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## **Names as Loci Memoris: Naming-Telling-Remembering in a Global Age**

Nay, his works may perish like those of Orpheus or Pythagoras; but he himself, in his name, in the footprint of his being, remains, like Orpheus or Pythagoras, undestroyed, indestructible.  
(Edward Bulwer Lytton)

Do democracy and republicanism require a new history based on convergent data, on sociological and economical phenomena and not on so-called great events accomplished by so-called leaders? During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century already, Voltaire's title *Essai sur les mœurs*, that can be translated as an *Essay on Customs*, and Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* (*The Spirit of the laws*) both indicate a genuine interest in global trends in religious behaviour or in law-making in various geographical areas and civilisations. Their philosophical reading of History already marks a decided shift from the chronicles of battles and successions of reigning dynasties that frame the historical narrative. A Century later, even historians or thinkers with very moderately democratic ideas, to say the least, such as Tocqueville in his *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856), or Hyppolyte Taine in his *Les Origines de la France contemporaine, L'Ancien Régime* (1875), do not focus their attention on the leaders but collect a huge range of testimonies, excerpts from diaries and letters, all from anonymous sources, to define the atmosphere that led to the great turmoil of 1789 and to the upheaval of the old monarchic and aristocratic order. Likewise, in 1864, Fustel de Coulanges who, like Hyppolyte Taine, was to be no admirer of the French Third Republic, captures the essence of Roman society and laws embedded in the archaic worship of the ancestors in *La Cité antique*<sup>1</sup>.

The trend towards collective history seems all the more overwhelming since, during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, it appears to be sanctioned by scientific progress far beyond the strong political boundaries that actually defined the practice of historical writing and research in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century France for instance. To put it in a nutshell, it accounts for the sociological approach of Henry Berr's *Revue de Synthèse*, the huge international success of British proponents of Law History, heirs to Summer Maine, not to mention the *École des Annales*. A few years later, Marc Bloch's interest in collective psychology and in economical forces follows the same pattern.

But despite the successful march of collective history, despite its results, the recent surge of published biographies, and historical novels, of numerous biopics on the screen from singers to princesses<sup>2</sup>, and exhibitions centred on more or less great figures

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<sup>1</sup> To this day, *La Cité antique* has been reedited 18 times in France; it is a landmark in French historiography.

<sup>2</sup> For a reminder: *Royal Affair* (*En Kongelig Affære*), a film directed by Nikolaj Arcel, on the history of Queen Caroline Mathilde and of the king's physician, Struensee, in Denmark in 1770, 2012; *Renoir*, a

in the public area must lead to a reassessment of “classical” history focused on famous lives or on models. Leaders, titans, prophets are striking back, to quote the titles or the back covers of some of the books that have been published during the past three years, as prove John G. Turner’s *Brigham Young, Pioneer Prophet* (Harvard, Belknap, 2012) and Lord Howard Rising’s presentation of Enoch Powell as a political Titan<sup>3</sup> or Simon Sebag Montefiore’s *Titans of History*. As it seems, sympathy and historical revivals are easier to achieve or to recapture when readers or spectators can identify with the humanity of the historical actors, admire their versatility, hate their monstrosity and overweening ambition. In this respect, the recent re-edition of René Grousset’s *Figures de Proue*<sup>4</sup> (*Figureheads*) echoes Simon Sebag Montefiore’s work of vulgarisation, strangely.

GROUSSET: The Marxist interpretation of history, one must recognize the fact whatever our personal preferences concerning the heart of the matter may be, answers a whole aspect of things. [...]

– Independently from all individual action? That is the problem. Is the direction followed by mankind the result of Man or a collective decision of the species? [...] The choice that is being made will determine the fate of the day. It is still a free choice. All potentialities are still free and are suspended.

