A Comparative Study of the Dress, Food and Leisure of Domestic Servants in France and Britain, 1900-1939



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SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of the everyday lives of French and British female domestic servants between 1900 and 1939. Despite making-up nearly half of the female workforce in both countries, the experiences of servants are hard to access. To overcome this problem, the thesis relies on a large sample of French and British servants' autobiographies. Autobiographies have been used by historians primarily to document the economic struggles these women faced and the social trajectories they followed. However, autobiographies are also bursting with revealing digressions and significant little details about servants' lives. This thesis seizes upon these insights by actively reading at the margins of servants' stories. It concentrates on three themes which were most present in servants' accounts: dress, food and leisure. What servants wore, what they ate and what they did in their free time played a key role in their negotiations of authority and the construction of class, gender, generational and regional identities. The thesis combines this focus on the micro-level of domestic servants' lives with a comparative analysis which contextualises servants' testimonies within two different social, cultural and economic environments. It shows how contrasting levels of industrialisation, urbanisation and land ownership as well as divergent forms of family structures and gender norms shaped French and British servants' world and identities. Ultimately, this comparative study of French and British servants' experiences with dress, food and leisure leads us to interrogate what it meant to be a servant and deconstruct the category of 'servanthood' in the first half of the twentieth century.

LONG ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of the everyday lives of French and British female domestic servants between 1900 and 1939. Despite making-up nearly half of the female workforce in both countries, the experiences of servants are hard to access. To overcome this problem, the thesis relies on a large sample consisting of 107 British and 92 French servants' memoirs. It gathers, in particular, the first sample of French servants' autobiographies and makes an important contribution to the relatively sparse literature on domestic service in France. Autobiographies have been used by British historians primarily to document the economic struggles domestic servants faced and the social trajectories they followed. However, autobiographies are also bursting with revealing digressions and significant little details about servants' lives. This thesis seizes upon these insights by actively reading at the margins of servants' stories. It concentrates on three themes which were most present in servants' accounts: dress, food and leisure. The thesis combines this focus on the micro-level of domestic servants' lives with a comparative analysis which contextualises servants' testimonies within two different social, cultural and economic environments. It shows how contrasting levels of industrialisation, urbanisation and land ownership as well as divergent forms of family structures and gender norms shaped French and British servants' world and identities.

Focusing on the everyday experiences of servants in the home is crucial to understand the transformation of domestic service in the first half of the twentieth century. The Victorians thought of service as a stable institution. Their Edwardian and interwar successors, however, were forced to confront the 'servant problem' as young women's aspirations and expectations of social independence clashed with the paternalist authority of their employers. When viewed through the prism of labour and work, the notion of a 'servant's

crisis' may appear misplaced or exaggerated. There were no pay rises, significant reduction of the number of hours that servants worked nor successful strikes. This was because, despite heavy workloads, work itself was not the main object of servants' complaints. Indeed, their domestic toil was gradually eased by the introduction of labour-saving appliances through the period, but the servant problem did not disappear. Rather, the primary source of their grievances was the system of residential domestic service in which servants' everyday life was regulated and constricted by the intrusive rules of their employers. It would only be with the disappearance of residential service and its replacement by part-time cleaners in the post-war period that these tensions would disappear. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the intimate and mundane realm to uncover the subtle changes and silent battles which transformed domestic service. It explores how unassuming moments of servants' daily life informed these women's sense of self by defining their place in the household and, more broadly, in society.

Chapter One focuses on the servant's uniform. The figure of the maid in her black and white uniform populated British servants' memoirs. This outfit, however, was surprisingly absent from French servants' testimonies. The chapter explores what these sartorial differences meant in servants' everyday lives and how it influenced their identities. In Britain, the servants' uniform had a multiplicity of meanings depending on the context in which it was worn, whether the servant's home, the employer's house or the street. Some servants had positive memories of their uniform before they went into service because it marked their entry into the world of adults, established their respectable status and appealed to their curiosity and aspirations for the lifestyle of the upper class. For the majority, these fond memories disappeared once they entered the workplace, where a new set of meanings, focused on social hierarchy and control, became dominant. British servants disliked the way

that the uniform stressed their inferior status and differentiated them from other women, both inside and outside of the home. In particular, as modern professional women in uniform, such as nurses, appeared on the public scene and more working-class women gained access to white-collar occupations, a shadow was cast on the servants' uniform. In a society in which women had better employment opportunities and more independence, servants saw their uniform as a stigma branding them as old fashioned and excluding them from modernity and new forms of femininity. In contrast, in France, most servants did not wear a uniform. They simply wore an apron over their dress, which distinguished them from their mistress but did not cast them apart from other workers. For the servants who left the countryside to find work in towns and cities, nonetheless, clothing played an important role in their sense of self. Instead of marking their occupational or class identity, these women's clothes often helped to define their status as rural migrants. Comparing these accounts across France and Britain not only reveals these women's personal feelings of shame or pride, but also uncovers something about the servants' place in their respective societies. In Britain, the uniform contributed to establish a distinctive occupational identity for domestic servants in a structured female labour market. In France, servants did not draw distinctions between themselves and other non-uniformed workers. They also enjoyed more flexible relationships with their employers within small family production units. The chapter argues that the uniform underlay the different ways in which domestic servants understood their occupation in France and in Britain.

Chapter Two explores how food, whether it was consumed or cooked by servants, acted as a marker of their identities. Food was used by employers to mark out social distinctions and discipline the staff while servants retaliated by using food as an alternative source of power. Mealtime rituals, nonetheless, differed between various households and more specifically

between French and British lower-middle-class households. In the former, servants often ate with their employers, while in the latter servants ate separately. Studying servants' experiences at mealtimes reveals how different understandings of the family and privacy shaped the types of relationship employers and servants had in each country. Servants did not solely engage with food to compare it with the employers, they also compared it to food that they used to eat at home to make sense of their new situation. French and British servants constructed this comparison on different premises. The rural-urban divide dominated servants' understanding of their situation in France while British servants made sense of new food in service mainly through the prism of social classes. Cooking these new foods in the first place also shaped servants' identities and played an important role in servants' narratives of social mobility. French cooks invested their sense of self in their mastering of culinary skills to a larger degree than British cooks. Cooking in Britain was commonly seen as a messy and demanding task, which led British kitchen servants to feel like social inferiors, even within the servant community. Given that the food sector outside of domestic service was dominated by French male chefs, the lack of opportunities available to female cooks also contributed to the unattractive status of the British cook. In contrast, in France, learning how to cook a *cuisine bourgeoise* in contrast to the simple soups eaten in the countryside was seen as a symbol of one's integration into the urban world. French servants also had more opportunities to use their culinary skills beyond domestic service in a society with a large proportion of small businesses. Some servants married into the shop-keeping class and opened a shop or a restaurant where they cooked dishes that they had been exposed to and learned to replicate in service. The second chapter confirms the picture painted of domestic service in the previous chapter as a more casual and flexible type of employment in France compared to Britain.

Chapter Three focuses on servants' leisure to explore how servants' identities were increasingly detached from their work in France and Britain. It reveals that despite low wages and strict timetables, servants had access to the same type of leisure activities as other young working women. Modern leisure not only allowed servants to escape from the strict rules of clubs, it also provided them with a language and a space to define themselves as other than servants. Dance halls, girls' magazines and other new forms of leisure enabled them to endorse broader and more flexible identities based on age. They created communities that helped servants break out of their loneliness by giving them the opportunity to court young men more freely as well as to connect with other young working women of their age. French servants who worked on farms were at the frontline of this cultural change as dancing was transformed from a celebration of the community on the village square in which everyone knew their place – particularly through line dancing – into an individualist and sensual practice performed exclusively by the youth in private spaces. In parallel, the idea of self-betterment conveyed by Americanised mass-leisure helped servants to envision themselves in more positive and aspirational ways. Music-hall songs and films spread on a mass-scale the concept of glamour, an enticing idea according to which success – which mostly meant marriage at the time for women – was more based on looks and personality than social class. Servants like other young women focused on and invested in their looks to secure a boyfriend on their day off. In return, they saw service only as a temporary and marginal moment of their lives before marriage. With the development of mass-leisure in the twentieth century, occupational status was not a central fixture of servants' identities outside the home and shaped in exchange what it meant to be a servant within the home. The chapter shows that while French and British servants constructed their identities in different ways, both increasingly rejected the paternalist authority of their employers.

What servants wore, what they ate and what they did in their free time played a key role in their negotiations of authority and the construction of class, gender, generational and regional identities. By focusing on unassuming everyday life moments of 'non-work' hidden in the privacy of small bedrooms, dark kitchens and cheap tearooms, this thesis reveals that servants were not merely work drudges defined solely by their labour, but young women who were fully part of their modernising societies. The thesis also shows that while both groups of workers in each country were called similar names – '*domestiques*', '*servantes*', 'domestic servants' – and performed domestic duties inside their employers' home in exchange for a wage as well as board and lodging, what it meant to be a servant in the first half of the twentieth century differed in France and Britain. Domestic service was a specialised type of occupation dedicated to the care of the home and its inhabitants in Britain, while the same category in France corresponded to an older understanding of service – common in Britain until the eighteenth century – in which servants were not only those who performed domestic tasks but anyone who left their home to live and work in someone else's. Ultimately, this comparative study of French and British servants' experiences with dress, food and leisure leads us to interrogate what it meant to be a servant and deconstruct the category of 'servanthood' in the first half of the twentieth century.

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Fluctuat nec Mergitur

Introduction

I helped my boss to unharness and tend to the horse, and then I dined in the kitchen with the Bray family. I was sitting in front of Lucien, their five-year old son, and smiled at him. I felt very self-conscious about my position and I tried to make myself useful in any way possible, but Mrs Bray wanted to serve the dinner. She kept staring at me as I devoured everything in front of me. All these new dishes whetted my appetite. Afterwards, Mrs Bray liked to do the dishes, so she washed them, and I only had to wipe them while her husband dozed off next to the fire. When everything was put in order, I remember mum's advice and asked Mrs Bray if I could iron my red bodice.

- 'You will wear it as it is,' Mrs Bray commanded. 'We will need you when the bar clients arrive around ten p.m. You can do whatever you want until then. When they arrive, if they ask you for some wine, you will have to go to the cellar.'

I wanted to use this time to read a novel but was told not to. I ended up playing with their little boy Lucien instead.[1]

Yvonne Cretté-Breton, *Mémoire d'une Bonne*

Mrs Fox had told me to put on my black afternoon dress and white apron. I kept trying to staunch the tears with the flannel and water in the washstand bowl. A black frock seemed to suit the occasion. I was in mourning for my lost self. I was in a strange new world – in a different role – with entirely new people to adjust to. My childhood was dead – now I was the skivvy – I was near to wishing she were dead too. I was given my supper in the tiny kitchen while the family ate in the living-room. It was strange to be considered not fit to eat in the same room as other human beings. It was a good supper, a thick soup with butter beans in it, but loneliness and misery had taken away my appetite. How delicious, in comparison, seemed the remembered slice of marge-spread toast given me by Mam and eaten as a member of a family.[2]

Winifred Foley, *A Child in the Forest*

These were the first moments in domestic service of Yvonne Cretté-Breton and Winifred Foley as described in their respective memoirs. Yvonne Cretté-Breton was born in the 1890s in the village of Gas in the agricultural region of Centre- Val de Loire in France. Her father

[1] Y. Cretté-Breton, *Mémoire d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1966), p. 19.
[2] W. Foley, *A Child in the Forest* (Cheltenham, 1991), p. 123.

was a farm worker and her mother raised rabbits to make ends meet but the family was struggling financially. Her first job was as a farmhand picking strawberries for a nearby farm but once the harvest ended, Yvonne Cretté-Breton needed a new job. She started working as a maid-of-all-work for the owners of a bar who lived in a neighbouring village. Winifred Foley was born in 1914 in Brieley, a mining village in Gloucestershire. Her father, a coal miner, and mother barely managed to feed their seven children, so Winifred Foley had little option but to become a servant when she finished school at fourteen years old. Her dreams of becoming a schoolteacher were left behind as she entered her first job as a general maid in the East End of London.

As Yvonne Cretté-Breton and Winifred Foley walk in their employers' house, we enter with them into a 'strange new world' and discover a social relationship which was a staple part of many young women's lives at the time. In Britain, domestic service was the primary employer of women until the Second World War. Fewer women were employed in service in France as the agricultural sector continued to employ a significant share of the population. Around 14% of the French female labour force was in service. This number was nevertheless an underestimation of the total number of servants in France because the boundary between domestic service and farm work was extremely porous. Servants were employed in a range of households, from grand upper-class mansions with a large staff to middle and lower middle-class households requiring just one or two servants. They were not only indispensable to the running of the household at a time before household appliances were available, they were also a crucial status symbol. Domestic service was a key site where people from different social classes, generations and regions met each other and negotiated their respective identities. Domestic servants, therefore, had an undeniable presence in French and British economic, social and cultural life.

Service, however, was changing in the first half of the twentieth century. French and British contemporaries worried about the so-called 'servant crisis' or 'servant problem', a summary term for the increasingly difficulty to recruit and keep servants. The period between the early twentieth century and the start of the Second World War saw the rise of new employment opportunities in developing sectors and changing attitudes regarding the social hierarchy, which created an atmosphere of crisis around domestic service.[3] In Britain, the share of women in domestic service fell from 40% in the early twentieth century to 30% during the interwar period to just 12% after the Second World War.[4] The fall was more gradual in France: the share of women working in service declined from 14% in 1906 to 8% in 1954.[5] The type of work women in service performed also changed over this period as residential domestic service became increasingly unpopular. In 1921, British resident domestic servants represented 69% of workers in personal services and charwomen only 8%.[6] By 1951, resident servants represented 49% of workers in personal services and charwomen had risen to 15% alongside many other new service jobs in hotels, restaurants, offices and businesses.[7] A similar transformation was operating in France as in 1921 there was only one charwoman for every eleven domestic servants, while by 1951, the ratio was one to four.[8] As the part-time cleaner gradually replaced the live-in housemaid, the age of these workers and their outlook on service changed. Domestic service was traditionally 'a formative life stage' for many young women who entered the occupation at the end of their compulsory schooling and left when they got married. More than half of British and French servants were below

[3] S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900–1950', *Past and Present*, 203/1 (2009), p. 195; S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and Their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880–1914', *Economic History Review,* 62/2 (2009), p. 3; A. Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes : La Domesticité Féminine à Paris en 1900* (Paris, 2003), pp. 339-347.
[4] 1901, 1921, 1951 Census of England and Wales.
[5] Tableau 2 'Population active suivant la profession individuelle', French census, 1906-1954.
[6] 'Occupations of females', General report, 1921 Census England and Wales.
[7] Table 20 'Selected Occupations', Occupation Tables, 1951 Census of England and Wales.
[8] L. Tilly and J. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (London, 1989), p. 154.

twenty-five years old during the period under study here.[9] However, as residential domestic service declined, servants or 'domestic workers' – a more commonly used term in the post-war period – had a higher propensity to be older and married. These women held a very different outlook over their part-time or daily cleaning job than had previous generations of young women entering their employers' home fresh from school. The decline of domestic service, therefore, was accompanied by a redefinition of what it meant to be in service. While these changes happened on different scales in France and Britain, servants and employers on both sides of the Channel negotiated new definitions of domestic service, argued over personal boundaries and, ultimately, debated the extent of the employers' authority over the servants' lives. This thesis, therefore, focuses on the experiences of female live-in servants whose work and living conditions were deemed increasingly problematic between 1900 and 1939.

Complaints about servants were a staple of middle-class conversations during the period. Employers left behind a trail of debates, manuals and reports on the servant problem in which they reflected on the short comings of their servants and the importance of domestic service for the functioning of middle-class households. For example, Marcel Cusenier wrote a thesis on French domestic servants in which he argued that the servant problem was mainly linked to the bad working conditions and accommodation provided for domestic servants who toiled and slept in dirt all day.[10] Living in such surroundings, he argued, surely influenced servants to be slovenly, to neglect their work and to engage in immoral behaviour. A British mistress thought the problem originated in many employers' inability to manage their servants. She reflected on her own failures in the newspaper *The Queen*,

[9] Todd, 'Domestic Service,' p. 183; C. Villeneuve-Gokalp, 'Les Gens de Maison', *Population* 49/ 3 (1994), p. 776.
[10] M. Cusenier, *Les Domestiques en France* (Paris, 1912), pp. 80-84.

admitting that she had been 'injudiciously kind and over-sympathetic, very impulsive' with her servants.[11] Her resulting lack of authority over staff led to domestic disharmony. In France, Augusta Moll-Weiss, a philanthropist and activist in the women's movement, argued in a series of reports and books for the creation of training schools for domestic servants and more 'genteel' classes for middle-class women which would teach them how to avoid the unfortunate mistakes made by the contributor to the *Queen* and help them manage their servants efficiently.[12] Others blamed the servants themselves. One mistress from Cardiff wrote to the editor of the *Western Mail* that 'servants, nowadays, are not to be compared to the honest and industrious workers of a few years ago' and denounced their 'gross' and 'wicked carelessness.'[13] The Abbot Pick, who was a member of the *Semaine Sociale*, a French catholic organisation, argued that the servant crisis was the result of the decline in church attendance by domestic servants and its replacement with unwholesome leisure activities which favoured individualist or 'selfish' behaviours over paternalist relationships with their employers.[14]

While many mistresses, philanthropists and experts discussed the causes of the servant problem and how they might be rectified, very few of the voices raised in this debate were those of servants themselves. This silence has led many historians to be over reliant on sources written by employers which depicted the servant as the 'other'. As a result, servants have often been seen solely through a lens of victimhood, exploitation and class conflict.[15]

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[11] 'Patience', *The Queen* (8 September 1915), p. 523.
[12] A. Moll-Weiss, *Les Ecoles Ménagères en France et à l'Etranger* (Paris, 1908); A. Moll-Weiss, 'Les Ecoles de Servantes en Suisse,' *Mémoires et Documents du Musée Social,* 12 (1911), p. 335; Augusta Moll-Weiss, *Les Gens de Maison* (Paris, 1927).
[13] 'A Mistress's Complaint', *Western Mail* (3 December 1892), p. 6.
[14] 'La Condition des Domestiques Ruraux dans les Régions de Grandes Cultures', *La Croix* (14 September 1911), p. 4.
[15] T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (London, 1976)*;* J. A Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning among the Victorian Middle Classes* (London, 1954); P. Guiral and G. Thuillier*, La Vie Quotidienne des Domestique en*

However, servants enjoyed other types of social relationships beyond those with their employers and had more various frames of references than their class consciousness. As such, this thesis adopts a more holistic perspective on service which focuses on the individual instead of the worker. Since this approach is highly dependent on access to personal sources, the thesis gathers a large sample of French and British female servants' memoirs to compare how these women negotiated their identities in their everyday life between 1900 and 1939. Testimonies such as those of Yvonne Cretté-Breton and Winifred Foley offer us a precious window into the lives of domestic servants whose voices do not otherwise boom through official records. These sources bring a new complexity to our conception of domestic service by giving us access to the emotions, experiences and identities of servants.

