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REPRESENTING THE UNTHINKABLE:
IMAGES OF LOSS IN THE MID-CENTURY
WORK OF JEAN FAUTRIER

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Art History
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Mara Holt Skov

April 1997

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Dr. Anne Simonson

Dr. Patricia Sanders

Dr. Dominique Van Hooff

Dr. Susan Landauer

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

REPRESENTING THE UNTHINKABLE: IMAGES OF LOSS IN THE MID-CENTURY WORK OF JEAN FAUTRIER

by Mara Holt Skov

This thesis addresses the lack of attention given by American scholars to the art of post-World War II Europe by providing an introduction to the work of French artist Jean Fautrier. It covers aspects of his entire artistic career, paying special attention to his two most important paintings series — *Les Otages*, painted during the war in response to assassinations of French *résistants* by the Nazis, and *Les Objets*, seemingly banal objects painted in response to post-war shortages faced by the French people.

By filtering the raw material of contemporary history through the formal concerns of abstract painting, the artist developed a new and powerful visual language for the traditional subjects of the figure and still life. The ultimate success of Fautrier's work is that through abstraction, the images are elevated from their specific moment in history to derive universal meaning as representations of all human atrocity and loss.

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Thanks also to my family: my mother, Carolle Skov, for giving me the passion for history; my father, Arny Skov, for giving me the passion for art; my husband, Steven Skov Holt, for creating with me a place for these passions to flourish; and to my son Larson Skov Holt, born April 12, 1997 for giving me the impetus to meet my deadlines.

And finally, thanks to Jean Fautrier for giving me some compelling issues to deal with, although the fact that I even bothered probably wouldn't mean a thing to him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Illustrations	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. CLASSICAL MODERNIST —	
THE EARLY WORK OF JEAN FAUTRIER	9
2. A PERSONAL RESISTANCE — <i>LES OTAGES</i>	15
3. SIGNIFICANT BANALITY — <i>LES OBJETS</i>	34
4. THE LIMITS OF <i>L'INFORMEL</i> — FAUTRIER'S LATER WORK	47
CONCLUSION	51
ILLUSTRATIONS	54
APPENDIX 1:	
FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE POST-WAR PERIOD ..	94
APPENDIX 2: BIOGRAPHY	108
APPENDIX 3: SOLO EXHIBITIONS	113
MONOGRAPHS ON JEAN FAUTRIER	121
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	123

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. <i>Tête d'otage No. 7</i> , 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 35 x 27 cm. Private Collection, Paris	55
2. <i>Tête d'otage No. 20</i> , 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 33 x 24 cm. Private Collection, Paris	56
3. <i>La clef</i> , 1949, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 33 x 46 cm. Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris	57
4. <i>Les boîtes en carton</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 67 x 81 cm. Private collection, Geneva	58
5. <i>Le grand compotier</i> , 1927, oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm. Private Collection, Germany	59
6. <i>Fleurs noires</i> , 1926, oil on canvas, 71 x 60 cm. Private collection, Germany	60
7. <i>Les peaux de lapin</i> , 1927, oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm. Collection of Marie-José Lefort, London	61
8. <i>Le sanglier écorché</i> , 1927, oil on canvas, 163 x 131 cm. Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris	62
9. <i>Le cageot de pommes</i> , 1927, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm. Collection of Castor Seibel, Bonn	63
10. <i>Glacier noir</i> , 1926, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm. Collection of Insel Hombroich, Neuss, Germany	64
11. <i>L'homme ouvert (L'autopsie)</i> , 1928, oil on canvas, 116 x 73 cm. Collection of the Musée des Beaux Arts, Dijon	65
12. <i>La jolie fille</i> , 1927, oil on canvas, 92 x 60 cm. Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris	66

13. <i>Nu couché</i> , 1929, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 81 x 130 cm. Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris	67
14. <i>Les poires</i> , 1940, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 53.5 x 64.5 cm. Private Collection, Geneva	68
15. <i>Tête d'otage no. 1</i> , 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 24 x 22 cm. Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles	69
16. <i>Tête d'otage No. 22</i> , 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 27 x 22 cm. Private Collection, Paris	70
17. <i>Tête d'otage</i> , 1942-4, lead, 49 cm. Collection of the Musée de l'Ile de France, Sceaux	71
18. <i>Grande tête tragique</i> , 1942, bronze, 33.5 cm. Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris	72
19. <i>La juive</i> , 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 73 x 115.5 cm. Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris	73
20. <i>L'écorché</i> , 1942, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 80 x 115 cm. Private collection, Paris	74
21. <i>Corps d'otage</i> , 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 114 x 87 cm. Private collection	75
22. <i>Torse</i> , 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 46 x 38 cm. Collection of Galerie Bonnier, Geneva	76
23. <i>Le massacre</i> , 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 114 x 146 cm. Private collection, Paris	77
24. <i>Boîtes de conserve</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 50 x 73 cm. Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris	78
25. <i>Branchages</i> , 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 38 x 46 cm. Private collection	79
26. <i>La grappe de raisins</i> , 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 38 x 46 cm. Private collection	80

27. <i>Boîte d'allumettes</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 46 x 56 cm. Private collection	81
28. <i>Le pain</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 44.5 x 53 cm. Borzi Collection, Rome	82
29. <i>Le moulin à café</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 46 x 55 cm. Private collection, Paris	83
30. <i>Le verre à pied</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 38 x 46 cm. Private collection, Paris	84
31. <i>Le pot</i> , 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 33 x 41 cm. Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles	85
32. <i>L'encrier</i> , 1948, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 34 x 41 cm. Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris	86
33. <i>Le flacon de cristal</i> , 1948, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 41 x 33 cm. Private collection, Paris	87
34. <i>Les sacs en papier</i> , 1955, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 50 x 61 cm. Private collection, Rome	88
35. <i>La boîte</i> , 1955, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 50 x 61 cm. Private collection	89
36. <i>Can't Give You Anything Else But Love</i> , 1957, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 97 x 130 cm. Borzi Collection, Rome	90
37. <i>Sunset in Alabama</i> , 1957, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 60 x 81 cm. Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris	91
38. <i>Tête de partisan, Budapest</i> , 1956, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 27 x 22 cm. Private collection, Rome	92
39. <i>La grand place de Budapest</i> , 1957, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 81 x 60 cm. Private collection, Geneva	93

INTRODUCTION

In October of 1945, a little over a year after the Liberation of Paris, the Galerie René Drouin presented an exhibition of paintings by French artist Jean Fautrier entitled *Les Otages: Peintures et Sculptures de Fautrier*. Among the works exhibited was a numbered series of abstracted impasto images, each bearing the title *Tête d'otage* (ill. 1, 2). *Les Otages* had been painted between 1942 and 1945 in response to the assassination of French *résistants* by the German police. In the preface to the exhibition, art critic André Malraux called the series “une hiéroglyphie de la douleur,”¹ noting that Fautrier expressed the drama of the assassinations without directly representing it, reducing the mortal figures to their most simple expression.

Ten years later, in February of 1955, another series of paintings by Fautrier, *Les Objets*, was exhibited in Paris at the Galerie Rive Droit. This time the subjects were simple objects such as bread, a key, and a cardboard box (ill. 3, 4), yet they were painted in the same manner as the hostage paintings. Many of the paintings in the exhibition belonged to a series that Fautrier had begun in 1947 after the war's end. A closer look beneath the surfaces of these seemingly banal objects reveals that many of them were in fact things which were unavailable due to the shortages and deprivations of the post-war period. When viewed within their historical context, the paintings have much to say about the emotional and cultural losses suffered by the French

¹ André Malraux, *Les Otages, Peintures et Sculptures de Jean Fautrier* (exhibition catalog) (Paris: Galerie René Drouin), 1945, p. 3.

people.²

Although both series of paintings represent specific and recognizable subjects, Fautrier's tendency toward abstraction is important. The artist reduced the subject of each painting to the most elemental form possible and depicted it with heightened materiality. Thus *Les Otages* represented a new approach to the figure while *Les Objets* represented a new approach to still life. By taking the raw material of his own contemporary history and filtering it through the formal concerns of abstract painting, the artist developed a new and powerful visual language for the traditional subjects of artistic practice.

But why, if these paintings are so powerful both in the subjects they represented and the style in which they were painted, is it that Jean Fautrier is virtually unknown in the United States?

Looking back at the post-World War II period, American culture appeared nothing if not triumphant. Augmented by optimism, ingenuity and a can-do spirit, the United States had risen to lead the defeat of Fascism. Respect for the United States among European nations had grown, and the door was opened for the spread of American culture. Exhibitions of Abstract Expressionism were sent to European museums. Interest in European art of the period was eclipsed by the appearance of the New York School and the writings of formalist critics such as Clement Greenberg, who supported the belief that the "main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and

² See Appendix 1 for an in-depth discussion of World War II and the post-war period in France.

political power.”³ Harold Rosenberg in “A Parable of American Painting” paralleled the success of American Abstract Expressionism to the American “coonskin” victory over the British “redcoats” in the Revolutionary war — a victory that came by relying on raw ingenuity and creativity rather than tradition and decorum. Rosenberg wrote that the new American artist “became willing to take a chance on unStyle or antiStyle ... the mistake, the accident, the spontaneous, the absent.”⁴ Irving Sandler capped off the cultural victory over Europe in 1970 when he wrote *The Triumph of American Painting*.⁵

American art, according both to artists and to their formalist supporters, was declared autonomous, relating neither to politics, to history, to philosophy nor to anything outside its own specific formal properties. Greenberg wrote in his 1940 essay, “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” that the “arts, then, have been hunted back to their mediums, and there they have been isolated, concentrated, and defined.” He went on to declare that the “purely plastic or abstract qualities of the work of art are the only ones that count.”⁶ Painting in particular was about painting and only about painting in all its formal aspects; line, color, and composition were liberated from the need to

³ Clement Greenberg, “The Decline of Cubism,” (originally published in *Partisan Review*, March 1948). In *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 572. This essay is part of a series of essays in which Greenberg makes the case for valuing American art on a par with the art of Paris.

⁴ Harold Rosenberg, “A Parable of American Painting,” *The Tradition of the New*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 21.

⁵ Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

⁶ Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” (originally published in *Partisan Review*, July-August 1940). In Harrison & Wood, 1992, p. 558.

express political, historical, or literary aims common to American social realism of the 1930s.

While American painters were boldly striding forward into the so-called independent field of Abstraction Expressionism, European artists were dealing with other issues entirely. Although similarities of style can be noted in much of their work — in the tendency toward abstract imagery, thick texture, and gestural line — the visual world the Europeans depicted in their canvases was one of destruction and decay; of a material world in need of rebirth and renewal. Jean Dubuffet's *art brute* — in which he looked for inspiration in the art of children and the insane — eschewed academic and aesthetic concerns in an attempt to unearth a more naive and honest form of expression. The artist known as Wols (Otto Alfred Schultz) depicted imaginary organic worlds intent on explosion or implosion, and his work was considered by Jean Paul Sartre to be the visual parallel to his existentialist philosophy. Pierre Soulages' canvases, with their emphasis on thick, ominous horizontal and vertical brushstrokes, had the effect of imprisoning the viewer, much the way that the Occupation imprisoned the French people in both real and abstract terms. These artists, in contrast to their American counterparts, were engaged in a process of deep moral questioning that hinged on their wartime experiences. The paintings of Jean Fautrier provide yet another example of how such questioning infused art production in France both during the war and in the years following the Liberation.

The tendency toward abstraction in the work of Dubuffet, Wols, Soulages, Fautrier, and others was dubbed *l'informel* by critic Michel Tapié in his 1952 book *Un art autre*, in which he called for a dramatically different

kind of art that would stun viewers with its emotive power and exploration of the human condition. Tapié was a passionate supporter of Fautrier and other artists whose work could be considered formless or abstract, yet which dealt with powerful subject matter, and he was responsible for organizing exhibitions which brought their work to the public.

While many French artists were exploring the limits of abstraction, André Fougeron and other artists led an opposing, yet equally powerful social realist movement motivated by Communist concerns. Their paintings were full of scathing commentary on the horrors of capitalism and material excesses, and they would probably have been denounced by an American public who, with the threat of Fascism removed, now feared the expansion of Soviet Communism backed by French Communists and Socialists who had risen to political power following the Liberation.⁷

Taking these issues into consideration, it was no wonder that American audiences had little interest in European art of the post-war period. Neither abstract art rooted in the often horrific wartime experiences of Europeans (not shared by the American public) nor the social realism of Communist doctrine seemed to be appropriate for an American public in the midst of unprecedented economic expansion. More appropriate was pure

⁷ A significant percentage of the French population embraced Communism — the party of the French Resistance — both during and after the war, and the post-war government included many former *résistants* who were Communist party members. The Communist party made up 26.6 percent of the Constituent Assembly elected in October 1945. In all, nearly three-fourths of Assembly members could be considered left of center. This included Communists, Socialists, and members of the Mouvement Républicain Populaire. Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times: From the Enlightenment to the Present*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 400-01.

abstract painting, free from weighty political issues of the day, and practiced by artists who were praised by critics for their individuality and freedom from the influence of a specific school or doctrine.⁸ Meyer Schapiro drew a parallel between these artists and their paintings when he wrote, "The sentiment of freedom and possibility, (is) accompanied by a new faith in the self-sufficiency of forms and colors..."⁹

The question of American disinterest in the art of post-World War II Europe is addressed by Serge Guilbaut in his book *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*.¹⁰ There he discusses the reasons why Paris lost its hegemony over the art world during and after the war, and the political and cultural machinery that went into creation of New York as the new epicenter for world art. In an attempt to dispel myths laid down by Greenberg, Sandler, and others, Guilbaut begins with the premise that although the Abstract Expressionism of the post-war American avant-garde declared its

⁸ It is important to remember, however, that not all American artists were interested in such apolitical abstraction as the New York School painters who gained notoriety in part because of both their situation in New York, and their enthusiastic support of well positioned critics. Recent studies have focused attention on previously overlooked American artists who were exploring wartime themes within the formal limits of abstraction, as well as artists who continued to produce figurative work that dealt with similar issues. See Christine Lindey, *Art in the Cold War: From Vladivostok to Kalamazoo, 1945-1962* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1990); Susan Landauer, *The San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1996); Susan Landauer, "Painting Under the Shadow: California Modernism and the Second World War," In *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900-1950*, ed. by Paul J. Karlstrom (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1996).

⁹ Meyer Schapiro, "The liberating quality of avant-garde art," *Art News* (vol. 56, no. 4), Summer 1957, p. 38.

¹⁰ Guilbaut's title puts a cynical twist on the title of Sandler's book *The Triumph of American Painting*.

independence from politics, ironically it succeeded on a world-wide scale precisely because of political support. Because of its "self-proclaimed neutrality," he noted, "it was soon enlisted by governmental agencies and private organizations in the fight against Soviet cultural expansion."¹¹

Guilbaut's work, although controversial, has set the stage for a reconsideration of the post-war period in both Europe and the United States.¹² A critical inquiry into the similarities and differences between artistic production in the two art centers is underway, and this thesis continues the inquiry by concentrating on the work of Jean Fautrier, an artist who was profoundly affected by the events of his time.