[...] In those moments, some men have always taken the lead, those whom the God of the strong has touched with his wings.<sup>5</sup>

MONTEFIORE: In the last half-Century, many history teachers seemed to enjoy making history as boring as possible, reducing it to the dreariness of mortality rates, tons of coal consumed per household and other economic statistics, but the study of any period in detail shows that the influence of character on events is paramount.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the two historians had different aims in these passages, for Grousset

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film directed by Pascal Mérigeau, with Michel Bouquet, 2013; *Lincoln*, by Steven Spielberg, 2013. *Diana*, directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel, appeared in 2013 with another story of the Windsor family, *Hyde Park On Hudson*, directed by Roger Michell, with Bill Murray (on the royal visit King George VI made with his wife to the Roosevelts during the war); *Jobs*, directed by Joshua Michael Stern, on Steve Jobs, 2013; *Hannah Arendt*, by Margarethe von Trotta, 2013; *Mandela: a Long Walk to Freedom*, directed by Justin Chadwick, 2013; *Violette*, directed by Martin Provost, with Emmanuelle Davos, a biopic on Violette Leduc, 2013; *The Invisible Woman*, on Charles Dickens and the 18-year-old actress Alice Ternan, directed by Ralph Fiennes, 2014. More recently, *Belle*, directed by Amma Asante, on the coloured aristocrat Dido Elizabeth Belle; *Grace of Monaco*, biopic directed by Olivier Dahan, with Nicole Kidman and Tim Roth; the *Jersey Boys*, directed by Clint Eastwood, based on the lives of the singers of the *Four Seasons*; *Mr Turner*, directed by Mike Leigh, 2014. Two films on *Saint Laurent* are due to appear on the screen this year, one by Bertrand Bonello and another by Jalil Lespert.

<sup>3</sup> See the back cover of *Enoch at 100. A Re-Evaluation of the Life, Politics and Philosophy of Enoch Powell*, edited by Lord Howard Rising, London, Biteback Publishing, 2012. Biteback Publishing publishes political and current affairs titles.

<sup>4</sup> First édition: Paris, Plon, 1949, followed by Paris, Perrin, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> René Grousset, *Figures de proue*, Paris, Tempus Perrin, 2012 (1949), p. I-II: « L’interprétation marxiste de l’histoire, il faut bien le reconnaître (quelles que soient nos préférences personnelles quant au fond), répond à tout un aspect des choses. [...] – Indépendamment de l’action des individus ? Tout le problème est là. La direction prise par l’humanité est-elle le fruit de l’Homme ou des hommes ? [...] Le choix qui va se faire déterminera le destin de la journée. Il est encore libre et, avec lui, sont libres et en suspens toutes les virtualités. [...] C’est en de pareils instants que se sont toujours révélés les hommes-chefs, ceux que le dieu des forts a touchés de son aile. »

<sup>6</sup> Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London, Quercus Publishing Plc, 2012 (revised edition of 2008 version), p. 3.

(1885-1952) was a very remarkable historian, a specialist of the Crusades and of Asian history, and his stance is epistemological, whereas Montefiore is an award-winning popular journalist and novelist who read History at Cambridge and who first attracted the attention of a large public with his work on *Catherine the Great and Potemkin*, in 2004, and *Potemkin: Catherine the Great's Imperial Partner*, in 2005<sup>7</sup>. In his preface, Grousset forcefully reasserts the power of individual decision-making of the leader who chooses a trail, be it for right or for wrong, and from which no way back is possible, over abstract and collective necessities. Men over matter. Montefiore centres his criticism on narrative efficiency and appeal to the general public. Indeed, the arguments are of different nature, one more philosophical, the other more aesthetical, although both seem to target Marxist materialistic historiography more particularly, despite the fact that the trend, as above mentioned, goes far beyond Marxism itself. Let us pause and examine their assumptions in detail for they can help us understand the tenets of individual-centred history and its new impact.

From a scientific point of view, the belief in leaders is more effective to describe historical events (Montefiore and Grousset agree at this point) ; from an aesthetic point of view, it is more efficient because it corresponds to the readers' interests and tastes much better than a sociological or an economical interpretation possibly can (Montefiore) ; from a philosophical point of view it stresses liberty and free choice over determinism (Grousset); finally it is at the core of western humanism and values (Montefiore).