Far from rushing into their work, broom in hand, Yvonne Cretté-Breton and Winifred Foley's first experience was to have dinner in their employers' home. A private moment of respite suddenly became something else; new relationships and identities emerged as they sat awkwardly at the employers' table or ate their soup alone in a tiny kitchen. As Yvonne Cretté-Breton tried to figure out what she needed to do during her first dinner with her employers, whether to serve the food or wash the dishes, she subtlety negotiated her new identity as a servant. Similarly, as Winifred Foley ate her dinner in the kitchen while her employers enjoyed theirs in the dining room, she was struck by her new position as a domestic servant so deeply that she felt 'dead' inside. As Yvonne Cretté-Breton and Winifred Foley sat down for dinner, however, their thoughts were not entirely occupied by their employers. They worried about their appearance – the crumpled red bodice or the black

France au XIXe siècle (Paris, 1978); V. Piette, *Domestiques et servantes: Des Vies Sous Condition* (Bruxelles, 2000); Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes.*

dress –, reminisced about food shared back home or day-dreamed about the latest novel that they had read. These parts of servants' testimonies, which might be put aside as trivial in order to focus on more traditional topics in social history such as servants' social class or wages, offer a surprising window into these women's subjective experiences and identities. The thesis explores these moments of everyday life concentrating on three main themes which were most present in servants' accounts: dress, food and leisure. What servants wore, what they ate or cooked and what they did in their free time played a key role in their negotiations of authority and the construction of various types of class, gender, generational and regional identities.

The two extracts quoted above also highlight some of the differences between French and British servants' everyday life. Despite the fact that they both worked for lower-middle-class households, Yvonne Cretté-Breton did not wear a uniform and ate her dinner at the same table as her employers while Winifred Foley had to wear a black dress with a white apron to serve her employers' dinner before retreating to eat hers in the kitchen. As the rest of their memoirs reveal, these contrasting everyday experiences had an important influence on how French and British women understood their position as domestic servants. Comparing servants' testimonies, therefore, helps to deconstruct the category of domestic service in the first half of the twentieth century and explore its links to the domestic and productive sphere within two changing economies and female labour markets.

The following introduction helps to situate the thesis within a broader historiographical context and clarify its methodological approach. The first section presents the advantages of combining a comparative framework with a focus on personal sources. The second section traces the historiography relating to domestic service in France and Britain from the 1970s

and highlights the contribution that this thesis makes towards the study of servants' identities and everyday life. The third section presents in detail the sample of French and British servants' memoirs and makes the case for using retrospective personal sources. The last section of the introduction provides a synopsis for the three chapters of the thesis which focus on dress, food and leisure.

I. Placing Servants: Comparative History and Women's History

By bringing together a concern for personal identities and a comparative framework, this thesis examines how servants made sense of their experiences within a specific social, cultural and economic environment which differed in France and Britain. Comparative analysis has long been used to identify research questions, put innovations or particularisms into perspective, test hypothesis and, ultimately, allow historians to take some distance from their speciality subject and inscribe it into a broader context.[16] Comparative history has been particularly influential in women's history. Because of its theoretical underpinning and, in particular, the connection it makes between the private and public spheres, women's history has often adopted a comparative methodology to understand the power structures which shape women's lives. As Sonya Michel put it: 'Feminist assertions about systematic and pervasive power differentials between women and men have challenged historians to determine whether or not we can identify a phenomenon called patriarchy. This, in turn, has generated a set of ready-made comparative analytical questions' across times and cultures.[17] Comparative history, therefore, has helped historians to set differences in gender relations

[16] M. Bloch, 'Pour une Histoire Comparée des Sociétés Européennes', *Mélanges Historiques,* 1 (1963), pp. 16-40; J. Kocka, 'Comparison and Beyond,' *History and Theory,* 42/1 (2003), pp. 39-44; D. Cohen and M. O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (London, 2004).
[17] S. Michel, 'The Comparative Turn: Is Women's History Ready?', *Journal of Women's History*, 10/2 (1998), p. 189.

in their cultural, social, economic, religious, and political context. This research agenda continues to the present day with women's historians using comparative history to understand, among others, feminist movements, the role of the welfare state, women's access to education and, most relevant to this thesis, women's work.[18] Historians of women have also been increasingly careful in their comparative analysis to acknowledge the importance of systematic and institutional factors while also being sensitive to women's agency and ability to resist dominance.[19] For example, Mary Jo Maynes in her study of spinning and girlhood in Western Europe between 1750 and 1880 focuses both on how the occupation was shaped by the Western European late-marriage pattern and how the girls' earning power created new patterns of consumption which disturbed older patriarchal relations.[20] This thesis follows the methodology of these historians by placing women both as objects and subjects of economic, social and cultural forces in a comparative framework.

France and Britain are, perhaps, the most common comparison, at least in English-speaking scholarship. [21] Comparison has focused on the 'big' questions of history, such as 'why did Britain experienced an Industrial Revolution before France' in economic history and 'why

[18] See for example: S. Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945* (Cambridge, 1993); L. Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914-1939* (London, 1995); D. Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (New York, 1998); K. M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, 2000); C. Duchen and I. Bandhauer-Schöffmann. *When the War Was over: Women, War, and Peace in Europe, 1940-1956* (London, 2000); M. Pelner Cosman, *Women at Work in Medieval Europe* (New York, 2000); A. Kershaw and A. Kimyongür, *Women in Europe between the Wars: Politics, Culture and Society* (Aldershot, 2007); C. De Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France, 1800-1867* (Oxford, 2007).

[19] See for example: Mary Jo Maynes, 'In Search of Arachne's Daughters: European Girls, Economic Development, and the Textile Trade, 1750-1880' in M. J. Maynes, B. Søland, C. Benninghaus (eds), *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750-1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 38-54; De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*; D. Simonton and A. Montenach, *Female Agency in the Urban Economy: Gender in European Towns, 1640-1830* (New York, 2013).

[20] Maynes, 'In Search of Arachne's Daughters'.

[21] See for example: M. Bloch, *Seigneurie Française Et Manoir Anglais* (Paris, 1960); McBride*, The Domestic Revolution*; P. Ariès and G. Duby, *A History of Private Life* (London, 1987); J. Horne, *Labour at War: France and Britain 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1991); P. O'Brien and Ç. Keyder. *Economic Growth in Britain and France, 1780-1914* (London, 1999)*;* De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*; R. Gildea, *Empires of the Mind: The Colonial past and the Politics of the Present* (Cambridge, 2019).

did Britain not have a revolution' in political history.[22] France and Britain have also been at the core of numerous comparisons made in women's history. Joan Scott and Louise Tilly in their pioneering comparative study of women in France and Britain argued that the countries' different rate and character of economic development shaped the type of work that was accessible to women and their place within the household.[23] Their work has been followed by other studies such as Laura Lee Down's work on gender divisions in the French and British metalworking industries between 1914 and 1939, and Susan Pedersen's comparison of the British male breadwinner model versus the French parental welfare state system between 1914 and 1945, which explores the connections between women's work, the welfare state and family structures.[24] More recently, Christina de Bellaigue compared the development of schooling for girls in France and Britain between 1800 and 1867 and its connection with national differences in concepts of femininity, domesticity and motherhood.[25] This thesis builds on these studies by comparing household structures, labour markets and attitudes towards class and gender in relation to domestic service in France and Britain.

[22] In economic history: O'Brien and Keyder. *Economic Growth in Britain and France*; C. P. Kindleberger, *Economic Growth in France and Britain, 1851-1950* (Cambridge, 1964); D. S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge, 1969); W. W. Rostow, *How It All Began: The Origins of the Modern Economy* (London, 1975); R. Cameron and C. E. Freedman. 'French Economic Growth: A Radical Revision', *Social Science History*, 7/1 (1983), pp. 3-30; N. F. R Crafts, 'Economic Growth in France and Britain, 1830–1910: A Review of the Evidence', *The Journal of Economic History*, 44/1 (1984), pp. 49-67; J. Vincent, 'Firm Size and Economic Backwardness: A New Look at the French Industrialization Debate', *The Journal of Economic History*, 47/3 (1987), pp. 649-669; In political history: A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979); H. T. Dickinson, *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (Basingstoke, 1989); M. Philp, *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991); D. Eastwood, 'E. P. Thompson, Britain, and the French Revolution,' *History Workshop Journal*, 39/1 (1995), pp. 79-88; J. Mori, *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution, 1785-1820* (Harlow, 2000); F. Mc Lynn, *The Road Not Taken: How Britain Narrowly Missed a Revolution* (London, 2012).
[23] Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family.*
[24] Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*; Pedersen, *Family, Dependence.*
[25] De Bellaigue, *Educating Women.*

A. Setting the (Comparative) Scene: Labour Markets for Women in France and Britain

While domestic service was an important sector of employment and a key cultural institution in France and Britain, the occupation was shaped in distinct ways by the different national economies and female labour markets. By the beginning of the twentieth century less than 23% of the British population was rural and only 6% of the female labour force worked in the agricultural sector.[26] In comparison, more than half of the French population lived in rural areas and the French agricultural sector continued to employ a large section of the male and female labour force.[27] Around 40% of French female labourers worked in agriculture in the first half of the twentieth century (Table 1).[28] Not only was the agricultural sector bigger in France, it also offered more opportunities of employment to women. The British agricultural sector had a much higher ratio of male-to-female workers than France did.[29] Enclosures, an increase in farm sizes, more commercial farming and the specialisation of farm products meant that there was a greater level of occupational specialisation which curtailed British women's contribution to agricultural activities. In Britain, only 18% of active males in agriculture were working on their own account in 1901 while in France 61% of the agricultural labour force did so in 1906.[30] National differences in the way in which agriculture was organised, and particularly in the size of units of ownership and production, had long-term consequences for women's employment. On small French farms, the family economy continued to thrive, requiring the work of both men and women. Female workers

[26] C. M. Law, 'The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales, 1801-1911', *Transactions*, 41 (1967), pp. 131-132; 'Population and Rates of Increase', 1901 Census of England and Wales. The census under-estimates the number of female farmers, wives of farmers and female day labourers in agriculture. Revised estimates for occupations are provided by: L. Shaw-Taylor, K. Sudgen and X. You, 'A Preliminary Estimate of the Female Occupational Structure of England and Wales 1700–1911' (unpublished paper, 2019, University of Cambridge), p. 13.
[27] 1906 French Census; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work,* p. 184.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Scott and Tilly, *Women, Work*, p. 69.
[30] Section 5, 4. Analysis of orders and sub-orders, XVI. Agriculture, 1911 Census of England and Wales General, 1906 French Census.

laboured in the fields, at home, and also often sold the output in nearby markets. These opportunities were much more limited for British women in rural areas. Nicola Verdon has nevertheless pointed that there were extensive regional differences in the share of English and Welsh female workers employed in the agricultural sector.[31] The 'remote small-scale economy of south-west Wales', for example, continued to employ a significant number of female servants who worked in the house, the dairy and the fields.[32] While at the national level, there were few employment opportunities in the agricultural sector in Britain, some forms of female casual and rural labour survived in parts of the country.

The tertiary sector was a larger sector of employment for women in Britain than in France. In 1901, 57% of female workers worked in the tertiary sector in Britain against 33% in France (see table 1). In both countries, nevertheless, new areas of work opened within the service sector. The absolute and relative growth within the female labour force of the tertiary sector had been mainly driven in the nineteenth century by the demands for domestic servants coming from the urban middle class. In the twentieth century, however, the proportion of servants within the tertiary sector declined while new types of service jobs became available to women. As the French and British economies grew, bureaucratic and administrative organisations expanded, creating a need for more clerks, typists and secretaries. In Britain, the number of female clerks increased 400 times between 1861 and 1911 in response to the rising demands from the private and public sector.[33] In parallel, the mass production of goods by private enterprises was accompanied by their mass distribution in large stores which gradually overtook family businesses. The new stores were staffed by

[31] N. Verdon, 'Agricultural Labour and the Contested Nature of Women's Work in Interwar England and Wales,' *The Historical Journal*, 52/1 (2009), pp. 109-130.
[32] Verdon, 'Agricultural Labour', p. 116.
[33] Scott and Tilly, *Women, Work*, p. 157.

an army of low-skilled female shop assistants. The sweeping reforms of the education system, including the introduction of compulsory schooling in the 1880s in Britain and France, also increased the demands for female teachers; a similar demand for female labour accompanied the expansion and codification of the health and social service sector.[34] These occupations were presented as 'women's jobs' because they either required 'delicacy' and 'finesse' like in the case of typewriting or because they imitated the philanthropic activities to which upper-class women had long dedicated themselves.[35] They also involved tasks such as care and education which had traditionally been performed by women in the domestic sphere. Many of these new jobs, such as shop work and typing, tended to be low paid with few opportunities for promotions. Even occupations such as nursing and teaching did not require the same level of qualification as their male equivalents. However, they attracted many hopeful candidates because they were 'respectable' occupations where women would not get their hands dirty whether by cleaning as in domestic service or working on machinery as in manufacturing. Most importantly, these new jobs represented a 'modern' world in which female workers had a level of independence than was unparalleled compared to domestic service or working within the family units since clerks and an increasing number of shop assistants did not have to 'live in'.[36] Some of the women who entered white-collar jobs were middle-class women in need of a respectable living but many also came from the educated working class who aspired to more than domestic service.[37]

The extent of this shift towards white-collar occupations and professions, however, varied in France and Britain. The percentage of women employed in clerical work, commerce and

[34] Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work,* pp. 235-236; G. Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (London, 2007), p. 122
[35] Scott and Tilly, *Women, Work*, p. 157.
[36] L. Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure and the London Shop Girl, 1880-1920* (Columbus, 2006), p. 101.
[37] Holloway, *Women and Work*, p. 96 and p. 149; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work,* p. 101.

finance increased more substantially in Britain than in France. While clerical work represented only 1% of the British female labour force in 1901, it accounted for 10% by 1931.[38] Commerce and finance also increased from 7 to 11% over the same period.[39] While women working in the professions only represented a small niche of the female labour market, their numbers nevertheless increased in Britain. In 1931, 390,000 women or 7% of the female labour force were professionals.[40] In France, the transition towards white-collar occupations was more gradual because of the slower shift from family-businesses to large corporations and the fact that a significant proportion of the population continued to live and work in rural areas.[41] As a result, there was a lesser share of new white-collar jobs and widespread casual employment in small businesses where women worked for their family or as servant-cum-employees.[42] In 1939, half of the retailers in France were still small structures located in rural areas far from the modern lights of the *Bon Marché* department store in Paris.[43] In parallel, women's access to the professions was further restricted in France compared to Britain. The image of British nurse was transformed by Florence Nightingale and her successors into an icon of the 'modern', educated yet feminine woman. Nursing attracted girls from all social classes because of its respectable image. In contrast, nursing remained an unskilled occupation dominated by nuns in France well into the interwar.[44] In spite of the relatively high number of female teachers in France, the relative conservatism of French society compared to Britain meant that women working in the professions represented only 2% of the female labour force or 3% of the non-agricultural female labour force against 7% of the female labour force in Britain.[45]

[38] Holloway, *Women and Work*, p. 155.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Scott and Tilly, *Women, Work*, p. 157.
[42] Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work,* p. 183.
[43] M. Martin, *Histoire de la Publicité en France* (Nanterre, 2012), p. 130.
[44] K. Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France, 1880-1922* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 191.
[45] 1906 French Census.

Table 1: Sectors of female employment in 1901 in France and Britain

	France	Britain
Primary	39%	6%
Secondary	28%	37%
Tertiary	33%	57%

Source: P. Bairoch, *La Population Active et sa Structure* (Bruxelles, 1968) pp. 174-175; Shaw-Taylor, Sudgen and You, 'A Preliminary Estimate', p. 13.

The different economic and social conditions prevailing in France and Britain impacted female servants' experiences in various ways. The contrasting size of the rural populations in France and Britain influenced the type of employers that servants worked for and the type of work they performed. The urbanisation and industrialisation of Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant that the model of the family economy, in which all family members and household residents played a role in the survival of the family as an economic and social unit, disappeared.[46] While historians have agreed that this process of separation between workplace and home was rather 'protracted and tortuous', by the twentieth century, the distinction was undeniable and goods were no longer produced within the household.[47] Domestic servants had been traditionally defined in broad terms as "persons employed by

[46] L. Shaw-Taylor and E. A. Wrigley , 'Occupational Structure and Population Change', in R. Floud, J. Humphries and P. Johnson (eds) *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2014), p. 76 and p. 86; M. Berg, 'Women's Work, Mechanisation and the Early Phases of Industrialisation in England', in P. Joyce (ed) *The Historical Meanings of Work* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 64-66.
[47] J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, 1999), p. 18; S. Alexander, 'Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London: A Study of the Years 1820-1950', in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds) *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 59-111; L. Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century England', in S. Burman (ed.) *Fit Work for Women* (London, 1979), pp. 64-97; S. Rose, 'Proto-Industry, Women's Work and the Household Economy in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism', *Journal of Family History*, 13 (1988), pp. 181-93; N. Verdon, *Rural Women Workers in Nineteenth-Century England: Gender, Work and Wages* (Woodbridge, 2002).

men of trades and professions under them to assist them in their particular callings; or, such persons as others retain to perform the work and business of their families".[48] Servants were employed for a variety of tasks: on farms, they helped with the dairy and nursed children; in shops, they sold the goods and cleaned the counter. Because servants could be found in all sorts of trades, domestic service was more characterised by a type of relationship – working for a master and living within his household – than an occupation dedicated to a specific task. Servants' participation in domestic and productive activities alongside the family unit, however, disappeared as work was exported outside the home and rationalised within larger structures. In the agricultural sector, the employment of female servants who took care of the home while helping to raise hens or weed the fields was incompatible with intensive capitalist arable farming, which relied instead on day labour.[49] In parallel, the rise of chain stores and lock-up shops contributed to the dissociation between the homes of shopkeepers and their place of work.[50] While in family-businesses, servants might help make and sell goods while taking care of various domestic tasks, these two types of activity were increasingly separate in the twentieth century. A shop assistant was employed to help in the shop while a servant was hired to take care of the shopkeeper's suburban home. In contrast, France's slower rate of urbanisation and industrialisation lead a majority of servants to continue to perform a wider variety of tasks in the households of farmers, shopkeepers and artisans. French servants worked in the shop, sold food in the market, distributed oats for the coachmen's horses, made deliveries by bicycle, alongside cleaning the house and caring for the children. Domestic service was a specialised type of occupation dedicated to the care of the home and its inhabitants in Britain, while the same category in France corresponded

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[48] E. Spikes, *The Law of Master and Servant: In Regard to Clerks, Artisans, Domestic Servants, and Labourers in Husbandry* (London, 1839) quoted in C. Steedman, 'The servant's labour: The business of life, England,1760-1820', *Social History*, 29/1 (2004), p. 1.
[49] B. Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 53-54.
[50] G. Crossick and H. G. Haupt (eds), S*hopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth Century Europe* (London, 1984), p. 81.

to an older understanding of service – common in Britain until the eighteenth century – in which servants were not only those who performed domestic tasks but anyone who left their home to live and work in someone else's. The thesis explores how different understanding of the home as a haven of domesticity or as a place of production, such as farms and family shops, influenced the experiences of servants.