Fautrier's relative anonymity in the United States stems from the fact that he belonged to an entire group of artists, both European and American, who chose to deal not only with the formal aspects of representation, but also with the difficult and controversial history of the period. Thus their work was often overlooked by American art historians and critics in their excitement over pure abstraction which was declared to be more about the inner psychological expression of the artist himself than an expression of exterior political issues.

The following chapters will provide an introduction to the work of

¹¹ Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, (translated by Arthur Goldhammer), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 11.

¹² Guilbaut's provocative title has stirred up discussions within art historical circles on both sides of the Atlantic (as it was obviously meant to do). Although reviewers praised the exhaustive documentation he presented in making his case, he has been criticized for his socio-political reading of Abstract Expressionism which in fact had little to do with the actual movement, as well as for his Marxist point of view which predisposed him to present a stronger case for the political use of art than actually occurred.

Jean Fautrier, covering aspects of his entire artistic career from the early 1920s up until his death in 1964. Special attention will be paid, however, to the two most important painting series he produced — *Les Otages*, painted during World War II in response to assassinations of French *résistants* by the German police, a series which reflects the ragings of the artist against the atrocities of war, and *Les Objets*, painted in response to post-war shortages faced by the French people, a series of seemingly banal objects which explores the material and cultural losses of war. Because the historical events surrounding the life of an artist are integral to that artist's production — in Fautrier's case reflected directly in the subjects and titles of his work — the paintings will be discussed within the historical and cultural context of the war and its aftermath.

Also to be addressed are the equally important formal concerns which ran parallel to the artist's interest in contemporary history — namely abstraction focused on materiality. Fautrier's exploration of abstract form and matter and the reduction of each subject to the bare essentials occurred at the same time that the artist tackled some of the most powerful psychological issues of his day — personal alienation, physical violence, and material deprivation.

In this introduction to the work of Jean Fautrier it is the author's hope that his work will first of all be appreciated for its sensitive depiction of both the human and material losses of World War II and the post-war period, and secondly be recognized for its ability, through abstraction, to transcend a specific moment in history and find a more universal meaning as a visual representation of all human atrocity and loss.

CHAPTER 1

CLASSICAL MODERNIST — THE EARLY WORK OF JEAN FAUTRIER

Although the celebrated series *Les Otages* was painted in direct response to the tragic events of World War II, Fautrier's work was not always so openly motivated by current events. His early work, in contrast, addressed the issues of classical modernist painting itself. His subjects were typical studio subjects common to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painters — still life, the nude, and landscape — yet they were consistently painted in dark and somber tones and reflect an underlying sense of the macabre (ill. 5).

Born in Paris in 1898, Jean Fautrier's formative years were spent in England. An illegitimate child, he experienced a lonely boyhood in France that was marked before he reached the age of ten by the loss of both his father and his grandmother, who had been his sole guardian. It was at this time, in 1908, that he went to live with his mother in London,¹³ where he later studied art at the conservative Royal Academy and the Slade School, and became familiar with the vast collections of the London museums.

At the age of nineteen, he was called back to France to serve in the French army in World War I, but ill health kept him out of front line

¹³ Finding himself an outsider in both England and France, Fautrier developed a detached and reticent personality, and kept to himself throughout most of his life. Beginning at an early age he experienced both loss and alienation, themes which are a unifying element in his work.

combat.¹⁴ After the war he moved to Paris, resumed painting, and exhibited his work in the galleries. It was during this period that Fautrier formed an acquaintance with Jeanne Castel, a gallery owner who became an early patron and remained a constant supporter throughout his lifetime.¹⁵ She was instrumental in arranging exhibitions of his work in her own and other galleries as well as introducing him to influential persons in the Parisian art world such as André Malraux who wrote the preface for the 1945 exhibition *Les Otages* at Galerie René Drouin.

Paintings from the 1920's of floral bouquets (ill. 6), still lifes, and dead game recall Dutch and English still life paintings that the artist may have seen on his visits to the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery in London, but thereafter, any resemblance to historical motifs ends. The artist's brooding sensibility is constant in these gloomy depictions of flowers, fruits, and animals. An emphasis on shadowy black backgrounds and a palette of muted earthy colors further imparts a sinister feeling to many of these early paintings.

In *Les peaux de lapin* (ill. 7), the hanging game commonly seen in Dutch paintings of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries takes on a dark

¹⁴ Pierre Cabanne, *Jean Fautrier*, (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1988), p. 146. There is some disagreement among scholars as to Fautrier's participation in the war. Some say that he saw combat, was gassed, and finally transferred from active duty. Cabanne, whose book includes very complete biographical records, reports that Fautrier was mobilized in the infantry, but due to an accelerated heartbeat and poor vision, was judged unfit for active duty. He was then assigned to various administrative units and eventually named brigadier in 1919.

¹⁵ Castel became one of the artist's closest friends despite his reportedly inhospitable personality. She housed him when he returned to Paris at the outbreak of World War II and also secured his release from the German police when he was arrested during the war.

aspect and eerily foreshadows his mature work. Rather than being aesthetically arranged on a table surrounded by the trappings of the hunt, the mangy and lifeless bodies of the animals are hung plainly in front of a dull tar-like background. *Le sanglier écorché* (ill. 8) takes its initial inspiration from Dutch still life, but rather than focus on a realistic depiction of the animal's soft fur underbelly, the hare has been slit open to reveal its bloody entrails — an image more reminiscent of Chaim Soutine's grisly *Side of Beef* (c. 1925).

Le cageot de pommes (ill. 9) exhibits a surprisingly delicate treatment of color. This may be Fautrier's nod to French artist Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, whom the painter acknowledged as a great influence, although visual references to the nineteenth-century avant-garde painters Gustave Courbet, Edouard Manet and Paul Cézanne can also be detected.

Fautrier's early landscapes exhibit the same muted blacks, greys, and browns seen in his still life paintings. A series of unidentified mountain landscapes (ill. 10), probably inspired by visits to the Tyrol, show the use of this minimal palette in works that achieve a level of abstraction rare for this period in France.¹⁶

Fautrier's sense of the macabre extended to his human figures as well. A gouged and lifeless male torso, *L'homme ouvert (L'autopsie)* (ill. 11) is depicted against the same tar-like black background as *Les peaux de lapin*. The cadaver's chest cavity is cut wide open exposing a serpentine mass of

¹⁶ Pure abstraction was rare indeed until the post-World War II period. Although Fautrier gave these paintings titles which refer to the landscape represented, his emphasis on surface texture and minimal color places them closer to abstract rather than representational painting, and foreshadows the future development of his post-war style.

intestines. The face, body, and organs appear swollen in a gruesome depiction of the clinical reality of death, showing from early on that the artist was capable of confronting such issues directly. Furthermore, the surface of the painting is scraped and gouged — introducing the subtext of violation in technique and content which will reappear in the later hostage paintings.

Other figures are not depicted in such a grisly fashion, but are nevertheless eerie representations of the human form. *La jolie fille* (ill. 12) is a ghostly female figure faintly emerging from a shadowy background. The artist applied paint in a series of transparent layers which suggest the division between figure and ground without specifically defining it. The figure's round face is mask-like with deep eye sockets; a dark red smudge defines the lips. Sloping shoulders and sagging breasts are softened even further by a warm light that bathes the left side of the figure, highlighting the cheek, breasts, and belly. Fautrier avoided giving his subject any personal traits, however, and depicted it simply as an anonymous female form existing in undefined space.¹⁷ The title of the painting provides an ironic challenge to conventional notions of beauty.¹⁸

Another female form from the period seems to come closer to a more traditional definition of beauty, yet she too is bathed in a ghostly aura. *Nu couché* (ill. 13) depicts the head, torso, and hips of a female figure seemingly

¹⁷ Later in the hostage paintings, he would turn this anonymity into a specific kind of universality.

¹⁸ Many of Fautrier's early paintings and drawings are of the female nude in which the artist makes no apparent attempt to make the figure appear beautiful or seductive to the viewer, and can be seen as an extension of the classical studio practice rather than an exploration of notions of female beauty or the desire to possess a part of that beauty by capturing it on canvas.

suspended on a white ground. The sensuous curves of her body are suggested by a broken black brushstroke which leaves traces around the russet patches of color defining the flesh of the figure. With this sinewy line tracing only the suggestion of form, the artist avoided the concise definition of the edge of the forms — a drawing technique that will become integral to his later work.

Nu couché also marks the beginning of Fautrier's experiments with an unusual technique of painting that consisted of gluing successive layers of painted paper onto canvas.¹⁹ In order to facilitate this process, he painted horizontally, building up areas of texture juxtaposed with areas of transparent varnish. Finally he went back to the painting and added outlines and details with a brush and spattered pure powdered pigment onto the textured surface. This technique allowed him to create at the same time both material form and surface transparency that was not possible with traditional oil painting.

Surprisingly unaffected by the prevailing twentieth-century French movements of Cubism and Surrealism, Fautrier's greatest inspiration for the work he produced in the 1920s and 1930s came from the mystical paintings of British nineteenth-century artist J. M. W. Turner. Turner's amorphous treatment of space and interest in rich surface texture proved to be a profound influence on the artist, who later declared his debt by saying, "je conserve pour Turner toute mon admiration. . ." ²⁰ British art historian Sara Wilson, who has written extensively on the post-war period in France and England,

¹⁹ Michel Tapié, "Fautrier paints a picture," (translated by Helen M. Franc), *Art News* (vol. 54), December 1955. A good description of this method is accompanied by photos of the artist in process. Fautrier had experimented with this technique as early as 1929, but does not develop it until the late 1930s and 1940s.

²⁰ Letter from Jean Fautrier to Jean Paulhan, n.d. In Cabanne, 1988, p. 146.

considers Fautrier "Turner's greatest heir" in the twentieth-century²¹, but also notes other important non-French influences in his work:

(Fautrier)... looked to the greatest of masters: Dante, Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Turner... his work can be seen as the culmination and the dissolution of a particularly French tradition of *belle peinture*. Supremely uncartesian, anti-cubist, Fautrier offers a Romantic challenge to the orthodox history of twentieth century French art."²²

It is clear that Fautrier's paintings from this period defied easy categorization and even went against the art trends followed by his French contemporaries. Nevertheless, his work was included in many exhibitions in Paris during the years following World War I, and he enjoyed a reasonable amount of success and critical acclaim, particularly from André Malraux and Jean Paulhan, editor of the literary magazine, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. His paintings were hung in exhibitions alongside the works of André Derain, Amedeo Modigliani, Pablo Picasso, and Chaim Soutine.

But by 1934, the economic depression had hit France and with it the art market withered. Fautrier ran into severe financial difficulties, stopped painting altogether, and moved to Tignes in the French Alps, where he worked as a ski instructor, and later to Val-d'Isère, where he opened a jazz nightclub. During this six-year period, Fautrier is thought to have completed a small number of sculptures, but it was not until the outbreak of World War II in the summer of 1940 that he returned to Paris and began to paint again in earnest.

²¹ Sara Wilson, "Jean Fautrier: Orthodoxy and the outsider," *Art International*, Autumn 1988, p. 33.

²² Ibid, p. 40.

CHAPTER 2

A PERSONAL RESISTANCE — *LES OTAGES*

Avis

La nuit qui précéda sa mort
Fut la plus courte de sa vie
L'idée qu'il existait encore
Lui brûlait le sang aux poignets
Le poids de son corps l'écoeurait
Sa force le faisait gémir
C'est tout au fond de cette horreur
Qu'il a commencé à sourire
Il n'avait pas un camarade
Mais des millions et des millions
Pour le venger il le savait
Et le jour se leva pour lui.

Paul Eluard, 1944²³

Jean Fautrier returned to Paris in June of 1940, the same month that the German army paraded their armored cars and troops up the Champs-Élysées proclaiming victory over an impassive French army. The army's surrender had come almost immediately, and German troops moved in to claim the French capital for themselves. Although the streets were full of people, most expressing shock and disbelief at the defeat, a great part of the civilian population had already fled, taking refuge in the provinces and neighboring countries.

During this tenuous period, Fautrier stayed at first in hotels and with

²³ Paul Eluard, *Au Rendez-vous allemand*, 1944. In *Paul Eluard*. Louis Parrot & Jean Marcenac, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1969), p. 111.

his friend, gallery owner Jeanne Castel, but, driven by the urge to paint again, he moved into his own studio space shortly after his return. He revisited many of his earlier subjects — still life (ill. 14), the nude, and landscape, and he had his first exhibitions in years, one of which was a retrospective.²⁴

It was during the Occupation that Fautrier developed a deep friendship with Jean Paulhan and became acquainted with poets Paul Eluard and Francis Ponge, both with whom he would collaborate in the coming years. All were active participants in the French Resistance to the German Occupation.

Before the war, Paulhan had been editor of the literary review *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, but was replaced in 1940 by Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, who was more willing to work with the Germans.²⁵ Paulhan also played a leading role in the resistance group *Comité National des Ecrivains*, which published *Les Lettres Françaises*, a clandestine journal supporting the Resistance. Discovered with a mimeograph machine in his home, the German police arrested Paulhan in May of 1941.²⁶ He was later released but continued throughout the war to participate in the literary arm of the Resistance.

Paul Eluard wrote actively for the Resistance. His famous poem “*Liberté*” was published clandestinely in 1942 as part of a collection of poems entitled *Poésie et vérité*. He paid for his activities, however, through his

²⁴ *Fautrier Œuvres 1915-1943* was held at Galerie René Drouin, Paris in 1943.

²⁵ Openly fascist, Drieu La Rochelle escaped the *épuration* trials of the post-war period by committing suicide in 1945.

²⁶ He had used the mimeograph machine to print the pamphlet *Résistance* for a group associated with the Musée de l’Homme. Frederick J. Harris, *Encounters with Darkness: French and German Writers on World War II*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 250-1.

capture, imprisonment and torture at the hands of the German police. Pleas of insanity and internment in a mental institution saved him from probable murder by his captors. After the Liberation, his work was celebrated for its violent criticism of the Germans and the atrocities they had committed. Eluard worked with Fautrier as illustrator on *Dignes de vivre*, a celebrated collection of resistance poems published shortly after the war.²⁷

Jean Paulhan introduced Fautrier to Francis Ponge in 1941. Ponge, who had written reviews of the work of other artists such as Georges Braque and Alberto Giacometti, was drawn to the hostage paintings.²⁸ He wrote a response to the 1945 Drouin exhibition, as well as introductions and commentary for later exhibitions and catalogs of Fautrier's work. Ponge had been active in the Resistance as an agent rather than a poet, although he composed works that can be read as subtle resistance pieces. Ponge's poetry was considered too cryptic to be associated directly with the Resistance, which undoubtedly saved him from the attention of the Nazis during the war, but later attracted the criticism of members of the Resistance for not having been sufficiently *engagé*.²⁹

Fautrier himself was suspected of participating in the Resistance and stopped by the German police in January of 1943, (although perhaps more

²⁷ *Dignes de vivre* was published in 1944 by René Julliard, Paris.

²⁸ Shirley Ann Jordan has written extensively on both Ponge's "Notes sur les Otages" and Fautrier's *Les Otages*. In *The Art Criticism of Francis Ponge*, (London: W.S. Maney & Son Ltd., Modern Humanities Research Association Texts and Dissertations, vol. 36), 1994.