The aim of this overview is not to debunk collective history but to underline how it is challenged notwithstanding its scientific appropriateness and to recognize the role individuals play to this day in commemoration processes and memory-making on a global scale. With the benefit of hindsight over the last three years of publications we announced in *Les Grandes Figures historiques dans les lettres et les arts*, we shall shed light on recent works (novels and narratives, scholarly publications, biographies, letters) in French, English and German, mainly. Some references to Italian, Spanish and Danish books will also be made to broaden the perspective. The information was gathered in newspapers and magazines, editors' blogs or catalogues, journal reviews and in various international online bookshops. I do not pretend here to offer exhaustive information but to point out trends that are to be compared here to traditional practices in history-writing and to reflect upon the identity of the figures that are considered as memorable in a global age.

### **Politics of commemoration and (inter)national values**

Politics of commemoration do not belong to one political side only or to authoritarian regimes only, notwithstanding the part the cult of the leaders played both in fascism and communism during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Tudor Cult is still linked to the making and the vindication of an Anglican society in England<sup>8</sup>, although to quote Archer, Heal and Kewes "[r]ecent years have produced a growing appreciation of the

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<sup>7</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon\\_Sebag\\_Montefiore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Sebag_Montefiore);  
<http://www.simonsebagmontefiore.com/author.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> It would be impossible to give here an exhaustive list of the numerous publications on the Tudors. See nevertheless: Susan Bordo, *The Creation of Anne Boleyn: A New Look at England's Most Notorious Queen*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, April 2013, a biography and an essay in cultural history.

diversity of Elizabethan political and religious culture. Another whiggish narrative, that of the inevitability of Protestant success, has been overturned, and given way to a sense of the continuing vitality of Catholic elements in Culture.”<sup>9</sup> A new political narrative is thus being built on the top of an older one, more like a peaceful political and religious reassessment of the past than like a radical break from the so-called traditional British values, as proves the republishing for a centenary edition of H.E. Marshall’s *Our Island Story*<sup>10</sup>.

Likewise, lay heroes play a great part in French history and in French politics since the French Revolution, as a means to create a new national identity and collective narrative<sup>11</sup>. Before he died, Condorcet wanted to counter the worship of Catholic saints<sup>12</sup> and to provide the new nation with a cluster of new effective symbols. Lay hagiography and traditional hagiography had the very same role: exemplary figures were intended to create a community based on shared values; they function as “lieux de mémoire” to use Nora’s famous expression. The tradition expands during the whole 19<sup>th</sup> Century not only amongst famous republicans, heirs to the old revolutionaries, such as Jules Michelet, but also in popular newspapers, whatever the political divide. Recently Adeline Wrona depicted how a portrait mania was developed in the fast-expanding press; it was based on photographs and on luxury albums given to subscribers as a gift. Pictures and biographies were successful rubrics in which debutant writers such as Émile Zola practised their talent and their effect on the audience<sup>13</sup>. Day after day, month after month, the articles and pictures elect a whole range of (would-be) celebrities offering their success as an example. The present is in the making; its values are defined by the journalists who select the man or more rarely the woman of the moment according to the echo they hope to find in the reading public.

For the dead, museums and portrait galleries are opened; monuments are raised sometimes thanks to large subscriptions. It is a well-known fact that during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, French burial places of the prominent citizens were large and lavishly decorated with statues and allegories. They reproduce the function of public memorials on a lower scale with their gilt inscriptions: names are a legacy left to posterity that must be compared with the opposite strategies of defacement to erase a person from all memories. The Invalides, the burial site of Napoleon since 1840 and Louis-Philippe’s reign, offers a symbol of military power, whereas the Pantheon, first conceived as a church dedicated to Saint Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris, represents a mausoleum in which the heroes of the nation are buried: it is the ultimate sign of recognition of the whole country<sup>14</sup>. The politics of

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<sup>9</sup> Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, Felicity Heal, « Prologue », in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles*, dir. Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, Felicity Heal, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. xxxiii. A comparable shift in national narrative has been underlined by A. N. Wilson, *The Elizabethans*, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012. Eamon Duffy in *Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition, Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformation* (London-Berlin-New York-Sydney, Bloomsbury, 2012) reevaluates Mary Tudor and the place of Catholicism in Tudor England (see the review of this book by Frédéric Briot in *Grandes figures historiques*, No. 3).

