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Sophie Fuggle, *France's Memorial Landscape: Views from Camp des Milles*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023. xii + 227 pp. Notes, references, and index. $104.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781837644780; $104.00 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9781837644506.

Review by Philip Nord, Princeton University.

The French Republic requisitioned a defunct tile factory near Aix-en-Provence in 1939 at the outset of the Second World War. It turned the space into a camp, the Camp des Milles as it was known, to intern enemy aliens. The Vichy regime that succeeded the Republic repurposed the camp, which was located in the Unoccupied Zone, to house Jews. The implementation of the Final Solution in France led to the emptying out of Les Milles in late 1942, as prisoners were trained to transit camps, Drancy the most notorious among them, en route to annihilation at Auschwitz. That November, in the wake of Operation Torch, the Germans took over the Unoccupied Zone and the Camp des Milles too, which they converted into a munitions storage facility. Over the course of the Camp des Milles' brief life, ten thousand unfortunates passed through its gates, a quarter of them ending up deported to the East.

Sophie Fuggle has written a book about Les Milles. It is not the camp's wartime history that interests her so much as the site's transformation in the war's aftermath into a memorial site. What messages, she wants to know, does the memorial attempt to convey, and of equal if not greater importance to Fuggle, what issues does it fail to address?

Les Milles was, of course, not the sole camp of its kind in France. The Republic set up a vast network of internment facilities in the late thirties for a variety of purposes, to confine enemy aliens, of course, but also Spanish Civil War refugees, "reds," and "undesirables" of all kinds. The Republic's camp system was meant as an expedient, but under Vichy, the temporary turned into the permanent, and the camp network became more and more implicated in the detention and deportation of France's Jewish population. For decades after the war, the French were content to forget about the camps, but that began to change as the twentieth century drew to a close, thanks in part to the research efforts of historians. Two books come straightaway to mind in this connection: Anne Grynberg's *Les Camps de la honte: les internés juifs des camps français (1939-1944)*, published in 1991, and Denis Peschanski's *La France des camps: l'internement (1938-1946)*, which came out in 2002. But, as Fuggle makes clear, memory entrepreneurs also had a hand in rescuing the camp phenomenon from oblivion, and in the case of Les Milles, the memory activist who seems to have made all the difference was Alain Chouraqui.

Chouraqui was involved every step of the way, as piece by piece, the elements of a memorial site were assembled. He was on hand in 1990 to inaugurate a memorial path, the *Chemin des déportés*, that led from the tile factory to nearby railroad tracks. This was the stretch that internees had been made to walk before boarding boxcars that would transport them to their deaths. Two years later, an actual boxcar was positioned on the tracks, and twenty years after that, in 2012, the memorial complex as a whole--factory, path, and train site--was opened to the public. Fuggle does not reconstruct Chouraqui's decades-long campaign (she did not interview him), but what he accomplished was remarkable, transforming a derelict space into a memorial that today welcomes a hundred thousand visitors per year, an estimated half of them school children.

What Fuggle does try to do is to parse the memorial landscape that Chouraqui played such a key role in creating. He did not work alone, of course, but had help from a scientific and pedagogical advisor, Bernard Mossé, and from unnamed staff at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris. Fuggle is inclined to take a critical view of what Chouraqui's team achieved, but even if she is ungenerous, her general line of analysis has its merits.

A visit to Les Milles begins on the factory's ground floor, which has been made into a museum. Guests pass through security. A sign informs them that the visit they are embarking on constitutes an act of resistance in itself. And then they are made to watch an introductory video. Fuggle does not provide a detailed account of the exhibits that follow. It is clear, though, that the museum makes much of the art that was created at the camp. In the camp's first phase, under the Republic, the enemy alien contingent included several painters and sculptors of note, among them the German Surrealists Hans Bellmer and Max Ernst. Internment did not stop them from making art, and the museum, it seems, touts the work that they did as acts of resistance, art's vital cry against the stultification of camp life. The museum, of course, devotes ample space to filmed survivor testimonies, though Fuggle does not seem engaged by what the former inmates had to say. She prefers to zero in instead on the museum's final projection, a triple-screen, immersive affair that reminds visitors that the genocide of the Jews was not one of a kind. Armenians and Tutsis were also once targeted for extinction. It is clear that Fuggle finds the factory museum oppressive. She writes of "sensory and information overload" (p. 33). Nor does she like its didacticism and invocations of resistance at every turn. For a breath of fresh air, she returns time and again to an open window on the museum's second floor, the so-called "suicide window." When the cattle cars pulled in to take inmates away, it was from here that a number of them jumped, preferring death to the fearful unknowns of deportation.

