

INTRODUCTION

The Virtue of Idiosyncrasy

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Some intellectuals deserve scholarly attention as emblems or models. They represent something larger than themselves—a trend, an ideology, a school, an institution. Others, in contrast, stand out in their singularity of thought or method. They warrant equal consideration, but not necessarily for the broader developments they exemplify. Acclaimed as he is, Alain Corbin belongs in this second category. A scholar whose oeuvre springs from an intensely personal curiosity, Corbin is arguably the most idiosyncratic historian in France today. Over four decades, he has charted a course that is entirely his own. While awarding him the 2000 Grand prix Gobert, the Académie française aptly extolled a work that “boldly extends the limits of historical method.”¹

When NYU’s Institute of French Studies decided to organize a conference around Alain Corbin (held in 2002), the first objective was accordingly to explore and engage his pioneering work in its idiosyncrasy. This special issue of *French Politics, Culture & Society* includes revised versions of the seven papers that touched most explicitly on the uniqueness of Corbin’s work.² Their authors make up a varied lot: they are French and American; historians, sociologists, and literary critics; senior scholars who worked alongside Corbin or read him from afar, as well as junior scholars who discovered the oeuvre of a mature historian. This diversity befits Corbin’s multiple interests and dialogues. In the issue’s first section (“Situating Alain Corbin”), Dominique Kalifa and Emmanuelle Saada examine Corbin’s work in its totality to trace its evolution, identify its motive forces, and situate it intellectually—within the French historical field (Kalifa) or vis-à-vis American academia (Saada). In the second section (“Culture and Politics”), contributors delineate the coherence and novelty of Corbin’s history by examining its attention to women and sexuality (Michelle Perrot), its distinctive approach to politics (Christophe Pro-

chasson), and its remarkably consistent conception of cultural history (Arthur Goldhammer). In the third and final section (“The Historian and the Text”), Michel Beaujour and Stéphane Gerson probe the stylistic and literary dimensions of a work whose form and content are entwined. Corbin’s reaction to these papers—a reflection on his life and work—closes the issue.

Alain Corbin’s idiosyncrasy—a thread that runs through most of the essays that follow—has not marginalized him within the French historical field. Corbin circulated at this field’s institutional and thematic peripheries and then, while maintaining his singular perspective, gravitated towards its center. He taught at the Paris I-Sorbonne University, won admission to the Institut universitaire de France, directed a collection for the Aubier publishing house, and sat on numerous editorial boards. While their focus falls squarely on Corbin, the contributors to this issue perforce address broader questions as well—the French “cultural turn,” the contours of political history, the relationship between history and other disciplines (anthropology, sociology, literature), the changing conventions of historical writing, the historian’s position in the French public sphere, and modes of academic exchange between France and the United States.

French anxieties about the state of history make these questions all the more urgent. First voiced in the late 1980s (when the dominion of the *Annales* school began to wane), concern about a profession in “crisis” has intensified since. The French university system, warn the critics, is creating an elite of researchers and a mass of overworked teachers. The historical discipline, they add, is losing its prestige in the academic world and the national imagination. Rather than elucidating the “social demand” for history, historians are allowing commemorations, trials, and the media to govern their research agendas. Following the demise of the structuralist and Marxist paradigms, furthermore, competing programs and vocabularies are fragmenting the historical profession. While some historians decry this profession’s conceptual insularity, others allege that theoretical debates about representation and narrative have supplanted sound historical research.³

All French historians do not share this bleak vision (or agree on its causes and remedies). Few would deny, however, that their profession is in transition. Idiosyncratic as they are, Corbin’s career and oeuvre may help us understand the post-1968 French intellectual world and illuminate, *de biais*, the evolution of this historical field as well as its underlying tensions. That, at any rate, was the second objective behind the conference—and now this special issue.