<sup>10</sup> H. E. Marshall, *Our Island Story*, Tenterden, London, Galore Park and Civitas, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> For a recent reflection on the subject see: Serge Bianchi (ed.), *Héros et héroïnes de la Révolution française*, Paris, Editions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> For a recent study on Medieval hagiography: *Hagiographie, idéologie et politique au Moyen Âge en Occident*, Edina Bozoky (ed.), Turnhout, Brepols Publishers, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Adeline Wrona, *Face au portrait, de Sainte-Beuve à facebook*, Paris, Hermann, 2012. See p. 108 sqq.

<sup>14</sup> During the restoration of the Panthéon from 2013 to 2015, the artist JR exhibited a participative creation with the portraits of anonymous people from the whole world both inside and outside the

commemoration choose the prominent figures that are considered by the political power mainly as true decisive actors in the history of the nation, or in a global representation, of world history. Except perhaps for Louis-Philippe who, with the Invalides, seemingly encouraged a cult that finally destroyed his reign, the power in place finds a confirmation in the figures it celebrates at many different levels, from the towns where they lived to the state itself. More recently, both in France and in Britain, the official funeral ceremonies of the prime ministers Pierre Mauroy and Margaret Thatcher were used appropriately by the parties they belonged to, to revive a period of relatively greater prosperity and to sweep aside the spectre of economical crises.

To this day, books, biopics and various cultural artefacts help crystallise the image of prominent characters in collective memory. National trends do appear: Constantine emerges as a German favourite because of the supposed links between the first two German Empires and the Eastern Roman Empire. Numerous books were published around 2013 for the anniversary of the Edict of Milan whereas during the same period in France only Vincent Puech, Bertrand Lançon together with Tiphaine Moreau and Pierre Maraval published works on the late Roman emperor<sup>15</sup>. Special collections are dedicated to enhance prominent figures in the spirit of the Lives of Plutarch. In 2010, two collections were created in France: “Biographies et mythes historiques” (by Ellipses), “Nouvelles biographies historiques” (by Armand Colin) presented as a collection of portraits associating the biographical narrative and the historical essay and focused on figures having an impact on the contemporary world. Likewise, Taurus in Spain created a collection called *Españoles eminentes* in 2012. The aims of the collection founded by Javier Gomá Lanzón, director of the *Fundación Juan March*, is to contribute to the recent development of biographical writing, offering modern biographies of outstanding Spanish persons in order to make the reader understand how these characters came to epitomise excellence, according to him, and to play a remarkable part in the history of the nation. Finally Javier Gomá Lanzón expresses his wish to attain a large consensus both through the moral values exemplified by these historical figures and through a largely shared tradition<sup>16</sup>, although after two years of existence, this assumption of a wide consensus may be deeply questioned because of the large proportion of religious figures amongst the published biographies (50%) and because of the troubled past of Juan March Ordinas himself. The Juan March foundation is certainly a conservative enterprise inspired by *The Rockefeller Foundation* and the philosopher Javier Gomá Lanzón promotes a revised concept of modernity in

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building. The political message is obvious and both questions the existence of a monument dedicated to a few chosen national figures and reasserts the intrinsic symbolic values of figures, be they anonymous.