The smaller share of rural women in Britain also meant that more British servants came from an urban background and negotiated their relationships with their employers on different terms.[51] Even for the British women who continued to migrate from the countryside into domestic service, the types of community they had been part of in the countryside were quite distinct to those of the French countryside, creating different types of 'migrant identities'. In 1921, white-collar workers were the third largest occupational group in English counties after agricultural workers and domestic servants.[52] In Surrey, for example, 21.5% of the population was white collar and in Cheshire, 23% of the population was also in white-collar occupations.[53] It was not the same experience to grow up in as well as leave a tightly-bounded community with most its population working in agriculture than to leave a semi-rural and suburbanised part of the countryside where a significant share of the population worked in the service sector. Occupational structures also gave servants distinctive aspirations as well as different levels of bargaining power as they felt more or less able to find a respectable job elsewhere. Finally, the size of the rural and urban populations in both countries shaped servants' world views and understanding of their place at home and in

[51] Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', pp. 405-29; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 115.
[52] A. Howkins, 'Death and Rebirth? English Rural Society, 1920-1940' in P. Brassley, J. Burchardt, L. Thompson (eds) *The English Countryside Between the Wars: Regeneration Or Decline?* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 18.
[53] Ibid.

society. French rural inhabitants consumed urban culture, but they also produced their own, which provided them with alternative understandings of service relationships.

B. Connecting Voices: Comparative History and Personal Sources

While this thesis compares the impact of such economic and social variables on French and British domestic servants, the approach adopted differs from that used in previous comparative studies of women's work in France and Britain because of its focus on autobiographies and personal identities. At first, the combination of micro and macro history can be seen as counterproductive since the comparative style in vogue with many economic and social historians has focused on quantifiable phenomena and tended to render human agency invisible. An example of this phenomenon of depersonalisation can be found in the comparative study of domestic service in France and Britain conducted by Theresa McBride. McBride was mainly interested in service as a symptom of the modernisation of French and British society. It stood, according to her, as 'an occupation central to the transition from a pure familial economy to an industrial mass-production economy'.[54] As a result, she tended to neglect servants' personal experiences to focus on migration flows and processes of social mobility. McBride, for example, uncovered that there was a higher number of rural migrants working in service in France compared to Britain, but she revealed very little about what this meant for servants in their daily life as they navigated an unfamiliar environment.[55] The daily experiences of domestic servants, their social life, their dreams and desires were absent from McBride's story.

[54] McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 119.
[55] Ibid, pp. 34-48.

In contrast, this thesis juxtaposes micro-historical and comparative narratives to situate servants' stories within personal and national frames. A comparative perspective provides an opportunity to explore contrasts between the lives of French and British servants and also to engage with questions about how domestic service was conceptualised in each country. By excavating the social, cultural and economic landscape that servants inhabited, we can better understand why some avenues of resistance, modes of conformity, and certain sets of identities were not only more possible but also more *thinkable* than others for French and British servants. This thesis shows how different levels of industrialisation, urbanisation and land ownership as well as divergent forms of family structures and gender norms shaped servants' world and identities differently in France and Britain.

These variations, in return, help to deconstruct and historicise the category of domestic service in each country. The historiography has mainly focused on the ambiguous and changing nature of domestic service in the early modern period when servants could be lady's maids, farm hands, apprentices, cooks or clerks.[56] There has been a tendency to see the feminisation and contractualisation of domestic service in the nineteenth century as a homogenising force which led 'service' to be defined as the employment of a usually female worker to complete domestic tasks for a household in exchange of a wage.[57] Comparing servants' experiences in Britain and France, in contrast, brings some new complexity to our definition of twentieth-century domestic service. This thesis shows instead how the

[56] B. Hill, *Servants. English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996); P. Ariès, 'Le Service Domestique: Permanence et Variations,' *XVIIe Siècle*, 32 (1980): pp. 415-420; T. Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household*, (Harlow, 2000); A.Fauve-Chamoux and R. Wall, 'Domestic Servants in Comparative Perspective', *The History of the Family*, 10/4 (2005), pp. 345-354; R. Sarti, 'Who are Servants? Defining Domestic Service in Western Europe (16th -21st Centuries)' in S. Pasleau and I. Schopp (eds) *Proceedings of the "Servant Project*", vol. 2 (Liège, 2005), pp. 3–59; A. Fauve-Chamoux, 'Domesticité et Parcours de Vie. Servitude, Service Prémarital ou Métier ?', *Annales de Démographie Historique* 1 (2009), pp. 5-34.

[57] Sarti, 'Who are Servants', pp. 16-21. An exception comes from Delap's research on chars: L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 36-41.

identities and narratives that domestic servants created around 'servanthood' varied alongside national economic, social and cultural factors.

II. Historiography: Dealing with the Maid

Recent studies of domestic service have moved beyond the previous historiographical focus on the gendered and class-based exploitation of servants, which was vogue in the 1970s. These studies, like this thesis, draw upon personal sources that highlight servants' agency, detachment and positive experiences. By bringing these new approaches to bear on the study of French servants, this research helps fill a gap in the French historiography. This research also goes beyond the limitations of the current British historiography, addressing, in particular, the neglect of servants' everyday experiences, which is caused, in part, by the tendency to view service through the dichotomous prism of home and work. Instead, this thesis uses French and British servants' memoirs to explore servants' everyday life and the various types of class, gender, generational and regional identities that they endorsed in and out of the employers' house. It argues that studying servants' dress, food and leisure can help us strike a balance between 1970s historians' image of servants as victims and more recent works which depict servants as workers like any others.

A. Victims in Service: The French and British Historiography in the 1970s

Domestic service has been studied from a variety of different perspectives. Demographers, for example, have studied the influence that service had on late marriage patterns and

household structures in north-western Europe.[58] Cultural and social historians have also been interested in the cultural exchanges fostered by such a large mobile workforce.[59] The majority of these studies, however, dealt with the early modern period.[60] For many modernists, domestic service was deemed a pre-modern occupation; an anachronism inherited from a former time. Dismissed by Adam Smith as 'unproductive', servants were excluded from modern labour theory because they were deemed to be involved in 'reproduction' rather than commodity production.[61] The care of the household took place outside of urban economic activities and had no exchange value. Domestic servants' place within the household also meant that their lives and interests seemed too close to those of

[58] For North-Western Europe: J. Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (eds) *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (London, 1965), pp. 101-143; P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London, 1965); J. Hajnal, 'Two Kinds of Pre-Industrial Household Formation Systems', in R. Wall, J. Robin, and P. Laslett (eds) *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 65-104; P. Laslett, 'Family and Household as Work Group and Kin Group: Areas of Traditional Europe Compared', in Wall, Robin and Laslett (eds) *Family Forms in Historic Europe,* pp. 513-563; Fauve-Chamoux, 'Domesticité et Parcours de Vie'; T. De Moor and J. Luiten van Zanden, 'Girlpower: The European Marriage Pattern and Labour Markets in the North Sea Region in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period', *Economic History Review*, 63/1 (2010), pp. 1-33; T. Dennison and S. Ogilvie, 'Does the European Marriage Pattern Explain Economic Growth?', *The Journal of Economic History*, 74/3 (2014), pp. 651-693; T. De Moor, J. Luiten van Zanden, S. Carmichael, *Capital Women: The European Marriage Pattern, Female Empowerment and Economic Development in Western Europe 1300-1800* (New York, 2019). About England: R. Wall, 'Leaving Home and the Process of Household Formation in Pre-Industrial England', *Continuity and Change*, 2/1 (1987), pp. 77-101; S. McIsaac Cooper, 'Servants to Servitude? The Decline and Demise of Life-Cycle Service in England', *History of the Family,* 10/4 (2005), pp. 367-386; N. Voigtländer and V. Hans-Joachim, 'Why England? Demographic Factors, Structural Change, and Physical Capital Accumulation During the Industrial Revolution,' *Journal of Economic Growth*, 11/4 (2006), pp. 319-6. About France: A. Fauve-Chamoux, 'Le Surplus Urbain Des Femmes En France Préindustrielle Et Le Rôle De La Domesticité/The Urban Surplus of Women in Preindustrial France and the Role of Domestic Service', *Population*, 53/1 (1998), pp. 359-377.

[59] About England: J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 1956); A. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981); Meldrum, *Domestic Service*. About France: D. Roche, 'Les Domestiques Comme Intermédiaires Culturels', in *Les intermédiaires culturels: Actes du Colloque du Centre Méridional d'Histoire Sociale, des Mentalités et des Cultures* (Aix-en-Provence, 1978), pp. 189-202; Ariès, 'Le service domestique'; J.-P. Gutton, *Domestiques Et Serviteurs Dans La France De L'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1981); S. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth Century France. The uses of loyalty* (Princeton, 1983); C. Fairchilds, *Domestic Ennemies. Servants and Their masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore, 1984); C. Petitfrère, *L'Oeil Du Maitre: Maîtres Et Serviteurs, De L'époque Classique Au Romantisme* (Brussels, 1986).

[60] For a rare study that bridges the eighteenth and nineteenth century see: L. Schwarz, 'English Servants and Their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *The Economic History Review*, 52/2 (1999), pp. 236–256.

[61] Banks, for example, presented servants as items of conspicuous consumption for rich employers rather than workers in the first place: J. A. Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning among the Victorian Middle Classes* (London, 1954).

the employers to have a modern, class-based identity. Domestic service, therefore, seemed anomalous for historians interested in the formation of cohesive class-based communities.

It was only with the advent of women's history and history from below that the home and female workers became a legitimate subject for research in Britain. Leonore Davidoff's 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England' published in 1974 broke new ground for the academic study of domestic service.[62] Davidoff used new types of sources like autobiographies and oral history interviews to retrieve women from the margins of historical analysis. She was particularly interested in studying domestic servants as part of a broader reflection on the subordination of women in past societies and the interplay between class and gender. Davidoff highlighted that while Britain had become increasingly industrialised and democratised in the nineteenth century, servants and women had been left virtually 'untouched' by these changes as they 'continued (…) in their pre-industrial, almost Biblical, subordination to their masters and husbands'.[63] Domestic servants, Davidoff argued, suffered from a double discrimination as workers and women. Servants were the victims of the ideology of separate spheres held by the middle class, according to which women's influence was confined to the home while men were made to inhabit the public sphere. This cult of domesticity, Davidoff argued, meant that many women who needed an income had little choice but to go into service because of the growing dogma that women should not be working in mines, factories or fields which were seen as male environments.[64] As a result, Davidoff wrote, 'the majority of girls moved from paternal

[62] L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Social History*, 7/4 (1974), pp. 406-428.
[63] Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life', p. 406.
[64] These claims have been nuanced since: P. Branca, 'Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Woman', in M. S. Hartman and L. W. Banner (eds) *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (New York, 1974), pp. 179-91; A. August, 'How Separate a Sphere? Poor Women and Paid Work in late Victorian London,' *Journal of Family History*, 19/3 (1994), pp. 285-309; S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male-breadwinner Family, 1790–1865', *Economic History Review*, 48/1 (1995), pp. 94-5; J. Humphries, 'Women and Paid Work', in J.

control, in their parent's home, into service (…) thus experiencing a life time of personal subordination in private homes.'[65] While she briefly explored servants' potential resistance to their employers' authority, Davidoff mostly attributed such rebellious behaviours to male servants. Gender norms, she argued, meant that 'accommodation' with the employers' authority 'might be more characteristic of younger girls under the double discipline of service and femininity.'[66]

In 1979, Pam Taylor expanded this argument in a chapter about domestic service during the interwar period. Relying on a sample of forty servants' testimonies, she claimed that while a minority of servants felt that they were exploited, most were 'deferential workers' unable to speak up even if they were badly treated. Employers could not have imposed such tight discipline on their servants, she argued, if the girls had not been brought up in the first place to internalise habits of obedience. Taylor claimed, in particular, that mothers were responsible for the exploitation of their daughters in domestic service. Mothers taught their daughters how to perform domestic chores from a young age and inculcated them with gendered values that shaped them into obedient servants. Taylor concluded that an insidious ideology of domesticity and femininity contributed to maintain the institution of domestic service: 'the girls were, in a sense, vassals, being handed over by the family to the employers for a small sum of money, plus lodging.'[67]

Purvis (ed) *Women's History: Britain, 1850–1945: An Introduction* (London, 1995), pp. 90-8; R. Beachy, B. Craig and A. Owens, *Women, Business and Finance in Nineteenth-century Europe: Rethinking Separate Spheres* (Oxford, 2006).

[65] Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life', p. 409.

[66] Ibid, p. 415.

[67] P. Taylor, 'Daughters and Mothers–Maids and Mistresses: Domestic Service between the Wars', in J. Clarke, C. Critcher and R. Johnson (eds), *Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory* (London, 1979), pp. 121-139.

This subordinate gendered position combined with a low social status and a work environment disconnected from 'working-class' communities, Davidoff and Taylor argued, made servants prone to abuse. Edward Higgs in a book inspired by his doctoral thesis completed in 1979, used a sample of households in Rochdale between 1851 and 1871 to analyse the characteristic of the servant population.[68] His study showed that most servants were paid low wages and were employed on a casual basis for a variety of households including artisans and shopkeepers. Higgs also pointed out that most servants were either rural migrants or workhouse girls who were not protected from exploitation by any type of community. Many subsequent studies followed this line of argument by highlighting servants' downward mobility, higher likelihood of becoming prostitutes, having children outside of marriage and committing infanticide.[69] Female domestic servants, therefore, were presented as the most vulnerable victims of gendered discrimination, economic exploitation, social alienation and sexual predation. As Davidoff concluded, 'far from familiar surroundings and confronted with what was to them an alien way of life, many young servants were both frightened and lonely; they were often exploited with heavy workloads and open to sexual advances from employers or other servants'.[70]

[68] E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Rochdale, 1851-1871' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1979); E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England,' *Social History*, 8/2 (1983), pp. 201-10; E. Higgs, *Domestic Servants and Households in Rochdale: 1851-1871* (London, 2016). See also: M. Ebery and B. Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914* (Reading, 1976).
[69] On mobility: P. Wilcox, 'Marriage, Mobility and Domestic Service', *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1981), pp. 195-206. On workhouses, criminality and domestic service: F. K. Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service in Victorian England', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54/129 (1981), pp. 79-85; On sexuality: E. Shorter, 'Illegitimacy, Sexual Revolution and Social Change in modern Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2?2 (1971), pp. 237-272; W. Langer, 'Infanticide: A Historical Survey,' *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 1/3 (1974), p. 357; L. Tilly, J. Scott and M. Cohen, 'Women's Work and European Fertility Patterns', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6/3 (1976), p. 455.
[70] L. Davidoff, 'Domestic Service and the Working-Class Life Cycle,' *Society of the Study of Labour History* 26 (1973), pp. 10-13.

Theresa McBride in her comparative study of domestic service in France and Britain published in 1976 offered a more positive account of domestic service. Like others, she described the harsh working conditions of servants and concluded that 'an integral part of live-in service had always been the debasing experience of inferiority'.[71] She also acknowledged that part of the servant population would face the dark path of unemployment, illegitimate pregnancy and prostitution. However, McBride asked why despite these hardships and mistreatment, women continued to enter the occupation even when alternative employment was available? She argued that domestic service attracted so many people because it was for some 'an important channel […] for occupational and social mobility'.[72] She used a sample of data about servants' marriages in Versailles between 1825 and 1853 and in Bordeaux in 1872 to show that between 30 to 50% of female servants who married were upwardly mobile.[73] Extrapolating more broadly, she argued that domestic service gave women the possibility to accumulate savings and have a significant dowry that would attract good marriage partners. McBride also claimed that through their occupation, servants had the opportunity to meet men from higher social classes, such as shopkeepers. McBride's research brought important nuance to previous claims which had seen domestic service as an exploitative institution close to slavery. By highlighting domestic service's potential for social mobility, McBride re-humanised servants, giving them a purpose and motivations in life rather than depicting them as alienated and somewhat brainwashed workers.

In France, historians of domestic service relied more heavily on census reports, account books, domestic manuals and novels rather than on servants' testimonies. They argued that because there were so few sources written by domestic servants, 'the only thing we can learn

[71] McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 99.
[72] Ibid, p. 82-98.
[73] T. McBride, 'Social Mobility for The Lower Classes: Domestic Servants in France', *Journal of Social History*, 8/1 (1974), p. 69.

about them comes from the middle class'.[74] Pierre Guiral and Guy Thuillier published the first academic work on nineteenth-century domestic service in 1978. They painted a grim picture of exploitative recruitment agencies, insalubrious bedrooms, a complete lack of privacy and neurotic mistresses controlling – and sometimes even starving – their servants. Guiral and Thuillier also drew upon geographical studies, which had highlighted the migration of women from the countryside towards the towns and cities to work in domestic service, to depict servants as helpless victims in the unfamiliar urban space. Servants, we are told, did not know how to navigate the streets, order food in a shop, or defend themselves in 'proper' French if they were accused of a crime by their employers. The two historians further interpreted the lack of trade union activities among domestic servants as evidence of servants' marginalisation from other working-class communities. While Guiral and Thuillier dedicated a chapter of their book to 'what servants thought', they concluded that given servants' limited amount of free time, they had few opportunities to rebel or reflect on their situation. Exploitative work conditions and a low level of education meant that the maid 'was absorbed, almost entirely by her employers' life'.[75]

Anne Martin-Fugier contributed a second monograph on French domestic service one year later entitled *La Place des Bonnes*. Martin-Fugier's work differed from Guiral and Thuillier's as it focused solely on the maid-of-all-work, the lowest grade of female domestic servants. Her main argument was that servants' marginalisation was not simply the result of their migration or inferior social class. Instead, she argued that servants had been deliberately forced into silence by their employers: 'It is no accident that they do not speak, they do not have their own voice.'[76] Relying mainly on literary accounts and employers'

[74] Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, p. 36.
[75] Guiral and Thuillier, *La Vie Quotidienne*, p. 128.
[76] Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, p. 213.

testimonies, Martin-Fugier claimed that domestic servants were pressured into practices of 'self-erasure' and 'self-sacrifice' as they had to answer to their employers' every need while being a minimal disturbance in the household. She insisted that it was not only their identities but their bodies which were repressed by bourgeois employers who imagined female servants as saintly and motherly figures devoid of any sexuality. If servants failed to comply with the bourgeois' ideal of the loyal servant, a path of moral and sexual degradation was often waiting for them. Martin-Fugier argued, therefore, that the only way for the maid to survive in this environment was to identify with the moral code of the bourgeois and their fantasy about selfless servants. The maid-of-all-work was devoured by the middle class, its endless request for domestic chores and fantasies of eternal loyalty, to the point of losing herself in this extreme process of social alienation. While Martin-Fugier paid more attention to the gendered aspect of servants' exploitation, she nevertheless presented a similar picture of French female servants as social outcasts and dependent workers to the one first produced by Guiral and Thuiller.

B. Dusting off 'Domestic Service': A Lack of Work on Service in French Academia

French academia's continuing reluctance to take 'life writing from below' and oral sources seriously has meant that the historiography has been relatively silent regarding domestic service since Martin-Fugier published her book *La Place des Bonnes* in 1979.[77] The French historiography has not yet move beyond accounts of servants' dependency provided by their employers to explore servants' own personal experiences, opinions and agency. Phillipe Joutard argues that the reluctance of French academic historians to engage with 'life writing'

[77] There was one publication in 1997 dedicated to the labour laws regulating domestic service: J. Martin-Huan, *La Longue Marche Des Domestiques En France Du XIXe Siècle à Nos Jours* (Nantes, 1997).

can be explained by the persistence of a 'positive' and 'quantitative' history based on the idea of the discipline as a 'social science'. He also notes that the attachment of French academia to the written document as 'the only reliable instrument of objective knowledge' has inhibited the development of oral history in comparison with its relative flourishing in Britain.[78] This is far from an understatement: when I visited the archives of the *Association pour l'Autobiographie et le Patrimoine Autobiographique*, one of the main depository of autobiographies in France, I walked into a small locale in the industrial estate of the town of Ambérieu-en-Bugey, which was filled with boxes and contained only one table and stool. Autobiographical archives of ordinary people seemed far removed from the grand imposing rooms of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris.