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The roots of Alain Corbin’s idiosyncrasy may lie in his childhood and “somewhat atypical” education. Born and raised in a small town in Normandy, he frequently accompanied his father—a country doctor of West Indian origin—on his rural rounds. Corbin spent seven years in a strict Catholic *collège*, earned his baccalaureate, and then deviated from the customary “trajectory” of French intellectual elites. Instead of preparing the entrance exams to France’s elite

grandes écoles, he chose the less restrictive “life of a free student.” For another seven years—first in Paris, then at the University of Caen (1953-59)—he read broadly in philosophy, literature, history, English, and geography.⁴ Following his *agrégation* exam came a posting at a Limoges *lycée*, military service in Algeria, a position at the University of Tours, and, in 1973, a two-thousand-page thesis on the “evolution of regional structures” in the Limousin between 1845 and 1880.⁵ This regional canvas gave way to a national one five years later, when Corbin analyzed the “regulationist project,” social practices, and “imaginary” that surrounded French prostitution in the modern era. More accessible and more controversial than his thesis, this book—*Women for Hire*—began a remarkable twenty-year run during which, every three to four years, Corbin published a landmark monograph on a little-studied aspect of nineteenth-century French (and sometimes European) history. There is no need to recapitulate his successive topics, from the social construction of odors, time, and landscape to the logic of peasant violence and the stakes surrounding village bells. Suffice it to say that *The Life of an Unknown (Le Monde retrouvé de Louis-François Pinagot* [1998]), Corbin’s latest and perhaps most daring monograph, seeks to carve a new “avenue of access to the nineteenth century.” Its goal is a history of the public and private life of an ordinary rural Frenchman, one Louis-François Pinagot, a clog maker about whom we know a priori nothing.⁶

The contributors to this issue draw a collective portrait of a historian with an incomparable erudition and command of sources, including some that his profession had deemed illegitimate (such as literature). But his idiosyncrasy, they say, is above all one of perspective: “another way of seeing and feeling,” as Perrot puts it. Even in a position of institutional authority, this “franc-tireur” (Kalifa) has followed his all-encompassing curiosity alone and sought the pleasures of discovery and dialogue with the dead. Corbin has thus ignored fads, the “imperious claims of the present” (Goldhammer), and “totalizing theories” (Perrot)—from Marxism to a *longue durée* structuralism whose inattention to subtle historical shifts and complex human motivations precludes “an authentic socio-cultural history.”⁷ Less interested in “urgent ideological messages” than “picturesque and odd” history (Beaujour), he has spurned these two commonplace postures of French intellectual life: the *intellectuel engagé* (Saada) and the civic professor, whose duty it is to bolster allegiance to the Republic (Prochasson, Gerson).

Corbin’s curiosity ran against what Kalifa calls the “inertias” of the French historical field: artificial boundaries between disciplines; no less arbitrary breaks between social, political, or cultural history (Prochasson); and a “conformism” and puritanism that long impeded the study of sexual practices. Perrot, perhaps France’s leading historian of women, recalls that Corbin was one of the rare male historians to voluntarily investigate the topic in the 1970s and 1980s.⁸ He began doing so in his thesis—paying attention to such topics as maternity and abortion—then expanded his purview to include representations of women (by men and women), desire, and masculinity.

Corbin has not hesitated, however, to pinpoint the limitations of his investigations—and, more generally, of historical understanding. Because social phenomena betray multiple and changing “logics,” because historical actors often vanish without leaving recoverable or intelligible traces of their motivations, Corbin has renounced “explanatory systems”—and “the satisfied, abusive, and blind certainty of having understood the past”—in favor of confident but guarded “interpretations.”⁹ He has written his share of essays on method but eschewed normative programs and manifestoes.¹⁰ Should we view him, then, as a humble historian? Corbin uses the term—the humility that consists in listening “to the men of the past with a view to detecting, rather than dictating the passions that stirred them”—and so do several of the issue’s contributors.¹¹ For Goldhammer, it is the humility to admit past errors and ignorance regarding the forces of history; for Saada, it is the “epistemological discretion” of a historian who “claims not to have a philosophy of history”; for Gerson, it is a rhetoric of uncertainty that, in his work on the clog maker Pinagot, parallels an aspiration to certitude.