<sup>15</sup> Hartwin Brandt, *Konstantin der Grosse: Der erste christliche Kaiser*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 2011; with nearly the same cover, Klaus Rosen, *Konstantin der Große: Kaiser zwischen Machtpolitik und Religion*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, July 2013; Kay Ehring, Gregor Weber, *Konstantin der Große. Zwischen Sol und Christus*, Mainz, Verlag Philip von Zabern, 2011; Manfred Clauss, *Konstantin der Grosse und seine Zeit*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 2010. This list is not exhaustive and can be compared to Pierre Maraval, *La Véritable Histoire de Constantin*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 2010; idem, *Constantin le Grand: empereur romain, empereur chrétien*, Paris, Tallandier, 2014; Vincent Puech, *Constantin*, Paris, Ellipses, 2011; Bertrand Lançon, Tiphaine Moreau, *Constantin: un auguste chrétien*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2012. Every time we could, we gave the month the work was published in order to make visible some convergences in the editorial time-line.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.editorialtaurus.com/es/noticia/coleccion-espanoles-eminentes/>, the blog is dated 20/03/2012. I loosely translated the introduction to the collection. Taurus kept its promise and published Enrique García Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola*, Madrid, Taurus, Españoles Eminentes, March 2013, and Joseph Perez, *Cisneros, el cardenal de España*, Madrid, Taurus, Españoles Eminentes, 26 February 2014.

which imitation and exemplarity are re-evaluated. Nevertheless the fact that such a project is inscribed in a growing global and transnational movement is telling. The public certainly finds a kind of reassurance thanks to these tutelary characters, especially in a period of doubts and deep crisis. The past is obviously made to serve the present.

### Opportunistic interests in the global editorial market

Deaths, or anniversaries of birth or of death, lead to numerous publications because of the symbolic value of the personalities they celebrate but also because they are believed to sell well. The phenomenon can be strictly national or, more significantly, reflect the interests of a more extensive community. Tutelary figures are becoming transnational. Since Thatcher's celebrity, good or bad, goes far beyond the British borders, biographies or memoirs<sup>17</sup> appeared slightly before her actual last moments in various languages and not only as translations from British books. For instance, Gunnela Björk's *Margaret Thatcher, en biografi*<sup>18</sup>, published in March 2013, a few weeks before the P.M.'s passing away, is the first biography on the Prime Minister in Swedish<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, Mandela, both before his death and after, has become a global figure through films and worldwide translations of his biographies and collections of speeches. Hence appeared in Germany under the title *Meine Waffe ist das Wort*, a new edition of a book containing Mandela's speeches and most famous quotations in June 2013<sup>20</sup> and in March 2014, *Mandela. Mein Gefangener, mein Freund*, by Christo Brand and Barbara Jones<sup>21</sup>. A comparable trend is observed in Italy, with for example the translation of John Carlin's *Ama il tuo nemico. Nelson Mandela e la partita di rugby che ha fatto nascere una nazione* in June 2014<sup>22</sup> and a quick enquiry would prove that it also exists in France or Spain or in the Netherlands.

On a more local scale, the prominence of celebrated figures is linked to national history and representativeness. Biographies, novels and narratives of a more undetermined genre are abundantly published in Denmark on Kierkegaard or on the

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<sup>17</sup> *Margaret Thatcher, Los años de Downing Street*, Madrid, Aguilar, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Gunnela Björk, *Margaret Thatcher, en biografi*, Lund, Historiska Media, March 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Wrona shows that obituaries are frequently made before the deaths of public personalities, in fact they are written as soon as the end is thought likely. The same can be said for Ben Jackson, Robert Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, August 2012, and a vast revival of interest from 2011 onwards. Thatcher's *Official Biography* appeared only two days after her funeral (Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography, Not For Turning*, Volume One, London, Allen Lane, 23 April 2013; the second volume appeared in October 2015: Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography, Everything She Wants*, Vol. Two, London, Allen Lane, 2015). See the prosopopeia: Ryuho Okawa, *Margaret Thatcher's Miraculous Message An Interview with the Iron Lady 19 Hours After Her Death*, Tokyo, IRH Press Company Limited, June 2013. IRH Press Company focuses on Ryuho Okawa's works and thoughts exclusively; he promotes a Japanese global sectarian religion called Happy Science.

