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Illuminating Vestige: Amateur Archaeology and the Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Rural France

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REINVENTING THE PAST

Propelled forward, we've turned, quite manifestly, backward, looking for the signs, signatures, and substantiating echoes of a world that underlies our own.

———Gustaf Sobin (1999: 4)

The postwar years, for Fernand Braudel (1989) and other historians, marked an era in French rural history that saw the final break with that country's age-old peasant civilization.¹ The mechanization of agriculture in the 1950s, funded largely by the Marshall Plan, cut the need for a large agricultural workforce, and a complex range of social and historical forces conspired to drive through major changes in French rural life, whose repercussions are still present today. New beginnings inevitably imply a rupture. Yet what appears to be a uniform transition is often more complex, and such periodizations necessarily exclude the ethnographic contingencies of change. This article concerns such a contingency: the abrupt awakening of interest in collecting Roman vestige in a village in Mediterranean France during a key juncture in local historical development during the 1970s. This modest shift in "historical mentality," as analysis will demonstrate, is more consequential than it appears. The vestige with which we are concerned is secreted from the silt that lines the lagoon of Monadières, some 5 kilometers from the city

¹ Braudel (1989) and Mendras (1970) date the disappearance of the French peasantry to the decades following the Second World War. Weber (1976) and others view the nineteenth century and the coming of the railways as instrumental in the peasantry's dissolution. Yet French rural history and its periodizations are arguably differential and locally nuanced, as Gavignaud-Fontaine (1997) demonstrates for the Narbonnais. The historical schema of a *longue durée* followed by a dramatic rupture is also a modernist and popular French myth about rural history, and epoch-making more generally is partly an expression of ethical and political criteria (Hodges 2010).

of Narbonne in the province of Languedoc. It is the debris of thousands of items of pottery that were jettisoned into the port of *Narbo Martius* during the first and second centuries AD—a port which ceased to exist when the river that flushed its silt into the sea violently changed course during the Middle Ages and left it landlocked by sand banks. *Narbo Martius* was the antecedent of Narbonne and the capital of *Gallia Narbonensis*, the Roman province that stretched from the Alps through modern Provence to Languedoc. Its relics are now scattered, and the final stage in this process took place during the nineteenth century, when spectacular city walls fashioned over the centuries from a bricolage of Roman vestige were torn down to make way for the traffic of an ephemeral wine boom.² What remains is an immense quantity of pottery shards—rust-red Gallo-Roman *terra sigillata* (sigillated pottery), fragments of amphorae, oil lamps, the rare spall of a red-figure Greek vase—which are discharged from the lagoon’s silt by the north-westerly *Cers* wind that blasts the Narbonnais during the winter months.³ It is likely that these fragments are what remain of the rubbish, pure and simple, of that Gallo-Roman colony, which was disposed of in the waters of the port.

For many hundreds of years this detritus was of negligible interest. “When the fishermen first saw us wading in the water, collecting it,” one pottery hunter told me, speaking of the 1970s, “they thought we were crazy. They’d say they saw it all the time, that it was just trash.”⁴ Yet soon enough, many of these same fishermen would be mooring their boats at the pottery-hunting grounds across the lagoon, and wading up to their waists in the brackish water, seeking the rust-red shards for themselves. Hauls were ferried back across the water dank with the odor of the lagoon’s silt, in buckets that on working days conserved eels, bream, and bass. Modest “collections” were assembled. And in due course, the delicately sigillated shards were ranked and valorized, prestige was accorded to successful hunters, and tales of exceptional finds were relayed by word of mouth to be digested in the summer-evening *veillées*. A living tradition or culture of “pottery hunting” emerged and briefly flourished. And if this “craze” with the temporality of a fashion (Buck-Morss 1993: 97–99) declined in the 1980s, many villagers still hold onto their collections. They have become doubly reminiscent—of that epoch when the village was still *comme une famille* [“like a family”], as

² The walls were torn down during 1867–1880, and forgotten until the 1990s, when “the photographic treasures of the Narbonne-Mignard family” were discovered and published (*l’Indépendant du Midi*, 31 May 1997). Their destruction subsequently prompted outcry on the part of the heritage tourism sector. This incident furnishes a parallel illustration of how the Roman past has been “refolded” into novel incarnations and valorizations over the centuries.

³ “Sigillated pottery” was produced at key sites in Gaul and Italy. It is a glossy orange or red pottery, attractively decorated with figures or emblems in low relief, which was produced on an industrial scale. It was widely used as tableware from about 50 BC to the third century AD.

⁴ I have used the term “pottery hunt” for this activity, to account for French and Occitan expressions, as there was no trace of a local terminology around the activity. This should be distinguished from the term “pot-hunter,” the pejorative North American label for amateur collectors of potsherds.

Monadièrois put it, and of the ambiguous, seemingly pastoral civilization that the sigillated images of wheat, and grapes, and animals evoke, now uncannily resonant of that earlier, vanished epoch of village life (see Hodges 2010: 122–25).

Popular enthusiasm for archaeological vestige has been noted in the social scientific and historical literature, although it has been insufficiently detailed and theorized in the context of local cultural practice. Raphael Samuel (1994) has written at length of that wave of interest in the past which has developed most intensely in Western Europe since the 1960s, and is still prevalent today. Partly motivated by the search for “roots” stimulated by modernity and cultural rupture, inspired too by that sense of “thrownness” (*geworfenheit*) intrinsic to lived experience (Heidegger 1993), such enthusiasm has given rise to an increase in “unofficial knowledge” about the past alongside the “official knowledge” of legitimized state and academic discourses. “[H]istory is not the prerogative of the historian,” Samuel writes, “nor even ... a historian’s ‘invention’” (1994: 8). Rather, he suggests, it is always a social form of knowing the past, and primarily a “popular” one, an everyday practice to which the work of historiographers contributes and in terms of which their narratives too must be read. Hence his memorable proposal, “If history was thought of as an activity rather than a profession, then the number of its practitioners would be legion” (*ibid.*: 17). No doubt he would include the pottery hunters of Monadières among their number.

Samuel’s vision, associated with the “History Workshop” movement, is a democratic and egalitarian view of the human relationship with the past, founded on socialist, and toward the end of his life, increasingly populist principles. And despite the ire he has provoked among some historians over the years (e.g., Le Goff 1992: 128–32) that are uncomfortable with the parallel he draws between professional and “amateur” practices, his words are particularly appropriate to invoke here. For a key catalyst in the emergence of the “amateur” archaeological practice with which I am concerned was a socialist historiographer, Jean Roudaut, and his wife Monique, a teacher. The emergence of this new mode of knowing the past was linked to Roudaut’s historiographical interests, and his enthusiasm for Occitan and Breton regionalism. Indeed, it was arguably a local *reinvention* of these “official” discourses (see Wagner 1981: 31–34). As we will see, it was also propelled by processes of time-space compression and rapid social and political economic change that were encroaching on local life (Harvey 1989). Such forces were introducing images of a chronologically and qualitatively dilating past, and of open, uncertain futures, that located village life in a regional and wider world of simultaneity (Kern 1983). They provoked the reinvention of Monadièrois relations with the past as a core dimension of local identity politics.⁵ Finally, this case is of particular interest in that it

⁵ The notion of the “dilating past” draws attention to how, under such historical conditions, the present becomes “littered” with the detritus and memory of former existences, “outmoded” ways of life that in various ways may then be reintegrated into alternative projects (Hodges 2002: 210–13).

concerns a predominantly non-narrative and affective genre of knowing the past that usurps the historiographer's and archaeologist's "official" media.

The first wave of anthropological studies of lived history in the 1980s acknowledged that "other histories" do not necessarily "look like" historiography, but suggested that they retain narrative or semantic features that are recognizably "historical" in form or orientation. This was compounded by a tendency to retain the Western cultural terminology and assumptions of "historiography" as an analytical frame (e.g., Hastrup 1992; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989). The second wave, dating from the 1990s, reveals how these other "histories," if that is the right term for them, can in fact appear distinctly "other" (e.g., Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Lambek 2002). A key advance in recent anthropological studies recognizes that social invocations of the past can take non-narrative, embodied, relatively unstructured (no linear or chronological organization), and even "unintentional" forms such as dreaming or spirit possession, which bear little resemblance to Western historical narratives, or indeed classic parallels for these in lineage genealogies. Likewise, they do not constitute examples of "social memory," since memory does not necessarily play a central part (Fentress and Wickham 1992). Such invocations, importantly, may also be founded on distinct "ontological" understandings of relations between past, present, and future, which are culturally specific (Hirsch and Moretti 2010: 279–83). In this respect, the practices described here contrast with recent studies that have focused on unofficial media for invoking the past (e.g., Hodges 2010; Lambek 2002; Stewart 2003). They illustrate how "official," Western historical media can be converted into predominantly non-narrative forms for such invocations.

