction and complete repression of France,

which makes his world view collapse and drives him to the fatal decision to make himself available for a suicide mission.

The silence of the narrator and the niece, first, stands for the 'silent' opposition: Being exposed to living with the soldier, it is a form of protest, an everyday and constant 'act' of the Résistance. In doing so, especially the narrator's niece arrives at a hardness and strength that even surprises the narrator and also makes him doubt. Her 'innocence' is made explicit when the narrator talks about her "pur profil tête et fermé" (14). Second, it becomes apparent that this persistent silence also connotes the 'guilty silence' of the French followers, as it also affects the communication between the narrator and his niece ("De cela je ne dis rien à ma niece" 23) and stands between them, and as it prevents the narrator from expressing his "absurd colère" and taking actions against "cette idiotie" (23). And third, the novella negotiates Vercors' question regarding the connection between innocence and silence: while the German occupying soldier Ebrennac is a rich source of storytelling, he is all the more embraced by the "gaz" (sic) of silence the French owners of the house persistently exude. The novella here draws connections to the gas chambers of the Holocaust in order to metonymically defy them. This henceforth pervasive silence lets the novella metafictionally emerge all the more as a narration that breaks the silence: The novella breaks the silence in the face of occupation and collaboration with a gaze to the sky, which, as expected, is not illuminated by the glistening light of the sun over Europe, which was predicted by Ebrennac in his National Socialist delusion. "Elle [ma nièce] me servit en silence. Nous bûmes en silence. Dehors luisait au travers de la brume un pâle soleil. Il me sembla qu'il faisait très froid." The cold silence of the French house inhabitants, which outlived the presence of the member of the occupying forces, is not capable of penetrating the mist. Vercors' novella, thus, ends with an appeal for a speech that opposes Ebrennac's visions: As a narration, the Résistance promises the expectation of and hope for that warming light which is withhold from the silence that believes to be innocent—Remembering Resistance means to break the silence.

*This article has been translated from German
by Lea Brenningmeyer and Christoph Behrens.*

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