<sup>20</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Meine Waffe ist das Wort*, translated into German by Elisabeth Liebl, with a Preface by Desmond Tutu, Munich, Kösel-Verlag, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Christo Brand, Barbara Jones, *Mandela. Mein Gefangener, mein Freund*, translated into German by Michael Bayer, Sigrid Schmidt, Wolfram Ströle, Salzburg, Residenz Verlag, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> John Carlin, *Ama il tuo nemico. Nelson Mandela e la partita di rugby che ha fatto nascere una nazione*, translated into Italian by D. Fasic, Milano, Sperling & Kupfer, 2014.

people he was acquainted with to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth<sup>23</sup>. It must be noticed that new criticism on Kierkegaard belongs to a larger transnational phenomenon<sup>24</sup>, whereas it seems that a more private enquiry on the man and not on the philosopher is a more Danish one, as if the genre and the medium of the commemoration also depended on the notoriety and on the symbolic appeal the figure could have on various publics.

In fact, in matters of opportunistic publishing strategies, any kind of anniversary can lead to a string of publications and reissues. For the 500-year anniversary of *The Prince*<sup>25</sup>, Gennaro M. Barbuto published *Machiavelli* and Volker Reinhardt, *Machiavelli, oder Die Kunst der Macht, eine Biographie*<sup>26</sup>. Likewise I. Natali translated a novel by the American author Michael Ennis, *The Malice of Fortune*, under the title *La congiura Machiavelli*<sup>27</sup>, to echo the Florentine celebrations of the 16<sup>th</sup>-Century thinker. The same opportunism appears at the re-edition in July of Antonio Gramsci's *Machiavelli*<sup>28</sup>. Economical reasons thus strongly interfere with the building of common social and historical references. But these economical reasons are only possible when, to quote Reinhardt's cover: Machiavelli or other representative figures "have something to tell us today"<sup>29</sup>. Notwithstanding the somewhat venal motivations, one must stress the fact that if profit is possible and for the editors plausible enough to risk money and hire translators, it is linked to the special appeal historical characters have on the national public, and for some global prominent figures on the international floor as well.

Liberal historiography that became dominant during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is probably to blame. Its well-known teleological thrust transforms the past in a series of reflections that help justify the present and even though history does not repeat itself, numerous analogies are built to influence contemporary politics. Hence political strategies combine with prospects of gain, and in some cases are more important than the money to be actually earned! For that matter, the publication of *Brigham Young, Pioneer Prophet* during the American Election campaign and Mitt Romney's candidacy is certainly not a coincidence since, as Turner points out, "secular liberals use the origins of Mormonism to cast doubt upon church members' intellect and fitness for high office."<sup>30</sup> The allusion to Romney is obvious and seems to question the public diffidence, although the stress the biographer lays on Young's plural marriages and the practice of speaking in tongues may seem to give fuel to the negative image of the Mormons. The "prophet's" racist theology that excluded African Americans from some

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<sup>23</sup> Joakim Garff, *Regines gåde*, Copenhagen, Gads forlag, 2013; Sørine Gotfredsen, *At leve med Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen, Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, 2013 or Peter Tudvad, *Forbandelsen*, Copenhagen, Vorlag Politiken, 2013, a novel on Kierkegaard.

<sup>24</sup> Among numerous examples: Hélène Bouchilloux, *Kierkegaard et la fiction du christianisme dans les Miettes philosophiques*, prefaced by Hélène Politis, Paris, Hermann, 2014; Axel Hutter, Anders Moe Rasmussen (eds.), *Kierkegaard im Kontext des deutschen Idealismus*, Berlin, DeGruyter, 2014; Karl S. Hughes, *Kierkegaard and the Staging of Desire: Rhetoric and Performance in a Theology of Eros*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Gennaro M. Barbuto, *Machiavelli*, Rome, Salerno, March 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Volker Reinhardt, *Machiavelli, oder Die Kunst der Macht, eine Biographie*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Ennis, *La congiura Machiavelli*, translated into Italian by I. Natali, Rome, Newton Compton Editori, 2013. In French, the translation has a more enigmatic title: *1502*.

<sup>28</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Note Sul Machiavelli, Sulla Politica E Sullo Stato Moderno: Quaderni Dal Carcere*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Volker Reinhardt, *Machiavelli, op. cit.*, n.p.