Alain Corbin’s idiosyncrasy also encompasses topics. The historian of garden walks and social statistics is also one of cruiseships and royal journeys across the provinces. The “*homme de la France rurale*” (Perrot) seeks to recover peasant rationality, but also studies urban elites and representations of the city. A set of recurring questions underlines this thematic diversity, from social regulation (and its subversions) to the construction of identities that straddle the personal and the collective (familial, local, national). In work after work, Corbin maps the emergences and “*basculements*” that transform, albeit partially, attitudes, allegiances, and cultural sensibilities. By showcasing the multiple cultural repertoires that coexist at any given time (archaism *and* modernity), he breaks with Norbert Elias’s linear depiction of the civilizing process (Saada). In work after work, Corbin likewise incorporates the most mundane aspects of everyday life into a “history of singularities” that subverts “holist paradigms” and, in Kalifa’s words, “the positive nature” of an accumulative historical science.¹²

When Corbin began his thesis, however, such a paradigm dominated French historiography. Ernest Labrousse’s macro-history of the evolution of societies postulated that true scientific history was quantitative. Series of documents would uncover patterns, structures, and, eventually, social laws. Confident that society was organized into classes (defined in strict material terms), Labrousse instructed his students to study a given region’s incomes and fortunes in order to retrieve its social organization and trace the impact of its economy on its politics.¹³ After contemplating a history of gestures, Corbin settled on a more prudent ‘Labroussian’ study of the Limousin. But, finding it difficult to calculate incomes or production in a region of gardens and hunters, he gravitated towards cultural history. Kalifa detects a triple break with Labroussian history: from stability and the long term to change and the short term; from quantitative to qualitative perspectives (focusing on regional

differences rather than commonalities); and from economic to anthropological analysis. Corbin examined cultural phenomena, from the body to literacy; asked how social groups defined themselves; and adduced socio-cultural factors to explain the genesis of the Limousin's "leftist tradition."¹⁴

Without neglecting traditional questions of social history—social mobility and distinction—Corbin's subsequent works married the "social imaginary" with social practices.¹⁵ He sought to "better understand the anxieties, fantasies, convictions and beliefs" of historical actors, how "systems of representation and appreciation ... shape gazes and discourses."¹⁶ His cultural history has thus revolved around three axes. The first is a history of those representations through which actors perceive (and compose) their social world, delineate their identities, and regulate their behavior. Dispelling "sterile oppositions ... between the 'real' and 'representations'" (Perrot), Corbin argues that representations—inflected as they are by class and gender—constitute, not the sole, but "the most interesting and meaningful elements of any historical reality." As such, they are the necessary preamble to any historical analysis.¹⁷ The second axis of his cultural history—the aforementioned history of "sensibilities"—begins, as Saada explains, with a "critique of pure sensation." The senses, "systems of appreciation," and "thresholds of tolerance" (to foul odors or violence) are socially constructed.¹⁸ To determine "what can be thought and felt at a given time," Corbin has analyzed desires and repulsions, pleasures and torments, new cultural practices, as well as "clashes of sensibilities" and sensory modes of distinction between social groups (Goldhammer).¹⁹ These two axes intersect a third and final one: a deepening "sense of individual identity" that, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, yielded "individuated" behavior, sensibilities, and expressions. This axis encompasses Corbin's studies of leisure and private life, which focus on the individual's control of time and body, his interpersonal and sexual relations, and other "original means of constructing identity."²⁰

Elites have left us materials for such a history. But what about "the people who have been suckered up by history, erased by the passage of time"?²¹ Corbin took up the challenge in his *Life of an Unknown*, only to encounter a dearth of sources about his clog maker's memories or aspirations. Corbin thus extrapolated from a fine-grained history of his *pays* what Pinagot could have known, experienced, and felt. This approach tends to substitute a discursive "Louis-François Pinagot," a hypothetical aggregate of "predicates" and "opinions" uncovered in the archives, for the human being Pinagot (Beaujour). Still, the book's focus on the local and the individual meets a broader interest, in France as elsewhere, in micro-history and local modulations.²² Borrowing from Italian *microstoria* and the anthropological work of Fredrik Barth, French "micro-analysis" begins with the premise that local "phenomena of circulation, negotiation, appropriation" constitute an essential facet of a broader social reality.²³ It selects the local scale, not to test national or global theses, but to retrieve the strategies and interpretations of rational actors who mobi-

lized the resources at their disposal to construct their social world. Corbin distinguishes his work from an approach that has favored official (often juridical) sources and atypical individuals.²⁴ Prochasson nonetheless identifies his “scale of observation”—a focus on local “*bricolages*” that have their own “logic” yet participate in wider cultural and political evolutions—as one of his work’s distinguishing traits.