In this sense, the article presents a study of what might be termed, in a twist on Wagner's conception, a "reverse historiography." In *The Invention of Culture*, Wagner writes: "If 'culture' becomes paradoxical and challenging when applied to the meanings of tribal societies, we might speculate as to whether a 'reverse anthropology' is possible, literalizing the metaphors of modern industrial civilization from the [other's] standpoint" (1981: 31). Anthropology is not the only paradigm that can be "reversed," and I present here an expressive practice for invoking the past that emerged in response to historiographical discourse, rearticulating its chronological "depth" and idiom in a manner attendant on local orientations, futures, and needs. Furthermore, its presence within modern Europe is also notable, illustrating how even within the French state, official and academic historical discourses have only recently, and unevenly been melded with local practices. Indeed, the dominant form of knowing the past in Monadières during the 1970s arguably comprised a living oral tradition, synthesizing memory, "history," and myth, with profound temporal roots—part of that legacy of the Languedocian peasantry that was unevenly assimilated into the viticultural economy and dominant French culture during the nineteenth century. The article illustrates how this uneven

process of assimilation has produced novel ways of knowing the past within Europe, which cast a distinctive light on official conservation discourses which might view the practices described here as mild forms of “looting the past.”⁶ It also illustrates how traces of precapitalist, “peasant” cultural practices are still present within rural social formations in contemporary Europe, in contrast to the thesis of Braudel and others.

Finally, a valuable way of bringing this event into focus is furnished by anthropological theories of “historicity” (Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Hodges 2010; Lambek 2002), which offer a counterpart to dominant conceptions of “historical consciousness.” As Hirsch and Stewart write:

Historicity describes a human situation in flow, where versions of the past and future (of persons, collectives or things) assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions.... [It] is the manner in which persons operating under the constraints of social ideologies make sense of the past, while anticipating the future.... Whereas “history” [e.g., Western “historicism”] isolates the past, historicity focuses on the complex temporal nexus of past-present-future.... To understand historicity in any particular ethnographic context, then, is to know the relevant ways in which (social) pasts and futures are implicated in present circumstances (2005: 262–63).

“Historicity,” in this anthropological sense, frames the invocation of the past as a cultural practice through which agents “engage with and produce knowledge about [the] past while anticipating [the] future” (ibid.: 267; see also Lambek 2002).⁷ Memory and imagination remain important organs of invocation, but are subsumed into a historically and temporally nuanced conception of human sociality, which allows for analysis of the diverse ways in which the past and future are referenced in cultural practice within an integrative framework. Likewise, it is vital to note that invoking the past *always* implicates the future. In this sense, historicity and temporality are meshed, with the modalities of the latter arguably constitutive of the former (Hirsch and Stewart 2005: 269–72; Heidegger 1993: 424–49; Deleuze 2004: 90–114), an insight which anthropological theorists of historicity are yet to significantly develop, and which I attend to here. Importantly, historicity is also implicated in the exercise of power, given that control over pasts and futures influences action in the

⁶ I refrain here from “judging” pottery hunters from a conservation perspective, aware that some might assess this practice negatively as a form of “looting” the area’s heritage.

⁷ For Lambek, historicity concerns “how the relationship of past to present is locally formulated and understood in the present—how the past is articulated with the present to give a particular shape and form to time.” In ethnographic terms, it must be investigated in terms of “the specific discursive forms, registers, and modes of practice by means of which it is produced and engaged” (Lambek 2002: 11–12). These anthropological conceptions of historicity differ from other usages (Geschichtlichkeit), which may index the authenticity of historical facts; the quality of existing concretely and historically; or have technical meanings linked to phenomenology. While the term “historicity” originates within the Western historiographical tradition, recent anthropological research appropriates it for largely distinct ends.

present. Such practices act as a hinge that connects subjects to wider power networks (Munn 1992: 109, 115).

This approach therefore foregrounds analysis of “the implications of the meaningful forms and concrete media of practices for apprehension of the past” (ibid.: 113), and their corresponding future orientations, within an anthropology of the lived experience of historical time. Importantly, it positions the practice of historiography *within* its analytical frame, while acknowledging its distinction and value as a knowledge practice.⁸ “Popular history” and the work of the historian are thus social forms of knowing the past, as Samuel (1994) argues, alongside other practices such as social memory and myth. But the notion of “historicity” offers a working, cross-cultural alternative to both Samuel’s historiographically informed framework, and the ways in which anthropologists have drawn on the historiographical tradition, its idiom and ontologies, to frame social ways of knowing the past (Hirsch and Stewart 2005: 263–67). It also provides an alternative to other approaches from within the discipline of history, such as Rüsen’s (1996) theory of “historical culture,” which it resembles. Such doxic notions of “history” and “historical consciousness” have dominated our theoretical understanding, and their Western origins—including the severance of integrative, dynamic relations between past, present and future—have gone largely unremarked until recently. By contrast, we should immediately note that “historical consciousness” is deployed in this article as an ethnographic term for a “historicity” with elements drawn from Western historiography, and associated ideological conceptions of historical timespace.

PLACING VESTIGE IN HISTORICAL TIME

Monadières is a village of some six hundred permanent inhabitants, and lies on a brackish lagoon bordering the Mediterranean Sea, some 10 kilometers from the city of Narbonne in the Aude *département* of the Languedoc *région* of Southern France. The lagoon supports one of the two economic activities for which the village is locally renowned: it is still fished by a handful of artisanal fishermen for eels. As for the other, much of Monadières’ arid, stony earth, crossed by the motorway that leads to Montpellier and Toulouse in the north and Barcelona in the south, is planted with vines whose grapes produce the local variety of Corbières wine. The population, however, is far from comprising an integrated community living off fishing and agriculture. While 55 percent of permanent residents claim to be from the village, the other 45 percent are recent immigrants, and 30 percent of the housing belongs to second-home owners, of predominantly urban, north European origin. Briefly, inhabitants of Monadières comprised “long-term residents,” or “Monadiérois” (those

⁸ Hirsch and Stewart (2005) provide an anthropological account of the “historical” and “historiographical” outlook.

of indigenous heritage, of at least second-generation descent, effectively comprising a “kindred”), “recent immigrants,” “second-home owners,” and “tourists.”⁹ These social groups as perceived by the anthropologist are viewed as such by local people as well. Any sense of community is thus fragmented, and ongoing tensions exist between Monadiérois and other inhabitants, who many Monadiérois view as “colonizing” the village in a pejorative sense, contributing to their marginalization and dispersal as a social group, and driving up house prices to an unaffordable degree. Agriculture and fishing are also no longer the dominant sources of employment: only 13 percent of the village now lives exclusively off viticulture and fishing, as opposed to 75 percent in 1946, and those who grow grapes do so to supplement an income derived from other jobs. More than 60 percent of the active population works in the shops, service industries, and factories of nearby Narbonne, only ten minutes away by car.¹⁰ The decreasing importance of Monadières as a site of economic activity, however, has been countered. Since the 1980s, many individuals—chiefly incomers—and the *conseil municipal* have begun to cultivate heritage tourism in the locality. The village council is now largely made up of incomers, and the cultural heritage of indigenous Monadiérois is increasingly appropriated for heritage tourism projects. The inability of young Monadiérois to purchase homes in the village is also a serious development, accelerating the group’s fragmentation, even if many of those selling houses for inflated sums are their own families.

If the preceding description provides a contemporary snapshot of the village, during the 1970s life was significantly different. To begin with, the population, 376 in 1975, stood at almost half its current number, and over half of the village’s working adults still labored within the *commune*, chiefly in viticulture and fishing. Only a third of women worked, as opposed to two-thirds in the late 1990s. Notably, second-home owners possessed a fifth of the available housing, and there were few recent immigrants. The village still “belonged,” then, to the Monadiérois. The chief ritual events of the year also revolved around established local industries: the *fête de la vendange* (harvest *fête*) in October, and the *fête de pêcheurs* (fishermen’s *fête*) in July, were the mainstays of the year’s festivities. They would disappear or pale in significance by the 1980s, to be replaced by festivals that were increasingly oriented towards tourism by the early twenty-first century.

At a general level, many cultural features of everyday life also pertained to the “deep” or “enduring time”¹¹ of long-term traditional practices—from the

⁹ This brief overview masks differentiation within these social groupings.

¹⁰ *Commune* of Monadières, French state censuses of 1946 and 1999, Archives départementales de l’Aude, 11000 Carcassonne.