²⁹ Ponge was most known as a *chosiste*, and published his most famous poems in *Le parti pris des choses* in 1942. These meditations on banal objects parallel Fautrier's exploration of objects and will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

through association with other *résistants* than by his own actions). Following this scare, he fled to the Alps, but shortly thereafter returned to Paris. At the urging of Jean Paulhan, he moved outside of Paris, 13 kilometers to the south, to the village of Chatenay-Malabry. There he took refuge in a sanatorium in the Vallée aux Loups near the chateau which had been the home of the nineteenth-century writer Chateaubriand.³⁰

From the sanatorium at night, the artist became an unwilling witness to the assassinations of resistance fighters and their families who were taken into the nearby forest and murdered by German troops. Haunted by the screams of protest, the sounds of shooting and the unnatural silence that inevitably followed, Fautrier sought relief by painting their faceless and nameless forms on canvas after canvas after canvas. The paintings were small in size, making the most of materials that were hard to come by during wartime shortages, and having the advantage of being easily hidden if necessary. These works were painted using Fautrier's new technique of painting on successive layers of paper pasted on canvas, which imparted a three-dimensional materiality to each image. These were the paintings of *Les Otages*, eventually presented at the Galerie René Drouin in Paris in October of 1945.

Tête d'otage no. 1 (ill. 15) is emblematic of many of the paintings in the exhibition. The head is a thick mass of material floating on an amorphous background; symbolically representing the death of one hostage. The drawn outline of the head encircles but does not meet the textural form of the head.

³⁰ Not much has been written about Fautrier's seclusion in the sanatorium, although living and working surrounded by mental patients for two years must have had some impact on him — both artistically and emotionally.

The facial features have been simplified to the very point of abstraction — a vertical line running through the center of the head depicting the nose and a horizontal smudge for the mouth. An unblinking eye looks directly at the viewer demanding to be recognized.

Tête d'otage no. 22 (ill. 16) shows the double profile of another hostage. Both the form and color of the head are disturbingly fleshy — built up through the layers of paint and paper. But this flesh lacks the vitality of life; instead it peels and flakes away from the canvas as if in the process of decaying. The lack of vitality, however, is made up for in the soul-like presence emitted by these “*profils ravagés*,” as Malraux called them.³¹

Fautrier's resistance to the Occupation, exercised by recording on canvas the assassinations he witnessed, remained for the most part a personal affair for the duration of the Occupation. He kept the paintings hidden to all but those closest to him until after the Liberation. Although his work might not have been recognized as a direct response to the assassinations in the Vallée aux Loups, it clearly went against the grain of what was acceptable to the Third Reich. Hitler had made clear his opinion of modern art in 1937 in a speech given for the opening of the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich. He declared that this degenerate art amounted to “the artifactitious stammerings of men to whom God has denied the grace of a truly artistic

³¹ Malraux, 1945, p. 3.

talent, and in its place has awarded them the gift of jabbering or deception.”³² He called for a purge of modern art and artists and went so far as to establish the Chamber of Culture — an arm of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda — to carry out his policies. The Chamber was responsible for the removal of so-called degenerate art from museums, the dismissal of museum personnel unwilling to adapt to the new government standards, and the education (or rather reeducation) of artists.³³

Although Hitler’s call for a purge of degenerate art was for the most part limited to Germany, comparable attitudes carried over to the occupied countries and added to the difficulties modern artists experienced living in occupied France. By the time the German army entered Paris in June of 1940, many artists had already fled fearing arrest and deportation in the wake of Hitler’s policies toward modern art. After a period, some returned (the most notable being Picasso), but many waited out the war in the unoccupied south: Fauves Georges Braque and André Derain in the Pyrénées near the Spanish border; Hans and Sophie Tauber-Arp and Sonia Delaunay in Grasse near the Côte d’Azur; André Breton, André Masson and many of the Surrealists in Marseilles awaiting visas for the United States.

Hitler’s anti-semitic, anti-Communist attitudes were promoted in

³² Harrison & Wood, 1992, p. 424. Hitler went on to suggest that these modern artists might be suffering from an eyesight deformation that they should be attended to in order to prevent the “further inheritance of such gruesome malfunctioning of the eyes” (ie. elimination of the owner of said eyes), or that the artists intended to “harass the nation” with their art in which case they should be dealt with by the penal code (ie. the elimination of said artists).

³³ Michèle C. Cone, *Artists Under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 7.

France by the collaborationist press throughout the Occupation. As a condition of the armistice, the press came under the control of the Vichy government which was eager to cooperate with the Germans. Jews and Communists were systematically removed from their positions as writers and editors of prominent journals and newspapers and were replaced by Nazi sympathizers and anti-Communists. Perhaps the most violent expression against degenerate art came from the pen of Lucien Rebatet, an anti-semite who wrote for the right-wing journal *Je suis partout*. In 1941, he described French art as a tree whose branches needed pruning. "It is essential to chop off the rotten branches. We must Aryanize our fine arts."³⁴

On the administrative level, the German *Propaganda-Abteilung* was set up in Paris to monitor the activities of the press and the art world. Museum and gallery exhibitions could not open without the consent of the agency, which also approved posters and publicity that accompanied the shows. Such restrictions ensured that no Jewish or so-called degenerate French artists were exhibited.³⁵

Given the restrictive environment of the Parisian galleries, it is not surprising that *Les Otages*, although begun in 1943, were not exhibited until 1945, well after the Liberation. Naturally, the resistance themes they represented would have been impossible to show during the Occupation without great risk to the artist and to any gallery brave enough to mount such

³⁴ Cone, 1992, p. 21.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 12. Cone notes, however, that as the Occupation wore on a tolerance for modern art developed in France, and exhibitions of the Fauves and other previously blacklisted artists were allowed.

a show.³⁶ In a letter dated June 1943, Jean Paulhan cautioned Fautrier of the dangers of shocking the public with his recent paintings, suggesting that he consider showing works from 1930 instead in his upcoming exhibition at Galerie René Drouin.³⁷ Following the German defeat in 1944, gallery owners were once again free to show the work they wished, although mounting any exhibition in the economic climate of the post-war period proved to be a challenge.

By 1945, the overall mood of France had shifted from celebration and relief to one of deep questioning of personal responsibility for the conflict, both external and internal. The *épuration* trials of collaborators were over, leaving in their wake the complex questions of guilt and innocence, of resistance and collaboration, to which few French people were immune. Many ordinary citizens had compromised their own sense of morality in their efforts to survive the war, and were by this time more interested in forgetting the past rather than confronting it. The exhibition of *Les Otages* was presented in this psychological climate, and although much of the critical and public response was positive, many who saw the show were disturbed by the images of hostages which forced them to directly confront their own

³⁶ Fautrier had only three exhibitions during the Occupation, all of which focused on his earlier work or themes of landscape, nudes, and still life — in 1939 at the Galerie de la N.R.F., in 1942 at the Galerie Alfred Poyet, and in 1943 at the Galerie René Drouin, all in Paris.

³⁷ Jean Paulhan, *Choix de Lettres: II 1937-1945*, ed. Dominique Aury & Jean-Claude Zylberstein (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), letter # 275. Ironically, both groups of paintings represented possible dangers because of their abstract approach which would have been considered degenerate by the German *Propaganda-Abteilung* standards.

moral shortcomings.³⁸

It is not surprising that the paintings would have been very well received by those who participated actively against the Germans, and thus found themselves on moral high ground following the war. André Malraux, who had gained status through his participation in the Resistance, praised Fautrier's hostage paintings for their attempts to express the drama of the assassinations without directly representing them.³⁹ Jean Paulhan, one of the organizers of the exhibition, considered the hostage paintings to be more "*la grande peinture*" than Fautrier had ever painted before.⁴⁰ Francis Ponge wrote, "It would be necessary ... to go back to Michelangelo's Slaves to find an equivalent in the past of this grandiose undertaking."⁴¹ Certainly one can expect such glowing praise from personal friends of the artist — those who stood to gain much from Fautrier's positive reception.

Critic Michel Ragon, on the other hand, decried the disagreeable impression of serial production, although he later recognized that it was exactly this "disagreeable serial production that the painter had chosen to express"⁴² It is possible that Ragon was concerned about the inevitable desensitization and trivialization of a subject that occurs after a certain number of repetitions (in much the same way that we today are desensitized

³⁸ Given the poor economic climate of post-war Paris, the paintings probably did not sell well. Little information exists to support or refute this claim, but according to provenance records available for many of the hostage paintings, they were initially owned by Fautrier's friends, the galleries, or remained in the artist's possession until well after the exhibition in 1945.

³⁹ Malraux, 1945, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Paulhan, 1986, letter # 347.

⁴¹ Michel Ragon, *Fautrier: Twelve Reproductions* (English translation of 1957 French edition), (New York City: Golden Griffin Books, Arts, Inc., 1958.), p. 8.

⁴² Ragon, "Les objets de Fautrier," *Cimaise*, April 1945. In Ragon, 1958, p. 26.

to the violent images in our own media). But in fact, the repetition only serves to increase the power of each individual painting. Each is subtly different, and thus reflects the differences between the distinct lives and deaths of the people the paintings represent. Shirley Ann Jordan, in her recent dissertation on the art criticism of Francis Ponge, supports this opinion:

Taking the hostages individually rather than en masse ... Fautrier maintains the emotional intensity, the personal horror for each hostage, alone, anonymous, even interchangeable.⁴³

Seen in the starkness of the gallery setting, British art historian Sarah Wilson noted:

... the serial presentation of the 'Otages' emphasized the anonymity of the tortured victims and implied the continuity of arrests, shootings, and deaths that were the day-to-day stuff of the popular press.⁴⁴

French painter Jean Dubuffet, whose work also dealt with issues of the war and its aftermath, was moved by the hostage paintings. He wrote to Paulhan shortly after seeing the show, "L'exposition de Fautrier m'a fait une impression extrêmement forte. Jamais l'art ne m'est apparu si pleinement réalisé à l'état pur."⁴⁵ Dubuffet's search for a more pure art had lead him to develop the *hautes pâtes* of the war years. Later, in his search for a purity of

⁴³ Jordan, 1994, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Wilson, "Paris Post War: In search of the absolute." In *Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism 1945-55.*, ed. Frances Morris (London: The Tate Gallery, 1993), p. 27.

⁴⁵ Letter from Jean Dubuffet to Jean Paulhan October 1945. In Cabanne, 1988, p. 37.

expression, he turned to a style he termed *art brute*, inspired by the art of children and the insane.

Although the themes represented by the hostages were emotional and political, much of the critical response focused on the formal aspects of the paintings, particularly their emphasis on materiality. Critic Jacques Gabriel wrote that there was without doubt something monumental in the paintings and something sacrificial which magnified them. But, outside of all symbolic significance, it was their overall materiality which was most disturbing.⁴⁶

This materiality, so important to both the artist and his supporters, was expressed through the technique of applying layer after layer of paper and paint to each canvas, some up to two centimeters thick. Form and materiality went hand in hand, and each successive layer created textured forms which, through the process of outlining and overpainting, became the heads of the individual hostages, although each of the resulting images avoided precise definition. Pierre Cabanne writes of this effect, "L'image était, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la peinture, dévorée par le matériau."⁴⁷ By emphasizing the materiality of each image, the artist gave form to the victims of the assassinations.

Malraux considered Fautrier's sculpture to be the source for the materiality in his paintings. The artist had worked in the medium of sculpture throughout the 1920s and 1930s, producing many bronze nudes and mask-like heads that were highly textured and approached abstraction. The 1945 exhibition featured one sculpture entitled *Otage* (ill. 17), and in the

⁴⁶ Jacques Gabriel, *Le Pays*, November 19, 1945. In *Jean Fautrier Rétrospective* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1964), p. 21.

⁴⁷ Cabanne, 1988, p. 36.

preface to the exhibition, Malraux noted:

The hostage which is the key to the others is the large sculpted hostage. More than Fautrier's (earlier) paintings, the figures (of the hostages) come from his sculpture. From his sculpture they have found, in torment, what they have long searched for in vain: a means to incarnation.⁴⁸

The leaden form Malraux referred to was perhaps the artist's most abstract work to date. More representational is *Grande tête tragique* (ill. 18), a sculpture in which the recognizable head of a hostage is consciously destroyed in one gesture by the artist. Jeremy Lewison of the Tate Gallery observed that although the entire left side of the face had been clawed away, the figure still retained its power:

There is a sense of dignity and even nobility in death, nowhere more than in the sculpture entitled *Grande tête tragique* in which the viewer may literally feel the pain of the obliteration of the left side of the face by running his fingers down the grooves from which the clay has been clawed away. The head nevertheless remains defiantly erect.⁴⁹

Fautrier's attempt to destroy the head reflects both the violence of the act of assassination and the artist's own antipathy towards easily defined forms, an antipathy that was integral to his work from the very beginning.

Many who attended the opening of the exhibition gasped at the sheer beauty of the paintings. Critic Marcel Arland recalled overhearing "They're beautiful, they're exquisite, they're ravishing ..."⁵⁰ Francis Ponge believed

⁴⁸ Malraux, 1945, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Jeremy Lewison, "Jean Fautrier," *Burlington*, September 1989, p. 674.

⁵⁰ Marcel Arland, "Les Otages de Fautrier," *Vingtième siècle*, November 8, 1945. In Cabanne, 1988, p. 154.

that this beauty was necessary and that Fautrier had depicted the forms in a manner:

“so striking (in time more and more striking) and so irrefutable; so beautiful that they will last for centuries, because man only retains images that please him; even the horrible ones.”⁵¹

The paintings are indeed aesthetically beautiful, but the beauty of the hostages is a flawed and tragic beauty — as tragic as the heroic beauty associated with dying for a just cause.

The aesthetic, even erotic beauty of the paintings was an aspect that many viewers noted with discomfort. Certainly a dichotomy exists between the horrific subject matter and the sensuality of form and tenderness of color expressed in many of the paintings. Nowhere is this sensuality more apparent than in *La juive* (ill. 19).⁵² Here Fautrier continued his exploration of the nude female form from the pre-war years, but this time the form bears little resemblance to his earlier nudes. Female curves are suggested, but not given clear definition with tenuous pink and black strokes of the brush. Are these forms breasts or buttocks, or are they to be defined at all? The matte surface of the canvas is softened by the application of pure pigment leaving a powdery quality that is enhanced by delicate pastel pinks and yellows hearkening back to the still life paintings of the 1920s (ill. 9) rather than the nudes of the same period. The resulting image of *La juive* is at the same time both appealing in its aesthetic beauty and repellent by virtue of its subject.

⁵¹ Francis Ponge, *Note sur les Otages, peintures de Fautrier*, (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1946).

⁵² *La juive* was painted in 1943, but not included in the Drouin exhibition.

Jeremy Lewison points to this dichotomy as “an exquisite beauty in death, a beauty already evoked in the carcass paintings of the 20s.”⁵³

In addition to the erotic implications of the painting, it is difficult to overlook the impact of the title given the anti-semitism of the Nazi regime, as well as the underlying anti-semitism of the French people, who allowed the deportations of French Jews to take place. Although the complete horror of the concentration camps would not surface until the end of the war, public knowledge of the deportations — which included many Jewish artists and intellectuals — was widespread. *La juive* was either painted consciously in 1943 in recognition of the injustices suffered by the Jews, or (more likely) was given the title later when the atrocities of the camps were a matter of public knowledge.⁵⁴

The subject of *L'écorché* (ill. 20), prefigured in 1927 in the painting *Le sanglier écorché* (ill. 8), is no longer a flayed and decaying rabbit, related to the English and Dutch still life tradition. This time the flayed subject is meant to be human. The only recognizable body parts are the extremities which are splayed out to expose the body — but it is not clear which part of the body is being exposed and which extremities are splayed out. Both paintings show the efforts of the artist to penetrate and expose the body, a theme which he had addressed earlier in a more gruesome manner in the painting *L'homme*

⁵³ Lewison, 1989, p. 674.