As a result, works on French domestic service have been strikingly absent from recent edited volumes about the history of domestic service in Europe from the early modern period to the present.[79] In his overview of research on French domestic service, Olivier Zeller notes that 'France has been the great absentee [from the new historiography of domestic service] because of a lack of new work on the topic (…) a large share of research on French domestic servants remains to be written'.[80] Domestic service has been 'abandoned' to sociologists who have used interviews and ethnographic methods to study contemporary cleaners and other workers in the service sector. Sociologist Christelle Avril, for example, has used such methods to study the work of home helps and highlight the importance of both material and 'emotional work' in contemporary service.[81] Geneviève Fraisse has also produced a

[78] P. Joutard, 'L'Oral comme Objet de Recherche en Histoire,' *Bulletin de l'AFAS*, (2012) [http://journals.openedition.org/afas/2683, last accessed May 29, 2019], pp. 49-56.
[79] A. Fauve-Chamoux, ed., *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity* (Oxford, 2004); Pasleau and Schopp, 'Proceedings of the Servant Project'.
[80] O. Zeller, 'Revisiter l'Histoire Française des Serviteurs et des Domestiques,' *Revista de Historia Moderna*, *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante* 34 (2016), pp. 257-278.
[81] C. Avril, *Les Aides à Domicile. Un Autre Monde Populaire* (Paris, 2004).

sociological and feminist study of domestic workers which linked the occupation to the general position of women in society.[82] The field in France has been divided between dated historical accounts of nineteenth-century service primarily based on sources emanating from the employers and modern sociological accounts which explore with more nuance how cleaners understand their work today.

A recent exception to this lacuna came from British historian David Hopkin whose work focused on the link between folklore and domestic service in nineteenth-century France. In contrast with previous cultural model which saw servants as copycats of their employers' lifestyle, Hopkin underlined the dual cultural exchanges between employers and servants. In his study of folktales, Hopkin revealed the important role that servants played in transmitting oral culture to middle-class children for whom they were responsible. Rather than a strict dichotomous relationship, his reflection on oral culture invites us to think about the cultural and emotional mediation between master and servants.[83] Hopkin's research stemmed from a new historiography developed in Britain which, in contrast with French historians' work, used personal and oral sources to rewrite the history of domestic service. Margot Beal's forthcoming book on domestic servants in the region of Lyon and Saint-Étienne between 1840 and 1940 also needs to be duly noted.[84] Beal's use of judicial archives to uncover the voices and agency of domestic servants is another illustration of the potential for new research on French domestic service inspired by the methodology of the British historiography.

[82] G. Fraisse, *Service Ou Servitude Essai Sur Les Femmes Toutes Mains* (Latresne, 2009).
[83] D. Hopkin, 'Intimacies and Intimations: Storytelling between Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century France', *Journal of Social History*, 51/3 (2018), pp. 557-91.
[84] M. Beal, *Des Champs aux Cuisines. Histoires de la Domesticité en Rhône et Loire, 1848-1940* (Paris, forthcoming); M. Beal, 'La Domesticité dans la Région Lyonnaise et Stéphanoise: Vers la Constitution d'un Prolétariat de Service (1848-1940); (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2016).

C. An 'Emotional' History: The New Historiography of Domestic Service in Britain

A group of modern British historians recently nuanced previous accounts of domestic service as an exploitative, paternalist and patriarchal system that isolated young working-class women from their community. Such a structural focus on class and gender subordination, they argued, obscured the potential that autobiographies held for revealing the servants' personal and subjective worlds. With the methodology of the history of emotions and an understanding of the self as fragmented and changing, they have introduced more complexity in past stories of servants' victimisation and mistresses' authoritarianism. Their work stemmed from the standpoint that cultural representations do not tell us by themselves what purchases they really have on individuals. Instead, historians have to pay attention to the psychic realm where meanings are internalised and interpreted to understand employers and servants' experiences.

Judy Giles and Alison Light, for example, rethought the relationship between mistresses and their servants. Giles' work on women, domesticity and modernity in the twentieth century has attracted researchers' attention to the 'emotional work' of domestic service.[85] Giles used a variety of personal sources, such as autobiographies, diaries and interviews of employers across the social scale, to show that domestic service was far from a well-oiled machine. Instead, she argued, servants were a concern for employers who tried to protect their privacy, but often felt that their life was tangled with those of the women who worked under their roof. Domestic service was also a key arena in which women defined their middle-class status, a process that was, however, far from straightforward in the twentieth century with

[85] J. Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford, 2004).

the rise of a more egalitarian and liberal society.[86] Giles revealed, in particular, the delicate social intricacies of domestic service in the suburban villas of the lower-middle class where the mistress did not have the same 'obvious' social superiority over her servant. She argued that far from a straightforward power-relationships, interactions between employers-servants were socially and emotionally complex. In 2007, Alison Light focused on the specific case of Virginia Woolf and her servants in early twentieth-century London, to highlight the complexity of service relationships.[87] Like Giles, she put forward the 'emotional housekeeping' conducted by both mistresses and servants in the private sphere. [88] In her diaries, Woolf discussed her ambivalent relationship with her servants as she struggled to be liked while simultaneously subjecting them to occasional cruelties. Instead of fitting within the traditional figure of the authoritative mistress, Woolf was not sure whether she had the upper hand on her servants: she had the power to command and fire them, but she also felt that she was dependent on their physical and emotional labour in order to flourish as a writer.

Although she focused on the late eighteenth century, the work of Carolyn Steedman needs to be included in this historiographical review as one of the most ambitious and influential works on domestic service. Steedman wove together the social history of a group of workers with a broader reflection of the history of emotions and the modern self. In *Master and Servant* published in 2007, Carolyn Steedman began with the story of Phoebe Beatson, servant to the Reverend John Murgatroyd, who gave birth to an illegitimate child in her employer's home.[89] Instead of chasing her away and possibly leading her down the familiar

[86] See also: J. Giles, 'Help for Housewives: Domestic Service and the Reconstruction of Domesticity in Britain, 1940–50', *Women's History Review*, 10/2 (2001), pp. 299-323.
[87] A. Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service* (London, 2007).
[88] Light, *Mrs Woolf*, p. 83.
[89] C. Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* (Cambridge, 2007).

path of prostitution and destitution, Murgatroyd kept his servant until she married many years later. Steedman studied Murgatroyd's diaries to understand how he came to such a decision within the social and cultural context of late eighteenth-century Yorkshire. She charted through his personal account the rise of new forms of feelings and new ways of imagining and understanding the self which helped him to come to a decision about the fate of his servant.

In her second book, *Labour Lost* published in 2009, Steedman harnessed the development of a new historiography about poor laws letters, court letters, petitions, settlements and bastardy examinations to discover more about domestic servants. [90] She was part of a group of historians who argued that the 1970s 'history from below' movement had overwhelmingly focused on the collective actions and the collective consciousness of the poor rather than their individual experiences.[91] As a result, past accounts, they argued, had tended to depict the poor as 'passive objects, victims of the action of the rich'.[92] In contrast, records of letters sent by claimants to poor law authorities, for example, gave historians the chance to reflect on 'the individual strategies and social knowledge of the poor'.[93] Steedman relied on this new set of sources, alongside other types of documents such as servants' letters, recipes and poetry, to highlights the subjectivity and agency of servants. [94] She argued that criminal and Poor Law archives could be seen as autobiographical materials because they tended to push people to produce a form of identity and selfhood for their legal

[90] C. Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009).
[91] J. S. Taylor, *Poverty, Migration, and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution: Sojourners' Narratives* (Palo Alto, 1989); T. Hitchcock et al, *Chronicling Poverty: the Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997); T. Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837* (Oxford, 2001); T. Hitchcock, 'A New History from Below,' *History Workshop Journal*, 57/1 (2004), pp. 294-298. For a review of the historiography on the English poor law: S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law, c.1760–1834* (London, 2011), pp. 1-20.
[92] Hitchcock et al, *Chronicling Poverty*, p. 2.
[93] Ibid.
[94] See also C. Steedman, 'Poetical Maids and Cooks Who Wrote', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39/9 (2005), pp. 1-17.

case. Far from casting servants as 'mute' victims, Steedman uncovered new exciting ways to study domestic servants as literate and articulate workers who were actively thinking, and in some cases writing, about their position in society.

The importance of Steedman's work is also seen in its influence on accounts of twentieth-century service such as Lucy Delap's *Knowing Their Place* and Selina Todd's 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900-1950'. Like Steedman, Delap engaged with the dual question of what domestic service meant to both servants and employers. In her article entitled 'Kitchen-Sink laughter' published in 2010, Lucy Delap focused on how 'laughter acted as a vehicle for managing and negotiating emotional and social investments in the precarious institution of service'.[95] Laughter provided a way to approach the gap between expectations and representations of domestic service and its messy reality. Delap, in particular, explored how laughing could also be a way of abandoning the social script to create moments of intimacy in instances of shared laughter between servants and employers. In 2011, Delap integrated her work on laughter in her book *Knowing Their Place* which relied on various works of fiction, autobiographies and oral history interviews to explore the 'emotional landscape of domestic service' in twentieth-century Britain.[96] Positive memories of domestic service from servants helped counter the assumption that service was a total institution and the idea that working as a servant was 'a powerful moment of anomie and self-alienation'.[97] Instead of passively adopting the cultural norms of their employers as Davidoff and Martin-Fugier had previously suggested, Delap argued that servants constructed their own identities and even intervened in print media and other cultural productions to shape representations of domestic service. Similarly, Selina Todd argued that

[95] L. Delap, 'Kitchen-Sink Laughter: Domestic Service Humor in Twentieth Century Britain,' *Journal of British Studies*, 49/3 (2010), p. 627.
[96] Delap, *Knowing their place*, p. 12.
[97] Delap, *Knowing their place*, p. 128.

for many, domestic service was not a traumatising experience of self-alienation. She used oral history interviews to argue that servants' relationships with their employers during the twentieth century could be better understood in terms of detachment rather than through simplistic tropes of deference versus defiance. Todd stressed that for many women, domestic service was 'just a job' which did not define them entirely.[98] They saw domestic service only as temporary situation before a better opportunity came up in the form of another job or marriage. Instead of studying service in a vacuum, therefore, Todd encouraged historians to approach it in connections with other spheres of life to better understand servants' experiences.

In the same year as Todd published her article, Siân Pooley produced a detailed case study of domestic service in Lancaster between 1880 and 1914 using both quantitative and qualitative sources. She drew on diaries, letters and oral history interviews and backed these sources with record-linkage analysis of the censuses to challenge the stereotype of 'a dichotomous master-servant relationship'.[99] She showed that there were 'considerable similarities between the backgrounds of servants and employers' in Lancaster as a significant share of servants were not rural migrants but were born in the town like their employers.[100] Service, therefore, did not necessarily entail the social and emotional distancing of domestic servants from their homes and communities as had been previously argued by Davidoff and other researchers.

[98] Todd, 'Domestic Service', p. 198.
[99] Pooley, 'Domestic servants', p. 425. This is in stark contrast with findings from Higgs, *Domestic servants and households in Rochdale*, p. 143 and more recently R. Wall, 'The Social and Economic Significance of Servant Migration', in Fauve-Chamoux (ed.), *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 30-33.
[100] Pooley, 'Domestic servants', p. 405.

An important way in which these historians have nuanced accounts about domestic service can be seen in their treatment of the family. As we have seen, previous historians saw the family as an institution which reinforced the authority of the employers. According to Taylor in 1979, mothers taught their daughters obedience, servility, and 'to expect very little for themselves' and were thus 'contributing to the exploitation of their daughters'.[101] Building on Todd's argument that servants were connected to other social spheres and discourses beyond those provided by their employers, this new generation of historians have instead presented the family as a potential counterforce to the employers' authority. Pooley showed that Lancaster servants regularly kept in touch with their parents and siblings through letters, and also received frequent visits from family members, which provided them with financial protection against unemployment.[102] Delap also argued that the family was an 'emotional lynchpin around which the memories of servants were organised'. [103] She criticised Taylor's analysis by pointing that 'theories of deferential workers and false consciousness don't easily lend themselves to making sense of the subjectivities of service.'[104] The servants' memoirs and oral history interviews she examined revealed that many mothers provided aspirational narratives and alternative values to those of employers, which helped servants feel confident enough to turn their back on service when they felt exploited and mistreated. Studying the family, therefore, helped retrieve servants from the middle-class home and reinsert them in their own community, thereby, breaking down previous narratives of powerlessness and social alienation.

[101] Taylor, 'Daughters and Mothers', p. 126-127.
[102] Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', pp. 423-424.
[103] Delap*, Knowing Their Place*, p. 57.
[104] Ibid, p. 60.

D. New Directions: Servants' Identities in their Everyday Life

This thesis follows in the footsteps of Delap, Todd and Pooley by using twentieth-century servants' memoirs to explore the different ways servants constructed their identities. By engaging with the methods of British socio-cultural historians, the first important contribution of this thesis is to expand our limited knowledge of domestic service in twentieth-century France. While Hopkin started this process by exploring servants' oral culture and folklore in the nineteenth century, this thesis provides a new addition to the French historiography by focusing on twentieth-century servants' memoirs. It proves that servant's voices are not as inaccessible as French historians claimed by unearthing 92 French servants' accounts. These sources help to nuance the work of Martin-Fugier, Guiral and Thuillier by bringing forward new accounts of French servants' lives which go beyond narratives of victimisation and marginalisation. The thesis is also inspired by the work of Giles on British lower-middle-class mistresses as it moves away from the traditional figure of the maid working for the Parisian middle class and explores the positions that servants held in a variety of households down the social scale, such as those of small shopkeepers and farmers.

The present thesis does not, however, simply replicate recent analyses of domestic service in a comparative Franco-British case study. It goes beyond the newest research on domestic service by performing a close analysis of servants' everyday life beyond work in France and Britain. While Delap argues that servants constructed 'very different subjectivities' around their service experience and Todd calls for historians to study servants' detachment from their work and employers; few of these historians focus on how these identities were

negotiated by servants in their everyday life.[105] They use servants' memoirs to examine their reasons for entering or leaving service, their aspirations and relationships with their employers rather than focusing on the specific experiences which servants encountered in service. These historians' desire to study servants as workers rather than shadowy figures in the margins of households lead them to neglect key aspects of domestic servants' lives.

Servants' relationship with their family has been one of the only facets of servants' experiences which has been studied in detail by historians following Todd's *mot d'ordre* of 'detachment'.[106] Such a focus on the family as an alternative source of identity, however, replicates the traditional dichotomy between the workplace and the home whereas for domestic servants, these 'separate spheres' were intertwined. While Todd is right to remind us that for many servants, domestic service was 'just a job' which did not define them entirely, this approach tends to obscure the specificity of this occupation. Live-in domestic service was not 'just a job' because it also included living in the employers' home.[107] Servants lived under the same roof as their employers, respecting their rules from personal grooming to curfews, playing with their children, filling their bellies with home-cooked food and washing their dirty laundry. While they could decide to put some distance between themselves and their employers, they could not escape the various intimacies – emotional and physical – that co-residency involved. As such, the study of servants' private lives and personal identities must also be located within the four walls of the home. Moments when servants ate, slept or simply rested in between tasks contributed to these women's sense of self. By focusing on these complex spaces and time frames – these moments influenced by

[105] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 61.
[106] Todd, 'Domestic Service', p. 198.
[107] Ibid.

work but nonetheless private – we can uncover the ways in which servants built their identities across the domestic and work spheres.

The desire to represent domestic servants as workers like any others has also focused historians' attention on class. Todd made the initial case for 'detachment' to argue that servants were part of 'working-class' communities despite being often physically removed from them and in constant contact with middle-class people and values. 'Detachment' was an analytical tool that Todd used to inscribe domestic servants 'at the centre' of the history of the working-class.[108] This focus on class, however, has led other areas of servants' experiences and identities pertaining to age or locality to be neglected. In particular, there has been little work to connect domestic servants, more than half of whom were below twenty-five years old to the growth of youth culture in the twentieth century. More work needs to be done to supersede the idea that servants embraced the advice of the middle class regarding their leisure by attending servants' clubs. Detachment, therefore, needs to be used as a multi-faceted analytical tool which links servants to a social class but also an age group, a region and a gender.

This thesis performs a close reading of a large sample of servants' memoirs in order to examine how servants constructed diverse identities in their everyday life. It concentrates on three themes which were most present in servants' accounts: dress, food and leisure. It pushes into new territory Delap's claim that social and cultural institutions are not accepted as such by individuals but rather interpreted and transformed into new narratives at the personal level. Instead of focusing on the overall opinions of service that servants had, this thesis explores how processes of identification operated at the micro-levels of dress, food

[108] Todd, 'Domestic Service', p. 182.

and leisure. The thesis also expands the original meaning of 'detachment' to show how servants were connected to other important sources of identity beyond class in their everyday life. Studying servants' everyday life provides us with a more holistic approach to service which focuses on the individual instead of the worker or the working class. Focusing on servants' leisure and dress, for example, brings a new understanding of detachment in terms of age, while concentrating on food help to think about detachment in terms of localism and regionalism. This thesis, therefore, examines the rich material provided by servants' memoirs in France and Britain to show how living in the employers' home and having to negotiate with them private experiences like clothing, food and leisure shaped servants' adoption of various types of identity.

III. Sources and Methodology: Memoirs at the Margins, Margins of the Memoirs

A. A Chorus of Voices: Creating a New Sample of Servants' Memoirs for France and Britain

This thesis expands previous works on domestic service by gathering a large sample of French and British servants' memoirs, consisting of 107 British and 92 French servants' testimonies.[109] Other historians have used servants' memoirs: Lucy Delap worked with oral history interviews and autobiographies while Selina Todd's research was based on a sample of sixty testimonies.[110] However, this smaller number of accounts was spread across a wider time period ranging from 1900 to the post-war period. Moreover, no work has been done yet to gather servants' testimonies in France. This thesis uncovers and provides translations

[109] Appendices 1 and 2.
[110] Delap, *Knowing their place*, p. 23-24; Todd, 'Domestic service', p. 183.

of this new material to create the first sample of French servants' memoirs. The comparative sample will hopefully serve as a springboard for future research while offering more opportunities to reflect on the diversity of experiences that service provided.

The thesis adopts a broad definition of 'memoir' which includes published and unpublished autobiographies as well as oral history interviews. For the British sample, 32 memoirs are published, 24 unpublished and 51 are interviews. For the French sample, five memoirs are published, 11 unpublished and 76 are interviews. Different types of testimony bring together more diverse voices. While published autobiographies might have a tendency to represent more 'traditional' trajectories of domestic servants who worked for prestigious households, unpublished autobiographies and oral testimonies introduce servants who might not have experienced social mobility or stayed in domestic service their whole career.[111] They also allow for the exploration of contradictions, unresolved tensions and silences which are not always apparent in published memoirs.