<sup>30</sup> Turner, *Brigham Young, op. cit.*, p. 2.

of the main rites and from the core practice of full spiritual sealing<sup>31</sup> can be opposed to Obama's own candidacy against Romney, despite the evolutions of the Mormon doctrine itself.

Because of the political power of History, the past is crowded with more or less successful forerunners that confirm the story historians or thinkers or even social groups wish to tell. Recently Enoch Powell, a prominent politician in Britain, appeared in a book largely written by Conservative members to prove that he was right about many things in Europe, on economics and on the United State. Hence he becomes a kind of magus capable of having predicted the current collapse of the European Union, a forerunner of Thatcherism which, under the pen of these Conservative thinkers, is considered as the end, the *terminus ad quem* of history itself, and more interestingly in the context of growing euro-scepticism and of global economic crisis, as a kind of Cassandra in the sixties and early seventies of the future woes of Britain and Europe. His party did not listen to him at the time, but, through this book, it seems, ironically enough, to be willing to listen to him now! Powell as many other leaders and politicians showed a road that was not chosen, but the figure of the unsuccessful but esteemed minister and M.P. lets the reader think about alternative History: what if we had listened to him? What if he had succeeded in his enterprise?

The compelling game of hypotheses seems the same with other major figures. Charlemagne is one of the most famous examples of these leaders whose legacy seems partial, of the imperfect forerunner: the Carolingian Renaissance announces the "real" 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Renaissance, his achievements seem incomplete and can only be understood when the cultural and political development of Europe becomes more enduring. In that sense, Montefiore's short chapter on the Emperor, or Jean Favier's *Charlemagne*<sup>32</sup>, that consider the "so-called Carolingian Renaissance" (Montefiore) as a mere temporary "awakening" (Favier), are closely attuned to the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century liberal representations and underline his temporary and fragile greatness. However, thanks to the 12<sup>th</sup> centenary of his death this year, numerous exhibitions counter this mitigated heritage, as proven by the three commemorations in Aachen on his power and on the art and treasures of the Carolingian Empire. Another exhibition in Zürich, "Charlemagne and Switzerland," wishes to demonstrate how Charlemagne transformed Europe and how his reforms are the basis of our culture. On the occasion, Eginhard's *Vie de Charlemagne*<sup>33</sup> has been reedited so as to give an inside narrative of the emperor's reign. Time will tell whether it is a temporary reassessment of Charlemagne's legacy or a more permanent tendency.

Nevertheless, the lesson of this teleological reading of the past is that leaders have to come at the right moment—it may reminds us of Grousset's image of God's wings—and at the right place when the people are ripe to receive and to carry out their message, otherwise the success will be short-lived and hardly extend beyond the life of the leader. If this ideal combination of circumstance is not achieved, the result is incomplete or fails in the long run. 19<sup>th</sup>-Century French and English analysis of Italian history especially is fraught with this kind of prejudice. The 14<sup>th</sup>-Century Cola de

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<sup>31</sup> The term refers to marriages that were thought to be prolonged after death. Hence prominent figures in the community could be sealed with other women in order to assure them with protection and status in the afterlife.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Favier, *Charlemagne*, Paris, Tallandier, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Eginhard (770-840), *Vie de Charlemagne*, prefaced, edited and translated by Michel Sot and Christiane Veyrard-Cosme, Paris, Belles Lettres, 2014.

Rienzi might have been right in announcing the possible revival of Rome and of an independent Italy but Mary Russell Mitford (1825) and Edward Bulwer Lytton (1835), inspired by the Swiss Sismondi, harp on the fact that the population was not ready and thus, in the end, betrayed its own cause<sup>34</sup>. Liberal historiography is deeply opportunistic because the present times are implicitly considered as the final outcome. At the time when Edward Bulwer Lytton was writing his novel, new plans to build an Italian nation were attempted. Their possible realisation was still uncertain and the predictive value of Rienzi could be read both ways, either as the harbinger of a new failure or as the glorious prophet of better days to come.