Culture and politics, politics and culture: here again, Corbin has resisted arbitrary divisions to articulate a singular conception of political culture. Prochasson warns against confining Corbin to cultural history alone, for politics, he writes, has constituted a persisting strand in his work. Beyond the Limousin’s radicalism and the liberal state’s regulationist project, Corbin has studied parliamentary prosopography, the modes of legitimation of successive regimes, and the ritualized murder of a southwestern aristocrat by Bonapartist peasants. Unlike other historians of his generation, Corbin did not scour the provinces in search of “modern” (that is to say, republican or socialist) political behavior alone. Local political traditions were often conservative, and this conservatism requires analysis.²⁵ So do bottom-up dynamics and the local reception or “instrumentalization” of national debates. In exploring such phenomena, Corbin critiqued and moved beyond his own thesis, with its vision of peasants as passive ciphers and its focus on the “downward transmission of ideology to the masses.” He also challenged the top-down model of politicization that Maurice Agulhon had propounded in his classic study, *La République au village*.²⁶ Corbin likewise dismissed political ideology, this “coarse” and reductive category, as the sole explanation of behavior (Goldhammer). This is the heart of Prochasson’s article: breaking with a traditional history of political ideas, parties, and professionals, Corbin analyzed the “cultural framework”—the local procedures, logics, horizons, strategies, emotions, and representations—that surrounds and shapes politics. Corbin, argues Prochasson, has studied politics as a “modern mode of expression” rather than the mere “art of gaining power.”

Expression may also be stylistic, and Corbin’s readers have learned to recognize his idiosyncratic voice: the evocative titles, the mellifluous sentences, the words that have faded from contemporary usage. At a time of concern about the “shriveling” of history’s “literary side,”²⁷ Corbin has melded intonations and genres (the tragic, the epic) to capture the diametrical poles of human existence (Goldhammer). His work on the elusive Pinagot further breaks from the protocols of historical writing by adopting an open, exploratory style (Kalifa) and foregrounding his own persona, as professional researcher, person, and social actor (Gerson). But this innovative use of the “I” parallels reservations about authorial subjectivity and self-reflexivity, argues Gerson. From this perspective, *The Life of an Unknown* captures a broader tension of the French historical field, caught between its positivistic heritage and a “liberation” of writing that Pierre Nora, Michel de Certeau, and others instigated in the late 1980s. Beaujour, too, links Corbin to broader tendencies of

the French “human sciences” discourse, including an affinity for semiotic (and synchronic) analysis. Corbin’s “unusual” style nonetheless stands out, contends Beaujour, as a mix of scientific neutrality, intricate rhetorical techniques, and “stylistic virtuosity” that seeks less to convince than to seduce, dazzle, and sometimes shock the reader.

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Some readers have found Corbin seductive and dazzling—as well as convincing. Others have expressed reservations, and Kalifa reviews the critical reception of his successive publications. Certain critiques have recurred over the years: an excessive focus on representations; a reliance on diverse sources of questionable status; nostalgia for a vanished rural France; far-ranging claims regarding emotions and other ostensibly inaccessible phenomena, some of them extrapolated from small and unrepresentative incidents.²⁸ Like other reviewers of Corbin’s study of prostitution, Perrot regrets that he paid less attention to female prostitutes than to men and their sexuality. Other contributors to this issue wish that he had gone further—in clarifying the radical consequences of his work (Kalifa); in addressing, within his study of Pinagot, the implications of his atypical methodology (Gerson); or in rethinking the divide between the realm of desire or pleasure and the action of a regulationist state (Saada). Saada also wonders whether, in his quest for personal fulfillment, the historian must necessarily shun social or political *engagement*. Corbin’s “profound idiosyncrasy” and apolitical stance have contributed to his success among American historians of France, she adds, but they have also limited the reach of his publications within other disciplines.