While no sample of sources can claim to be completely representative of the experiences of all British and French servants, my material nonetheless offers a broad coverage in terms of time period, geography and employers which allow for a nuanced analysis. 30% of the memoirs cover the period between 1900s and 1910s while the rest focuses on the 1920s and 1930s.[112] The sample also includes servants who worked for different types of employers ranging from the upper to the lower-middle class and including those who worked for institutions and farms.[113] For France, in particular, the sample includes rare accounts of domestic servants who worked for the lower-middle class and farmers. These types of

[111] Delap, *Knowing their Place*, p. 24.
[112] See Appendices 1 and 2.
[113] Ibid.

servants are currently not considered in the historiography, which focuses solely on urban upper- and middle-class employers. Including the experience of domestic servants in rural communities, which constituted nearly 50% of the French population in the first half of the twentieth century, is crucial to obtain a better understanding of domestic service in France. The sample also includes a diversity of places extending beyond capital cities and major towns. The British sample is geographically diverse including, among others, Wigtownshire in Scotland, Newport in Wales, Cumbria in the north of England, Norfolk in the east, Worcestershire in the west and Hampshire in the south. It excludes Ireland, however, given its different political, social and economic context during the period studied here. The French sample also offers a broad geographical coverage which ranges from Brittany and Normandy in the west to the Bas Rhin and Savoie in the east, including the Loire in the centre and extending to southern departments Dordogne, Gard and Vaucluse.

The process of gathering British servants' memoirs was guided by *The Autobiography of the Working-Class*, the autobiographies' index created by John Burnett, David Vincent and David Mayall.[114] As a result, the majority of unpublished memoirs comes from the Burnett Archives of Working Class Autobiographies which was created by Burnett, Vincent and Mayall while compiling the index volume.[115] The archives contain some letters, hand-written notebooks and typed manuscripts which would have otherwise 'remained hidden in family attics, known only to the author and a handful of relatives.'[116] Two unpublished memoirs come from other archives, one from the LSE library and the other from the Cambridgeshire archives.[117] The thesis also relies on oral history interviews of British

[114] J. Burnett, D. Vincent and D. Mayall, *The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated, Critical Bibliography* (Brighton, 1984).
[115] Appendix 1.
[116] Burnett, Vincent and Mayall, *The Autobiography* (vol.1) p. xxix.
[117] Appendix 1; Amy Grace Rose, *The Reminiscences of Mrs Amy Grace Rose*, Cambridgeshire Archives, ref P137/28/3; Mollie Prendergast papers, The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University, 7MOP.

domestic servants which mainly come from Paul Thompson's collection entitled 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918', Rosemary Scadden's interviews of domestic servants for her book *No Job for a Little Girl* and Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths' interviews of servants reproduced in their book *Cap and Apron*.[118] Three other interviews come from the George Ewart Collection deposited at the British Library which focuses on East Anglia.[119] These testimonies are complemented by twenty-eight memoirs which were either published by small editors inspired by history from below or commercial editors trying to profit from a general interest in country-house life and the heritage sector in general.[120]

In France, without an index to guide my research, the process of finding servants' memoirs was more difficult. Departmental and regional archives responded negatively to my enquiries about servants' memoirs. The *Archives du Travail* (The National Archives of Work) did not hold any testimonies from domestic servants either. Even the *Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand*, the national archives for women and feminism, contained disappointingly few resources on domestic servants. The archives seemed to reproduce two forms of bias present in French academia: a bias against memoirs and another against women workers outside the strongly unionised industries. To overcome these issues, I turned to archives that specialised in personal sources. As a result, all the unpublished French memoirs used in this thesis come from the *Archives pour l'Autobiographie et la Mémoire Autobiographique* located in Ambérieu, the purpose of which is to gather and preserve

[118] Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973' UK Data Service (2009) , SN:2000, http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-2000-1 (5 September 2018); G. Griffiths and S. Mullins, *Cap and Apron: An Oral History of Domestic Service in the Shires, 1880-1950* (Leicester, 1986); R. Scadden, *No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service* (Llandysul, 2013). See Appendix 1 for details.
[119] George Ewart Evans Collection, British Library Sound Archive, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/George-Ewart-Evans-collection (accessed 5 September 2018). See Appendix for details.
[120] Appendix 1.

autobiographical texts from family archives.[121] In order to find more testimonies of French domestic servants, I had to find creative ways of accessing their voices outside of traditional archives. That is how I came to rely on oral history archives dedicated to folklore and ethnography to find servants' testimonies. Half of the French oral history interviews come from Jean Haubenestel's oral history project for his book about Alsatian domestic servants entitled *Active, Propre et Honnête*.[122] The other half come from oral history online platforms which include the *Union Pour la Culture Populaire en Poitou-Charentes et Vendée* (UPCP-Métives), the *Office du Patrimoine Cultural Immateriel et Centre de Resources Ethnodoc* (OPCI-Ethnodoc), the M*aison Méditeranenne des Sciences de l'Homme* and the *Centre Occidants des Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles Toulouse Midi-Pyrennées* (COMDT).[123] These archives were created in response to the 1970s oral history movement in France.[124] The French oral history tradition and its archives, however, differ from similar structures and movements in Britain. In France, they are intertwined with the folkloric and ethnographic research tradition which dates back to the nineteenth century.[125] The 'radical' aspect of oral history and its distancing from official archives resonate with a regional and, in some cases, regionalist discourse about folk culture and rural traditions.[126] These archives, therefore, gathered a large proportion of oral testimonies dedicated to regional dances, tales

[121] See Appendix 2 for details.
[122] J. Haubenestel, *Active, Propre et Honnête: Jeunes Filles Alsaciennes en Place à Paris, 1900-1960* (Strasbourg, 2002).
[123] Phonothèque Maison Méditerranée des Sciences de l'Homme, http://phonotheque.mmsh.huma-num.fr/ (accessed 4 December 2016); Centre d'Etudes, de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Oralité, UPCP-Métives http://www.cerdo.fr/ (accessed 6 December 2016); Portail du patrimoine oral, http://stq4s52k.es-02.live-paas.net/ (accessed 15 December 2016); Réseau des Archives Documentaires de l'Oralité, Opci-Ethnodoc, https://raddo-ethnodoc.com/raddo/ (accessed 15 December 2016); "Centenaire ou Presque", Archives départementales-Maison de l'histoire de la Manche (2011-2012), 251 AV http://www.archives-manche.fr/ark:/57115/a011441812803AOMYV4/from/a011441812936zwlcGz; (accessed 20 December 2016), Centre de Documentation du Centre Occitan des Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles Toulouse Occitanie, http://cataloguedoc.comdt.org/ (accessed 6 March 2016).
[124] P. Joutard, *Histoire et Mémoires, Conflicts et Alliance* (Paris, 2015), p. 106.
[125] T. Baycroft and D. M. Hopkin. *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 2012).
[126] D. Hopkin, 'Regionalism and Folklore' in X. M. Núñez Seixas and E. Storm (eds) *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day* (London, 2019).

and cooking rather than, as was often the case in Britain, accounts of the lives and struggles of the urban working class. This focus makes it at first sight difficult if not impossible to use these sources to study groups of workers like domestic servants. However, as rural migrants who went into service and sometimes returned home to secure a farm or a shop with their savings, servants constituted a notable share of rural informants about past traditional practises. While the interest of these oral history archives lies predominantly in folkloric culture and, therefore, the interviews tend to gravitate around memories about traditional dance, cooking and songs, some interviewers nonetheless asked questions about the interviewee's life. These 'digressions' sometimes resulted in hours of taped conversation and detailed accounts of rural servants' experiences and migration. These interviews provide an important basis for the French sample given the limited number of servants' autobiographies and their absence from more 'official' archives. These sources are complemented by some rare servants' autobiographies distributed by small publishers.[127] All of these different sources have been translated from French and in a few cases from Occitan, a regional dialect, into English.

B. Memory and Marginals: Theoretical Approaches to Memoirs

Memoirs are a crucial source to record the experiences of groups who might otherwise have been neglected by contemporary officials and historians. They offer a chance to inscribe these under-represented groups on the historical record and offer their own interpretation of history. As such, they have been particularly useful for post-colonialist and feminist historians.[128] This type of sources can also help historians to recover 'particular aspects of

[127] See Appendix 2 for details.
[128] For an historiographical review of such uses of personal sources see: M. J. Maynes, J. L. Pierce and B. Laslett, *Telling stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (London, 2008), pp. 3-6.

historical experience which are rarely recorded in documentary sources, such as personal relationships and domestic life'.[129] Most importantly, written and oral memoirs convey the personal or subjective meanings of lived experience.

However, memoirs are not 'transparent representations or objective reconstructions' of the past.[130] An old criticism of oral history and written memoirs is that memory gets distorted with time, can be influenced by the personal bias of the interviewer, or reshaped by collective versions of the past. David Vincent argued that as a result of 'unresolved doubt about the "truth" and "relevance" of [autobiographical] works which are necessarily subjective in form and limited in number', memoirs could not be read as factual.[131] This selectivity and subjectivity also led Patrick O'Farrell in 1979 to conclude that oral history 'lead[s] us not into history, but into myth.'[132] Earlier historians of personal sources responded to these criticisms by arguing that all sources contained a form of bias and introducing guidelines that were inspired by the social sciences to assess the reliability of personal documents, such as representative sampling and checks for internal consistency.[133]

Since the 1980s, however, a significant number of historians have begun to 'see the peculiarity of oral [and memoir-based] history as a strength rather than a weakness.'[134] Following the cultural turn which emphasised the role of language and culture in constituting reality and raised the idea that subjectivity, memory and emotions had a history, historians

[129] A. Thomson, 'Unreliable Memories? The Use and Abuse of Oral History' in W. Lamont (ed) *Historical Controversies and Historians* (London, 1998), p. 25.
[130] M. J. Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road: Life Course in French and German Workers' Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization* (Chapel Hill, 1995), p. 6.
[131] D. Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom* (London, 1982), p. 4.
[132] P. O'Farrell, 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 5(1982), pp. 3-9.
[133] Thomson 'Unreliable memories,' pp. 26-27; P. Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (London, 2019), p. 78.
[134] A. Thomson, 'Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History' *The Journal of American History*, 85/2 (1998), p. 585.

have seen memoirs as creative literary forms rather than sources of factual evidence. Alessandro Portelli summarised the new approach by concluding that 'what is really important is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings.'[135] Historians have been particularly interested in the diachronic nature of memoirs, that is, the fact that they are shaped by two points in time: the moment at which they are created and the period to which they refer. Diachronicity, according to them, opens the door to conscious and unconsciousness alterations of memory on which historians should focus. As a result, research has tended to concentrate on self-censorship, irrelevancies, discrepancies and silences in memoirs. Some historians studied more specifically the influence of public narratives and language on the construction of personal memories.[136] They argued that personal accounts of the past were never created in isolation from public narratives but entailed the reworking of past experiences into available cultural scripts. In *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, for example, Penny Summerfield, argued that the oral testimonies of women workers in the Second World War needed to be understood in terms of two discourses about femininity – stoic and heroic – which had their roots in official wartime narratives about women.[137] Other historians have been influenced by psychoanalysis and focused on the psychological aspect of remembrance. They argued that story-telling was a means of managing painful experiences from the past and dealing with unconscious conflicts.[138] Michael Roper, for example, worked on a set of memoirs

[135] A. Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different' in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *Oral History Reader* (London, 1998), p. 69.
[136] For example: L. Passerini, 'Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism' in Perks and Thomson (eds) *Oral History Reader*, pp. 53-6; A. Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford, 1994); A. Devenish, 'Performing the Political Self: A Study of Identity Making and Self Representation in the Autobiographies of India's First Generation of Parliamentary Women', *Women's History Review*, 22/2 (2013), pp. 280-294.
[137] P. Summerfield *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998).
[138] For example: J. R. Barrett, 'Was the Personal Political? Reading the Autobiography of American Communism', *International Review of Social History*, 53 (2008), pp. 395-423; O. Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London, 2008); D. James, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham, 2000).

written by one veteran at distinct moments of his life in order to understand the psychic reconstruction of memory in personal narratives of the Great War.[139] Both psychic and social approaches, therefore, argued against the idea that oral recounting and memoirs were 'history as it really was' and privileged an approach in which memory was an object of historical analysis in itself allowing historians to explore the impact of past experiences upon people's lives and identities. Oral history and memoirs were seen not as a record of the past but rather of the 'complex interaction between past and present within each individual and in society'.[140]

There have been some voices, however, arguing that this new theoreticism had gone too far and that the initial motivations of historians using oral history and written memoirs to provide evidence about marginal groups and experiences 'were being submerged under the weight of post-structuralist and postmodernist theories'.[141] Jane Humphries, for example, used memoirs alongside quantitative data to study child labour during the Industrial Revolution.[142] She defended her use of memoirs as 'accurate sources' against critics by arguing that the voices of working-class children 'merit[ed] remembrance'.[143] These personal accounts were significant, according to her, because most mainstream accounts of the Industrial Revolution were macro-oriented and tended to focus on institutions and natural resources.[144] The inclusion of the voices of past historical agents is most particularly important for historians who study marginal groups such as women, ethnic minorities and homosexuals. Joan Hoof in a particularly controversial article worried about the effect of

[139] M. Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier-Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, 50 (2000), pp. 181-204.
[140] Thomson, 'Unreliable Memories,' p. 27.
[141] Thomson, 'Fifty Years On,' p. 587.
[142] J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010).
[143] J. Humphries, 'Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, 66/2 (2013), p. 416.
[144] Ibid, pp. 397-398.

these postmodern theories on women's history and the ensuing neglect of women's experiences in favour of a deconstructed account where historical actors were seen as literary constructions and power dynamics were ignored.[145]

An emerging trend has been to link theories about narrative and memory with a commitment to the history of oppressed and marginal groups. Joan Sangster summarised this new approach by arguing that: 'without a firm grounding of [personal] narratives in their material and social context, and a probing analysis of the relationship between the two, insights on narrative form and on representation may remain unconnected to any useful critique of oppression and inequality.'[146] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy used oral history to study working-class lesbians in New York State.[147] Her approach focused on the experiences of this group while paying attention to the subjective and narrative qualities of oral testimonies. She argued that the impressive storytelling by her informants revealed the important role of this skill in creating alternative identities and a way to cope with homophobia. Kennedy concluded that historians could draw on both aspects of oral testimonies – facts and subjectivity – to write the story of marginalised groups rather than losing their connections in a falsely polarising methodology.

Historians of domestic service have tended to follow this theoretical compromise in order to develop a nuanced account of the experiences of a marginal group of female workers. Todd, for example, notes how frequently a particular rebellious story appeared in servants' memoirs: an employer tested a servant's honesty by leaving coins under a carpet and the

[145] J. Hoff, 'Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis', *Women's History Review*, 3/2 (1994), pp. 149-168.
[146] J. Sangster, 'Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History' in Perks and Thompson (eds), *Oral History Reader*, p. 97.
[147] E. Lapovsky Kennedy, 'Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of Pre-Stonewall Lesbian History', *Radical History Review* 62 (1995), pp. 59-79.

angry servant got her revenge by gluing them to the floor instead of returning them to her mistress. Todd argues that these stories were an 'apocryphal, anecdotal signifier of discontent with the employers' rather than real acts of rebellion.[148] She then briefly explores their link with an oral tradition among servants which served as an outlet for discontent. In the last chapter of *Knowing their Place*, Delap explores the 'historicity of domestic service—the way in which the past plays a social role in the present through the staging of memory'.[149] She pays particular attention to the way the heritage sector has portrayed domestic service in the second half of the twentieth century. However, both Todd and Delap develop this textual and cultural analysis alongside rather than against a study of servants' experiences based on their memoirs. Delap, in particular, dismisses the argument that servants' positive memories of service are purely a reconstruction or a coping mechanism.[150] Both historians put forward servants' voices in order to correct previous research based on employers' accounts which tended to victimise, marginalise and silence these women. They make a clear case for an approach to servants' memoirs in which the insights brought by textual analysis does not detract from the process of recovery of servants' voices.

C. Servants' Stories and Servants' History

This thesis follows in the footsteps of historians of domestic service by using memoirs as its main source to uncover servants' experiences while paying attention to the inherent subjectivity of this material. Servants' memoirs give us a unique window through which we can glimpse the lives of those who did not leave any written trace in the official records. If we refuse to listen because of the 'reconstructed' and sub-sequential nature of these sources,

[148] S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford, 2005), p. 150.
[149] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 207.
[150] Ibid, p. 30.

we risk condemning servants, not to mention a large share of the working class, to silence. Including these voices is important given the rarity of 'working-class' women's memoirs. In France, in particular, where servants' voices have been ignored for so long by historians and archivists, it would be senseless to refuse to listen to the few testimonies which have survived. As Emma Griffin simply put it: 'We should work with these autobiographies because we can'.[151] While these sources are not without issues, without them, we are left with an even more partial account of domestic service. Sources produced by the employers and official sources such as government reports leave us with the problems of 'othering' and 'victimisation' of domestic servants. Autobiographies, in contrast, give us a rare chance to gain a more nuanced understanding of servants' experiences. In order to give some agency to marginalised groups and reintroduce them into mainstream historical narratives of twentieth-century Britain and France, we must accept the autobiographical accounts of domestic servants as a legitimate source for historians.

The thesis relies on different types of servants' memoirs to ensure that certain voices or stories are not privileged. These include published and unpublished testimonies as well as oral history interviews, which allow the inclusion of the illiterate, or those who did not have the confidence to write memoirs. The variety of sources covers the different motivations servants had for picking up their pen and the varied audiences for which they wrote. For example, there is a danger that published autobiographies might over-represent 'success stories' of socially mobile servants, while the unpublished autobiographies from the Burnett Archive of Working-Class Autobiographies might over-represent testimonies from servants who wanted to share their sense of injustice and articulate their story in terms of class. Oral history interviews also help us to hear the voices of servants who did not have any strong

[151] E. Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn: A People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven, 2014), p. 10.

feelings about service or social classes but saw their experience as only one aspect of their working lives, which in turn, was one aspect of their whole lives. Combining different sources, therefore, allows for a more representative and complex picture.

Although the bedrock of this research, memoirs have been triangulated with other types of sources, like reports and newspapers articles as well as visual materials such as postcards, cartoons and films. The thesis relies in particular on the 1916 report by the Women's Industrial Council which collected 706 employers' testimonies and 566 servants' testimonies about their experiences in service; and the 1919 report on domestic service from the Ministry of Reconstruction which was also based on interviews with a panel of domestic servants and employers.[152] Mass Observations surveys also provide an alternative source of information about servants' leisure practices using door to door interviews and surveys.[153] These reports and surveys are a great source to compare servants' testimonies in their memoirs to contemporary practices and opinions. Other types of sources are also used to contextualise and critically engage with servants' testimonies. Servants' memoirs are read alongside employers' accounts to understand the complex and multifaceted nature of domestic service relationships.[154] Following Delap's note that 'neither oral histories nor

[152] C. V. Butler and M. Frances, L. Hanbury and V. W. De Broke, *Domestic service: An Enquiry by the Women's Industrial Council* (London, 1916); G. Emmott, *Ministry of Reconstruction. Report of the Women's Advisory Committee on the Domestic Service Problem Together with Reports by Sub-committees on Training, Machinery of Distribution, Organisation and Conditions, XXIX, 7* (1919).
[153] 20-2-D, *Directives Replies*, READING HABITS 1937-47 [Topic Collection], University of Sussex, Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Mass Observation Online, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3166/Documents/Details/TopicCollection-20 (Accessed 23 January 2018); 51-2-J to K, *Leisure and Clubs Questionnaire Jan 1941: Bermondsey and Paddington*, and 51-3-G *Youth Questionnaire, June 1943: Paddington*, *YOUTH 1937-1943*. [Topic Collection] University of Sussex, Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Mass Observation Online, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3166/Documents/Details/TopicCollection-51 (Accessed 8 January 2018).
[154] Employers testimonies comes from the reports and the secondary literature: Delap, 'Servant-Keepers and the management of servants' in *Knowing their place*, pp. 64-97; Pooley, 'Domestic servants'; Giles, 'Help for Housewives'*;* Guiral and Thuillier, *La Vie Quotidienne*, p. 16-36; Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*; F. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: Domestic Service in England 1850-1939* (London, 1973), pp. 24-35; P. Horn, T*he Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Stroud, 1990), pp. 17-32; P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 2010); L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-century Britain*

memoirs are produced within a cultural vacuum', servants' testimonies are also analysed in conjunction with cultural sources such as films, novels, newspaper articles and caricatures to understand the context in which domestic servants articulated their identities and made sense of their experiences.[155]

Finally, it should be stressed that the inherent subjectivity of personal sources is an intrinsic part of the story, rather than a detriment to it. As David Vincent put it in his work on working-class autobiographies about life during the industrial revolution, memoirs should be read first and foremost to grasp 'how people understood their lives'.[156] Focusing on how servants constructed their identities through dress, food and leisure builds on the strength of autobiography as a source to study the self. If, for example, servants tended to remember more frequently their uniform rather than the everyday clothes that they wore on their day off, this bias, rather than invalidating the study, in fact reveals the strong emotional weight that the uniform portended for many servants. Similarly, while French servants might not all have been perfect cooks as they claimed in their memoirs, it is nevertheless significant that cooking was invested with such pride. Memories of dance halls and cinema outings as young women might have been nostalgic, but the thesis explores how access to leisure was embedded into alternative identities outside of service. What was remembered and what was not, therefore, lies at the centre of this work on servants' memoirs to understand key aspects of these women's identities.