The window also opens out onto the out-of-doors portion of the memorial, and Fuggle piles on the criticisms as she leads the reader down the deportees' path to the boxcar, the *Wagon du souvenir*. The path is lined with panels, which spell out the wartime efforts of French men and women who acted to succor inmates or to help them escape. One is devoted to Pastor Henri Manen and his wife Alice. He kept a record of what he saw at Les Milles, a document indispensable to the reconstruction of what life was like at the camp. Of greater importance, the two saved lives. In recognition of such risk-taking heroism, the State of Israel bestowed on the couple the honorific title of Righteous among Nations. What Fuggle objects to is how the Manen couple's deeds of rescue are rolled into a narrative of resistance and how that narrative in turn is

mobilized to make the case that true France was not to be found at Vichy but in the ranks of those modest French men and women, devoted to the cause of humanity, who refused Vichy's siren calls. Last of all, Fuggle conducts us to the *Wagon du souvenir*. She notes how the cattle car has become an integral feature of so many Holocaust memorials, a status that has elevated it into a veritable metonym for the genocide of the Jews. But she is just as engaged by the two flags that fly alongside the boxcar, the European Union flag with its twelve-starred halo and, above all, the Tricolor. The flags, as she interprets them, have a message to send: that France and Europe, too, stand as the antithesis of what the boxcar represents. What happened here must never happen again. And it is not just governing authorities who are charged with resisting the genocidal impulse but all of us. The memorial, both outdoors and in, takes pains to remind visitors that they are more than passers-by. They are citizens with the capacity to act, and they are enjoined to do just that--to resist xenophobia and antisemitic bigotry. There it is, the resistance theme once again, which moves Fuggle herself to resist. What she hears in the memorial's call to moral responsibility is a hypocritical expression of the "French state ideology around universal rights," hypocritical because the French state likes to see itself as a bastion of human rights when, in fact, it is not (p. 18).

Indeed, Fuggle is in many ways more involved in the stories that the Les Milles memorial does not tell than in the self-congratulatory one about resistance and rights that it does seem intent on conveying. And what are these untold stories? There are three principal ones. The first has to do with the people who live hard-pressed in present-day France: the undocumented, Muslims, and immigrants. It is all fine and well to speak up against the anti-Semitism of the Vichy era and its twenty-first-century avatars, but the Les Milles memorial fails to reckon with all the ways in which the Republic treats so many people poorly in the here and now, failing to live up to its professed values.

Fuggle's second untold narrative leads her back once again to the suicide window. Who were the people who leapt out, she wants to know? It seems that they were Jewish women, though further details prove hard to come by. For sure, they were latecomers to the camp, relocated there in 1942 by way of preparation for their deportation to the East. They were not latecomers to detention, however. For it was from detention spaces in Marseilles that they had been relocated, to be precise, from a batch of requisitioned hotels where they had already been held for some time. So, Les Milles, it turns out, was not just a camp unto itself but the hub of a galaxy of holding centers that radiated out to places like Marseilles. From here, Fuggle moves on to reflections about Les Milles' relationship to other internment camps in France--Gurs, Rivesaltes, etc. And the final step in her mental odyssey takes her to penal camps in the colonies like Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni in Guyane. Les Milles is one site, a small cog, in a much larger camp machine spread across the entire globe. About all this, the Les Milles memorial has nothing to say.

Nor does it have anything to say about climate change. Fuggle's last substantive chapter is entitled "Sky." As she looks out the suicide window once more, she is moved to reflect on the meteorological deterioration of our planet. Global warming is one of the prime reasons so many people are on the move today in search of safer havens like France. The Les Milles memorial maintains a discreet reserve about the Fifth Republic's inhospitality to newcomers, for all the

memorial's adjurations to resist xenophobia. Little wonder then that it is silent as the grave about the climactic conditions that have helped to stoke our era's migration crisis in the first place.

It may be a lot to ask of a Holocaust memorial to take a stand on global warming, and Fuggle's musings do take her far from the subject at hand, the Camp des Milles. As a result, many questions go unanswered. To start with, is it altogether satisfactory to label the Les Milles site as a Holocaust memorial? Many of the people who passed through the camp were not Jews at all but German nationals who were in time released. Does the memorial fail to make the distinction between short-term internees and people destined for deportation and death? Fuggle takes due notice that the flurry of memorial activity surrounding France's wartime camp system dates to the late twentieth century, but why then, readers might want to know? She proposes a reasonable, if unsympathetic, reading of the lessons that the Les Milles memorial is designed to teach, centered on resistance, rescue, and human rights. But she does not inquire into the design process, nor does she reflect on the political and social setting that made these messages, whatever their limitations, seem so urgent at the time. It is illuminating to think about Les Milles as part of galaxy of carceral institutions, but are all the carceral institutions that Fuggle links together identical in purpose and function? Is a penal colony the same as a transit camp the same as an internment camp? What she has to say about the lacunae in the memorial's narrative about the camp and its meanings is suggestive. But there is a lacuna in Fuggle's own presentation. The memorial highlights testimonies from former inmates. In Fuggle's account, the inmates themselves almost never get a word in. She does spend time mulling over the fate of the women who leapt through the suicide window, but they remain specters more than identifiable human beings. It would be interesting to know what Les Milles survivors made of their experience, how *they* interpreted it.

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