In France, these publications have provoked surprisingly few debates and controversies. Prochasson emphasizes their dismissal by political historians, who deemed them irrelevant to their concerns. Kalifa, in contrast, argues that Corbin’s caution and “apparent submission” to dominant codes masked the subversive nature of his work. So did, no doubt, his methodological, thematic, and stylistic idiosyncrasy. What, after all, could one fear from a highly literary study of village bells? From a historian who recently outlined a history of “the configuration of silences,” yet another impossible project?²⁹ From a scholar who tolerates silence—the silence of what he does not know—in his own publications?

“Que faire de Corbin?” The contributors to this issue hazard answers to Prochasson’s question. Grasp and engage his assumptions and ruptures. Assess the French historical field’s response to innovation and idiosyncrasy. Consider one’s own relationship, as a scholar, to institutional norms and social pressures. Or read him to recall that historical phenomena, in the words of Prochasson, are “always impure, always ambiguous, always equivocal.” Eminent names surface in the following pages: Michelet, Bachelard, Febvre, Lévi-Strauss. But none is more pertinent in this regard than Goethe. “We must be ready to attend to anything we may hear, especially anything opposed to our

own view,” he wrote in 1823, “for here we will recognize the problematic character of things and, especially, of people.”³⁰

Notes

1. Marc Fumaroli, speech on literary prizes, annual public meeting of the Académie française, 30 November 2000, www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours_SPA/fumaroli.html. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from the French are mine.
2. The conference on “Alain Corbin and the Writing of History” took place at the Maison française of New York University on 27 and 28 September 2002. The other presenters were Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, Françoise Gaillard, Lionel Gossman, William M. Reddy, and Vanessa Schwartz. Edward Berenson and Stéphane Gerson organized the conference, with valuable input from Emmanuelle Saada and Herrick Chapman (who also suggested and shepherded this special issue).
3. For the most concise statement on this crisis, see Christophe Prochasson, “Is There a ‘Crisis’ of History in France?” *Perspectives* 36, 5 (May 1998): 9-11. For a fuller overview, see Christian Delacroix, “Une crise de l’histoire? (les années 1980-1990),” in Christian Delacroix, François Dosse, and Patrick Garcia, *Les Courants historiques en France, 19e-20e siècles* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1999), 241-86. The initial cry of alarm was Daniel Roche, “Les historiens aujourd’hui: Remarques pour un débat,” *Vingtième siècle* 12 (October-December 1986): 3-20; the most resounding (and controversial) was Gérard Noiriel, *Sur la “crise” de l’histoire* (Paris: Belin, 1996). For debates on this “crisis” and Noiriel’s diagnosis, see the collective “Sur la ‘Crise’ de l’histoire: autour du livre de Gérard Noiriel,” *Bulletin de la Société d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 3-4 (1997): 72-99 ; “Forum : ‘A Crisis in History ?’ On Gérard Noiriel’s *Sur la ‘crise’ de l’histoire*,” *French Historical Studies* 21, 3 (Summer 1998) : 383-414 ; and “Controverses: y a-t-il une ‘crise’ de l’histoire ?” *Le Mouvement social* 184 (July-September 1998): 99-111. On historians and “social demand,” see also François Bédarida, ed., *L’Histoire et le métier d’historien en France, 1945-1995* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1995); Antoine Prost, *Douze leçons sur l’histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996); and Henry Rousso with Philippe Petit, *La Hantise du passé* (Paris: Textuel, 1998).
4. Alain Corbin, *Historien du sensible: Entretiens avec Gilles Heuré* (Paris: La Découverte, 2000), 12-15.
5. Corbin, *Archaïsme et modernité en Limousin au XIXe siècle*, new ed., 2 vols. (Limoges: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 1999 [1975]), 1: xi.
6. Corbin, *The Life of an Unknown: The Rediscovered World of a Clog Maker in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), xiv. Corbin’s key works are listed after this introduction. For a chronological discussion of his monographs, see Sima Godfrey, “Alain Corbin: Making Sense of French History,” *French Historical Studies* 25, 2 (Spring 2002): 381-98.
7. Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750-1840*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 283.