(London, 2013); P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs: The Real Lives of Servants, 1939 to the Present* (Stroud, 2014); A. Maloney, *Life Below Stairs: True Lives of Edwardian Servants* (London, 2015).

[155] Delap, *Knowing their place*, p. 24.

[156] Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge*, p. 5.

IV. Synopsis

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Each concentrate on a key theme beyond work which was most present in servants' accounts: dress, food and leisure. The chapters compare how French and British servants made sense of their everyday experiences and constructed their identities within a broader social, economic and cultural context. Underlining the three chapters is the argument that although most of servants' life was regulated by their employers or at least lived in close proximity to them, servants had agency and negotiated their everyday life using other spheres of references beyond work. Far from anachronistic and marginal figures, as they have sometimes been caricatured, the way these women apprehended domestic service and its rituals around dress, food and leisure was deeply linked to the status of female workers in the broader French and British societies.

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on the servant's uniform. The figure of the maid in her black and white uniform populated British servants' memoirs. This outfit, however, was surprisingly absent from French servants' testimonies. The chapter explores what these sartorial differences meant in servants' everyday lives and how it influenced their identities. In Britain, the servants' uniform had a multiplicity of meanings depending on the context in which it was worn, whether the servant's home, the employer's house or the street. Some servants had positive memories of their uniform before they went into service because it marked their entry into the world of adults, established their respectable status and appealed to their curiosity and aspirations for the lifestyle of the upper class. For the majority, these fond memories disappeared once they entered the workplace, where a new set of meanings, focused on social hierarchy and control, became dominant. British servants disliked the way that the uniform stressed their inferior status and differentiated them from other women,

both inside and outside of the home. In particular, as modern professional women in uniform, such as nurses, appeared on the public scene and more working-class women gained access to white-collar occupations, a shadow was cast on the servants' uniform. In a society in which women had better employment opportunities and more independence, servants saw their uniform as a stigma branding them as old fashioned and excluding them from modernity and new forms of femininity. In contrast, in France, most servants did not wear a uniform. They simply wore an apron over their dress, which distinguished them from their mistress but did not cast them apart from other workers. For the servants who left the countryside to find work in towns and cities, nonetheless, clothing played an important role in their sense of self. Instead of marking their occupational or class identity, these women's clothes often helped to define their status as rural migrants. Comparing these accounts across France and Britain not only reveals these women's personal feelings of shame or pride, but also uncovers something about the servants' place in their respective societies. In Britain, the uniform contributed to establish a distinctive occupational identity for domestic servants in a structured female labour market. In France, servants did not draw distinctions between themselves and other non-uniformed workers. They also enjoyed more flexible relationships with their employers within small family production units. The chapter argues that the uniform underlay the different ways in which domestic servants understood their occupation in France and in Britain.

The second chapter explores how food, whether it was consumed or cooked by servants, acted as a marker of their identities. Food was used by employers to mark out social distinctions and discipline the staff while servants retaliated by using food as an alternative source of power. Mealtime rituals, nonetheless, differed between various households and more specifically between French and British lower-middle-class households. In the former,

servants often ate with their employers, while in the latter servants ate separately. Studying servants' experiences at mealtimes reveals how different understandings of the family and privacy shaped the types of relationship employers and servants had in each country. Servants did not solely engage with food to compare it with the employers, they also compared it to food that they used to eat at home to make sense of their new situation. French and British servants constructed this comparison on different premises. The rural-urban divide dominated servants' understanding of their situation in France while British servants made sense of new food in service mainly through the prism of social classes. Cooking these new foods in the first place also shaped servants' identities and played an important role in servants' narratives of social mobility. French cooks invested their sense of self in their mastering of culinary skills to a larger degree than British cooks. Cooking in Britain was commonly seen as a messy and demanding task, which led British kitchen servants to feel like social inferiors, even within the servant community. Given that the food sector outside of domestic service was dominated by French male chefs, the lack of opportunities available to female cooks also contributed to the unattractive status of the British cook. In contrast, in France, learning how to cook a *cuisine bourgeoise* in contrast to the simple soups eaten in the countryside was seen as a symbol of one's integration into the urban world. French servants also had more opportunities to use their culinary skills beyond domestic service in a society with a large proportion of small businesses. Some servants married into the shop-keeping class and opened a shop or a restaurant where they cooked dishes that they had been exposed to and learned to replicate in service. The second chapter confirms the picture painted of domestic service in the previous chapter as a more casual and flexible type of employment in France compared to Britain.

The third chapter focuses on servants' leisure to explore how servants' identities were increasingly detached from their work in France and Britain. It reveals that despite low wages and strict timetables, servants had access to the same type of leisure activities as other young working women. Modern leisure not only allowed servants to escape from the strict rules of clubs, it also provided them with a language and a space to define themselves as other than servants. Dance halls, girls' magazines and other new forms of leisure enabled them to endorse broader and more flexible identities based on age. They created communities that helped servants break out of their loneliness by giving them the opportunity to court young men more freely as well as to connect with other young working women of their age. French servants who worked on farms were at the frontline of this cultural change as dancing was transformed from a celebration of the community on the village square in which everyone knew their place – particularly through line dancing – into an individualist and sensual practice performed exclusively by the youth in private spaces. In parallel, the idea of self-betterment conveyed by Americanised mass-leisure helped servants to envision themselves in more positive and aspirational ways. Music-hall songs and films spread on a mass-scale the concept of glamour, an enticing idea according to which success – which mostly meant marriage at the time for women – was more based on looks and personality than social class. Servants like other young women focused on and invested in their looks to secure a boyfriend on their day off. In return, they saw service only as a temporary and marginal moment of their lives before marriage. With the development of mass-leisure in the twentieth century, occupational status was not a central fixture of servants' identities outside the home and shaped in exchange what it meant to be a servant within the home. The chapter shows that while French and British servants constructed their identities in different ways, both increasingly rejected the paternalist authority of their employers.

This thesis aims to contribute to the historiography of domestic service by revealing the complex ways servants negotiated their identities in their everyday life in France and Britain. Using a large sample of French and British memoirs, it compares how these processes of identification operated at the level of dress, food and leisure; and explores how they were connected to various types of class, gendered, regional and generational discourses. Ultimately, this thesis encourages us to see domestic service not as a timeless female task or a fossilized episode of class conflict, but instead, as an occupation shifting and redefining itself in twentieth-century France and Britain.

Chapter One: The Servant's Uniform: A Badge of Servitude?

In 1915, at age fourteen, Irene Phillips started working as a maid in Cranfield, England. As she sat down years later to write her memoirs about her childhood in an English village at the turn of the century and her work as a housemaid in the imposing English country houses of the interwar period, the dress she had donned on her first day of work vividly came back to her memory. She opened her memoir with the following: 'A servant girls' life was very hard and you were expected to wear stripped cotton dresses and aprons and caps for morning and afternoon black dress, white lace apron and lacy cap.'[1] In an interview about her time in service, Paulette Belaire, a French maid in the 1920s, was asked whether she wore a uniform and struggled to answer: 'I don't know, I dressed like I wanted. Did I wear an apron? Of course, I did, like any fourteen years old girl.'[2] These passing remarks on dress set alongside a broader discussion of these women's occupational trajectories and work conditions are easy to miss. However, they reveal that, far from a simple dressing of the main text, the contrasting discourses that the two women created around their dress can help us better understand what it meant to be a domestic servant, to wear a carefully selected white lacy cap and apron every day or, on the contrary, to done a work apron without giving it a second thought. That Irene Phillips returned to her dress years after the events highlights the strong emotions that her uniform evoked. Paulette Belaire's experience in France was entirely different. She seemed bemused by the question regarding the existence of a

[1] I. Phillips, Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography, Brunel University Library, 2:612, p. 22; This chapter forms the basis of the following article: F. Louvier, 'Beyond the Black and White: Female Domestic Servants, Dress and Identity in France and Britain, 1900-1939', *Cultural and Social History* 16/5 (2019), pp. 581-602.
[2] Interview with P. Belair conducted by the author, 01 September 2016; in the author's possession.

servant's uniform. While these two women had the same occupation, there was a stark contrast between Irene Phillips who, by putting on her black and white uniform, took on the distinctive identity of the domestic servant in Britain and Paulette Belaire, who painted herself as a more elusive figure dressed like any fourteen-year-old French girl.

This chapter explores how dress served a crucial but contrasting role in the way French and British servants defined their identities. Clothes provide protection from the elements, but they also fundamentally define who we are and how we are perceived by others.[3] They can indicate the wearer's occupational and regional identity, class, gender, age and religion. They can empower and confer respectability, but they can also be used to punish, shame, ridicule and exclude. The bulk of the historiography has focused on the clothing of the elite or items with more public symbolism such as ceremonial dresses, court clothing and military uniforms.[4] Historians of clothing have adopted this narrow focus because of the role of the upper classes as trend setters with a more vibrant, extravagant, and varied fashion and because upper-class clothing has been more carefully preserved.

Notable exceptions to this trend include Daniel Roche's seminal work on the wardrobes of the rich and the poor in Ancien Régime France, as well as Vivienne Richmond and John Styles' ground-breaking studies of the clothing of the poor in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which show the important symbolism of dress in all categories of society.[5] Richmond and Styles, in particular, dedicate part of their research to female

[3] J. Craik *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford, 2005), p. 4.
[4] This is a point also made by V. Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 4.
[5] D. Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1994); J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2007); Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*. Although Karen Slayer's work is not solely dedicated to clothing, she also makes an important contribution on the pastoral representations of nineteenth-century rural women: K. Sayer, *Women of the Fields: Representations of Rural Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995).

servant's clothes and present the uniform as a key site of conflict between servants and mistresses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[6] Phillis Emily Cunnington's study of the costume of household servants and Diana de Marly's work on occupational dress are also helpful references on the dress of British male and female servants from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century.[7] However, these studies exclude any analysis of what the clothes meant to those who wore them, relying instead on prescriptive literature written by the middle class.

To create a more revealing picture of servants' identities, and to move beyond the representations of servants provided by employers, this chapter turns to servants' own accounts. These sources provide the opportunity to analyse the importance of dress in the self-fashioning of servants, on which conventional sources have very little to say. Some historians like Clare Rose have criticised the use of autobiographies as a source for the study of dress because of their reconstructed nature.[8] However, it is the subjective and mediated nature of autobiographies that is key to study the dress of servants. The importance of servants' memories of their clothing recorded in the autobiographies, or their relative absence, are meaningful. They help us understand the role played by the uniform in the construction of servants' identities. Servants' autobiographies are key sources to study their work dress, because, as Jennifer Craik points out 'anecdotes about uniforms involve formative moments of self-hood.'[9] The evidence from the autobiographies and oral history

[6] J. Styles, 'Involuntary Consumers? Servants and Their Clothes in Eighteenth-Century England', *Textile History*, 33/1 (2002), pp. 9-21; Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, pp. 247-251.
[7] P. Cunnington, *Costume of Household Servants From the Middle Ages to 1900* (London, 1974); P. Cunnington and C. Lucas, *Occupational Costume* (Poole, 1982); D. de Marly, *Working Dress: A History of Occupational Costume* (London, 1986).
[8] C. Rose, *Making, Selling and Wearing boys' clothes in late-Victorian England* (Farnham, 2010), p. 227.
[9] Craik, *Uniforms Exposed*, p. 5.

interviews is nevertheless corroborated with other types of sources such as newspaper articles and official reports to place it in historical context.

This chapter contributes to our understanding of the nature of domestic service in France and Britain by showing that far from a trivial detail, French and British servants' dress played a crucial role in defining their identities and stood as a visual reminder of the status of their occupation in their respective society. The first section provides a description of the uniform commonly worn by British servants and argues that its use was justified by the hierarchical and conspicuous nature of domestic service in the British economy. In contrast with the British servants' uniform, it is shown that most French servants wore ordinary clothes because of their place within the French family-economy. The second section explores the multitude of different meanings that servants attributed to their dress. It argues that the presence or absence of a uniform deeply shaped the type of identities that French and British servants adopted. While domestic service might stand a 'reference point for the establishment of class difference' in Britain, the study of servants' dress reveals that this narrative had little relevance in France where rural identities predominated. Finally, the fourth section compares the servant's uniform to other female uniforms in both countries and reflects on how British servants struggled with the symbolism of their uniform on a labour market where female workers enjoyed an increasing amount of independence.

I. Dressed for the Job: The Servant's Uniform

A. Cap and Apron: British Servants' Dress

The way that French and British servants dressed was directly connected to the different nature of the occupation in their respective economies. Each of the 107 British female servants in my sample described themselves wearing a uniform. It was a common experience regardless of the social standing of the households which employed them. In wealthy households that employed more than one servant, the uniform varied according to the servant's position within the staff hierarchy. A parlour maid wore a morning uniform to do the cleaning and an afternoon uniform to serve at the table and welcome guests. Eileen Balderson started her career as a between-maid – i.e. a junior housemaid at the bottom of the staff hierarchy – in a country house in 1931 and later moved up to the position of housemaid. She recalled that her employer asked her to wear 'a striped print dress, usually blue and white, but [sometimes] pink or mauve and white' with 'a large white apron and a cap' and 'black shoes and stockings'. In the afternoon, she changed into 'a black dress with the same apron and cap as in the morning'.[10] In contrast, cooks, kitchen maids and scullery maids did not change outfits for the afternoon as they stayed in the kitchen all day and were not on display. Nannies, housekeepers and lady's maids also sported different styles of dress to underline their higher position in the servants' hierarchy. Most servants worked as maids-of-all-work in middle-class households and wore a similar uniform to the housemaid. Daisy England, the only servant in a middle-class household in 1920, also had to wear a uniform which consisted of a blue dress with a white apron for the morning and a dark dress with a 'fancy apron' for the afternoon.[11] Both uniforms were accompanied by a cap. Elsie Oman

[10] E. Balderson, *Backstairs Life in a Country House* (Oxford, 1982), p. 11.
[11] D. England, *Daisy Daisy* (London, 1981), p. 140.

was a maid in a 1920s middle-class household that had gone bankrupt and in which the daughter of the house was helping with domestic tasks. Despite working in a more modest household, she was still required to wear a print dress for the morning and a black dress with 'white collars and cuffs' for the afternoon.[12]

Urbanisation and industrialisation contributed to a public anxiety concerned with the difficulty of distinguishing people according to their rank in the anonymous crowd of the city. [13] In this context, the uniform was used to create a distinction between the mistress and her maid, to underline who was inferior and who had power in the household. The uniform transformed the stranger into a recognisable figure defined solely by her work and erased other aspects of her appearance which might connect her to the outside world. The famous black and white uniform that servants wore in the afternoon was also symbiotically linked to the 'domestic' nature of the occupation. As domestic servants had stopped being involved in productive activities, their role was increasingly one of social display. While servants spent backbreaking hours cleaning, washing and dusting the various rooms of their employer's house, they also helped their mistress entertains her visitors. For the idle if not slightly bored middle-class wife waiting for her husband to return from work in the evening, calling on friends and acquaintances in the afternoon was a way to pass time as well as an important social practice to maintain her place in the social circle.[14] As a result, servants wore an *afternoon* uniform so they would be suitably dressed to impress potential callers when they greeted them at the door. The material of the afternoon uniform was delicate if not extravagant to represent the status of the employers. The white apron, collars and cuffs

[12] E. Oman, *Salford Stepping Stones* (Swinton, 1983), p. 39.
[13] Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 42.
[14] S. D'Cruze, 'Women and the Family' in Purvis (ed), *Women's History*, p. 47.

also highlighted the neatness and cleanliness of the servant.[15] Being able to employ a maid solely dedicated to menial domestic tasks that would not stain her pristine white uniform was a mark of respectability.

B. An Old Smock 'Would Do': French Servants' Dress

While representations of domestic servants in literature, paintings, films and domestic manuals might lead us to think that French servants wore a similar uniform, servants' accounts tell a different story.[16] The popular figure of the French maid in a becoming little black dress and a dainty white apron was a carefully constructed cultural figure that was used to export the fashion and sophistication of the French bourgeoisie to both national and foreign audiences. This classy and often erotic figure in uniform, however, was far from representative of French domestic service. In reality, few French servants wore specific clothes for work. In a study covering the years between 1852 and 1879, the French historians Pierre Guiral and Guy Thuillier claimed that most female servants simply wore a white apron with, in some cases, a cap.[17] Marcel Cusenier in his thesis on domestic service published in 1912 noted that while the chamber maid in rich households was elegantly dressed in black with a white bib apron, most maids just had to be dressed 'decently'.[18] The

[15] P. Hantzaroula, 'The Dynamic of the Mistress-Servant Relationship', in A. Fauve-Chamoux (ed.), *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity* (Oxford, 2004), p. 387.
[16] For a reflection in the representations of domestic servants in literature see A. Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes: La Domesticité Féminine à Paris en 1900* (Paris, 2003); for a study of the representation of servants in films see: D. Memmi, "Une situation sans Issues? Le Difficile Face à Face entre Maîtres et Domestiques dans le Cinéma Anglais et Français," *Cahiers du Genre* 35/2 (2003), pp. 209-235. For a few examples of primary sources see: O. Mirbeau, *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre* (Paris, 1900); H. Caro-Delvaille*, La Belle Fille*, 1902, oil on canvas (Petit Musée Beaudoin, Paris); *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre,* dir. Luis Buñuel, (Film, 1964)*;* Mme Pariset, *Nouveau Manuel Complet de la Maîtresse de Maison, ou Lettres sur l'Economie Domestique* (Paris, 1852).
[17] P. Guiral and G. Thuillier*, La Vie Quotidienne des Domestiques en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1978), p. 48.
[18] M. Cusenier, *Les domestiques en France* (Paris, 1912), p. 50 and p. 53.

most compelling evidence about servants' dress, however, comes from their autobiographies.