¹¹ For Gurvitch, enduring time is where “the past is projected in the present and in the future. This is the most continuous of the social times despite its retention of some proportion of the qualitative and the contingent penetrated with multiple meanings.... Among the social classes it is the

cooking and eating of homegrown or locally hunted food, to the widespread playing of ritualized practical jokes, to the communal evening *veillées*. The living tradition of “grotesque” nicknaming, for example, endured from those folk cultures of the Middle Ages which had nourished Rabelais (Bakhtin 1984); and such everyday practices, which are core emblems of Monadiérois belonging, had been consolidated in their current forms during the long nineteenth century of viticultural expansion, with the emergence of a Languedocian working class rooted in precapitalist “peasant” living traditions (Fabre and Lacroix 1973). Ultimately, then, this enduring social time, if fractured and rent by the periodic convulsions of viticultural capitalism, still retained its potential for symbolization as the cusp of an epoch of long-term temporal continuity, in relation to the duration of a life being lived. The past was not yet perceived as the foreign country it seems today, and the future had not colonized the present in so comprehensive a fashion. This rendered the lived experience of the early 1970s, at least, qualitatively different from life in the 1990s.

The second half of the 1970s, however, would see the consolidation of ruptures in living traditions that were already in progress: the vanishing of the conviviality of the *veillées* with the rapid encroachment of television; the decline of viticulture and contraction of the agricultural workforce; new work in industries such as the Narbonne tile factory or supermarkets; the spread of car ownership and “technologies of comfort” such as the washing machine and central heating; and the easing of cultural values and a shift in the authority of living traditions, following on the heels of the cultural revolution of the 1960s and the expansion of consumer society. In sum, enduring time was being substituted by more *erratic* forms of social timespace.¹² Significantly, there was also a broadening of cultural horizons and conceptions of identity, as the mass media and local tourism rendered Monadiérois more conscious of a world beyond the immediately tangible. This encouraged local identification with regional, French, and European imagined communities (Anderson 1991), particularly among the young. It precipitated a rupture in the local temporal fabric,¹³ as the past loosened its ties to the cultural media

peasant class, and among the global societies the patriarchal structures which appear to actualize this time” (1964: 31).

¹² Erratic time is that “enigmatic series of intervals and moments placed within duration. This is a time of uncertainty par excellence where contingency is accentuated, while the qualitative element and discontinuity become prominent eventually. The present appears to prevail over the past and the future, with which it sometimes finds it difficult to enter into relations.... This is the time of global societies in transition, as our society of today so often is” (Gurvitch 1964: 32–33).

¹³ The term “temporal fabric” refers to those cultural media used for the evocation and co-ordination of time and activities, and time’s dimensions (past-present-future). These might include calendars, clocks, and so on involved in “time reckoning”, but also other symbolic media such as language with its complex temporal markers, or narrative genres (see also Gell 1992: 118–26).

of communal oral history, to be invoked more frequently via the mass media of televised history, the local papers, the *lieu de mémoire*, on a greatly expanded spatio-temporal scale (Le Goff 1992: 90–97; Nora 1997).

The increasingly differentiated presence of the past—apparent across the Western world—was complemented by a dilation in its volume, driven by an “acceleration” in rates of social change (Hodges 2002: 210–13). In Monadières, this was intensified by the sudden availability of historiographical media for invoking the local past. In 1979 Jean Roudaut published the first “local history” of Monadières, informed by the extensive but hitherto undisturbed village archives. His interests formed part of the growing influence of the regionalist Occitan movement, another imagined community to assimilate. In this regard, local activists, including the socialist village council, sought to reinvent local living traditions and an Occitan identity as a counterweight to northern French “domination.” They viewed historiography as a key resource for revaluing local pasts and making them available for actualization (e.g., Fabre and Lacroix 1973). That said, Monadiérois, who were predominantly working class, continued to articulate their independence and dissidence through an overt hostility to the outside world, for which they had long been renowned, that classic “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985).

A grasp of the *longue durée* of the *commune*’s political economy is necessary to properly contextualize these substantive transformations.¹⁴ It is important to immediately note that during the past two hundred years, the plain of Languedoc has had a complex history. Viticulture was the most important economic activity from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1970s, and the subject of a veritable economic boom during the 1870s and 1880s. Its historical development is characterized by instability and crisis, and this has periodically resonated across the varied domains of local life. However, the Narbonnais entered the nascent capitalist economy in the late 1700s with the development of commercial wheat production in the region. The area was renowned for the quality of its grain, such that in 1788 the governor of Narbonne, Charles Bailainvilliers, could write, “There is no region in France that produces better wheat.” Wheat took its place alongside an enduring Mediterranean polycultural peasant economy, which was not fully displaced. But after several decades of uneasy co-habitation, viticulture rapidly gained ground as cheap wine became the favored sedative of the French urban proletariat. The transition from this mixed economy of the early nineteenth century to a capitalist, viticultural monoculture by the 1870s was both convulsive and synthetic. It required substantial hybridization of local customs, as the workforce adopted the new organizational arrangements, relations of domination, and ethos of a viticultural proletariat. This was particularly the case among the hundreds of labor migrants

¹⁴ This account draws on the work of Fabre and Lacroix 1973; Frader 1991; Gavignaud-Fontaine 1997; and Roudaut 1979.

from inland, who mainly worked as day laborers (the population of the *commune* peaked at 1,193 in 1881, compared with 796 in 1856). Yet these modifications grew out of an established, durable peasant culture that, at the customary level, flourished in a climate of increased prosperity (Fabre and Lacroix 1973). Thus it was a time of transformation, rupture, and cultural continuity.

Further transformations were in store. The *phylloxera* crisis of the 1880s, when an invasive plague of insects devastated French vineyards, occasioned a new reorganization of the workforce as smaller producers went out of business. Thirty years later, market crises and the advent of the *cave coopérative* worked in the small producer's favor, and the viticultural smallholding became dominant. Mechanization followed in the 1950s, which saw the workforce decrease dramatically over the following decade and the introduction of new techniques of production that were vividly recounted to me by older wine growers, who found themselves working alone with machines for much of the time. And throughout this time there was the need to consider what the markets and innovation might bring, such as a drop in prices or new techniques that had to be quickly mastered. While from a long-term perspective viticulture is therefore marked by dynamic historical transformation and crisis, it must be recalled that these changes took place over many years, and importantly, in terms of the lived experience of actual individuals, many aspects of everyday practice may have remained consistent for extended periods. "Traditional" practices were therefore present in periods of short-term historical stability that, apparently insignificant in the *longue durée*, nevertheless stretched over significant extents of a life being lived. Indeed, in conversation it was those times of intensive, substantial change, such as the 1950s and 1960s, which were singled out, rather than intermediate periods when new techniques had been assimilated.

Turning to fishing, the number of fishermen grew during the viticultural boom, from forty-two in 1861 to fifty-four in 1911, before trailing off to ten in 1968. During this time, techniques remained constant, and when transformations occurred they took place gradually, being incorporated into a body of practices in which the past appeared as the way things had always been done. By the 1990s, however, numbers of fishermen had again increased due to the changes of the 1960s and 1970s. Fishermen adopted nylon netting, outboard motors, and fiberglass boats, which enabled them to increase their catches. Nylon nets required less time to construct, and could be left in the waters of the lagoon for longer than cotton netting; outboard motors were faster than sails. Improvements in transport networks and expanding markets then permitted fishermen to increase profits. Such transformations signaled the transition to a capitalist mode of production, whose effects were most strongly felt during the mid-to-late 1970s, when the subsistence ethic had been comprehensively displaced and surpluses converted into capital and disposable income. Village fishermen's principal market at this time became large

commercial organizations in the lagoons around Venice, who purchase live eels, fatten them up, and sell them on the lucrative markets of Northern Europe. Fishermen who were historically subsistence-oriented, and purveyors of their surplus on local markets, effectively became petty commodity producers. The creation of this relative affluence, and the decrease in working hours enabled by low maintenance boats and netting, were instrumental in freeing up “leisure time” among fishing families for pottery hunting.

This overview at once illustrates how different economic activities have experienced different timescales of historical development, although the transformations of the 1960s and 1970s can already be seen to have constituted a notable and turbulent juncture. Intensified experience of cultural upheaval, likewise, was confined to specific periods, such as the 1970s. Finally, let us consider tourism. Historical change in France in the last fifty years has been significantly influenced by the development of an international and internal tourist industry. In Languedoc this assumed the form of state-driven construction projects during the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in tourism infrastructure being built along the entirety of the region’s coastline. Monadières and two other villages on the lagoon’s borders, due to environmental obstacles, remain the only settlements that were not restructured. These developments diversified at the end of the 1970s into a state-led project to create a new, decentralized tourism infrastructure to satisfy “holiday-makers”’ desires for diverse experiences, while channeling capital into rural areas negatively affected by the modernization of agriculture. The plan was to mobilize the celebrated diversity of the French state just as it was publicly perceived to be threatened by homogenization. Regional ways of life, often transformed beyond recognition by postwar upheavals, were symbolically codified in museum exhibits; the idiosyncrasies of regional produce and the built environment were repackaged for tourists; the ever-increasing narratives of local and professional historians were utilized to provide depth to this differentiation of identities that would render each region unique, and inviting.