⁵⁴ Most of the hostage paintings were left unsigned and undated to guard Fautrier's identity in case the paintings were discovered by the Germans. On the occasion of the Drouin exhibition, many of the paintings were titled and dated in 1945.

ouvert (L'autopsie) (ill. 10).⁵⁵

L'écorché and other hostage paintings are consciously depicted by the artist as ambiguous and incomplete, symbolizing the dead and mutilated body which is itself incomplete. Devoid of life, the body is in the process of decaying into pure material. The decay of the human form in Fautrier's paintings symbolizes the decay of the culture and the self which was pervasive in France during the war and post-war period.

Fautrier's antipathy towards defined form is apparent in every one of the hostage paintings, and as Frances Morris notes, it is "seen most clearly in the incongruity between the drawn contours of his images and the physical contours of his impastos."⁵⁶ In *Corps d'otage* (ill. 21) the broken black brushstroke which defined the form of *Nu couché* (ill. 13) reappears, and still refuses to define clearly the point at which the body ends and the background begins. For Fautrier, refined form is secondary to materiality.

Corps d'otage also addresses the issues of disembodiment and dismemberment which was an underlying theme throughout the series of hostage paintings. The disembodied head and the dismembered body (ill.# 22) were particularly powerful images in the history of France. Since the French revolution with its iconic guillotine, the image of a decapitated head symbolized the "irreversible enactment of the destruction of the old regime."⁵⁷ By the twentieth-century the guillotine, used as a method of capital punishment, had come to symbolize state-sanctioned death for

⁵⁵ Fautrier's interest in the open and exposed body would be transformed later into empty vessels which became the object paintings.

⁵⁶ Morris, 1993, p. 90.

⁵⁷ Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor for Modernity*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1994), p. 11.

convicted criminals. Although the victims of the assassinations in the Vallée aux Loups had been shot, the floating heads and dismembered bodies of Fautrier's hostages are symbolic of the state-sanctioned murder — supported by the Vichy government and carried out by the German police — of those who opposed the German Occupation and whose acts of resistance ultimately led to their deaths. "The mutilation of the headless body is a potent metaphor of sacrifice... The headless torso, then, functions as a powerful sacrificial object." notes Linda Nochlin.⁵⁸ Fautrier's mutilated heads and bodies were offered up on the gallery walls as sacrificial remains of the ordinary citizens who died as martyrs who died for justice and free France.

Martyrdom was indeed a dignified way to die, particularly for a nation with such deep Catholic roots.⁵⁹ Martyrs of the war, particularly the heroes of the Resistance, were celebrated through public and private memorials, street names, and songs, and their stories became part of the popular mythology of the period.⁶⁰ Indeed everyone wanted to identify with the Resistance, if for no other reason than to assuage their guilt.

Francis Ponge saw *Le massacre* (ill. 23) as representative of Christian martyrdom. The painting shows an arrangement of nameless heads; each punctuated by a thick matte black line down the middle of the face suggesting the line of the nose which meets a horizontal black line depicting the mouth.

⁵⁸ Nochlin, 1994, p.49, 51.

⁵⁹ Although religious practice had been declining in twentieth-century France, the importance of Catholic imagery and symbolism remained. Fautrier's personal religious convictions are not well known, but his grandmother, his guardian as a young boy, was a devout Irish Catholic.

⁶⁰ Today there is a monument standing in the Vallée aux Loups where the assassinations which Fautrier witnessed were reported to have taken place.

Together these lines form an inverted T-shape. Ponge suggested that this modified cruciform motif is symbolic of the martyrdom of Christ and thus transforms the anonymous hostages of *Le massacre* into holy beings. "The shot victim replaces the crucified One, the anonymous man replaces the painted Christs."⁶¹

Fautrier's motivation, rather than consciously representing crucifixion, may have been simplification of the head and its features; the inverted T-shape can be seen as an appropriate solution to the problem of abstracting a head.⁶² Issues of simplification are a more convincing explanation than an interest in crucifixion imagery when considering the rest of the hostage paintings and the way in which Fautrier pared them down to their essential components. Malraux noted the power the images achieved through the artist's simplification of form in his preface for the exhibition, "en le représentant toujours moins, en l'exprimant toujours d'avantage."⁶³

This simplification of the subject is paralleled in the suppression of narrative in the paintings. Unlike Goya's *The 3rd of May 1808*, Manet's *The Assassination of Maximilien*, or Picasso's *Guernica*, all paintings which dealt with the themes of political injustice and assassination, Fautrier's hostage paintings avoided a narrative treatment of their violent theme. Instead he pursued the physical aftermath of the hostage assassinations rather than the

⁶¹ Ponge, "Notes sur les Otages," (translated by Wilson). In Morris, 1993, p. 27. Fautrier had painted the subject of crucifixion twice in 1927, and although these paintings prefigure the theme of martyrdom, they are more representational than the symbolic *Le massacre*.

⁶² Consider the painted heads of Alexej von Jawlensky from the 1920s in which he uses similar techniques of abstraction of facial features.

⁶³ Malraux, 1945, p. 4.

violent acts themselves. In this way the paintings become emblematic of all murder and suffering — their anonymity gives the paintings power, and they become representative of all human atrocities committed. Michel Ragon wrote about their timeless quality in 1957:

The Hostages of the forties will not cease to haunt us. For that matter, the fifties also have their Hostages, outside of France to be sure, but not a day goes by without talk of Hostages. One day it is a Madagascan's head, another day the head of a Korean, or an Annamite, or a Greek, or an Arab, or a Hungarian. Twentieth-century man becomes accustomed to living with his executed Hostages, like medieval man with his lepers.⁶⁴

Les Otages are emblematic of the prevailing existentialist philosophy of the Occupation and the immediate post-war period, exemplified by writers Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. Existentialism holds that man is inherently alone in his struggle to find meaning in an absurd world where death is the final absurdity. His only salvation can come from the personal commitment to action against his futile situation. Fautrier embodied the existentialist as artist — solitary, removed from the comfort and companionship of others (in part by choice), the prisoner of events over which he has no control. He can only react to the injustices and absurdities of the world. The act of painting *les Otages* as a memorial to those who were assassinated was in accordance with existentialism's tenets of meaningful action and commitment.

Although Fautrier had not been an overtly philosophical painter before the Occupation, he was drawn into the existentialist's commitment to a

⁶⁴ Ragon, 1958, p. 30-31.

cause through the events he witnessed. The continued assassination of *résistants* which took place in such close proximity to his wartime refuge demanded some kind of response, even from the most withdrawn of persons. The hostage paintings demonstrate the private efforts of an artist to react to and record the tragic events which occurred around him. All bodies can look this way after violent death — suspended between Sartre's *l'être et le néant* — not alive, not dead, and most certainly not at peace.

The need to purge the demons that were troubling him must have been great, given the sheer numbers of the hostages completed during and after the Occupation.⁶⁵ When one considers that he had little opportunity to sell these paintings during the war, it becomes even more clear that the initial act of painting the hostages was probably more of a cathartic exercise than one with a marketable purpose.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The complete catalog of Palma Bucarelli lists twenty-four *Tête d'otage* paintings as well as numerous other paintings on the theme of hostages; not to mention the sculptures, drawings, and prints that exist on the same theme. Palma Bucarelli, *Jean Fautrier*, (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1963).

⁶⁶ This would change in the following years as the demand for the hostage paintings grew. He later pursued the theme in prints, drawings, and revisited the *tête* motif in 1958 for his *Partisans of Budapest*.

CHAPTER 3

SIGNIFICANT BANALITY — *LES OBJETS*

Mesdames et Messieurs, voici donc les premières notes, que j'ai jetées sur le papier en avril 1942, à Roanne, petite ville du centre de la France, où nous étions, ma famille et moi, comme on disait alors, *repliés* — ou *réfugiés*.

Nous étions donc, alors, en pleine guerre, c'est-à-dire en pleines *restrictions*, de tous genres, et le savon, le vrai savon, en particulier, nous manquait. Nous n'avions que de mauvais ersätze — qui ne moussaient pas du tout.

Peut-être cela fut-il une des raisons, inconsciente, de ce qu'il me faut bien appeler mon inspiration du savon, en avril 1942 . . . ?

Roanne, avril 1942

Si je voulais montrer que la pureté ne s'obtient pas par le silence, mais par n'importe quel exercice de la parole . . . Quel objet conviendrait-il mieux que le savon?

.

Violente envie de faire toilette.

Cher lecteur, je suppose que tu as parfois envie de faire toilette?

Pour ta toilette intellectuelle, lecteur, voici un texte sur le savon.

Coligny, juin 1943

from Francis Ponge *Le savon*, 1967

Today such redundant meditations on the subject of soap by Francis Ponge may seem banal, but when the poet was writing them in 1942 and 1943, they were deeply meaningful. During World War II, soap was a luxury available only in limited quantities and would have been greatly missed. Ponge posited ironically that a meditation on soap would give him the impression of possessing and utilizing the scarce commodity, if only in the intellectual sense. In addition, the cleansing properties of soap serve as an important metaphor for the times, expressing the desire to cleanse the nation both of the Nazi occupiers during the war, and of the French citizens who collaborated with them after the war.⁶⁷

Ponge had come to prominence as a poet through his work *Le parti pris des choses*, published in 1942, in which he describes apparently banal objects such a candle, a pebble, an orange, and a cigarette. He describes them in simple terms, sometimes focusing on their aesthetic qualities, sometimes on their functional qualities, and sometimes using the objects as a departure for other subjects.⁶⁸ At the time, Ponge's *choses* were considered detached and

⁶⁷ From an etymological standpoint, the cleansing ritual of *l'épuration* which took place during the immediate post-war period gave the French an opportunity not only to "purge" the nation of collaborators, but to "purify" it in the process. In addition, the use of the term "ethnic cleansing" for the genocide committed by the Nazis provides an interesting correlation to the subsequent *l'épuration* of collaborators.

⁶⁸ Roland Barthes also addresses seeming banal elements of French culture in *Mythologies*, (1957) in which he discusses such diverse subjects as detergents, wine and milk, the *Guide Bleu*, wrestling, and plastic. In another vein, Ponge's style has been seen as a precursor to that of Alain Robbe-Grillet, originator of the the *nouveau roman* in the 1950s, in which the detached author describes objects and settings in complete, unemotional detail meant to reflect the depersonalization of the modern machine driven world.

unemotional; this became a source of criticism from his contemporaries, many of whom produced work that was more overtly in support of the Resistance. In defense of his style, Ponge later argued “Je ne suis pas un peintre de batailles... Je suis plutôt un peintre de natures mortes...”⁶⁹

This statement illustrates Ponge’s recognition of the connection between the literary and visual arts, and provides an appropriate point of comparison between the poet’s writings and Jean Fautrier’s post-war paintings of objects. Both Ponge’s text on soap and Fautrier’s object paintings call for the contemplation of the physicality and the functionality of the objects in question, and, at the same time, draw attention to the greater issue of shortages and rationing experienced by the French people during the war and the immediate post-war period.

Nowhere is Ponge’s work more connected with Fautrier’s than in the artist’s paintings of objects such as *Boîtes de conserve* (ill. 24), painted in 1947. Jam, one of the essential ingredients of the French breakfast, was a product that many French people went without for years before the Marshall Plan offered aid from the United States for the reconstruction of Europe. Ration coupons for the essentials were in use, and a thriving black market made some special items available, only at high prices. Jam would have been a scarce and expensive addition to the meager diet of most French during and after the war.

In the painting, Fautrier paints three objects that, according to the title, are to be read as jars of jam, although their contents are not clear. The forms of the three objects are suggested by a thick paste of paint and paper that looks

⁶⁹ Ponge, “Entretiens avec Francis Ponge,” 1976. In Jordan, 1994, p. 48.

as if it has been spread on the canvas — like jam itself — rather than painted.⁷⁰ The heavily textured paint takes on a materiality of its own; the blue and black outline of the jars is drawn without actually tracing the forms of the jars themselves. In the ambiguous space between form and line, the physical reality and representation of the objects is called into question.

This and other object paintings illustrate Fautrier's attempt to fill a psychological and material void by creating a visual representation of the absent object. His inspiration came from Ponge's intellectual consumption of soap through the process of writing about it. But does a poem about soap or a painting of jam fill the empty place of the physical object itself? And are one's hands cleaner or one's stomach fuller after intellectual ingestion of these objects? The action may be futile, but the record of that action which remains — painting or poem — is indeed meaningful. Thus, *Boîtes de conserve* is not simply a painting of jars of jam; it is rather a symbol of the emotional and material deprivation experienced throughout France both during the war and for a long time after, particularly in the urban areas where Fautrier was working and where this painting would have been seen.

The object paintings that are the subject of this chapter can be seen as a continuation of Fautrier's exploration of the subject of still life. But how was the artist's pre-war still life painting style in the tradition of the Dutch and French masters transformed into the near abstract paintings such as *Boîtes de conserve*?

Although Fautrier's most celebrated work from World War II is the

⁷⁰ Based on Fautrier's technique at the time this painting was completed, it is probable that the artist painted this canvas on a horizontal surface, applying the paint with a knife.

powerful hostage series,⁷¹ he was at the same time continuing the exploration of his earlier, less emotionally-charged subjects such as still life and landscape. As with the hostages, however, the artist pared these subjects down to the bare essentials of form, color, and texture and used the same technique of painting horizontally and building up layers of paint and paper pasted onto the canvas. Landscapes with trees became simply *Branchages* (ill. 25); bowls of fruit were reduced to *La grappe de raisins* (ill. 26). These subjects are soothing respites from the horrific subject matter of the hostages.

By 1947, Fautrier had simplified his still life subjects even further to the point of achieving his first true *objets*.⁷² Again the paintings were executed in the same manner as the hostages — undefined shapes floating in the center of an ambiguous ground, a highly reduced color palette with flecks of pure pigment, and a broken outline merely suggesting the edges of the floating shapes. The only changes evident are in the artist's use of color and form. He distinguishes the object paintings from the hostages by changing the color palette from earthy browns, bloody reds, and fleshy peaches to steely blues and matte blacks, grays, and browns and by contrasting the organic forms of the human body with an angularity appropriate for man-made objects (ill. 27). Both the hostage and the object paintings reflect a primal reduction of subject matter, palette, and technique that works to their

⁷¹ Examples of the hostages are almost always included in exhibitions of post-war art as evidenced by exhibition histories of the paintings and catalogs on the subject.

⁷² The tendency toward simplification in Fautrier's object paintings is also seen in Ponge's poetry by Shirley Ann Jordan who writes, "small, graspable objects — graspable by the hand as well as the mind — are preferred to subjects whose implications are so numerous as to swamp the observer, or threaten him with annihilation." Jordan, 1994, p. 5.

aesthetic advantage. It is as if the privations of war gave Fautrier the gift of clarity which he translated into visual terms in his paintings.