Servants who worked for the provincial bourgeoisie, shopkeepers, artisans, or on farms, did not wear a uniform. For example, Juliette, who worked for a small middle-class household in Lyon, was told by her mother that her old dress, a patched skirt and a smock 'would do' for her work dress. When she arrived at her employers' house, they only requested that she wore an apron over it. [19] In the 1920s, Paulette, who worked for a dentist in Périgueux, a small town in southern France, only had to put on a clean apron when she served at the table.[20] While white aprons were the most common, some women also recalled wearing grey and black aprons.[21] The cap, one of the key elements of the distinctive dress of the domestic servant in Britain, was mentioned only once in the sample of autobiographies. Even then, the servant who mentioned it strongly suggested that it had disappeared from use in most households by the 1920s, for she denounced her employer as being 'stuck in the past'. [22]

The rules regarding servants wearing caps, black dresses and dainty white aprons were only followed by the urban elites. For example, when Marie worked in Paris for an upper-class courtesan after a few jobs in some provincial households, she was asked to wear a short afternoon apron decorated with embroidery. This outfit made her feel like 'an operetta lady's maid with this small apron that doesn't even reach my knees. I don't feel comfortable.'[23] Marie's reaction suggests that she saw aprons as a regular accessory that was useful to protect a servant's dress and make her look clean, which in turn highlights that decorative

[19] M. Chaix, *Juliette, Chemin des Cerisiers* (Paris, 1986), p. 74.
[20] Interview with Paulette Belair.
[21] Marie, *Mes Patrons et mon Cœur: Mémoires d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1935), p. 97; Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 54.
[22] Y. Cretté-Breton, *Mémoires d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1966), p. 89.
[23] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 182.

aprons were not regularly used in smaller provincial households. By referring to the distant world of the stage to make sense of her new uniforms, Marie's account shows her unfamiliarity with the performative and deferential aspect of domestic service in upper-class households.

Pictures of servants at the time confirm that they did not tend to wear a specific uniform in the first half of the twentieth century (pictures 1-3). These portraits were commissioned by the employers and printed into postcards, so they could be sent to friends, family and even business partners in order to show off their respectable middle-class status. They do not tend to depict the outfits worn by the servants of the lower-middle class. Despite this level of formality, the servants depicted below did not all wear black dresses, nor did they all wear white cuffs and collars. Most importantly, none of them wore a cap, even in pictures of large staffs which suggested that these women worked for wealthy households. The most common feature of their dress was a white apron. Overall, their outfit looked less formal than that of British servants at the time.

Picture 1: The staff of Chateau de l'Isle Fort, Lignan-de-Bordeaux in the 1910s



Source: Personnel de maison amis de M. Farge cuisinier femme de chambre, Château de l' Isle, http://www.delcampe.net/page/item/id,376684550,var,Carte-photo-personnel-de-maison-amis-de-M-Farge-Chateau-de-l-Isle-fort-cuisinier-femme-de-chambre,language,E.html (3rd August 2018).

Picture 2: Staff of a bourgeois house in a village near Orleans, 1912



Source: Employés d'une maison bourgeoise Valet Bonne Servante Fillette avec son ballet, Romorantin, 1912 https://www.delcampe.net/fr/collections/cartes-postales/france/romorantin/41-romorantin-environs-carte-photo-employes-dune-maison-bourgeoise-valet-bonne-servante-fillette-avec-son-ballet-130403116.html (3rd August 2018).

Picture 3: A maid in 1920s, Saint-Germain-en-Laye



Source: Femmes- mode - Belle carte photo portrait femme domestique avec tablier - Photo H. Bayard, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, https://www.delcampe.net/fr/collections/cartes-postales/france/st-germain-en-laye/saint-germain-en-laye-femmes-mode-belle-carte-photo-portrait-femme-domestique-avec-tablier-photo-h-bayard-516052041.html (3rd August 2018).

In the countryside, where half of the French population lived until the Second World War, the maid was often part of an informal network which made the need for a uniform irrelevant as she was already known to be a maid within the social structure of the village. Moreover, in the countless small family businesses spread around the four corners of France, women did all sorts of domestic and productive tasks alongside their employers for which they often simply wore an apron over their everyday dress. Yvonne Cretté-Breton, for example, worked as a maid in a bakery.[24] She cleaned the house and helped with various tasks in the shop: "On Sunday, I also had to cook twenty roasts; on Monday, I had to put some cinders into bags with a shovel; On Tuesday, I had to clean the copper and marbles with the help of the bread delivery girl."[25] In consequence, for the employers, the conspicuous uniform did not matter as much as the strength of the servant. The importance of hard work over appearances can also be seen in the behaviour exhibited by servants and employers at 'employment' fairs, which took place in the countryside until the 1950s.[26] Men who wanted to be employed in the field would wear a corn maize on their vest while cart drivers would wear their whip around their neck, thereby representing their employment.[27] Maids were reported to simply wear a flower on their dress or even come to the fair with no specific sign. While the men could negotiate their employment with the farmers based on their skills, maids relied on their strength and health. The flower symbolised the youth of the woman who was still full of strength and vitality. It was not uncommon for farmers interested in employing a maid to also ask to see her hands to judge her strength, inspect her teeth to check her health or even ask her to walk in order to reveal any potential disability or injury.[28] Servants were employed

[24] Cretté-Breton, *Mémoires d'une Bonne*, p. 17 and p. 47.
[25] Ibid, p. 51.
[26] See a hiring fair in the 1950s: 'La loué à Tiffauges', (1956), AF, 0001, https://fresques.ina.fr/olonne/fiche-media/Olonne00001/la-louee-a-tiffauges-muet.html (10 July 2017).
[27] G. Bertheau, *Vieux Métiers et Pratiques Oubliées à la Campagne* (Lausanne), p. 119.
[28] P. Piegay, *Domestiques Agricoles et Servantes de Ferme dans les Sociétés Paysannes (de 1900 aux années 1960)* (Paris, 2007), p. 34.

more for the hard work that they could do, whether it was in the kitchen, the henhouse or at the shop's counter, than for representing the social standards of the household by wearing a uniform. This finding complements Diana Crane's research on the fashion expenditures of the wives of farmers and skilled workers in late nineteenth-century France.[29] Using Frédéric Le Play's collection of household budgets, she discovered that, in contrast with the process of emulation among the lower-middle class in Britain, the wives of farmers, some with a significant income, and those of artisans and craftsmen living in the French provinces did not buy many fashion items to copy the urban middle class. In a society where women continued to play a productive role within the home, there was little sartorial emulation and thereby, little need for a servants' uniform.

II. Domestic Servants and Their Dress: A Feather in Their Cap?

A. British Servants and Their First Uniform: A Source of Pride and Respectability

Whether or not servants had to wear a uniform led French and British women to have drastically different experiences of domestic service and build different types of identities around their occupation. Because working-class women paid a particular attention to their clothes as a publicly visible form through which they could demonstrate their respectability, the extent of servants' ability to control what they wore had a profound impact on the way they made sense of their position in society.[30]

[29] D. Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago), pp. 38-48.
[30] On working-class women's fashion and respectability see: G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 199; C. K. Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick, 1987), p. 89.

Except for a few upper-class households where housemaids had their uniforms provided by the employers, most British servants had to provide their own uniforms before entering their new job. Some women were from families that were wealthy enough to buy the uniform.[31] Others saved, working part-time while helping at home until they had enough to pay for one.[32] In most cases, however, the dress was either entirely made from scratch or cut down from a second-hand garment. Even during the interwar period, when mass-produced clothing became more available, most women made rather than bought their uniforms.

While the role of mothers in helping daughters to find employment has already been highlighted in the historiography, servants' accounts of their uniform show us another way through which mothers helped their daughters to get their first job.[33] Mothers often helped their daughters by sewing the uniform together. Mollie Moran's afternoon uniform was made by her mother who bought the fabric from the local draper's shop.[34] Similarly, Daisy Noakes's mother 'made me two blue dresses for morning wear, half-lined, one black dress for afternoon wear, and four large bibbed white aprons'.[35] As working-class households owned few clothing items, sending a girl to service meant that some sacrifices had to be made by other family members. In consequence, the fabric of the dress or the dress itself was often obtained from other garments owned by the girl's sisters. This was the case for Mrs Holywell who received her print dresses, caps and aprons from her two older sisters cut down to fit her and Mollie Moran who used her sister's old nursing uniform for her morning

[31] M. Dickens, *One Pair of Hands* (London, 1972), p. 28; G. Griffiths and S. Mullins, *Cap and Apron: An Oral History of Domestic Service in the Shires, 1880-1950* (Leicester, 1986), p. 29.
[32] A. Maloney, *Life Below Stairs: True Lives of Edwardian Servants* (London, 2015), pp. 61-63.
[33] S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 91-93; E. Roberts, *Woman's Place, History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984), p. 58; E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral history, 1940, 1970* (Oxford, 1995), p. 53.
[34] M. Moran, *Aprons and Silver Spoons: The Heart-Warming Memoirs of a 1930s Kitchen Maid* (London, 2013), p. 51.
[35] D. Noakes, *The town Beehive: A Young Girl's Lot, Brighton 1910-1934* (Brighton, 1980), p. 49.

uniform.[36] Even when clothing was not provided by the family *per se*, mothers played a key role in making sure that their daughters had a uniform ready to enter their new job. They used an extended network of family and neighbour relations to obtain fabrics or garments. For example, Dorothy got her pink dress and white aprons from her mother's sister who was a dressmaker; Winifred Foley had her dress provided by a friendly old neighbour; and Louise Santer used a friend of her mother's 'old alpaca dress'.[37]

Selina Todd argues that the making of new clothes was often a ritual of passage for young working-class men and women who left to work at the factory, and a similar process can be observed here for domestic service.[38] In spite of wearing cast-off clothes and ill-fitting garments made out of a sister's old dress, many servants remembered their excitement and apprehension as they first tried the dresses and aprons. As they transitioned from schoolgirls to wage earners, they left behind their childhood clothing, switching to a longer style of dress.[39] The expenditure and work on the creation of the uniform symbolised the first step into the world of work and adulthood. 'Remembering when her sister went into service, Winifred Relph commented that 'it was years since we'd had so many new clothes in the house and I think we felt like Evie was going for a holiday!'[40] When it was her turn in 1926, she remembered how the making of the uniform was a symbolic moment, one that made her feel 'very grown up and excited'.

[36] F. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: Domestic Service in England 1850-1939* (London, 1973), p. 104.
[37] W. Foley, *A Child in the Forest* (Cheltenham, 1991), p. 147; R. Scadden, *No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service* (Llandysul, 2013), p. 64; Moran, *Aprons and silver*, p. 312; Hasting, *Hasting Voices: Local People Talking about Their Lives in Hastings and St Leonards before the Second World War* (Hastings, 2002), p. 15
[38] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 199.
[39] Ibid.
[40] W. Relph, *Through Rough Ways*, Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography, Brunel University Library, 2:657, p. 44.

Young women entering service were proud of their uniform not only because it marked their entry into the world of adults, but also because wearing the right type of clothing demonstrated the respectable status of their family.[41] When Charlotte Meadowcroft first tried on her uniform in the 1910s she was 'really proud of it' because she 'felt smart and clean' and May thought she was 'going to be very posh' in her new outfit.[42] Mollie Prendergast also explained that her mother made two print dresses for her, but that once she arrived at her employers' house, they did not like the print dresses because they did not have enough 'tucks in the back.'[43] She concluded the anecdote by explaining that the dressmaker refused to add some material 'because she said they were made nicely'. The remark highlights Mollie Prendergast's regard for her mother and how offended she was at the idea that her dress might not keep up with appearances and display her status accordingly. Similarly, Mollie Moran was 'proud of [her] new uniform' and set off to meet her employers in a 'new cream cotton dress that Mother had made as she didn't want me shaming myself by turning up for service looking shabby.'[44] Projecting a respectable image through clothing was especially important because it opened employment opportunities. In the early 1900s, Dorothy Green, for example, saved money to buy a quality uniform 'because it meant I could get a position in a good house.'[45]

Servants were also proud of their uniform because they could customise them to a certain extent. While the colour of the dress and the number of aprons and caps worn were specified by employers, they could often decide which style of apron and cap they would wear. They

[41] B. Burman, 'Made at home by clever fingers: home dressmaking in Edwardian England', in B. Burman (ed), *The Culture of Sewing: Gender, Consumption and Home Dressmaking* (Oxford, 1999), p. 41.
[42] C. Meadowcroft, *Bygones*, Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography, Brunel University Library, 2:523, p. 12; Scadden, *No Job*, p. 57.
[43] M. Higgs, *Servants' Stories: Life Below Stairs in their Own Words 1800-1950 (*Barnsley, 2015), p. 124.
[44] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 51.
[45] Maloney, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 63.

could either customise the caps and aprons themselves – by adding frills, lace and embroidery – buy commercial patterns to reproduce trendy designs or buy them ready-made from the high street. The personalisation of aprons is evident in pictures 4 to 6 which are portraits of servants from 1900s to 1910s. These portraits were often commissioned by the employers or the institutions employing the servants. The formality of the photographs transpires from the facial expressions and body postures adopted by the servants as well as the cut of the photograph in the case of the oval vignette portrait. Within this context, the outfits and aprons worn by the servants tend to be respectable afternoon uniforms rather than the rougher clothes which were usually worn to do the dirty work in the morning. Contrary to what one might expect about a 'uniform', none of the aprons in the pictures below are identical to one another, including even those of servants who worked in the same household. In the early twentieth century, the neck of the apron could be square, round or v-cut, while some women displayed ruffles on their sleeves. Later in the 1910s, the aprons of a group of servants who worked at Erddig Hall showed the same variety despite the rise of ready-made clothing. The neck of the aprons varied and they were decorated with different style of lace insertions and embroidery.

Picture 4: Two British maids in a garden, c. 1900s



Source: 'Beautiful portraits of Edwardian maids from the 1900s' https://www.vintag.es/2018/07/1900s-edwardian-maids.html (25 August 2018).

Picture 5: Four British maids in 1907



Source: 'Four Edwardian maids July 1907' http://www.flickriver.com/photos/47496164@N03/5244733379/

(25 August 2018).

Picture 6: Staff of Erddig Hall, Wales, c. 1910s



Source: S. Evans, *Life Below Stairs in the Victorian and Edwardian Country House* (London, 2015), p. 6.

The same variety of styles can be found in the collection of seventy maid's aprons and fifty-six caps from between 1900 and 1940 held by the National Trust.[46] While this collection tends to over-represent the clothes worn by the servant of the upper class – for example, not all servants would have worn expensive muslin aprons in the afternoon – it nevertheless showcases the different fashion styles of the time. For the interwar period, afternoon aprons in the collection tended to be made of muslin, but different designs can be found. See for example, a white muslin apron in a square shape with a small bib, two tucks on the bib and

[46] National Trust Collection, online catalogue, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/results?SearchTerms=maid%27s+apron&FromYear=1900&ToYear=1940 (10 August 2018).

one on the bottom with a small broderie lace frill (picture 7); a stiffened beige muslin apron with a slightly bigger square bib, no frill and short ties (picture 8), an apron of window pane corded muslin in a square shape with a small bib and long waist ties (picture 9); and a machine sprigged muslin bibbed apron in a round shape with no frill (picture 10). Despite the average style of the apron being similar, they all displayed slight variations regarding the pattern on the muslin, the length of the ties and the addition of frills. Caps were also available in a range of styles.[47] During the interwar period, caps could either be a band of fabric tied with a ribbon (pictures 11, 12, 13 and 14) or a nurse's style of cap called 'Sister Dora' that looked more like a bonnet (picture 15 and 16). The costume archives of the National Trust show that the band-type of caps could have different embroidery patterns on them. See for example, a cap in a deep beige organdie colour, a machine filet lace at the top and a line of hemstitch with a brown velvet tie and ribbon trim (picture 11), a machine sprigged white muslin decorated with frills (picture 10), a beige swiss cotton cap with a scalloped trim, machine faggoted decorative stitching and a brown velvet ribbon (picture 12) and a beige organdie cap with decorative faggoting and stitching in a x shape and a brown velvet ribbon (picture 13). Similarly, the nurse's style of caps had different decorations on their edges. For example, the white Swiss cotton cap in picture 14 had a windowpane pattern and machine lace trim while the cap in picture 15 was made of white muslin and had a simple hemstitch had the front.

The presence of small alterations on morning uniforms is the most striking because these were worn by maids to do some hard work in the morning while a more refined uniform was often worn in the afternoon to serve tea and attend other conspicuous events. Because they

[47] Ibid, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/results?SearchTerms=maid%27s+cap&FromYear=1900&ToYear=1940 (10 August 2018).

were used for hard and dirty work, fewer morning aprons have survived. Nonetheless, the National Trust has conserved two specimens of morning aprons. This collection is complemented by that of the Manchester Galleries of Costume which hold eight maid's aprons including one morning apron. These aprons were decorated with lace insertion, white pique, hemstitched Swiss embroidery or machine trimmed broderie anglaise (see morning apron with broderie anglaise in picture 17).[48] One apron in particular can be identified as homemade as the skirt and bib were made from scraps of material.[49] This white cotton apron was decorated with machine broderie anglaise and machine lace edging, suggesting that a maid or her mother took special care of decorating the apron with her limited resources and recycled pieces of cloth. Such alterations on morning uniforms were not necessary to please the employers. On the contrary, they suggest a sense of ownership from the maid regarding her uniform as it was bought or sewed together before entering service. By personalising the morning uniform and making it look more feminine, maids could feel proud of it. These feelings were expressed by Mrs Pickersgill who was very proud of having sewed her own apron with a bit of spotted muslin and lace and Doris Freegarde who showed off her sewing skills by making 'a pretty needlework short apron' instead of the 'bib type' for the afternoon.[50] Similarly, Megan insisted on the quality of her mother's craft when she described the creation of her uniform. She explained that her mother cut 'a beautiful pair of linen sheets' to make a dress and embroidered a handkerchief and added lace to create a fancy cap.[51]

[48] Ibid, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/results?SearchTerms=morning+apron&FromYear=1900&ToYear=1940 (10 August 2018); Servant's dress, 1900-1910, Manchester City Galleries, 1971.73, http://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/search/collection/?id=1971.73 (10 August 2018).
[49] Maid's apron, 1920-1940, Manchester City Galleries, 1983.751 http://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/search/collection/?id=1983.751 (10 August 2018).
[50] Dawes, *Not in Front*, p. 107; Mullins and Griffiths, *Cap and Apron*, p. 43.
[51] Scadden, *No Job*, p. 64.

Picture 7: Maid's apron, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's apron, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust (NT), Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1360971, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1360971 (10 August 2018).

Picture 8: Maid's apron, 1938, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's apron, 1938, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1362473, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1362473 (10 August 2018).

Picture 9: Maid's afternoon apron, 1900-1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's afternoon apron, 1900-1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1363269, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1363269 (10 August 2018).

Picture 10: Maid's apron, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's apron, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1364486.1, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1364486.1 (10 August 2018).

Picture 11: Maid's cap, 1920-1940, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's cap, 1920-1940, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1361850, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1361850 (10 August 2018).

Picture 12: Maid's cap, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's cap, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1364486.5, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1364486.5 (10 August 2018).

Picture 13: Maid's cap, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's cap, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1365339.2, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1365339.2 (10 August 2018).

Picture 14: Maid's cap, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's cap, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1365342.2, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1365342.2 (10 August 2018).

Picture 15: Maid's cap, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's cap, 1930, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, 165337, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1365337 (10 August 2018).

Picture 16: Maid's cap, 1920, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Maid's cap, 1920, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1361145, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1361145 (10 August 2018).