The tale is that of the problematic development of rural tourism under European modernity, linked to the broader development of cultural and heritage tourism (Boissevain 1996; Hewison 1987; Samuel 1994). The first incidence of heritage tourism in Monadières is traceable to the businesses of Pierre Cadasus, an entrepreneur and fisherman. In the late 1970s he started to offer hospitality services at his restaurant that incorporated symbolizations of local cuisine as products of historic local traditions, and fish dishes in particular as the product of historic artisanal fishing practices, via decorative wall-displays and menu texts (see Hodges 2001). This disembedding of local cultural practices in terms of a distinctive local heritage, and their commodification for tourists, were followed by projects focused on the consumption of “traditional” local products and the past-infused ambiance of the built environment,

linked with enjoyment of the “natural” heritage of the locality (“eco-tourism”). The *conseil municipal* took a leading role in these matters, which constitutes a further rupture in local relations with the past during the 1970s. But at the time, the most pressing issue for Monadiérois concerned plans to develop the village as a yachting marina and a luxury hotel, which were ultimately thwarted by the instability of the marshy ground. Such developments nevertheless awakened Monadiérois in a further concrete manner to the expanding and encroaching world beyond the village.

The cumulative result in local consciousness of these long-term changes—the mechanization of viticulture, technological advances in fishing, processes of “detraditionalization” (Heelas 1996), the changing cultural fabric and parameters of everyday life—was a dramatic, rapid “compression” of the social and spatio-temporal horizons of Monadiérois. This can be viewed as a local manifestation of what has been identified as a second round of “time-space compression” in Western Europe (Harvey 1989). For Harvey, time-space compression signals “processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves” (ibid.: 240). Two modern epochs of time-space compression have been identified: 1850–1918, and the 1970s onwards. Harvey singles out telecommunications technology as central to the second period, which significantly affected life in Monadières. He also identifies globalization as a driving force, whose influence is pervasive in those changes to the local political economy just detailed (ibid.). While the 1980s and 1990s saw these changes come to fruition, in Monadières their impact was undoubtedly most strongly felt in the 1970s, when the contrast with earlier forms of life was most notable and vividly experienced, according to oral history accounts (see Hodges 2010). Of particular significance to local historicities was the sudden need to differentiate local senses of belonging from the visible and increased presence of wider communities and associated pasts and futures, a dilation in the depth and volume of the “knowable” past enabled by the impact of mass media, and an increased prominence of “historical consciousness” as a form of historicity. “History,” in this sense, became visible as a dominant narrative practice through which relations with the past were constructed, and identities in the present legitimized. As Friedman writes: “The construction of a past in such terms is a project that selectively organises events in a relation of continuity with a contemporary subject, thereby creating an appropriated representation of a life leading up to the present, that is, a life history fashioned in the act of self-definition. The people without history in this view are the people who have been prevented from identifying themselves for others” (1992: 837). That said, rather than constituting a “people without history” whose right to historical self-definition was denied through oppression, the Monadiérois were in fact a people with a distinct

set of relations with the past which had their origins in precapitalist “peasant” cultural practices.¹⁵ The advent of pottery hunting in the late 1970s marked the moment when these came to be hybridized with dominant cultural traditions, to create a new path into the future.

For it is during this turbulent period that interest ignites in Roman vestige. The ceramics concerned date primarily from the first to fourth centuries AD, and were generally produced at sites in southern France—principally *la Graufesenque* near modern Millau in the Aveyron, *Montans* in the department of the Tarn, and *Narbo Martius* itself—hence the name “Gallo-Roman.” There were also shards of red-figured Greek pottery to be found, dating from c. 500 BC. Pottery can be hunted in two locations close to Monadières: one in a vineyard outside the village, where the ruins of a Gallo-Roman villa can be seen and Gallo-Roman roof tiles lie casually flung beneath bordering scrub oaks, and another on the other side of the lagoon. It is here, in the shallows and on the beaches, that the pottery hunts of the late 1970s took place, and the Monadièrois cultural practice of “reverse historiography” emerged.

THE POTTERY HUNT: AN ARCHAEOLOGY

“You had to stop the kids in the village from mucking about,” Jean Roudaut told me one afternoon on the balcony of his house in *place juin 1907*, the main square of Monadières, as we looked out towards the pottery-hunting grounds across the lagoon. “Especially as I had my son around. So we took them swimming, taught them to play volleyball, and *je les ai tous emmené au poterie* (I took them all to look for pottery).” And it was in this casual way that a novel “craze” for seeking out the debris of antiquity caught on with the children of Monadières, and soon after among many of their parents.

Roudaut chose the square’s name himself, when he was commissioned by the socialist *conseil municipal* to re-baptize the village streets in the early 1980s, and the name commemorated the assassination of a villager by the French army during the Narbonne wine riots in June 1907. This reflected his belief in the value, as he told me, of local historiographical knowledge of the past, and his desire to make this available for Monadièrois, in keeping with French socialist and regionalist ideologies.¹⁶ A professional historian and Breton nationalist who lives in Nantes, Roudaut has visited Monadières since his father-in-law purchased the first second home in the village in the 1950s, and has owned a house there since the 1960s. He has also published

¹⁵ This cultural continuity therefore extended beyond the postwar watershed singled out by Braudel, Mendras, and others as the end-point of the French “peasantry.” The appearance of a viticultural proletariat in Languedoc in the nineteenth century likewise conflicts with their timescale for rural historical change (see Fabre and Lacroix 1973).

¹⁶ This sentiment was shared by the socialist “History Workshop” movement.

two “local histories” of Monadières, and is sufficiently well integrated into village life that he can claim to be a co-founder of the *boules* association.¹⁷

For Roudaut, then, Roman vestige is chiefly invoked in relation to specialist and local historiographical, and to a lesser extent archaeological knowledge about its provenance. His interest is in many respects as informed as that of a professional archaeologist. It is also linked to the work of a small museum in the nearby village of Peyriac-de-Mer. But it lacks most of the institutional context, legitimacy, and orientation of the field of academic archaeology, and instrumentalization with its disciplinary and technical apparatus. The character of his own interest in *terra sigillata* might thus be viewed as an expressive manifestation of his historiographical interests. That said, he constitutes an exception to historic trends in local pottery hunting. The presence of historiographical media for invoking the local past that derived from his seasonal residence in the village in no way over-determines how Monadiérois respond to ceramic vestige, as we will see.

During the 1970s, Roudaut told me, when he first discovered pottery shards in a vineyard, he became excited. He collected all the vestige he could find, and took it to the small museum of local history in nearby Peyriac-de-Mer. Few people in Monadières have actually visited this museum, whose holdings consist of modest amounts of pottery, mosaic, tiles, and amphorae. At the time, a local historian dismissed most of his finds as of medieval origin, though his identification of some Gallo-Roman shards encouraged the Breton. As Roudaut soon discovered, the only Monadiérois who hunted for pottery was a local architect called Castaings. He was willing to show Roudaut where to look. And as Roudaut’s interest developed during the 1970s he built up a sizeable collection, while contributing to the museum’s project to chart pottery deposits.

During this time, the Roudauts often supervised village children. They were teachers and on holiday—a luxury that many Monadiérois could not yet enjoy—and would mind local children during the long summer holidays as a favor. Initially, the Roudauts would motor out with several children in their dinghy to the far bank of the lagoon and scour the beaches for pottery. Alternatively, there would be wading in the shallow water, or swimming with a snorkel and mask, which was often more fruitful. But children soon began to seek out pottery by themselves, and not always when the Roudauts were in Monadières. As Roudaut told me, children would come across a fragment of pottery; then would show it off to others. These in turn would ask where it was recovered. Then they too would be off to hunt in the same location, and invariably return to show Roudaut what they had found.

¹⁷ Roudaut was professeur de Première Supérieure (Khâgne), and prepared history students for entry to the École normale supérieure and Ecole des hautes études commerciales. He was also part-time lecturer at the Université de Nantes, and has published widely on Irish history.

Likewise, when Roudaut arrived from Nantes, kids would be waiting with shopping bags of debris. A few of the children wanted him to identify the remnants, and he carried out research into the historical literature for this purpose, although most just sought praise for their finds. And it was not long before their enthusiasm spread to their parents.