The object paintings, although rooted in Fautrier's earlier work, represent a new approach to the subject of still life — much the same way that the hostages offer a new approach to the figure. Taken separately as pure objects floating in undefined space, Fautrier removed them from a typical studio setting and by doing so, imbued them with deeper meaning. Although the subjects for these paintings seem to be banal, a closer look reveals that a great deal is hidden beneath their common exteriors. Taken within the context of the material and cultural losses suffered by the French people during and after the war, the objects in fact engender the same emotional impact as the hostages. It is as if the objects, though inanimate, are hostages themselves — symbolic artifacts of a France of the pre-war years and even the nineteenth-century when the collective psyche of the French people was still intact. Artisanal objects — a loaf of bread (ill. 28), a coffee grinder (ill. 29), and a wine glass (ill. 30) — carry heavy weight within French consciousness.

Bread, long the staple of the French diet, was a subject imbued with significance dating back almost 200 years to the French Revolution and the establishment of the modern French Republic — not to mention the religious association of bread with the sacramental body of Christ. Bread was considered an essential part of the French diet, a veritable *droit de l'homme*. It was a significant subject for a post-war France in which bread rations allowed only small amounts of coarse grain bread as the staple of the weekly diet for most of the populace. White bread baguettes had not been available for many years, and would not be available until 1948 when wheat could be

finely milled for public consumption.⁷³

Le moulin à café symbolizes the traditional mainstay of the French liquid diet: coffee. Young and old began their breakfast with a *café au lait*. Neighborhood *cafés* offered Parisians a place to work, relax, and socialize outside of their homes, generally over a cup of espresso.⁷⁴ But during the Occupation, and for four years following the Liberation, coffee was unavailable except at high prices on the black market, and as a result was sorely missed. Many French substituted burned barley “coffee” for the real thing. Milk rations were limited to young children, putting a temporary end to the breakfast *café au lait*.

Just as coffee was an integral element of French daily culture, so was wine, and an empty wine glass served as a reminder of yet another shortage. Poor agricultural conditions affected viticulture during the war years and farmers hoarded grapes and other produce for their own consumption and for sale on the black market. In response to limited supplies, available wine was extended with water. In addition, the lack of wine for sacramental use in Catholic mass left a substantial spiritual void.

Le pot (ill. 31) seems to be more a symbol of the emptiness of the period than a direct reference to specific shortages. The pot of ambiguous shape and purpose is, like many of Fautrier’s objects, a vessel, yet these vessels seem

⁷³ On August 11, 1948, Janet Flanner’s weekly report to the *New Yorker* magazine begins with the excitement over hot humid weather which had the effect of ripening the wheat crop and growing “hopes everywhere for that long-unseen luxury, white bread.” Janet Flanner (Genêt), *Paris Journal 1944 - 1965*, (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 93.

⁷⁴ The lack of coffee did not deter the French from seeking refuge in *cafés* both during and after the war. During these times of short fuel supplies, *cafés* were often the only public places heated throughout the cold winters.

poignantly empty. Perhaps this pot refers to the phrase *prendre un pot* which in French means to have a drink with close friends⁷⁵ — under normal circumstances a pleasant experience. The empty *pot* for Fautrier may be symbolic not only of the lack of wine, but the alienation and division which the war brought to personal relationships — in Fautrier's case made more profound by his self-imposed seclusion from Parisian intellectual life by remaining in the town of Châtenay-Malabry. The empty pot and other vessels which Fautrier painted during this period may also refer to the emptiness of post-war French life once the euphoria of victory had worn off, and the realities of day-to-day survival set in. Understandably, it was a time when many French people experienced intense grief and despair over the human and material losses of the war.

In contrast to the emptiness of the pot, *L'encrier* (ill. 32), a symbol of the treasured literary culture of French intellectuals (of which Fautrier counted many friends and acquaintances), appears full, perhaps a reference to the richness of French literature and poetry following the war. Or conversely, a full inkwell could also refer to the literature which had not been and would never be written by those poets and intellectuals who died as a result of the war and deportations.

L'encrier is a small work like most of Fautrier's canvases. The object has been reduced to a matte black construction, with boundaries suggested by a tenuous line "drawn" with a stick into the impasto of the form itself and defined through reduction of material rather than addition. Behind the black

⁷⁵ Thanks to Dr. Dominique Van Hooff for bringing this phrase to my attention.

form of the inkwell lies a pasty white form — perhaps a blank piece of paper waiting for the writer's pen. This painting is significant in that it was originally part of the collection of writer and editor, Jean Paulhan. The subject "inkwell" becomes emblematic of Paulhan himself and the tradition of writing in French history — not from a contemporary perspective, but rather an old-world perspective in which the task is done with artisanal tools.

Flacon de cristal (ill. 33) is symbolic of many of the luxury products traditionally associated with France. Both the crystal bottle and the perfume it contained represent long traditions of fine artisanal production — production that was overshadowed by wartime mass production and post-war efforts to reconstruct. Fragile cut crystal and elegant perfume were images inconsistent with the post-war period — emblematic rather of the loss of a more delicate time and the artisanal traditions that went with it.

Fautrier's insistence on the artisanal objects of French culture can also be seen as a reaction against the manufactured goods that were flowing into France by the mid-1950s, reflective of the artist's conscious rejection of contemporary life. It is as if he shunned imported material goods in favor of the icons of *la vieille France* in response to his own personal distress over the cultural shifts taking place. Perhaps it was this distress that kept him in the little town of Châtenay-Malabry after the war was over, when most artists and writers who had fled the Occupation chose to return to Paris.⁷⁶

Although these objects were painted shortly after the end of the war,

⁷⁶ Fautrier was 46 when the war ended and quite possibly had little desire to uproot himself during this period of his life. In 1943, he had met Jeanine Aeply and settled down in Châtenay-Malabry. The couple had two children in 1946 and 1947. Fautrier remained in Châtenay-Malabry, in the same cottage which included his studio, until his death in 1964.

many were not exhibited publicly until February of 1955 at the Galerie René Drouin in Paris. The exhibition entitled *Les Objets de Fautrier* also included more recent paintings from 1954 and 1955 specifically for the exhibition. These later objects, although painted in the same manner as the earlier ones, lack the emotional impact of the objects from the immediate post-war period. The new subjects are empty containers: mass produced paper bags (ill. 34), metal and cardboard boxes (ill. 35) bobbins, and crates — perhaps reflecting the artists response to the philosophical and emotional emptiness of the mid-1950s in France. But this new paper bag simply does not carry the same emotional weight as the symbolically loaded inkwell painted nearly a decade before.

In the end, the objects exhibition was a failure. Not one canvas was sold. Fautrier commented ironically in a letter to Jean Paulhan, “Le résultat aura été concluant, si vous estimez que moins une peinture se vend, plus elle a de chance d’être la meilleure — on n’a pas vendu un seul tableau.”⁷⁷ Paulhan had written a piece for the small exhibition catalog which positioned Fautrier as a *jeune ancêtre* of the modern movement; a precursor to abstraction who was still among the living.⁷⁸ But, as important as this role may have been to contemporary French art in 1955, the critics panned the

⁷⁷ Cabanne, 1988, p. 156.

⁷⁸ Jean Paulhan, “Un jeune ancêtre, Fautrier,” Preface for the exhibition *Les Objets de Fautrier*, Galerie Rive Droite, February 1955. Following the hostages exhibition, Fautrier had been singled out by critic Michel Tapié as an artist whose work represented *un art autre*, Tapié’s reference to abstraction. Tapié included Fautrier in two significant exhibitions of abstract painting in 1948 and 1951.

show, arguing that it was out of touch with contemporary issues.⁷⁹ The art critic of the newspaper *Le Monde* wrote that Fautrier's objects "... n'ont plus guère de rapport immédiat avec leurs prétextes respectifs."⁸⁰

The critic was right when he said that the paintings had little to do with contemporary issues. Pure abstraction in the form of *art informel* and *tachisme* were the flavors of the day by 1955, and although Paulhan had identified Fautrier as a precursor to *l'informel*, his paintings, which insisted on a subject both intellectually and physically, can also be seen as rejecting the movement. The critics may have concluded that the artist had progressed little since his celebrated hostage paintings of ten years earlier. Sarah Wilson notes that "Fautrier was again going against the grain with his deliberate figuration and his insistence on an intimate, contemplative scale."⁸¹

The greatest failure of the object paintings in 1955 was that they had been removed from their post-war context by one decade — an important period during which France made a conscious separation from the disillusionment of the immediate post-war period and moved toward the future. Their heroes were no longer existentialist philosophers and writers, but the contemporary singers and film stars who represented a forward-moving nation, not one fixated on the past. The France of the future —

⁷⁹ The critics of the 1950s were a different lot than those who had previously supported Fautrier's work. Having been raised on *l'informel*, they found his insistence on the subject to be dated.

⁸⁰ "A travers les galeries: Fautrier," *Le Monde*, February 18, 1955, p.10.

⁸¹ Wilson, 1988, p. 37.

modeled on American consumerism and cleanliness⁸² — had little interest in dwelling upon wartime shortages and the loss of what might be considered true French culture by a painter past his prime. Subjects such as bread and inkwells must have seemed outdated and banal indeed, when stripped of their post-war meaning.

Although immediate commercial success of the object paintings eluded the artist, the long-term importance of them is clear (particularly those from the immediate post-war period). Yet these paintings were far from banal in that they represented the lost elements of French culture following the war. The security and intimacy of familiar rituals and sensual experiences was gone — the sound and aroma of milling coffee, the scent of perfume, the scratch of pen and ink on paper, the clink of wine glasses followed by the sensation of intoxication, the aroma of bread baking, the crack of the crust and the full stomach it rendered. All these were now replaced by a painful lack of presence.⁸³ Fautrier attempts to compensate for some of these losses by giving the objects a material reality in his paintings. Yet by depicting them in an ambiguous way, he confronts the impossibility of replacing that which had been lost. His later objects of 1954 and 1955, empty vessels that are also apparently empty of symbolic meaning, suggest that he has given up trying to

⁸² Using documentation from popular culture — films, novels, newspapers, and magazines — Kristin Ross aptly describes France's absorption of American culture during the 1950s in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

⁸³ The importance of alimentary references in French culture is emphasized by Marcel Proust's celebrated *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27) in which a simple madeleine provides the impetus for his multi-volume psychological memoir. Proust was student of Henri Bergson whose theory of "la mémoire affective" connected objects, memories, and emotions. Seen within this context, Fautrier's objects carry intense emotional weight.

replace meaning and instead has succumbed to the emptiness he felt within the culture around him. This emptiness and lack of meaning became the basis for the abstract paintings that followed. Although aesthetically beautiful and well painted, these works from the end of Fautrier's career lack the emotional power of the two most important series of the artist's œuvre just discussed — *Les Otages* and *Les Objets*.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIMITS OF *L'INFORMEL* — FAUTRIER'S LATER WORK

Following the failure of the objects exhibition at Galerie René Drouin, Fautrier left subject matter behind and worked in a completely abstract style. The result is a series of beautiful, though decorative paintings with titles inspired by American jazz (ill. 36), the American landscape (ill. 37), and nonsense words and phrases. These paintings are the first of his works to completely depart from a recognizable subject, and although the paintings themselves achieve aesthetic success, they fall short of evoking an emotional response equal to that of either *Les Otages* or *Les Objets*. The power of these later paintings is in fact diminished by their aesthetic beauty coupled with their lack of meaningful subject matter.

The paintings, however, are reflective of France in the late 1950s when optimistic American culture was pervasive.⁸⁴ It was also at this time when the artist had his first exhibitions in the United States. The English titles chosen for many of the paintings may be due to these influences, as well as to the artist's attempts to make his work more marketable for contemporary audiences. It is important to remember that this was a time when the interest in *l'informel* was declining. Dubuffet had turned to a lighter cartoon-like

⁸⁴ American culture was represented by new consumer goods such as automobiles, televisions, and domestic appliances and ownership of these goods had increased dramatically by the late 1950's. By 1958 the French owned one automobile for every seven citizens, one million televisions, and home appliance ownership had increased 400 percent in the years 1949 to 1957. Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 104-5.

style, Yves Klein was patenting his brilliant blue, and the seeds of Pop and Minimalism of the 1960s were being sown on both sides of the Atlantic. It is not difficult to imagine that artists such as Fautrier, who had dealt with such emotional issues during and after the war, were ready to infuse their work with the vitality of new styles and lighter subjects.

The painting entitled *Can't Give You Anything Else but Love* is a reminder of Fautrier's interest in jazz that went back to the 1930's when he managed jazz nightclubs in the Alps. The curving shapes of the forms are reminiscent of *La juive* and other hostage paintings, but the conspicuously upbeat title calls for a different response from the viewer. *Sunset in Alabama* has the horizontality of a landscape, but there the resemblance to the subject ends. Instead the painting is an abstracted rectangular shape of texture that is defined by two horizontal pink lines running through it. These are just two of the many examples of purely abstract images that the artist produced during this period.

Paintings such as these owe a technical debt to *Les Otages* and *Les Objets*. Again Fautrier employs his technique of building up layers of paint and paper on canvas, again he uses a reduced color palette, and again the composition is centered around forms that seem to float on an amorphous background. But the paintings, accentuated by evocative titles, are more ambiguous than ever, leaning more towards *l'informel* than any of their precursors. These abstract paintings with their emphasis on textural surfaces and pleasing color are indeed beautiful, but they are sadly lacking the substance and emotional impact of their predecessors.

It would take a dramatic event for Fautrier to gain back the substance of

his earlier work, and when Soviet troops invaded Hungary in 1956, he once again addressed once more the dramatic theme of political resistance.⁸⁵ The artist memorialized the plight of the unsuccessful Hungarian Resistance in his series *Partisans of Budapest*, which took the familiar forms of the earlier hostages (ill. 38, 39). Lines from Paul Eluard's poem "Liberté," written during World War II, were inscribed across the bottom of each of the paintings. Michel Ragon commented that the paintings, although connected to the hostages of 1943, were more like replicas of the first series. He considered the partisans a mob — a multitude of heads — more concerned with the "magna de la pâte, dans le feu d'artifice des couleurs écrasées." But at the close of his review, he gave the artist credit for remaining true to his concern with form, while at the same time expressing sentiments pertaining to the here and now.⁸⁶

Based on their poignant theme, the paintings themselves are moving, but one cannot help but find them both too decorative and too derivative of *Les Otages* to demand equal emotional response. Perhaps the paintings lack the immediacy of the hostage paintings because in Châtenay-Malabry Fautrier was removed both physically and emotionally from the subject matter of the partisans. Perhaps it is rather that his work had become far too abstract in the intervening years to recapture the emotional intensity of the original hostages.

The later part of Fautrier's career was a time of growing recognition,

⁸⁵ By this time in France, the knowledge of Stalin's pogroms had effectively demystified Soviet Communism and French communists were aware of the evil it represented, although not all were willing to admit its failure.