One can surmise that Gautam Makunder's<sup>35</sup> choice of leaders to prove his theory on filtered and non-filtered leaders, and the judgement on their impact in *Indispensable. When Leaders really Matter*, is based on comparable implicit strategies and on the assumption that the past may have a predictive value:

The trick [...] is figuring out which leaders matter, when and why, and what lessons we can take from those who do. In puzzling out the answers to these questions, we will focus on those individuals who seem very different from everyone else who might have been in their shoes. The consistent pattern of their careers [...] will help answer our question about which individuals really did have impact. It will help identify contemporary leaders who could have a large impact, and even evaluate candidates for leadership. Along the way we will build a new theory about leaders that, even as it acknowledges that most individual leaders have little impact, identifies the relatively rare circumstances when a single individual *in the right place, at the right time*, can make history.<sup>36</sup>

The theory establishes that high impact leaders, for better or for worse, are *non-filtered*<sup>37</sup>, that is to say that they escape general expectations in the various circles of power and do not belong to the usual groups in which leaders are generally chosen: Lincoln and Churchill are given as positive examples of *non-filtered leaders*, whereas Al Dunlap, “the CEO of Sunbeam who took the company into bankruptcy after barely a year,”<sup>38</sup> appears as a negative one. The aim of Makunda is to have the very best of both ways, that is to say to be able to combine the prudential predictability of filtered leaders, and thus minimize the risk of psychologically disordered and overconfident personalities which are some of the frequent traits of these non-filtered chiefs, with the highly innovative thrust some of them do indeed possess<sup>39</sup>. As a researcher in a Behavioural Unit, his ultimate goal is to find how single individuals might emerge successfully without incurring the drawback of having a catastrophic leader, which is the most likely, at the head of a nation or of a firm. Once again, past lives are supposed to teach us a lesson for the present, to solve what seems like an unsolvable dilemma, with, of course, the epistemological flaw that these lives that are narrated in the book

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<sup>34</sup> RIENZO/RIENZI, international symposium, Université Toulouse le Mirail, June 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>th</sup> 2013, organized by Dr Christophe Imbert.

<sup>35</sup> Gautam Mukunda is an assistant professor in the Organizational Behaviour Unit at Harvard Business School. His book has been considered as a major breakthrough in the American Media and among American intellectuals.

<sup>36</sup> Gautam Mukunda, *Indispensable. When Leaders really Matter*, Harvard, Harvard Business Review Press, 2012, p. 2. My emphasis.

<sup>37</sup> Filtered and unfiltered belong to Mukunda's vocabulary.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> The positive examples remind us of the figure and of the role of the genius in John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, 1859.

give the impression that they were precisely elected by Makunda himself because they proved the point he wished to make, which is that “most of the time, Plato and Marx are right. Under most circumstances, it doesn’t much matter who ends up as leader,”<sup>40</sup> but that in some rare cases happy or unhappy accidents happen. The amplitude of the breakthrough depends on the risk one wishes to take.

This paper only examines part of the many functions of historical figures. The aesthetic function of (in)famous anecdotes should be left to a study in its own right. The often scandalous and provocative power of the various adaptations of the Borgias or the Tudors, the re-edition of Robert Graves of the *I Claudius* series or the forthcoming *Royal Marriage Secrets: Consorts & Concubines, Bigamists & Bastards* by John Ashdown-Hill prove that sensationalism has a deep appeal on the audience, and questions to a certain extent the so-called moral value of exemplary figures. But it is no novelty if Suetonius, Plutarch, Procopius and Voragine are, so to speak, reverses of the same coin. We have demonstrated here that commemoration politics is often opportunistic both in the sense that it obeys to economical reasons and that, in the selection process itself, it is closely entwined with the present times. That is perhaps the reason why the revival of individual histories, the reference to *loci memoris* are very strong at the moment because new symbols have to be found amongst the turmoils and crises of global societies.

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<sup>40</sup> G. Mukunda, *Indispensable, op. cit.*, p. 19.