These families were drawn from the full spectrum of local occupations, including fishermen, wine growers, the village carpenter, and those who worked in the service industries of Narbonne. By all accounts, the majority of adults at the time left school early and were not acquainted with historical accounts of the region's past. There was little interest in nationalist or written histories, for example. During the late 1960s, regional television programming—diffused via the only television in the bar—had awakened Monadiérois to the tales of the Cathars, heretics who inhabited the area in the Middle Ages and who were invoked in terms of regionalist identity. But according to the testimony of several informants, this was the only significant example of local uptake of historical discourse, aside from occasional reference to key republican symbols such as the Revolution of 1789, conjured by the statue of “Marianne” in the main square, or her face on the currency. Importantly, such discourse was translated into local, oral genres of historicity. Indeed, testimony reveals that Monadiérois historicity was chiefly elicited through oral narratives of the kindred's activities, the mythic stories of the Catholic Church, and “tall tales” of fishing exploits, for example.

This picture dovetails with academic accounts of popular Languedocian historicity at the time, which was particularly marked by the performative rhetoric of Occitan storytelling (see Coulomb and Castell 1986). It also exhibits continuity with historical descriptions of living traditions of historicity among the Languedocian peasantry during the nineteenth century and earlier, suggesting features of long-term cultural continuity (Fabre and Lacroix 1973). Although provincial academies across France during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries occasionally featured reports on ancient finds by local aristocrats and priests, including in the Narbonnais, this awareness and valorization of antiquity was not present among the peasantry. In sum, the novelty of this hybrid historicity should not be underestimated even if it requires a leap of the imagination to take stock of how rapidly “historical consciousness” has subsequently become diffused. The alterity of prior relations with the past should instead be emphasized. Today, of course, pride in local archaeological relics and awareness of connections to wider “history” are pervasive in rural European historicities, and often framed by heritage and tourism discourses (see Hodges 2001; 2011).¹⁸

¹⁸ This account of Monadiérois historicity prior to the 1970s is not intended to cast local ways of knowing the past as a “mythical” premodern consciousness. Clearly, the village was very much a part of “history” as understood by Braudel (1989) and others, and illustrated above. But local

Monadiérois parents' involvement with pottery quickly took the form of a trip "*en famille*." It also coincided with the first recreational use of the lagoon by villagers for swimming and sunbathing, and the first instance of villagers that were not fishermen buying boats for leisure activities. This hunt *en famille* in fact approximates a classic tripartite ritual structure (Turner 1969; van Gennep 1909). Villagers would change into leisure wear—which differed significantly from everyday village clothing—or swimming costumes and motor in their skiffs to the hunting grounds across the lagoon. Such was the differentiation of this relaxed conduct and physically revealing mode of dress from existing and stringent village norms—especially for women—that it could be termed a "rite of separation," with the ensuing hunt occurring in a state approximating a transgressive liminality. Monadiérois would moor in family groups within close proximity. This was a significant reversal for the fishermen who, in competition over resources, usually worked alone to conceal where they placed their nets. The presence of women was also without precedent. Likewise, the squandering of time and labor that would formerly have been used for mending nets, tending to the allotment, or other chores, was a novelty, and for fishing families was enabled by the prosperity that the short-lived boom in fishing catches had brought. The hunting locations—good fishing grounds that bore working names in the local Occitan dialect—assumed novel, transient identities, resonant with expressive historicity. The hunt itself would involve swimming, snorkeling, or wading in the shallows, and villagers often set up an encampment on the beach nearby to rest, eat, and take stock of their finds. Finally, after several hours, they would motor back to their lives in the village. The boats would be moored back in the small working port, the hunters would wash the silt and briny lake water from their bodies, and all would change back into everyday clothing. This ritual of re-incorporation brought the day's transgressions to a close—although in the captured shard, suntanned body, and the mind's eye, the transformative agency of the hunt endured.

The paraphernalia of the hunt—the fishing boats temporarily reinvented as leisure boats, the fish buckets used as containers for collecting shards, all the beach wear and parasols and picnic food that was prepared—can thus be viewed as symbolic tokens that enhanced this ritualized invocation of the past. In turn, the ritual effected a durable transformation in local historicity, as participants assimilated this novel "historical consciousness" of the locality

relations to the past were focalized predominantly via enduring oral and kin-based historical narratives, and mythical tales, rather than historiographical and nationalist ones, even though elements of the latter were familiar to many villagers. I base this assessment on cross-referencing interviews with informants, including Roudaut, and do not believe it constitutes an historical mythologization of the past on the part of contemporary villagers. I address local equivalents of the traditional-modern historical schema, including the topic of historical mythologization, in Hodges 2010.

into everyday practice through the contemplation of fragments at home, oral reminiscence of the hunt, and involuntary thoughts of the Gallo-Roman past during daily life. The pottery hunt employed a series of symbolic tropes that imaginatively articulated the individual into an emergent social timespace infused with Roman precedents via transformative ritual practice (Fernandez 1986; Gurvitch 1964). I will analyze this *rite de passage* further shortly.

Contemporary informants attest that in the late 1970s there was a sudden growth of interest in Monadières concerning the vestige of its Gallo-Roman past. Exact numbers are hard to determine, but from the testimony collected it seems likely that some 35 percent of the total population was actively involved, with gossip spreading news of their exploits throughout the village. The “craze” for collecting Roman vestige continued into the early 1980s. The extent of local enthusiasm is exemplified by an incident in the late 1970s, when an area on the lagoon’s northern shore was excavated. Contractors were converting a zone of scrub and tamarisk into a car park for hikers and pleasure boaters. Working with excavators, they uncovered large quantities of unspoiled Roman amphorae and many extraordinary pieces of Gallo-Roman pottery. When the news spread to Monadières the village youth became excited at the thought of obtaining the pottery, which the contractors viewed as so much wreckage to be cleared. One weekend, when the site was shut, they scaled the fence and made off with all the vestige they could carry. The contractors soon discovered what had happened and called the police. The police insisted that all pottery must be returned—not because it was a marketable commodity or due to its cultural value, but because the youngsters had violated private property. As a lesson to all involved, police officers and contractors ceremonially destroyed the vestige in the presence of the young Monadiérois. In today’s climate of official interest in the local past—in terms of its economic value for heritage tourism, for example—one cannot imagine such vandalism being sanctioned. The vignette demonstrates vividly the extent to which official opinion about the past’s value has changed.¹⁹ It is also a clear illustration of the oppositional character of pottery hunting in the 1970s, a point to which I will return.

Finally, it is important to have a concrete sense of what the experience of pottery hunting was actually like. In the words of one informant, “You drift on the water’s surface, the sun heating your body. Or wade through the shallows, the cool silt between your toes, your eyes peeled for a rust-red shard on the mud ... until suddenly you spot a fragment. The excitement mounts as you

¹⁹ I have already mentioned the destruction of Narbonne’s “Roman” walls. It is also well known that a long-time mayor of Monadières in the early twentieth century, who was president of the Narbonne archaeological association, ordered a Gallo-Roman mosaic discovered in one of his vineyards to be ploughed in for financial reasons (Roudaut 1979). In this regard, Stewart notes how “The past is constantly being re-evaluated and revalued as an object of interest and consequently as a source of wealth” (2003: 287).

rinse it off. You try to discern—as experience grows—if it is something unusual, or unexceptional and unmarked.... And there is disappointment at the thought that it is only a chipping. Or satisfaction as the contours of a lion or other emblematic beast becomes visible. Or even—on a lucky trip—that portrait of a gladiator with a spear.” Though subjective, this description of the hunt is representative. It was an intensely future-oriented practice, eager (if not avid), unfolding in an intensified, sensuous present, and fixed on the past’s invocation through sensory apprehension of the aesthetics of its material debris, and their direct impact on the nervous system. Given both the pleasures of the pottery hunt and its potential rewards, it was also, by all accounts, addictive. Yet the verbalization of this activity masks the moment of initial recognition, which given the primary role of the senses and related loosening of the sense of self, would arguably have been “pre-subjective” in nature. In this sense, preliminary contact with vestige and the past, for most Monadièrois, was rooted in bodily affect (Massumi 1995).²⁰

THE POTTERY HUNT AS A GENRE OF EXPRESSIVE HISTORICITY

These beliefs occur in a historical context in which one mode of production and life is being supplanted by another ... [and] can be thought of as mediating two radically distinct ways of apprehending or evaluating the world.

