



The Life of an Unknown

Alain Corbin

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The Life of an Unknown Alain Corbin

"My task is piecing together a puzzle... I hope to reconstitute the existence of a person whose memory has been abolished.... I want to re-create him, to give him a second chance... to become part of the memory of his century."

With these words, Alain Corbin embarks on a journey that is part history and part metaphysics: recreating the life and world of a man about whom nothing is known except for his entries in the civil registries and historical knowledge about the times in which he lived. Risen from death and utter obscurity is Louis-François Pinagot, a forester and clog maker who lived during the heart of the nineteenth century?the age of Romanticism, of Hugo and Berlioz?from the Napoleonic Wars to the Third Republic.

The result is a fascinating picture of the way people lived along the forest's edge during this tumultuous and eventful time in the history of France?and of the world. How did the residents of this unique community live and work together? How did life in the village differ from life in the forest? How did the church and various governments of France affect the everyday lives of these people, and of Pinagot in particular? With *The Life of an Unknown*, Alain Corbin presents a full record of a life, comprised of supposition, with room for each reader to insert his/her own imaginings onto the scene.

Ambitious in its aims and exquisite in its execution, *The Life of an Unknown* is nothing short of a bold and successful attempt by a master to correct historians' all-too-common neglect of those relegated to oblivion with the passage of time.

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