⁸⁶ Ragon, "Fautrier: Budapest" (exhibition review), *Cimaise* (vol. 4, no.3), January-February 1957, p. 38.

and his work became known to a wider audience in Europe, the United States, and Japan. In 1960, he was awarded the international grand prize at the 30th Venice Biennale, followed the next year by the grand prize at the 7th Tokyo Biennale.⁸⁷ In addition, the Musée d'art Moderne in Paris honored the artist in 1964 with a retrospective exhibition, but he died shortly before the opening was to take place. In fact these honors, which came at the end of his career, should be seen not as the crowning achievement in a long career of successes, but rather as a recognition of the important part his work played in the healing period of the post-war years.

⁸⁷ The special interest in Fautrier's work shared by Italy and Japan may also be related to both of these countries wartime experiences of loss and destruction.

CONCLUSION

Just as the empty box (ill. 35), painted in 1955 for the Drouin exhibition, was devoid of content, Fautrier's art when turned toward complete abstraction, found itself empty of meaning. As if to recognize this development, he stated in one of his few published writings, "Reality must survive in a work of art, it is the primal matter, the living substance beneath the form which sustains and energizes it."⁸⁸ He went on to say that the *irréalité* of absolute abstraction offers nothing, and that no form of art can give emotion unless it is partly involved with reality.⁸⁹

Ironically Fautrier made these declarations in 1957, a time in which his paintings moved more and more away from the subject — the recognizable reality of his earlier paintings — and more and more towards pure abstraction. His statements seem surprisingly contradictory to the work he was producing at this time, unless the reality he was referring to was the reality of the formal aspects of art — texture, line, and color. It would seem that the artist was no longer willing to hold onto the reality that made his previous work so significant and his later paintings suffered for it by dissolving into purely decorative abstraction.

Fautrier's most important and moving paintings remain those which in which the dual realities of a powerful subject and a tangible materiality are united — namely in the two series *Les Otages* and *Les Objets* . Indeed, the

⁸⁸ Jean Fautrier, "A chacun sa réalité." *Vingtième siècle*, no.9, June 1957. In Wilson, 1988, p. 37-38.

⁸⁹ Fautrier, "A chacun sa réalité." In Jean Fautrier, *Ecrits publics*, (Paris: L'échoppe), 1995, p. 21-22.

tragic circumstances of World War II provided Fautrier with the raw, emotional material and universal subject he used to achieve a moment of greatness.

The hostages and the object paintings are as fragile, damaged, and as rawly exposed as both Paris and the French spirit were following the German Occupation, the purges, and the political, economic, and moral rebuilding that followed. The thick impasto and tenuous lines which outline the forms reflect the uncertain mood of the time. The inability of the artist to define a concrete form was symbolic of the issues faced by the French people in the aftermath of the war. Truth and justice were neither black nor white, but were varying shades of gray, to be found somewhere between form and outline.

Shirley Ann Jordan saw Fautrier in the role of visual artist, acting as “the *réparateur* of a shattered world.”⁹⁰ and positioned the paintings as “straddled between their acute awareness of ruin and their determination to reconstruct.”⁹¹ The hostages express of the rage of human ruin while the objects illustrate the pervasive desire to reconstruct post-war French society. The paintings stand as a record of the artist’s search for clarity and resolution of his own wartime experiences.

That Fautrier’s work represented issues specific to the European wartime experience can help to explain his practical anonymity in the United States. American troops were, after all, fighting a war on the soil of other nations and American citizens were not exposed directly to the same fears or

⁹⁰ Jordan, 1994, p. 10.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 145.

material deprivations as the Europeans. But as the 50th anniversary of World War II has inspired a reconsideration of the history of the period, the contemplation of *Les Otages* and *Les Objets* is particularly important for the understanding it brings to the totality of the World War II experience.

In addition, Fautrier's subjects, simplified to their essential nature, have the ability to transcend their specific moment in history to represent more universal issues — man's inhumanity to man, cultural loss, and the alienation of the modern world. These subjects will continue to be the subjects of artists, writers, musicians, and poets — anyone trying to come to terms with and make meaning of the tragic circumstances of unwarranted death and needless destruction. Fautrier's paintings are but one example of art's ability to bring greater awareness and understanding to the human condition.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Tête d'otage No. 7*, 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 35 x 27 cm.
Private Collection, Paris

2. *Tête d'otage No. 20*, 1944,
oil on paper pasted on canvas, 33 x 24 cm.
Private Collection, Paris

3. *La clef*, 1949, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 33 x 46 cm.
Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

4. *Les boîtes en carton*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 67 x 81 cm.
Private Collection, Geneva

5. *Le grand compotier*, 1927, oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm.
Private Collection, Germany

6. *Fleurs noires*, 1926, oil on canvas, 71 x 60 cm.
Private collection, Germany

7. *Les peaux de lapin*, 1927, oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm.
Collection of Marie-José Lefort, London

8. *Le sanglier écorché*, 1927, oil on canvas, 163 x 131 cm.
Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

9. *Le cageot de pommes*, 1927, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm.
Collection of Castor Seibel, Bonn

10. *Glacier noir*, 1926, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm.
Collection of Insel Hombroich, Neuss, Germany

11. *L'homme ouvert (L'autopsie)*, 1928,
oil on canvas, 116 x 73 cm.
Collection of the Musée des Beaux Arts, Dijon

12. *La jolie fille*, 1927, oil on canvas, 92 x 60 cm.
Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

13. *Nu couché*, 1929, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 81 x 130 cm.
Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

14. *Les poires*, 1940, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 53.5 x 64.5 cm.
Private Collection, Geneva

15. *Tête d'otage no. 1*, 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 24 x 22 cm.
Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

16. *Tête d'otage No. 22*, 1944,
oil on paper pasted on canvas, 27 x 22 cm.
Private Collection, Paris

17. *Tête d'otage*, 1942-4, lead, 49 cm.
Collection of the Musée de l'Ile de France, Sceaux

18. *Grande tête tragique*, 1942, bronze, 33.5 cm.
Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

19. *La juive*, 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 73 x 115.5 cm.
Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

20. *L'écorché*, 1942, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 80 x 115 cm.
Private collection, Paris

21. *Corps d'otage*, 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 114 x 87 cm.
Private collection

22. *Torse*, 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 46 x 38 cm.
Collection of Galerie Bonnier, Geneva

23. *Le massacre*, 1944, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 114 x 146 cm.
Private collection, Paris

24. *Boîtes de conserve*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 50 x 73 cm.
Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

25. *Branchages*, 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 38 x 46 cm.
Private collection

26. *La grappe de raisins*, 1943, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 38 x 46 cm.
Private collection

27. *Boîte d'allumettes*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 46 x 56 cm.
Private collection

28. *Le pain*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 44.5 x 53 cm.
Borzi Collection, Rome

29. *Le moulin à café*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 46 x 55 cm.
Private collection, Paris

30. *Le verre à pied*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 38 x 46 cm.
Private collection, Paris

31. *Le pot*, 1947, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 33 x 41 cm.
Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

32. *L'encrier*, 1948, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 34 x 41 cm.
Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

33. *Le flacon de cristal*, 1948, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 41 x 33 cm.
Private collection, Paris

34. *Les sacs en papier*, 1955, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 50 x 61 cm.
Private collection, Rome

35. *La boîte*, 1955, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 50 x 61 cm.
Private collection

36. *Can't Give You Anything Else But Love*, 1957,
oil on paper pasted on canvas, 97 x 130 cm.
Borzi Collection, Rome

37. *Sunset in Alabama*, 1957, oil on paper pasted on canvas, 60 x 81 cm.
Collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

38. *Tête de partisan*, Budapest, 1956,
oil on paper pasted on canvas, 27 x 22 cm.
Private collection, Rome

39. *La grand place de Budapest*, 1957,
oil on paper pasted on canvas, 81 x 60 cm.
Private collection, Geneva

APPENDIX 1

FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE POST-WAR PERIOD

THE OCCUPATION

In the early days of World War II, at the outset of German aggression, a great percentage of the French population was opposed to the war and favored a quick armistice with Germany. They were still suffering from the tremendous loss of life, property, and morale from World War I and were unwilling to put themselves at risk again. The depression of the 1930s had hit France later and deeper than most European countries, and the economy had been slow to improve. The decade of the 1930s was also a time of great political dissent and disorganization, the result of which left French people questioning their government's ability to run the country effectively. It must also be mentioned that the threat of German Fascism seemed pale in comparison to the greater threat of Russian Bolshevism.⁹²

All these issues led to the enthusiastic support of the Vichy government when the Germans marched on France in the summer of 1940. Leading the Vichy government was the revered Marshal Phillipe Pétain, a World War I hero of the bloody battle of attrition at Verdun. His first goal was to sign an armistice with Germany which put a speedy end to the war — thus avoiding further French losses — and paved the way for collaboration with the Germans in building a new European power structure in which France would have a secondary yet powerful role. Hitler had other ideas,

⁹² Robert O. Paxton provides a wealth of information on the Vichy period in *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972)

however, and never considered France more than a pawn able to supply Germany with workers for armament and other factories (empty because most German working men were in Hitler's army), agricultural products for the consumption of German population, and some colonial raw materials and resources which could be devoted to the war effort.

The armistice, signed in the summer of 1940, called for German Occupation of the northern portion of France, including Paris. The non-occupied southern portion would be governed by Pétain and his cabinet, operating out of the spa town of Vichy. The French would assume all costs of the Occupation, a condition which quickly led to the depletion of already limited government reserves. Pétain and his ministers, Pierre Laval in particular, appealed to Hitler time after time, arguing to no avail for French participation in the new Europe; Hitler was simply too busy fighting on the eastern front and enacting the Jewish Final Solution to bother with what he considered the trifling affairs of the French.

By 1942, the German grip on France through the collaborationist Vichy government had begun to tighten. Germany was running low on workers, food, and supplies for the war effort, and took what little had been originally allotted to France in the armistice agreement. This left workers, peasants, and the bourgeoisie alike with little to live on and limited means by which to change their situation. Although there had been a resistance movement from the outset of the armistice, it had been limited to several small groups some who threatened the Germans with individual acts of violence, some who clandestinely published anti-German newspapers and pamphlets, and some who carried out their own personal acts of resistance to the Occupation

making daily life difficult for their occupiers. By 1942, boosted by the growing dissatisfaction of a great part of the population, the Resistance movement had grown stronger and had won wider support throughout the country.

Frustrated, the French people looked for outlets for their anger, and as their dissatisfaction with the Vichy government increased, their participation in the Resistance followed.

The role of the *résistant* was a dangerous one, and for a great many their lives ended with denunciation, arrest, torture, and death at the hands of a firing squad. Numerous arrests and assassinations of *résistants*, their families, alleged communists, and other assumed troublemakers and undesirables occurred throughout the period of German Occupation.⁹³ Often the killings were in reprisal for unknown or unproven circumstances and they undoubtedly became one of the causes of growing French anger towards the German occupying troops.

In the summer of 1944, when American and British Allies landed at Normandy and pressed southward toward the capital, and Charles de Gaulle and his Free French forces moved north from the Mediterranean, a strong resistance movement was already in place to assist them. In addition, the armies had the support and encouragement of townspeople and villagers along the way who had by this time turned their loyalties away from the Vichy government and toward the liberating forces. This shift had come in part from the realization that the Vichy government had been ineffective and had in many cases acted on the part of the German forces against French

⁹³ Jacques Meyer et al., *Vie et mort des Français 1939-1945*, (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1971) p. 557-608.

citizens.⁹⁴ This realization must have been made more and more clear as the austerity measures grew tighter and the average French person grew more hungry and cold and lost the ability to provide for their families.

On August 25, 1944, Paris was liberated from German troops by the advancing American and British troops. De Gaulle and his troops entered Paris the following day to claim victory for the Free French forces. Parades, speeches, and both public and private demonstrations celebrated the Liberation for which Parisians had waited four arduous years.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR

Paris may have been liberated, but the war with Germany continued for another nine months (until May 8, 1945), and the privations of war plagued French citizens for many years afterward as they struggled to rebuild their country. The transition from war to peace was much more difficult

⁹⁴ The fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II in 1994 has led to the reconsideration of the role of the French government and her people in the German occupation, the denunciation of résistants, and the deportation of French Jews. Greater access to government records as well as a need to record the experiences of survivors has resulted in numerous publications, exhibitions, and documentary films. A few recent examples include *French Children of the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) an exhaustive volume of photographs of Jewish children taken before their deportation to Nazi concentration camps at the hands of French police, was compiled by Serge Klarsfeld, himself a Holocaust survivor. *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial Exhibition* at the New School for Social Research, New York from February to March, 1997 includes many of the photos from Klarsfeld's book. *A French Tragedy: Scenes of Civil War, Summer 1944* Tzvetan Todorov (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996) addresses a series of incidents of French aggression against both résistants and Jews in the town of St.-Armand at the close of the war. These are only a few examples of the rapidly expanding scholarship and documentation of World War II issues.

than that of the United States, which moved smoothly from wartime heroism to post-war prosperity, with a government that was then recognized as a world power, an economy that had benefited from wartime production, and a people whose optimism was at a high point after conquering the menace of Fascism. American optimism was matched in equal portions by the pessimism of the French people. Their country was left with a divided government, with the means of production and raw materials either destroyed during the war or taken over by the Germans, and with a people who had been humiliated from four years of shortages, deportation, forced labor, and loss of life, property and opportunity. It would take many years to build the country back to pre-war standards in both the structural and the spiritual sense.

In the period immediately following the war, the French people were overtaken by the urge to rid the nation of those who had collaborated with the Nazis, and they embarked upon the difficult task of bringing to trial members of the government, the army, and private citizens whose treason against the nation or crimes against humanity could be proven. The symbolic goal of the trials, called the *épuration*, was to cleanse the nation of the old guard to make way for new leaders, presumably those who had participated actively in the Liberation and the Resistance, with de Gaulle in the lead.⁹⁵

As a result, beginning with the Liberation in the summer of 1944 (and continuing even up until the present), it became politically astute to claim one's position in support of the Resistance, however slight. There was a fine

⁹⁵ The cleansing metaphor is illustrated clearly by the name given to this period of trials and sentencing — *l'épuration* — which means purification or purge.

line between resistance and collaboration upon which most French people had precariously balanced during the Occupation, and the *épuration* tested the limits of that line. One of the unfortunate circumstances was that the trials fulfilled a need for revenge felt by many citizens, and numerous informal purges were carried out by vigilante groups often with little or no evidence against those accused.⁹⁶

Most prominent among those tried and convicted by the state was Pétain himself; he was initially sentenced to death, but then pardoned by de Gaulle, presumably out of respect for his age and his World War I record. He spent the rest of his life in prison, but many of his cabinet ministers were executed, including Pierre Laval, the prime minister who had continued a dialog with German leaders throughout the entire Occupation. In many of the trials, former Vichy officials argued unsuccessfully that their continued collaboration with the Germans ultimately saved French lives throughout the Occupation.

Themes of rebuilding and rebirth, tinged with pessimism and doubt — the “essential constituent of modernity”⁹⁷ define the cultural climate of the decade following the war as philosophers, writers, and artists worked through a period of deep questioning, searching for elemental truths in a world which evaded easy definitions. The Existentialism of Sartre and Camus flourished, and their plays and novels questioned man’s plight in the face of an unfeeling

⁹⁶ Official court records show that 39,000 persons were sentenced to prison, 40,000 to loss of civil rights, and 2,000 to death, although less than 800 were officially executed. Unofficial estimates of unsanctioned executions carried out by private persons or militia groups number around 10,000. Wright, 1995, p. 400.