———Michael Taussig (1980: 17–18)

It is valuable at this point to recall those expressive experiences of the past identified by Hirsch and Stewart (2005), Lambek (2002), and Stewart (2003), which contrast with the narrative fashion in which Western Europeans are habitually said to invoke the past—itself arguably a product of the dominant role of historiographical discourse in Western society and its tendency to eclipse or assimilate other historicities. Lambek, for example, analyzes the practice of spirit possession in northern Madagascar as an improvisation with the past and cultural media for its invocation. The creative character of such invocations plays freely with the “truth” in naturalistic terms, but the pasts invoked also retain residues of the open-ended, emergent experience of temporal becoming that characterized their moments of origin. Manifestations of spirits are grasped as a living presence of the past open-endedly unfolding in the timespace of possession (Lambek 2002: 11–14). Spirit performances here involve a radically different conception of our relationship to the past to that dominant in the West. In popular Western ideologies and Western

²⁰ “Affect” refers to that “terrain that is pre-subjective without being pre-social. As such, it implies a way of apprehending social life that does not start with the bounded, intentional subject while at the same time it foregrounds embodiment and sensuous life” (Mazzarella 2009: 291). Affect comes before emotion, and can be glossed as that embodied, impersonal set of indeterminate felt reactions to stimuli, from which we extract and “fix” emotions and concepts with the signifying logics of culture.

historiography, by contrast, the past is viewed as “finished” and ontologically distinct (*ibid.*: 12; Hirsch and Stewart 2005: 263–64; Fasolt 2004), even if this sense of closure can occasionally be “suspended” during aesthetic contemplation of historical dramas, for example, or encounters with “ghosts.” Stewart (2003) reports related findings in his commentary on dreams of treasure in contemporary Greece, which constitute a parallel to Lambek’s case study by virtue of their open-ended emergence in the unconscious.

Comaroff and Comaroff invoke this contrast between Western “historical consciousness” and historicities expressive of temporal emergence, writing of their fieldwork in South Africa: “[Tshidi] history is seldom spontaneously told in narrative style; that is, as a linear account of events. Nor can it be readily distilled, from its various expressive forms, into an ‘objective’ chronicle.... Of course, this kind of historical reckoning is at odds with the conventional Western view of history as an account of ‘real’ events and processes. At the heart of that view lies a distinction between reality, the actual making of history, and representation, the terms in which its story is told and acted upon” (1992: 157–58; see also Sutton 1998: 10). They go on to argue that representation itself has distinctive modes, verging from the realist to the poetic. The latter is not viewed as appropriate for Western “historical” (historiographical) representation—yet, they propose, “[historicity] is not confined to one expressive mode. It may be created and conveyed—with great subtlety and no less ‘truth’—in a variety of genres” (*ibid.*: 159).²¹ The interest of Monadièrois practices, in their subversion and reinvention of Roudaut’s historiographical practices, furnishes a gloss on the Comaroffs’ remarks on genre. For, although the pottery hunt can be theorized as an ethnographic example of such everyday forms of historicity, it is additionally characterized by its adaptation of an “official” discourse (historiography and archaeology).²² Expressive historicity of this kind can therefore be viewed as a form of “reverse historiography,” in the manner in which it reinvented what was at the time “external” historiographical discourse in terms of a local idiom. Let us now analyze how this was accomplished.

As a starting-point, the pottery hunt in Monadières can be classified into two relatively discrete modes of invoking the past. The initial encounter in the total sensory world of the lagoon, where the shards had been secreted, was for most Monadièrois dominated by what Merleau-Ponty (1964) has termed the “primary expression” of our experience of being-in-the-world as a body-subject. “Primary expression” already stylizes and renders over the external

²¹ “Historicity” is substituted here for the Comaroffs’ term “historical consciousness.”

²² French nationalist history had been taught at the village school for many years, but had not been assimilated by Monadièrois, perhaps because the broader socio-cultural conditions for emergence of historical consciousness had not yet developed. Historiographical knowledge was explicitly transmitted by Roudaut, but academic archaeology probably played an indirect role.

world through the bodily senses, but it does so in an inchoate, pre-subjective, predominantly affective and aesthetic manner. It comprises the stylizing perceptions of the body-subject, involved in a specific, historically contingent project of cultural practice, and the immanent bodily affects to which these give form (Massumi 1995: 88–89). Merleau-Ponty identifies artistic expression as approximating this mode of perception, which is significant in that the shards were once stylized aesthetic objects, and their most valued qualities in Monadières were their expressive depictions of *terra sigillata* emblems. The beauty of the shards was also cited as attractive by contemporary Monadiérois. We can therefore propose that the initial encounter with, and actualization of the past took place both in terms of the local cultural idiom of primary expression, and in relation to signifying qualities of the artifacts that also operated to varying degrees via an affective, aesthetic (primary) language of expression. To bring this primary idiom into focus, it was mediated by the socio-historical context of the hunt—the sensuous warmth of the water, the wearing of swimming costumes, that is, the total sensory experience of the lagoon as a site of social liminality and expressive historicity. But it was also modeled via the manner in which the senses themselves were locally stylized—from linguistic classification of sensation, to culturally mediated color recognition, to the cultural qualification of the emotions—ethnographic data which are beyond the scope of an historical anthropology of this kind but demand recognition (Turner 1967).

Later contemplation of found shards took place elsewhere, a further mode of invocation, tending toward “secondary expression” of conceptual and intellectual assertion (Merleau-Ponty 1964) as the shard was assessed and typologized. This was a process that the Roudauts, for example, and a very few informed enthusiasts might undertake during the hunt itself with reference to historiographical sources. Such secondary expression, Merleau-Ponty argues, is ultimately derived from primary perception, and constitutes an aspiration to rationalize and abstract such perceptions into a state of clarity. It is a project that must always remain open-ended, given the emergent temporality of the world.

It is thus clear that during the hunt, when primary expression predominated, the past was invoked through the discovery, handling, and imaginative contemplation of pottery fragments. This involved a variable measure of aesthetic contemplation, depending on the nature of the find. In an intriguing parallel, it resembles the “post-human,” emergent production of knowledge that has been commented on by Pickering (1995) in relation to scientific practice. The Monadiérois hunt for shards, which relied inherently on the agency of chance and the nature of the object located for the context of the pasts’ invocation, can be characterized as a performative “dance of agency.”²³ In turn, this is

²³ Pickering writes: “The dance of agency, seen asymmetrically from the human end, thus takes the form of a dialectic of resistance and accommodation, where resistance denotes the failure to achieve an intended capture of agency in practice, and accommodation an active human strategy

shaped by a “dialectic of resistance and accommodation,” as the found object may or may not furnish the desired goal, adjustments to the pottery hunt are made, and the quest is once again embarked upon (ibid.: 20–22). The trajectory of the pottery hunt, both as a singular event, and cumulatively over time, consisted of this interactive agency in which the lagoon, the wind, and the shards themselves—the locus of non-human agency—and their previous histories, were brought into interaction with the agency of Monadiérois pottery hunters, whose control over the pottery found was inherently limited. The “emergent trajectory” of this practice, which was, inevitably, characterized by chance encounters, unpredictability, and novelty, concords with the random, emergent qualities of scientific knowledge practices, as detailed in Pickering’s analysis. The result was the performative elaboration of the practices of Monadiérois expressive historicity, constitutively and emergently intertwined with literal “captures” of pottery (to adapt Pickering’s terms), underwritten by the wider historical context outlined earlier.²⁴

Let me now synthesize these remarks with further analysis of the character of this encounter with the past. In this regard, the primary expression of pottery hunting can be said to approximate a form of impersonal “involuntary memory” (Proust 1996), in that the symbolization of the fragments was sensuous in character, and relied specifically on a chance encounter. The *involuntary* quality of the encounter was constituted by the agency of the combination of lagoon, wind, and shards that fused with the agency of the pottery hunter to produce the encounter. It also involved a characteristic and variable affective jolt to the nervous system, the intensity of which was indexed to the exceptionality of the pottery found, and was in direct relation to the sense of wonder and vividness with which the past was “felt.” Such fragments took on an aura of the past all the more intensely for being discovered *in situ*, I was told, since they are usually the property of museums and handled only by professionals. The psychologically relaxed state of mind impelled by the activity itself also intensified the nature of the encounter, and responsiveness to its pre-subjective, affective features.

This was therefore a past “charged with the time of the now” (Benjamin 1992: 253), an embodied, inarticulate, dialogical encounter akin to Benjamin’s mysterious “dialectical image.” Consider his well-known comments for a moment: “The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is

of response to resistance, which can include revisions to goals and intentions as well as to the material form of the machine in question and to the human frame of gestures and social relations that surround it” (1995: 22).

²⁴ See Pickering 1995: 17, 23. A resemblance to the surrealist practice of searching for the *objet trouvé* in Parisian “flea” markets is also notable (see Breton 1937).

never seen again... For every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (ibid.: 247). The objective of such an actualization of the past for Benjamin is the awakening of political consciousness, as the aspirations of previous, oppressed generations inspire revolutionary new hopes. Benjamin’s is thus a politicizing concept, and pottery hunting is not a revolutionary activity, although it did evince a political dimension, as we will see. But both involve the “primary” invocation of the past, a sensuous energizing of lived experience, a loosening and melding of temporal identities, rather than the distanced, intellectual contemplation and systematic mapping—that is, “secondary expression”—of the historiographer. The *experience* of the past that Benjamin evokes—which was influenced by Proust’s notion of *mémoire involontaire*—is thus uncannily similar to pottery hunting, even if his ends are distinct.