8. See also "Des femmes, des hommes et des genres," interview of Alain Corbin and Michelle Perrot by Raphaëlle Branche and Danièle Voldman, *Vingtième siècle* 75 (July-September 2002): 167.
9. Corbin, Preface to Peter McPhee, *Les Semailles de la République dans les Pyrénées-Orientales, 1846-1852: Classes sociales, culture et politique*, trans. Nicole Prosper and Peter McPhee (Perpignan: Les Publications de l'Olivier, 1995), 14; and Corbin, *Lure of the Sea*, vii.
10. Cf., among others, René Rémond, ed., *Pour une histoire politique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1988); Bernard Lepetit, ed., *Les Formes de l'expérience: Une autre histoire sociale* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995); and Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, eds., *Pour une histoire culturelle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997).
11. Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside*, trans. Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), xx.
12. Corbin, "Histoire et subjectivités," in *L'Histoire, la Sociologie et l'Anthropologie*, ed. Yves Michaud (Paris: Poches Odile Jacob, 2002), 140.
13. See Arlette Farge, "L'histoire sociale," in Béderida, *L'Histoire et le métier d'historien*, 282.
14. Foremost among them: attachment to traditional notions of egalitarian community, distinctive forms of sociability, and feelings of frustration before the region's perceived backwardness.
15. Corbin, *Historien du sensible*, 54. Surprisingly or not, the contributors all but ignore historiographical debates on rural modernization and politicization.
16. Corbin, *Historien du sensible*, 62; and idem, "Les lieux d'observation des cadres sociaux," in *Histoire sociale, Histoire globale?* ed. Christophe Charle (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1993), 203.
17. I am citing Antoine Prost's paraphrase of a personal exchange with Corbin, in Prost, "What Has Happened to French Social History?" *The Historical Journal* 35, 3 (September 1992): 679.
18. Corbin, "Senses," in *Encyclopedia of Social History*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 668.
19. Corbin, "Désir, subjectivité et limites: L'impossible synthèse," *EspacesTemps* 59-60-61 (1995): 46.
20. Corbin, "Backstage," in *A History of Private Life*, vol. 4: *From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, , trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 457; and Corbin, "L'avènement des loisirs," in his *L'Avènement des loisirs (1850-1960)* (Paris: Aubier, 1995), 17.
21. Corbin, *Life of an Unknown*, viii.
22. On Corbin and micro-history, see Jean-Luc Mayaud, "Historiens et histoires locaux," in *Histoire locale: Rencontres d'Ancenis*, ed. Marie Percot (Nantes: Siloë, 2000), 69-75.
23. See Jacques Revel, "Présentation" and "Micro-analyse et construction du social," in his *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard and Le Seuil, 1996), 7-36, quotation on 28; Revel, "L'histoire au ras du sol," preface to Giovanni Levi, *Le Pouvoir au village: Histoire d'un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVIIe siècle*, trans. Monique Aymard (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), i-xxxiii; and Bernard Lepetit, "De l'échelle en histoire," in his *Carnets de croquis: Sur la connaissance historique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), 100.
24. Antoine de Gaudemar and Robert Maggiori, interview of Alain Corbin, *Libération*, 27 March 1998.
25. On this question, see Edward Berenson, "Politics and the French Peasantry: The Debate Continues," *Social History* 12, 2 (May 1987): 213-29.
26. Corbin, 1998 addendum to his "avant-propos," *Archaïsme et modernité*, vol. 1, xiii. See Maurice Agulhon, *La République au village: Les populations du Var de la Révolution*

- à la *Seconde République* (Paris: Plon, 1970); and Corbin's comments in "Du Limousin aux cultures sensibles," in Rioux and Sirinelli, *Pour une histoire culturelle*, 102-3. For a more recent critique, along similar lines, see Christine Guionnet, *L'Apprentissage de la politique moderne: Les élections municipales sous la Monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1997). Agulhon responds in his "'La République au Village': Quoi de neuf?" *Provence historique* 194 (1998): 423-33.
27. John Demos, "History Can Be Literary," *New York Times*, 30 December 1998.
 28. Corbin enumerates and addresses some of these critiques in his *Historien du sensible*, esp. 64-65 and 75.
 29. Corbin, "Prélude à une histoire de l'espace et du paysage sonores," in *Le Jardin de l'esprit: Textes offerts à Bronislaw Baczko*, ed. Michel Porret and François Rosset (Geneva: Droz, 1995), 51-63.
 30. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, reproduced in his *Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. Douglas Miller (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1988), 305.

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