⁹⁷ Jordan, 1994, p. 10.

universe and encouraged *engagement* in meaningful action as a necessary response to man's bleak situation. Communism, specifically Soviet Stalinism remained a great draw for many intellectuals, who saw it as the alternative to the equal threats of German Fascism and American Capitalism. This was also the period in which Claude Levi-Strauss developed his anthropological theories which would form the basis for structuralism, a system of inquiry that was to influence the following generation of French thinkers who would go on to deconstruct the nature of language, culture, and knowledge in their attempts to uncover the hidden truths that all cultural productions were purported to contain.

SHORTAGES AND DEPRIVATIONS

Philosophical and moral considerations aside, the post-war issues that affected the average French citizen on a daily basis were the continuing shortages, rationing, and the black market on food and fuel — the basic necessities of daily life.

Severe fuel shortages and rationing came during the winter of 1944, a winter that was colder than most. Coal, gasoline, natural gas and electricity were either unavailable or rationed to the barest possible minimums. The inability to transport coal stalled production at factories which had access to few raw materials anyway. Shipments of goods were halted by bridges and roads which had been destroyed during the course of the war and remained so due to lack of materials, gasoline, and manpower to make the necessary repairs. Shortages of fuel affected almost every form of transportation including the metro, buses, taxis, and private automobiles as well as heating

and electricity in public buildings and private homes.⁹⁸

The fuel shortages and rationing continued into the following winter of 1945-46, which proved even colder than the previous one. Some areas of the country received only one third or a quarter of their heating fuel allocations, in part because blizzards affected both the production of coal and the movement of trains delivering fuel supplies. Most people were forced to wear overcoats inside their unheated apartments, and writers reported of suffering chilblains from the extreme cold.⁹⁹

Shortages permeated nearly every aspect of French life. Due to paper shortages, newspapers were limited to one page. Telephones were often out of service.¹⁰⁰ Hospitals were forced to manage on the bare necessities, often lacking even the most common drugs, as well as supplies such as plaster of paris, thermometers, and electricity to perform operations. Women wore shoes with wooden soles in place of leather and shorter skirts because of shortages of fabric and leather.¹⁰¹ Tobacco was so scarce that used cigarette butts were even collected and sold in packs of ten.¹⁰²

But perhaps the most difficult shortages for a country with such a rich culinary tradition as France were those of food and drink. Staples such as

⁹⁸ Janet Flanner, writing in her weekly column from Paris for the *New Yorker* magazine, notes on December 15, 1944 that cooking fuel had been rationed to none in the morning, 1 1/2 hours in mid-day, and 1 hour in the evening. Flanner, 1965, p. 6. Although more journalistic than scholarly, Flanner's entries help to define the character of the period. A long time resident of Paris, her column ran from 1925 to 1965.

⁹⁹ Antony Beevor & Artemis Cooper, *Paris After the Liberation 1944-1949*, (New York: Doubleday, 1994) p. 297-8.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 292. Noted in 1946.

sugar, salt, bread, milk, butter, cheese, and meat were severely limited or not available at all, except at black market prices. Coffee, which would be rationed for the next four years, was replaced by a hot beverage made from burnt barley. Milk rations were limited to young children. Wine supplies were extended with water. In her December 15, 1944 entry, Flanner wrote:

This week's fat-and-flesh ration for a family of three in Paris is a half pound of fresh meat, three-fifths of a pound of butter, and nine twenty-fifths of a pound of sausage. On this much food the family of three will not starve, but neither will any member of it feel full.¹⁰³

By the following spring, the situation had not improved:

In April 1945 the population of Paris averaged only 1,337 calories a day, but this overall figure hid terrible imbalances between the *beaux quartiers* and working-class districts where many, especially the old, virtually starved to death.¹⁰⁴

As noted, these shortages affected the urban poor to the greatest degree because they had meager incomes and little to bargain with. In contrast, the bourgeoisie and diplomatic corps were able to survive more comfortably because they had resources to trade or sell for scarce goods on the black market. Farmers and peasants also fared well — in fact many became very wealthy because they had access to livestock, game, and fruits and vegetables

¹⁰³ Flanner, 1965, p. 5. Flanner goes on to write on March 7, 1945, "The last time the French around here had butter was Christmas Eve. The food situation is frightful... Butter has taken on political qualities. By New Year's Day certain butterless French were already muttering that they had had more food when the country was occupied by the Germans than they had had under the Allies." Flanner, 1965, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Beevor & Cooper, 1994, p. 292.

and could sell their excesses on the black market or trade with their neighbors.

In the face of wartime and post-war rationing, the black market thrived. Scarce goods such as gasoline, cigarettes, alcohol, chewing gum, chocolate, and luxury foods — often unavailable through rationing — were still available to those that had the means to purchase them, although prices were exorbitant. A barter system also developed in which goods and services were traded, and workers were often paid in produce from the factory rather than in wages.¹⁰⁵ The black market, or *le système D* — meaning *se débrouiller*, or to survive by any means necessary¹⁰⁶ — was an accepted reality that, despite its illegal status and associated questions of immorality, helped many to survive and even prosper during the war. Flanner writes of the double-edged sword of the black market, that it “devastated what was left of French morale and cheapened the value of time, since it consumed hours of each day, but it also saved French lives.”¹⁰⁷

The black market had devastating consequences for those who were unable to come up with the means to purchase goods because items that were sold illegally were often the very ones destined for government rationing. The French peasant received in government payment “only a fraction of what it cost him to produce what he sold. Therefore, humanly, he not only lied to the authorities about the quantity he could bring to market but, inhumanely, he undersupplied even his assessed regional share for the

¹⁰⁵ Beevor & Cooper, 1994, p. 292.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁰⁷ Flanner, 1965, p. 5.

needy.”¹⁰⁸

There are those who point to the unseen advantages of the black market. The system acted as a type of free market system that may actually have helped the French recover once aid arrived in force.¹⁰⁹ The first people able to return to Paris’ pre-war elegance were those who had profited from the black market. Although their gains were selfish, their expenditures contributed to the regrowth of the economy.

The black market in certain goods continued for nearly five years following the Liberation of Paris. On April 15, 1949 — the one year anniversary of the implementation of the Marshall Plan — Janet Flanner noted that the black market was expected to disappear at the end of the month, and as a result “milk, butter, cheese, and maybe fats, oil, and chocolate will be available without ration tickets — at a stiff boost in price, naturally.”¹¹⁰ Ironically, the black market had lasted longer than the war itself.

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE MARSHALL PLAN

In 1947, following yet another particularly cold and harsh winter, it became clear that the rebuilding of Europe would be possible only through aggressive outside aid. Many of the devastated nations were operating at subsistence levels, and although they could probably have continued, they were unable independently to rebuild their economies to pre-war levels.

¹⁰⁸ Flanner, 1965, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Beevor & Cooper, 1994, p. 297-8.

¹¹⁰ Flanner, 1965, p. 98.

Introduced on June 7, 1947 by American Secretary of State General George C. Marshall, and implemented in April of 1948, the Marshall Plan was an economic aid plan which generated several billion dollars in loans and shipments over a three year period for the economies of Western European countries.¹¹¹ Secretary of Commerce Averell Harriman persuaded Americans that the Plan was in the self-interest and moral duty of the nation, and would be a boon to American business which would then have the opportunity to expand its markets to the European continent.¹¹²

France, like most of the European countries that had endured the German Occupation, loss of population, and destruction of industry and infrastructure, recognized that outside intervention was the only foreseeable way to get the country back on its feet economically. They accepted the Marshall Plan with mixed emotions, initially recognizing that the United States was the only country with the economic strength to offer such aid, but also fearing a loss of French autonomy in the process. For many French citizens, most notably those with communist leanings and anti-American sentiments, this meant that the fascist Nazi occupier would merely be replaced with a capitalist American occupier.

But by the end of 1949, thanks to the Marshall Plan, the French could

¹¹¹ The exact amount of Marshall Plan aid is not clear, but estimates run in the billions. Wright, 1995, p. 437.

¹¹² Harriman's underlying interest, however probably lay in the threat of communist expansion which he believed could be averted by the teaching American ways of business and management. Beevor & Cooper, 1994, p.384-5.

take comfort in their greatly improved situation. Flanner describes it as:

... (the) first Christmas without rationed foods, except for coffee, and that was available in large quantities, as usual, on the black market. It was the first Christmas when there was every kind of merchandise that the heart could desire. Mostly, the French bought fine food for their stomachs.¹¹³

The 1950s would be ushered in by economic recovery, followed by the greatest economic growth period that Europe had ever experienced. But as was feared by many French, the recovery also brought an influx of American culture and products. In January of 1950, French newspapers reported that United States Ambassador David Bruce had demanded meetings with French Premier Georges Bidault on the subject of increasing the distribution of Coca-Cola, which the Communists quickly termed the "Coca-Colonization of France."¹¹⁴

At the same time, another type of American colonization of France was also occurring. Spurred on by high exchange rates, American tourists came to France in droves — the young looking to participate in the fashions of existentialism and jazz clubs¹¹⁵, the rest looking for the mythical French culture of high fashion, luxury products, and haute cuisine. A second wave of American expatriates moved to Paris following the first wave from the 1920s. This wave was made up of socialites and diplomatic corps, many of whom had been sent to France to implement the Marshall Plan, as well as soldiers on the GI bill who found that their dollar went far in Paris.

¹¹³ Flanner, 1965, p. 113.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

¹¹⁵ This drive was manifest stateside in Beat culture, and later packaged for American consumers in films such as *Funny Face* of 1957.

Much to the chagrin of the older generation, France of the 1950s became — through American influence — a new France desirous not only of rebuilding, but of complete modernization, with an emphasis on the concepts of abundance, cleanliness,¹¹⁶ and speed. The latter was symbolized by the automobile and depicted dramatically in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut which celebrated the recklessness of youth. New magazines such as *Marie Claire*, *Vogue*, and *L'Express*, the first French mass-circulation news weekly,¹¹⁷ defined the times and registered the desires of its readers. The business of advertising encouraged couples and families to participate in domestic and consumer culture modeled on consumption-oriented American lifestyles.

By the mid-point of the decade, France had moved from post-war recovery to prosperity. Political and economic concerns had shifted from the European stage to colonial conflicts arising in Indochina and Algeria. Although World War II and its aftermath were still fresh in the memories of many, the dominant direction in which the nation and its people pressed was not backward to the pessimistic past, but rather forward to a semi-optimistic, yet unknown future.

¹¹⁶ By the 1950s, the post-World War II *épuration* of collaborators in the political arena had been transformed into the purification of the domestic environment.

¹¹⁷ Kristin Ross, 1995, p. 65-6. Ross illustrates the changes taking place in the early 1950s by contrasting the bourgeoisie intellectual couple of Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir as *demodé*, effectively replaced by the youthful and attractive couple of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and Françoise Giroud, co-editors of the magazine *L'Express*.

APPENDIX 2

JEAN FAUTRIER BIOGRAPHY

1898

— Born in Paris on May 16. Raised by his grandmother.

1908

— Death of his father, followed by his grandmother. His mother leaves France for England. Fautrier joins her in London six months later.

1912

— Enters the Royal Academy to study art. Finding it too conservative, he leaves to study at the Slade School, but despite its supposedly progressive instruction methods, is disappointed. Leaves to study independently in the galleries. Discovers J.M.W. Turner at the Tate Gallery.

1917

— Outbreak of World War I. Called back to France to serve in the army. Is enrolled in the auxiliary corps due to his ill health. (Some accounts mention that he saw action on the front and was gassed.)

1918

— End of World War I.

1920-21

— Travels to the Tyrol for health reasons. Paints *Tyroliennes en habits du dimanche* and his first mountain views (now lost).

1922

— Lives at 6 rue Nicolet in Paris. Exhibits *Tyroliennes en habits du dimanche* in the Salon d'automne. Travels to Corsica with Andrée Pierson.

1923

— Moves to 46 rue Hippolyte-Maindron in Paris. Meets gallery owner Jeanne Castel, who becomes his long-time patron and friend.

1924

— First solo exhibition at Galerie Visconti receives positive response from critics. Works on watercolors of brothels nudes, and first lithographs.

1925

— Introduced to Paul Guillaume by Jeanne Castel. Works on studies of nudes, still life, and landscapes.

1926

— *Bouquet de Violets* acquired by Musée de Grenoble, gift of Jeanne Castel. Work exhibited by Parisian art dealer Zborowsky along with Amedeo Modigliani and Chaim Soutine.

1927

— Establishes a studio on rue Delambre with the financial support of Paul Guillaume.

1928

— Introduced to André Malraux by Jeanne Castel. Invited by Malraux to illustrate a text; he chooses Dante's *Inferno*. His lithographs for the text are judged too abstract by publisher Gallimard and the project is put on hold. Summer spent at Port-Cros. Paints landscapes and nudes.

1930

— Dante's *Inferno* project canceled. Fautrier, in frustration, destroys all remaining prints. One series of lithographs it saved by Malraux and a few prints by Jeanne Castel.

1931

— France hit by the Depression

1932

— Difficult period. Fautrier paints very little.

1933

— Solo exhibition of *Inferno* lithographs at the Galerie de La Nouvelle Revue Française, Paris; preface by André Malraux is later published in the *La Nouvelle Revue Française*.

1934

— Leaves Paris for Tignes in the French Alps with companion Yvonne Loyer. Teaches skiing and opens a jazz nightclub. For the next five years paints very little and works on few small scale sculptures.

1935

— Marriage to Yvonne Loyer, August.

1936

— Moves to Val-d'Isère and opens another nightclub.

1939-1940

— Outbreak of World War II. Fautrier leaves the Alps for Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, then Bordeaux. Returns to Paris; lodging initially with Jeanne Castel. Begins to paint again. Establishes studio at 216 boulevard Raspail.

1941-1944

— Develops friendships with René Char, Paul Eluard, Robert Ganzo, Jean Paulhan, and Francis Ponge. Works on a series of bronze sculptures.

1942

— Illustrates *Orénoque* and *Lespugue* by Robert Ganzo, and *Madame Edwarda* (under the pseudonym of Jean Perdu) by Pierre Angélique (pseudonym for Georges Bataille). Divorces Yvonne Loyer, July.

1943

— Stopped by the German police under suspicion of resistance activities, January. Released by request of Hitler's official sculptor Arno Breker, at the appeal of Jeanne Castel. Leaves Paris for Chamonix; returns later, and at the urging of Jean Paulhan, takes refuge in a sanatorium in Châtenay-Malabry (just south of Paris). Witnesses the assassination of *résistants* in the Vallée aux Loups, near Châtenay-Malabry. Begins work on *Les Otages*. Meets Jeanine Aepley, with whom he will have two children. Illustrates *Dignes de vivre*, by Paul Eluard.

1945

— Exhibition of *Les Otages* at Galerie René Drouin, Paris; catalog preface by André Malraux. Moves into a cottage in Châtenay-Malabry where he lives and works for the rest of his life.

1946

— Birth of Dominique in January. *Notes sur les Otages, peintures de Fautrier* by Francis Ponge published. "Fautrier L'Enragé" by Jean Paulhan appears in *Variété*.

1947

— Illustrates *L'Alleluiah*, *Catéchisme de Dianus*, for Georges Bataille and *La Femme de ma Vie* for André Frénaud. Birth of Manuelle, September. Begins work on *Les Objets*.