The past could be invoked imaginatively during the hunt, as individuals testified that they fantasized about the fragment of pottery they chanced upon, who could have dropped it, how the lagoon appeared in Gallo-Roman times spread with galleys, and so on. The previous form and use of shards could also occasionally be discerned—in the case of bowls, plates, or fragments of oil lamps and amphorae, for example—and more precise images of how they might have been used could be imagined. Rare fragments would also retain the potter’s signature stamped on the base, which lent a much more individualized character to the shard. Such invocations could articulate with more historiographical information about the Romans drawn from the Roudauts’ accounts or schooling, which was rare, and indeed also all those other invocations of antiquity that are diffused throughout popular culture, which was more common.²⁵ The “objective chance” inherent in this dance of agency contributed to render the experience of the hunt dominated by an intensified, future-oriented present, as consciousness was fixed on the emergent chance encounter. The invocation of the past itself was subsumed in the nervous expectation and affective excitement of the hunt, principally a primary, rather than secondary expression.

Such excitement could pass over into activities of contemplating the finds after the hunt, as did the primary experience of aesthetic contemplation of the artifacts that would accompany this. But during this time the experience of “secondary” actualization was dominant and at its most intense. Roudaut looked up fragments in pertinent academic publications on the matter, obtaining technical details of the period and place of manufacture. However, such practices did not usually form a part of Monadiérois secondary expression. While one or two villagers were well informed about the historical origins of the different types of pottery, most of them were enthused by the process of collecting itself, and the tactile contemplation of the fragments. In this respect, in

²⁵ It is likely that *Astérix le gaulois* (Goscinny and Uderzo 1961) was invoked by young Monadiérois.

this secondary mode the shards tended to remain vaguely symbolic of antiquity in general, rather than contextualized with specific historiographical information. That said, what was absolutely clear was the identification of this past era with the locality, and its vertical chronological “depth,” which while not necessarily being invoked with historiographical precision, clearly surpassed the temporal extension of previous Monadièrois oral history. In this way, I was told, the pottery finds were linked directly to the belief, recent in origin, that the village was of Roman origin, itself hailed as expressive of its independence and local distinctiveness. Arguably, this is the most recognizably novel element of Monadièrois historicity, namely a “historical-chronological” framework hybridized from dominant conceptions, which could be utilized to organize “events in a relation of continuity with a contemporary subject” and create “a life history fashioned in the act of self-definition” (Friedman 1992: 837). In this respect, Monadièrois identity was already inalienably entwined with the locality. Finally, Roudaut’s collection was also arranged in a shelved “museum” display with cards attributing relevant information, and a few Monadièrois apparently created modest versions of the same. The creation of makeshift museums seems to lend a form of mock, ironic legitimacy to the activities of Monadièrois, and might be viewed as a subversion of official museum culture, given that it championed collecting for personal gain. However, it does not appear to have been a general practice.

For the Monadièrois in the 1970s, then, this secondary mode was predominantly a social activity. Congregating to discuss one’s finds, pottery hunting took on its communal dimension, and so began the elaboration of its folklore, oral history, and associated customs. Indeed, one collector stressed how over the years the pottery hunt had become *une tradition*, and it is clear that there developed a limited, short-term “living tradition” around this activity. It is here that we can analyze how Roudaut’s “paradigm” was reinvented through synthesis with existing practices of expressive historicity as a form of “reverse historiography.” The pottery hunt as an enactment of historiographical modes for knowing the past was remodeled by Monadièrois as a sensory (in its primary expression) and relational social practice (in its secondary expression). In primary terms, the affective, felt immediacy of the past arguably displaced the severance between past and present typical of Western historical consciousness, and Roudaut’s intellectualized practices, and rendered the past immanent and “alive” in a manner comparable to documented non-Western historicities (Hirsch and Moretti 2010; Lambek 2002). In secondary terms, historiographical discourse was recast and “reversed” in emergent local terms. We have noted above the use of the historical “deep time” frame as an element drawn from Roudaut’s practices and linked to the role of historical discourse in a novel local identity politics. This was hybridized with a disregard for naturalist historical detail, and a focus on individual agency and devices of local storytelling that form an extension of, and synthesis with distinctive Languedocian idioms

of historicity. Although pottery hunting tales are now lost, one can thus hypothesize that they adapted narrative forms drawn from the “mythic tales” of fishing or hunting exploits that, I was told, constituted the dominant ways in which local people invoked the past in the 1960s. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Monadiérois situated the Roman past in a wider, holistic history that encompasses the human past as a totality, as Roudaut would have done, and which Hirsch and Moretti (2010) have argued is exemplary of dominant Western historicities.²⁶ According to several key informants, including Roudaut himself, Monadiérois had little or no interest in such narratives at the time, and did not invoke them as a frame of reference. At the most, Monadiérois conceptions of the Roman past and its relation to wider “history” were highly fragmentary, given the limited presence of historiographical information in local historicities prior to the 1970s. The fusion of the present with the past was therefore likely to have constituted a monad dissociated from homogenous empty time, in a further echo of Benjamin’s (1992) critique of historicism. On their return from across the lagoon, then, the Monadiérois pottery hunters had symbolically transformed the locality and, by association, their own identity as a social group, in a manner that marked the advent of a genre of popular, hybrid “historical consciousness.” (And it should be reiterated that by historical consciousness, I refer to a cultural practice productive of a popular form of historicity with borrowings from Western historiography.)

HISTORICITY, EMERGENCE, AND THE COMPRESSION OF TIMESPACE

Making a distinction identifies a rupture—it shows us where to look to see that which is taken to be the crucial dimension of the world that, as long as one accepts this particular distinction, has changed forever.

———Paul Rabinow (2008: 63)

The concept of historicity allows us to analyze the cultural ground of our interactions with the past without subsuming it to the ideological and ontological assumptions of historiographical knowledge practices. Rather than interpreting what emerged in Monadières as a novel form of “historical knowledge”

²⁶ “Even when they think that past events are not really guided by a unitary plot or are simply too many to ever be fully recorded and read as a single account, Westerners still hold onto the fundamental notion that ‘everything that has happened belongs to a single determinate realm of unchanging actuality.’ ... Further, they view this past actuality as a story that may never be told in full but that is nevertheless out there and always knowable, at least in part(s)” (Hirsch and Moretti 2010: 281). As an aside, one potential parallel between this hybrid Monadiérois historicity and Western historical discourse, which it is now impossible to confirm, lies in conceptions of personhood and agency (which Hirsch and Moretti identify as a key distinction between Western historical narratives and Melanesian conceptions of the past, for example [ibid.: 281–82]). While these conceptions may share a genealogy, however, the caricatured individuality evoked in Languedocian storytelling (e.g., Coulomb and Castell 1986) suggests how concepts of personhood and agency are a variable within Western historicities as well.

(Hastrup 1992), I have argued that it is productively viewed as a novel historicity, or temporalization of the past, with a notable affective dimension (Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Munn 1992). The “voices of the past” (Davis 1983: 10) that spoke to Monadiérois came initially in affective, pre-subjective flashes. They were mediated via a local tradition of conjuring the past with deep temporal roots, which hybridized in the process, creating a “reverse historiography.” My account acknowledges their cultural and imaginative autonomy, which was only partly held in check by a focus on real people and their material culture. In fact, the primary intensity of contact with the past in the lagoon, I have argued, is comparable to historicities where the past literally “comes alive” (Lambek 2002). In short, the historicity framework, as employed here, casts interaction with the past as a temporally dynamic, situated cultural practice, for both historiographer and non-professionals, which needs to be addressed from an analytical perspective that outreaches Western historiography. Historiographical components of such practices can thereby be framed ethnographically, as features of historicity, rather than constituting the frame in itself.

What gave rise to this emergent, expressive historicity? What underwrote the span of its durability? Clearly, interest was catalyzed by the Roudauts, but there were other fields of force at work. On one hand, one can link the pottery hunt with Roudaut’s account to me of pride in a popular belief that emerged at the same time that the true name of the village is of Roman origin. Among the villages of the Narbonnais, Monadières has been credited since at least the nineteenth century with a hostile attitude towards outsiders. The invocation of a Gallo-Roman heritage provided a transient, symbolic precedent for this outlook, and set the village apart from others in the area that did not trace a Roman genealogy, at a time when such temporally-distant cultural heritage was not valued in the way it is today. It was probably facilitated by the fact that the shards evinced agricultural motifs, and in the case of amphorae, were associated with wine. In this regard, it would be a misrecognition to assume that Monadiérois invocations of the Gallo-Roman are comparable to the established interests in antiquity of the upper and educated classes.