1949

— Illustrates *Fautrier l'Enragé* by Jean Paulhan; the book is poorly received. With Jeanine Aepley he experiments with a process which produces one of a kind prints of famous works by other artists; called "original multiples". Later applies the practice to his own work.

1950

— Production and exhibition of *Originaux multiples* at Galerie Billiet-Caputo, Paris; poorly received by the critics. The *Originaux multiples* of his own work fail in subsequent exhibitions in Paris and New York.

1952

— *Un art autre* by Michel Tapié is published in which he introduces the theory of *l'informel*; illustrated with examples of Fautrier, Jean Dubuffet, Wols, and other artists whose work pushed the limits of abstraction.

1954

— Fautrier returns to painting after the failure of the *Originaux multiples*.

1955

— Begins series of etchings and aquatints. Exhibition of *Les Objets de Fautrier* at Galerie Rive droit, Paris; catalog preface by Jean Paulhan; not one painting is sold.

1956

— Works on the Partisans of Budapest series inspired by the Soviet invasion of Hungary. First American exhibition *Fautrier's Objects* at Alexander Iolas Gallery, New York; preface by André Malraux.

1957

— *Fautrier* by Michel Ragon published. *Fautrier 43* by Robert Droguet published. Exhibition of *Les Partisans (Budapest 1957)* at Galerie Rive droit, Paris. Second American exhibition, *Fautrier, Paintings* at Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

1958

— *Fautrier* by André Verdet published. Signs an exclusive contract with Galerie Michel Couturier. Exhibitions in Germany, Italy, and England. "Grâce et atrocité de Fautrier" by Jean Paulhan appears in *Vingtième siècle*. Travels to Japan with Jean Paulhan and Edith Boissonnas.

1959

— “Fautrier d’un seul bloc fougueusement équerri” by Francis Ponge appears in *Mercure de France*. Exhibitions in England, Italy, and Japan.

1960

— Awarded the international grand prize at the 30th Venice Biennale. *Fautrier Pittura et Materia* by Palma Bucarelli published. *Fautrier Matière et mémoire* by Giulio-Carlo Argan published.

1961

— Awarded the international grand prize at the 7th Tokyo Biennale.

1963

— Illustrates *L’Asparagus* by Francis Ponge. The film *Fautrier l’Enragé* (dialog between Fautrier and Jean Paulhan) is produced by Philippe Baraduc. Renews contract with Michel Couturier for all work completed after 1950.

1964

— Bequest of paintings to the Musée de Sceaux, Ile-de-France and the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Fautrier retrospective organized by the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Fautrier dies of cancer on July 21 at his home in Châtenay-Malabry and is buried in the town cemetery.

APPENDIX 3
SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1924

— Galerie Visconti, Paris: *Fautrier*.

1925

— Galerie Fabre, Paris: *Fautrier, Peintures et dessins*.

1928

— Galerie Georges Bernheim, Paris: *Fautrier*.

1929

— Galerie des Quatre Chemins, Paris: *Fautrier, Dessins*.

1930

— Galerie Le Centaure, Bruxelles: *Fautrier*.

1933

— Galerie de la N.R.F., Paris: *Fautrier, Peintures et sculptures de Fautrier et ses pastels destinés à l'illustration de l'Enfer de Dante*.

1939

— Galerie de la N.R.F., Paris: *Exposition des lithographies de l'Enfer*.
(mentioned by Palma Bucarelli, but contested by others)

1942

— Galerie Alfred Poyet, Paris: *Fautrier, Œuvres récentes*.

1943

— Galerie René Drouin, Paris: *Fautrier, Œuvres 1915-1943*.

1945

— Galerie René Drouin, Paris: *Les Otages, Peintures et sculptures de Fautrier*.

1949

— Galerie Billiet-Caputo, Paris: *Fautrier l'Enragé*.

1950

- Gimpel Fils Gallery, London: *Aepley Replicas*. (Original Multiples)
- Galerie Billiet-Caputo, Paris: *Les Originaux Multiples*. (same exhibition as Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, 1950)

1953

- Galerie de la N.R.F., Paris: *Les Originaux Multiples*. (same exhibition as Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, 1950)

1955

- Galerie Rive droite, Paris: *Les Objets de Fautrier*.

1956

- Alexander Iolas Gallery, New York: *Fautrier's Objects*.
- Galerie Rive droite, Paris: *Nus de Fautrier*.
- Hugo Gallery, New York: *The Original Multiples*.

1957

- Galerie Rive droite, Paris: *Les Partisans* (Budapest 1956).
- Sidney Janis Gallery, New York: *Fautrier, Paintings*.
- Galerie Rive droite, Paris: *Fautrier, 30 années de figuration informelle*.

1958

- Galerie 22, Düsseldorf: *Fautrier - 30 Jahre informelle Malerei 1928-1958*. (same exhibition as Galerie Rive droit, 1957)
- Galerie Apollinaire, Milano: *Fautrier, Tempere, disegni, litografie dal 28 a oggi di Fautrier*.
- Galerie La Loggia, Bologna: *Fautrier, Tempere, disegni, litografie di Fautrier*. (same exhibition as Galerie Apollinaire, 1958)
- Galerie L'Attico, Roma: *Fautrier, Tempere, disegni, litografie*. (same exhibition as Galerie Apollinaire, 1958)
- Kunstverein, Fribourg-en-Brisgau: *Fautrier*.
- Galerie René Drouin, Paris: *Gouaches et dessins informels de Fautrier de 1928 à 1958*.
- ICA Gallery, London: *Fautrier, 1928 to 1958*.
- Galerie Apollinaire, Milano: *Mostra di Jean Fautrier con Opere dal 1928 ad oggi*.
- Städtisches Museum, Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen: *Jean Fautrier*.

1959

- Galerie L'Attico, Roma: *Fautrier, Mostra di Opere dal 1928 ad oggi*. (same exhibition as Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, 1958)
- Galerie La Loggia, Bologna: *Fautrier, Mostra di Opera dal 1928 ad oggi*. (same exhibition as Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, 1958)
- Galerie 22, Düsseldorf: *Fautrier*.
- Hanover Gallery, London: *Jean Fautrier, Paintings, gouaches, drawings*.
- Gallery Minami, Tokyo: *Fautrier*.

1960

- Galerie L'Imagine, Torino: *Disegni e tempere di Jean Fautrier*.
- 30th Venice Biennale: *Jean Fautrier, international grand prize*.
- Galerie Notizie, Associazione Arti Figurative, Torino: *Dipinti e disegni di Jean Fautrier*.
- Galleria Lorenzelli, Bergamo: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Galeria Sala Nebli, Madrid: *Jean Fautrier*.

1961

- Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Barcelona: *Jean Fautrier, Gouaches, glaciers et paysages informels de 1927-1928*.
- Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery, 7th Tokyo Biennale: *Fautrier, international grand prize*.
- Galerie Europe, Paris: *Fautrier, 10 peintures récentes*.
- Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf: *Jean Fautrier*.

1962

- Galerie Bonnier, Lausanne: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Galerie Apollinaire, Milano: *Dipinti di Fautrier*.

1963

- Galerie René Métras, Barcelona: *Fautrier 1928-1963, Exposición antologica*.
- Galerie L'Attico, Roma: *Fautrier, Opere recenti*.
- Kunstforening, Bergen: *Fautrier 1921-1963*.
- Kunsternes Hus, Oslo: *Fautrier 1921-1963*. (same exhibition as Kunstforening, Bergen, 1963)
- Moderna Museet, Stockholm: *Jean Fautrier, Målningar 1921-1963*. (same exhibition as Kunstforening, Bergen, 1963)
- Konstforening Konsthallen, Göteborg: *Jean Fautrier, Målningar 1921-1963*. (same exhibition as Kunstforening, Bergen, 1963)
- Galerie René Métras, Barcelona: *Fautrier, Obra grabada 1927-1963*.
- Sala Santa Catalina del Ateneo, Madrid: *Fautrier*.

1964

- Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris: *Jean Fautrier, Rétrospective.*
- Musée de l'Ile-de-France, Château de Sceaux: *Acquisitions nouvelles depuis cinq ans, Donation Fautrier.*
- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Fautrier, Peintures récentes.*
- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Hommage à Fautrier.*

1965

- Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, St. Gallen: *Jean Fautrier, Aquarelle und Zeichnungen.*
- Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris: *Hommage à Fautrier.*
- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Fautrier, Œuvres anciennes 1922-1942.*
- Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf: *Jean Fautrier, Skulpturen und Gemälde.*
- Galerie Cogême, Bruxelles: *Fautrier, 15 sculptures, huiles, dessins, eaux-fortes.*
- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Fautrier, Sculptures et gravures.*

1966

- Galerie Apollinaire, Milano: *Le sculpture di Fautrier.*
- Galerie Bonnier, Lausanne: *Jean Fautrier, Peintre, sculpteur, graveur.*
- Galerie Senior, Roma: *Fautrier.*
- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Fautrier, Peintures, dessins, sculptures, eaux-fortes de 1926 à 1964.*

1967

- Galerie René Métras, Barcelona: *Fautrier.*
- Galerie Cavallero, Cannes: *Fautrier, Dessins et sculptures.*

1968

- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Fautrier, Otages 1942-1945.*
- Galerie Rive gauche, Bruxelles: *Fautrier.*
- Galerie Sanluccha 33, Bologna: *Fautrier.*

1969

- Galerie Engelberts/Galerie Bonnier, Genève: *Fautrier.*

1970

- Galerie Ciranna, Italy: *37 Incisioni di Fautrier*.
- Galerie Wünsche, Bonn: *Jean Fautrier, Das Graphische Gesamtwerk und Skulpturen*.
- Gallery Stampfli, New York: *Jean Fautrier, Oils, gouaches, drawings, sculpture*.
- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Jean Fautrier, en Hommage à Jeanne Castel*.
- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Fautrier, Sculptures et gravures*.

1971

- Musée de l'Ile-de-France, Château de Sceaux: *Inauguration de la salle Fautrier*.
- Galerie Iolas-Velazco, Madrid: *Fautrier*.

1972

- Galerie Michel Couturier, Paris: *Fautrier, Peintures de petits formats*.

1973

- Galerie Wünsche, Bonn: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Kunstverein, Hamburg: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Sala Nebli, Madrid: *Fautrier*.

1975

- Gallery Kasahara, Osaka: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Galerie Mony Calatchi, Paris: *Hommage à Fautrier*.

1976

- Galerie Falchi Arte Moderna, Milano: *Fautrier*.
- Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Köln: *Jean Fautrier, Olbilder 1925-1959*.
- Galerie Neuendorf, Hamburg: *Jean Fautrier, Olbilder 1925-1959*. (same exhibition as Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Köln, 1976)

1976-7

- Fuji Television Gallery, Tokyo: *Fautrier*.

1977

- Galerie Verbeke, Paris: *Fautrier*.

1978

- Galerie Bonnier, Genève, *Fautrier, Œuvres de 1926-1962*.

1979

- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Fautrier*.
- Galerie Van de Loo, München: *Jean Fautrier, Radierungen 1925-1964*.
- Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Köln: *Fautrier*.
- Galerie Fred Jahn, München: *Fautrier*. (same exhibition as Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Köln, 1979)
- Galerie Becher, Wuppertal: *Jean Fautrier, Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Grafik*.

1980

- Josef-Haubrich Kunsthalle, Köln: *Jean Fautrier, Gemälde, Sculpturen, und Handzeichnungen*.
- Galerie L'Attico-Esse Arte, Roma: *Fautrier*.

1981

- Galerie Limmer, Fribourg-en-Brisgau: *Jean Fautrier, Gemälde, Zeichnungen*.
- Galery Anne Blanc, Marly-le-Roy: *Jean Fautrier, Œuvre gravée*.
- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Jean Fautrier, Aquarelles, dessins, gouaches, pastels*.
- Galerie Tendances, Paris: *Fautrier, Œuvre gravée de 1927 à 1961*.
- Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf: *Schwarz*.

1982

- Hôtel de ville de Châtenay-Malabry: *Fautrier à travers ses estampes*.
- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Jean Fautrier, Peintures*.

1983

- Fuji Televion Gallery, Tokyo: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Galleri Benny Bigersson, Halmstad, Sweden: *Jean Fautrier, Gouacher, teckningar, etsningar*.
- Galerie Heyraud-Bresson, Paris: *Fautrier*.
- Galerie Limmer, Fribourg-en-Brisgau: *Jean Fautrier, Olbilder 1927-1947*.

1984

- Galerie Tendances, Paris: *Fautrier, Sculptures, Œuvres sur papier*.
- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Jean Fautrier, Sculptures, peintures, dessins*.
- Galerie Limmer, Fribourg-en-Brisgau: *Jean Fautrier, Schwartzte Bilder*.
- Galerie Edition Hylteberga, Skurup, Sweden: *Jean Fautrier*.

1985

- Gallery Art Center, Tokyo: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Gallery Gion Sanjyo, Kyoto: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Köln: *Jean Fautrier, Skulpturen*.
- Galerie Thomas Borgmann, Köln (with the Galerie Neuendorf, Hamburg): *Jean Fautrier, Bilder 1926-1930*.
- Galleri Benny Birgersson, Halmstadt, Sweden: *Fautrier, Målningar etsningar*.
- Musée des Beaux-Arts, Calais: *Fautrier 1925*.

1986

- Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam: *Fautrier 1925-1935*.
- Kunsthaus, Zurich: *Fautrier 1925-1935*. (same exhibition as Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam)
- Galerie Bonnier, Genève: *Hommage à Jean Fautrier*.
- Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Cabinet des Estampes, Genève: *Jean Fautrier, Les Estampes*.
- Centre Culturel Français, Seoul: *Jean Fautrier*.
- Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tourcoing: *Fautrier, Les Estampes*. (same exhibition as Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève, 1986)
- Galerie Jeanne Castel, Paris: *Jean Fautrier 1925-1938*.
- Galerie Di Meo, Paris: *Fautrier, Œuvres 1940-1964*.
- Galerie Limmer, Fribourg-en-Brisgau: *Fautrier, Die Erschaffung der Frau*.

1987

- Break Club, Roma: *Fautrier*.
- Graphische Sammlung der Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart: *Jean Fautrier, Das Druckgraphische Werk*. (same exhibition as Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève, 1986)
- Kunstmuseum, Basel: *Jean Fautrier, Das Druckgraphische Werk*. (same exhibition as Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève, 1986)
- Musée Ziem, Martigues: *Fautrier, Les Estampes*. (same exhibition as Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève, 1986)

1988

- Galleria Civica, Modena: *Jean Fautrier*.

1989

- Monica Sprüth Galerie, Köln: *Fautrier, Bilder 1926-1956*.
- Galerie Orangerie-Reinz, Köln: *Jean Fautrier, Olbilder, Arbeiten auf Papier, Das Graphische Werk*.
- Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, *Jean Fautrier 1898-1964*.

1990

- Galerie Tendances, Paris: *Fautrier, Les Nus, Œuvres sur papier.*
- Galerie Frank Waill, Paris: *Fautrier, Œuvres sur papier.*
- Galerie Di Meo, Paris: *Fautrier.*

1994

- Civica Galleria di Villa dei Cedri, Bellinzona: *Fautrier, stampe et disegni.*

1996

- Musée National Fernand Léger, Biot: *Jean Fautrier.*
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