Furthermore, this hostility has extended to the authorities. During the 1970s, in particular, a spate of out-of-season robberies of tourist residences in nearby resorts by Monadiérois youths fired a local reputation for acting outside the law—an “outlaw” image that was highly valued by many villagers. The confrontation with police over the vestige on the local building site dovetails with this wider context, and suggests that the “theft” that took place was likewise an opportunity for articulating this oppositional identity. In this regard, the fact that many pottery hunters were moved at their ability to acquire outmoded objects that might normally be found in museums would appear to evince a similar anti-institutional ethos. One can therefore propose that this novel historicity was charged with political significance for Monadiérois, in

that it enabled them to invoke a distinctive, antagonistic identity in the face of local social transformations that tied them into wider networks of power and related imagined communities. Such antagonism was expressive of their structural position as a local working class, and to a degree, their resistance to this subordination (Scott 1985).

Wider fields of force that shaped this expressive historicity have been mapped. As the village emerged into heightened daily consciousness of regional and national imagined communities, via the impact of the mass media in particular, a local manifestation of time-space compression was produced. Established forms of historicity were undermined. The ethnographic record bears witness to comparable shifts in relations with the past prompted by historical acceleration. Papagaroufali (2005), writing of the inhabitants of a Greek town, notes how descendants of refugees from Asia Minor, who had publicly “forgotten” about their relatives’ flight, were moved to adopt a new, nostalgic perspective on this history of displacement when their town explored the possibility of twinning with the Turkish town which their forebears fled. Harris (1995: 105–8) draws attention to how novel forms of “historical consciousness” are awakened among indigenous nationalists in Bolivia who have experienced cultural dislocation that differ significantly from indigenous Andean historicities. In this regard, new Monadièrois historicities were likewise prompted by a rupture in living traditions. They evinced a desire to rearticulate, in an emergent local idiom, external, hegemonic historicities informed by historiography and the temporal depth of Western historical consciousness, and reconstitute a viable historicity in the process. On one hand, this bears witness to an existential human need (Heidegger 1993: 434–39). But more specifically, we encounter here an ethnographic case of a “reverse historiography” that subverts “official” historical consciousness and historiographical discourse for local ends, while integrating a selection of the same structuralizing features.

This was achieved through a symbolic play of tropes that articulated the inchoateness of Monadièrois historicity into a social timespace charged with Roman precedents. This novel historicity retained elements of alterity that marked it as a culturally distinct way of invoking the past in everyday practice. It comprised a mediation between dominant “historical” discourse, and local discourses of historicity characteristic of the *longue durée* of the Languedocian peasantry. It also constituted an intervention by the Monadièrois in a wider cultural politics within which historical discourse was identified with cultural capital, at a time when they increasingly relied on low-status employment in Narbonne. For a short while, it achieved a resolution between oral and expressive idioms for invoking the past, and external discourses, which was empowering. This historicity thus arguably constituted a breach: a manifestation of indigenous difference within the Western “historical” tradition, an intrusion of becoming or the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984). Indeed, the spirit of

improvisation with which Monadiérois reworked Roudaut's idiom exhibits a quality sometimes noted as lacking from public engagement with heritage and historical discourses, which certain writers view as pacifying the past's emancipatory value (e.g., Hewison 1987).

Eric Bourrel, a local archaeologist who grew up in Monadières during the 1970s and now works at the local history museum, was also insistent that this "craze" was part of an enthusiasm for "popular history" that spread across France. Such amateur historiographical and archaeological "crazes" have become increasingly popular since the 1960s (Samuel 1994: 274). One could thus view pottery hunting in Monadières comparatively as part of a wider awakening to a tangibly dilating past. Yet one must be careful not to assimilate such local reworkings of dominant historicities to a view that presupposes that this wider awakening to "history" is essentialist and uniform in character, or symptomatic of a "universal" human need. It should be posited as multiple acts of recontextualization, where dominant "historical idioms" become subject to local mediation. My objective in using the historicity framework has been to make visible this alterity, as well as its wider parallels, and thereby to understand how a familiar Roman past was reconfigured in the context of alternative European cultural traditions. Kurkiala (2002) furnishes a revealing parallel. He notes how external, hegemonic narratives of Lakota (Sioux) "history" have been challenged by Lakotas. In particular, he illustrates how indigenous use of an oral tradition characterized by its distinction from dominant Western historicities subverts the logic of modern historiography, thus exemplifying how the re-appropriation "of the privilege to define their historical roots is simultaneously an attempt to regain the privilege to define their identity" (ibid.: 445). Broadly speaking, this was also the case in Monadières.

As a range of practices for invoking the past flooded the Narbonnais during the 1980s and 1990s, pottery hunting was substituted by other forms of popular "historical consciousness" facilitated by an increasing range of local history narratives, often furnished by heritage tourism products such as the discourse surrounding food produce (Hodges 2001). This was accompanied by a political economic weakening of Monadiérois status in the village. In this regard, it is telling that the authorities have now appropriated the Roman past for invocation in heritage tourism, while incomers are commoditizing Monadiérois "history" and cultural practices for use in heritage tourism (see Hodges 2011). The potential for similar "reversals" of historical narratives about Monadières have thus dissipated, for now. At present these outmoded shards are valued not for their historiographical, archaeological, or financial value, nor as oppositional symbols, but chiefly because they are aesthetically pleasurable evocations of how the area once was. As it was put to me one afternoon by Thierry Martin—who had once been a childhood hunter, and who I watched as he now adorned the wall outside his house with fragments of amphorae—the Gallo-Roman shards are "precious because of their beauty."

Nevertheless, in comparative terms, findings suggest that the emergence of “historical consciousness,” as defined here, is a more recent and uneven phenomenon in France and Europe than is often presumed, and that the hegemony of historical discourse informed by historiography is less well established in local historicities than usually thought. Comparable transformations in historicity have undoubtedly taken place, and other “reverse historiographies” emerged, which could be similarly illuminated utilizing the historicity framework.²⁷ The notion that narrative-driven “historical consciousness” is the dominant mode of historicity in the West would also reward scrutiny. Some historians and philosophers of history have acknowledged that historiography is one among several components informing “historical culture” (Rüsen 1996), and have begun to recognize the extent to which it is merely one facet of a dynamic European engagement with the past that is complex and heterogeneous. But they remain reluctant to step outside a historiographically informed frame of analysis. “Historicity” provides a notable alternative to such approaches, and the attention paid in this article to its temporal modalities indicates ways in which the relationship between temporality and historicity can be further clarified, both analytically and ethnographically. In summary, it is important to acknowledge that historicity among Europeans is potentially as diverse, expressive, and non-narrative in character as that found outside Europe (see also Sutton 1998). In certain cases, it is linked to longer traditions of experiencing the European world that exist adjacent to those dominant cultures—including historiography—embedded in capitalist political economic organization. New beginnings do not necessarily imply a wholesale rupture, and what appears to be a uniform transition is often complex and differential. Frames grounded in the “historical idiom,” as valuable as these are for writing historiographical narratives, and revealing “other histories” of regions within states such as France, can obscure alterity, as well as reveal it. This is particularly the case, one can propose, when historiography itself is the subject of parody and subversion.

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²⁷ The ethnographic record and work of social historians might be drawn on for these ends. Samuel (1994), with its detailed comparative data, furnishes such a resource.

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Abstract: This article provides a historical ethnography of an abrupt and transient awakening of interest in Roman vestige during the 1970s in rural France, and explores its implications for comparative understanding of historical consciousness in Western Europe. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Languedoc, and particularly the *commune* of Monadières, it details a vogue for collecting pottery shards scattered in a nearby lagoon that developed among local inhabitants. The article frames this as a ritualized “expressive historicity” emergent from political economic restructuring, cultural transformation, and time-space compression. It analyses the catalyzing role of a historian who introduced discursive forms into the *commune* for symbolizing the shards, drawn from regionalist and socialist historiography, which local people adapted to rearticulate the historicity of lived experience as a novel, hybrid genre of “historical consciousness.” These activities are conceptualized as a “reverse historiography.” Elements of historiographical and archaeological discourses—for example, chronological depth, collation and evaluation of material relics—are reinvented to alternate ends, partly as a subversive “response” to contact with such discourses. The practice emerges as a mediation of distinct ways of apprehending the world at a significant historical juncture. Analysis explores the utility of new anthropological theories of “historicity”—an alternative to the established “historical idiom” for analyzing our relations with the past—which place historiography within the analytical frame, and enable consideration of the temporality of historical experience. Findings suggest that the alterity of popular Western cultural practices for invoking the past would reward further study.