Picture 17: Parlour maid's apron, 1920, Killerton Fashion Collection, National Trust



Source: Parlour maid's apron, 1920, Killerton Fashion Collection, NT, Sophia Farley and Renée Harvey, 1366293, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1366293 (10 August 2018).

B. A 'Badge of Servitude': The Uniform in Service

Once they started working, some British servants continued to be proud of their uniform, especially in the few exceptional cases where it was provided by rich employers rather than made or bought by the servant herself. Mrs Halliday loved the 'beautiful bottle green dresses' that her employers provided to their servants in the mid 1930s while Mrs Woodburn, a housemaid in Lancaster in the 1900s, was thrilled with the new uniforms the maids were given for a family wedding: 'We were all dressed in grey, lovely silver grey, shiney like alpaca, in them days, nice plain pinnies, no lace, but happen a lot of tucks round the bottom.'[52] She thought that these uniforms made for a special occasion were extremely elegant. In these conditions, the uniform became the mark that one served a prestigious household and was therefore well-placed in the hierarchy of domestic servants. Other servants were proud of their simpler home-made uniforms for different reasons. Mollie Moran, a kitchen maid in an upper-class London household in the 1930s, defended hers against criticisms:

> I've heard of some scullery maids who were ashamed to wear their uniforms outside, for fear of being seen as a skivvy. Not me! I was proud of it and I wore my apron like a badge of honour. I had a job and was sending money home to my mother. That meant I was respectable.[53]

The expression 'badge of honour' was an intentional reversal of the popular expression 'badge of servitude', which was used at the time to refer to the servant's uniform. Mollie Moran rejected the narrative that presented the uniform as a symbol of servitude and continue to see it as a proof of her respectability. The uniform marked Mollie Moran's belonging to the class of respectable workers, who, even if they did not earn much, were

[52] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 37; E. Roberts, *Woman's Place, History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984), p. 57.
[53] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 105.

nonetheless able to provide for their family in contrast to the badly clothed, unemployed and charity-dependent poor.

However, the association between the servants' uniform and respectable workers that Mollie Moran was trying to make was culturally inconsistent. Domestic servants and their uniform had been associated since the nineteenth century with the garments worn by the poorer and 'less respectable' section of the British society. Girls entering domestic service were partly recruited from workhouses, charity schools and prisons.[54] Because they had few skills, domestic service was often the only occupation made available to them. It was also thought that domestic service could reform and educate young women by inculcating them domestic values and mould them into obedient workers. For these reasons, the uniform of the domestic servant was associated with the most infamous institutions in the British society.

The expression 'badge of servitude' that was used in relation to the servant's uniform was linked to the way that the clothing of the inmates was described in the workhouse. Through the Poor Law, the poor had been required between 1697 and 1810 to wear a uniform to signal that their needs were taken care of by the parish. [55] On top of this uniform, they had to wear a *badge* with a large roman P and the first letter of the name of the parish that they depended on. According to John Styles, 'for those who were obliged to wear them, and they were many, these were literally badges of dependency'. [56] Many sacrificed a potential source of revenue because they refused to wear it. Despite the fact that the badge was abolished by the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, those who had to enter the workhouse still wore a

[54] E. Ewing, *Women in Uniforms: Through the Centuries* (London, 1975), p. 22; Richmond, *Clothing the poor*, p. 190; L. Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and The People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 295.
[55] Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 189.
[56] Styles, *The Dress of the People*, p. 272.

uniform, which deterred people from seeking relief for fear of being shamed.[57] In the mid-nineteenth century, women and girls wore gowns made of a coarse fabric of silk or mohair and wool stiffened with gum, with a calico shift and a petticoat made with a linen or cotton weft.[58] They also wore caps, worsted stockings and woven slippers. In the twentieth century, the uniform was simplified to a shapeless and waist-less shift in a blue-and-white-striped cotton material which reached the ankles, worn with a smock over it. The coarse material and the shapeless dress that was too short in the early twentieth century and too long by the time of the First World War excluded its wearer from society and stigmatised them as poor. Lynn Hollen Lees argues that the new Poor Law 'worked effectively to enforce social distance between paupers and the rest of Victorian society'.[59] Those who had to wear the workhouse uniform were all the more aware of this process of distinction. In the nineteenth century, a blind tailor explained that 'I dread the workhouse, (…) for the workhouse coat is a slothful degrading badge. After a man has had one on his back, he's never the same.'[60] The shame associated with workhouse uniforms was carried into the twentieth century. Daisy England, a servant, described the stigma that was attached to Poor Law clothing in the 1920s when she was taken to the workhouse as a child:

> Our own clothes were removed and taken away for ever, and with the help of our young nurse, we were transformed into charity's own. From the dark recesses of the clothes store with its unbelievable reserve of ugly outmoded garments, kindly she selected for us the least formidable, and with that false brightness of a saleswoman, lured us into their forbidding chic. We were shod from the same dark cache of fashion, for me a pair of short black boots styled for maturity, and several sizes too big, my black woollen legs rising like sticks from the copious scalloped tops.'[61]

[57] Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 261.
[58] 'Workhouse uniform' http://www.workhouses.org.uk/life/uniform.shtml (16 August 2018).
[59] Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of Strangers*, p. 151.
[60] Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 274.
[61] D. England, *Daisy Daisy* (London, 1981), p. 56.

At a time when working-class girls were gaining an increasing access to cheap fashionable clothing, the outmoded garments from the workhouse stigmatised Daisy England and excluded her from the company of other young people. In particular, the boots with a scalloped top were popular in the late nineteenth century, making Daisy England a ridiculous sight as she wore them during the interwar period. Both the workhouse and domestic service uniforms were condemned as 'badges' of servitude or dependence because they reminded those who wore them of their station in life and put their inferior status in plain view.

The connection between the uniforms was not solely symbolic since the young girls from the workhouse were often sent to charity schools where they would be trained to become domestic servants.[62] They learned to obey and respect their elders and social superiors, at the same time as they were taught to clean, sew and cook.[63] The layout of the schools also taught inmates to respect authority through space, as the girls' rooms were furnished sparsely while the matrons' rooms were decorated in a middle-class fashion and only accessible if one had been called, just like a middle-class mistress's parlour.[64] For example, when Mrs L.J. Campbell, manager of the Toxteth Park reformatory was asked by the 1896 Departmental Committee whether she ever asked girls to tea, she answer 'To tea? With me or the servants?' and added that inviting the girls to the drawing room 'would rather put them out of their place' and encourage 'a spirit of equality; not a spirit of submission and reverence for those who are above them.'[65] Hannah Cullwick who left charity school for

[62] F. K. Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service in Victorian England', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54/129 (1981), p. 80.
[63] M. Cale, '"Saved From a life of Vice and Crime": Reformatory and Industrial schools for Girls, c. 1854-c.1901.'(D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993), pp. 274-276; C. Soares, 'A Permanent Environment of Brightness, Warmth, and "Homeliness" : Domesticity and Authority in a Victorian Children's Institution', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 23/1 (2018), p. 7.
[64] Soares, 'A Permanent Environment', p. 15.
[65] Parliamentary Papers (1897), xlii (8290), Minutes of evidence, Dept. c. on Ref. & Ind. Schools, pp. 296-7 and pp. 305-6.

domestic service in the second half of the nineteenth century, claimed in her diary that her charity school education trained her to become a 'good' servant. She recalled:

> I went out to service too soon – before I really understood the meaning of it – and at the charity school I was taught to curtsy to the ladies and gentlemen, and it seem'd to come natural to me to think them entirely over the lower class and as if it was our place to bow and be at their bidding, and I've never got out o'that feeling somehow – I must leave it to others to judge whether I am the better or worse for it.[66]

The charity school uniform played a role in moulding the character of young girls like Hannah Cullwick to prepare them for their expected careers in domestic service. Some schools kept the uniform from the year when they were founded so that their pupils were dressed in an odd and antiquated manner by the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, the girls from the St Pancras female orphanage and charity school wore a cap that was in fashion in the late eighteenth century (picture 18). These outfits instilled a sense of servile obedience in children by reminding them constantly of their inferior position and exclusion from the rest of society. Isaac Watts, an English Christian minister, noted that charity-school children 'are sufficiently distinguished from children of the better rank… there is no ground for charity children to be proud of their raiment when it is but a sort of *livery* [my italics].'[67] The connection was clearly made between the servants' uniform, or livery, and the charity uniform for they stood as badges of dependence and servitude.

[66] L. Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 121.
[67] Styles, *The dress of the People*, p. 272.

Picture 18: St Pancreas Female Orphanage and Charity School 'old' uniforms



Source: St Pancras Female Orphanage and Charity school, 1900s, Peter Higginbotham http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/StPancrasFemale/ (16 August 2018).

In the twentieth century, some schools updated their uniform and let the young girls dress in a simpler outfit consisting of a dark gown and a pinafore while the older girls who had started their training, dressed as domestic servants with a black dress, a white apron and collar as well as a cap (picture 19). The uniform entrenched class distinctions and symbolised the social inferiority of the inmates as it was in stark contrast with the best dress of the matrons who represented the authority of the middle-class mistress.[68] As a result, domestic service was partly associated with the poor orphans and waifs who were often depicted as stupid or incompetent and who were, in some cases, physically disabled.[69]

[68] Soares, 'A Permanent Environment', p. 14.
[69] Cale, 'Saved from a Life of Vice', p. 274; Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy', p. 83.

Picture 19: St Andrew's Home for Girls



Source: St Andrew's Home for Girls, Southsea, c. 1911, Peter Higginbotham, http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/SouthseaWS/ (17 August 2018).

Prisons uniforms were also directly connected to domestic servants' uniforms. Most women in prison were from a working-class background and were imprisoned for petty crimes like theft.[70] Similarly to charity schools, in order to convert these women to a more disciplined lifestyle and lead them to accept their station in life, inmates were trained to become domestic servants and forced to wear a servant's uniform while they served their sentence.[71] The use of domestic servants' uniforms within the prison system as an avenue for rehabilitation and a tool to teach women to respect the social hierarchy further marked the domestic servants' uniform as a shameful symbol of inferiority and servility worn by disrespectable women. The servant's uniform was associated with institutions that punished and reformed inmates so that domestic service was seen as less honourable and desirable than other occupations.

[70] J. Ash, *Dress Behind Bars: Prison Clothing as Criminality* (London, 2010), p. 42.
[71] Ibid, p. 28.

While they might not have made a direct connection between their uniform and the lives of the 'disrespectable' poor, the capacity of the servant's uniform to discipline and even shame those who wore it was key to British servants' experiences in service. In contrast to Mollie Moran's account, most servants surveyed here left behind the 'respectable' image of the uniform when they described their working lives. Instead, the uniform became a tool through which the employers enforced the power relationships within the household. The same item of clothing worn in two different places had contrasting meanings. When Jean Rennie tried her uniform for the first time, she felt 'the real feel of a black frock, a little white apron, and a white muslin cap, with black stockings and shoes. My mother had turned me out well'.[72] However, when she mentioned her time in service and her relationship with her employers, the uniform appeared in a different light: 'I would now have to submit to the badge of servitude – a cap and apron'.[73] The garment that stood as a symbol of respectability and a rite of passage in a woman's community took a new meaning when compared to the middle-class mistress and her wardrobe. Outside of one's home, the symbolic of the uniform resonated with the plight of workhouse paupers and other forms of social inferiority.

The dress of the servant made her feel inferior by marking a clear distinction between the employer and the employee. Violet Firth was a middle-class woman who experienced domestic service during the First World War. She joined the Women's Land Army and worked as a gardener for private households. Having been on both side of the mistress-servant relationship, she felt even more strikingly the burden of clothing which drew a boundary between two women, giving authority to one and forcing the other into subservience. She recalled:

[72] J. Rennie, *Every Other Sunday* (Bath, 1978), p. 22.
[73] Ibid, p. 20.

> The woman in the fashionable silk frock tells the woman in the washed-out print dress that she cannot afford to give higher wages. In the evening, the woman in the kitchen uses her scanty leisure to patch the day, and so make it hang together a little longer. Then she goes into the dining room to serve dinner and sees that the silk frock has been changed for a satin frock. Next evening, she patches the print dress again, because the material, never strong, is rotten with wear and washing. When she goes into the dining-room she sees that the satin frock is replaced by a lace frock. Is there any need for me to detail the feelings of that woman towards her employer?[74]

Everyday contact between the servant and her mistress stressed the sartorial difference between two women: the type of cloth used for their dress, the fashionable cut of the mistress's dress or, perhaps, the irregular cut of the homemade dress of the servant. The outmoded afternoon apron and the cap, often called by servants 'a badge of servitude', were further symbols of the servants' inferiority.[75] Having long fallen out of fashion by the 1880s, the cap was viewed as an anachronistic imposition on servants that singled them out and emphasised the power that employers had over them.[76] Far from a simple whim, servants' reluctance to wear caps was commented upon in newspapers, governmental reports and manifestos dedicated to the future of the occupation. As early as 1891, *Reynolds Newspaper* noted that 'the servants' cap, that badge of servitude stops many girls from becoming servants.'[77] This belief was put more strongly in the 1916 report on domestic service by the Women's Industrial Council – a organisation promoting the interests of women at work – , which found that 'the caps were generally referred to as the trademarks of modern slavery'.[78]

The power that employers had over their servants was also sometimes expressed in the form of gifts of clothes. In rich households with a large staff, it was traditional to give Christmas

[74] V. Firth, *The Psychology of the Servant Problem: A Study in Social Relationships* (London, 1925), p. 14.
[75] M. Powell, *Below Stairs* (London, 2011), p. 130.
[76] Cunnington, *Costume of Household Servants*, p. 125.
[77] 'Our daughters', *Reynolds Newspaper* (4 October 1891), p. 2.
[78] C. V. Butler and M. Frances, L. Hanbury and V. W. De Broke, *Domestic service: An Enquiry by the Women's Industrial Council* (London, 1916), p. 62.

presents to the servants while, in smaller households, the gifts might be made less consistently, when the mistress wanted to get rid of an old dress. Some servants enjoyed being able to wear their mistress' fashionable clothes. These presents could create a form of intimacy between servants and employers.[79] Mollie Moran, for example, recalled that the old dress that her mistress had given her made her feel 'so special'.[80] In contrast, many others recalled their disappointment as the gift were useful rather than for the servants' personal enjoyment.[81] While maids bought or made their first uniform, they often received new aprons or yards of cloths to make a new uniform after staying for some time with the employers' family. This type of gifts helped servants financially as it meant that they could renew their uniform without having to pay for it entirely from their pocket. However, this practice of gift-giving was one-way and therefore underlined the power that employers had over their servants.[82] Giving them items for their uniform insisted as well on their 'servant identity' instead of acknowledging the other needs and desires that these women might have. Dolly Davey, for example, commented that 'I had the feeling that they didn't think maids should have Christmas presents' after receiving a coffee-coloured dress as a new afternoon uniform for Christmas.[83] Similarly, Jean Rennie was bitter after receiving some pink cotton cloth to make a morning dress. According to her, the gift showed that her work, symbolised by the gifted cloth was 'just the one thing that mattered to her ladyship-work; the nobility and the privilege of working for her, dressed in the hideous pink, for about six pence an hour'.[84]

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[79] L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), p. 76.
[80] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 334.
[81] J. Hegstrom, 'Reminiscences of Below Stairs: English Female Domestic Servants between the Two World Wars', *Women's Studies*, 36/1 (2007), pp. 26-28.
[82] F. Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove: A Kitchen Maid's Story* (Norwich, 2007), p. 19; Mrs H. Woolland, *Untitled*, Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography, Brunel University Library, 2:853, p. 15; Interview with Annie Cable, conducted by George Ewart Evans, British Library, T1423W, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/George-Ewart-Evans-collection/021M-T1423WXXXXXX-0100V0 (5 October 2018).
[83] D. M. Davey, *A Sense of Adventure* (London, 1980), p. 16.
[84] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 85.

Servants also experienced a sense of inferiority because of how the uniform physically felt to wear. In the 1916 government report on domestic service, some women complained that the black dress they were required to wear in the afternoon was too warm in the summer.[85] In servants' autobiographies, Jean Rennie noted that when working long hours, sweating from carrying buckets of water, her black woollen stockings were uncomfortable as the wool absorbed the moisture and became itchy and heavy.[86] Monica Dickens also criticised the cap which was unfunctional as it kept falling in front of her eyes when she was trying to work.[87] And, as the extended quote from Violet Firth, above, outlined, the poor quality of servants' uniforms meant that the material quickly wore out, leaving their wearers in a shabby state. Servants, therefore, *felt* their inferior position through their impractical and uncomfortable uniforms, which were maintained only for the sake of their employers.

Finally, the uniform was not only a symbol of servants' inferior status, it was also an important financial struggle for the many women who had to pay for their uniform out of their meagre income. One servant, for example, wrote to *The Common Cause* journal in 1911 and complained that she was required to buy a uniform out of her £10 annual wage, leaving very little spare money.[88] It is relatively difficult to estimate the exact cost of the uniform as many servants bought some fabrics to make their own rather than purchased readymade clothing. Servants' testimonies, nevertheless, highlight that in many cases, these women worked for free for the first months of their employment as the money they earned barely covered their travel and clothing expenses.[89] In 1904, Kate Taylor, a general maid who was paid 15d per week, took six months to repay 'the necessary print for dresses and

[85] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry,* p. 62.
[86] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 117
[87] Dickens, *One Pair*, pp. 238-239.
[88] 'Letters to the Editor', *Common Cause* (9 November 1911), p. 543.
[89] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 52.

hessian for aprons'.[90] By the interwar period, buying the uniform was still an important financial hurdle. In 1933, Mrs Slade who earned £18 a year as an 'in-between maid' had to repay £12 for her uniform.[91] This system contributed to the power imbalance between servants and employers and restricted servants' opportunities, for they could not leave service early without empty pockets.

C. Depersonalising the British Servant

British servants also felt that the uniform reduced them to a fixed identity and social class, thereby suppressing their individuality and self-esteem. Violet Firth argued that the uniform constructed the servant as an 'other': 'that is a shock to them [the employing classes] to find human nature akin to their own concealed by a servant's apron.'[92] Dorothy Fudge, a parlour-maid in the 1920s, was also angry when her employers used her uniform to stress her inferior status and suppress her identity, even when she was off-duty:

> We went to Bournemouth with them [her employers], on an arrival were told they would meet us at a certain restaurant on the seafront. When the time came, we were having tea in the 'best room', and feeling very grand, when the colonel's sister came in. She told us Mr and Mrs Adams would be late picking us up and then, in a very loud voice, said: 'I hardly recognised you! You look so different without your caps!' We could have hit her.[93]

With her cap, Dorothy Fudge was a faceless maid, hence the surprise of her employers when they saw her in her everyday clothes on her day off. Winifred Foley, who started as a maid-of-all-work in 1930, also condemned this process of depersonalisation: 'I wasn't sure whom

[90] J. Burnett, *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood Education and Family from the 1820's to the 1920's* (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 308.
[91] P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs: The Real Lives of Servants, 1939 to the Present* (Stroud, 2014), p. 47.
[92] Firth, *The Psychology*, p. 14.
[93] D. Fudge, *Sands of Time: The Autobiography of Dorothy Fudge* (Wimborne, 1988), p. 27.

I was feeling sorriest for, myself or those five kind girls, barely allowed their identities under the uniform caps and aprons.'[94] These women were alienated from their own appearance in order to help their mistress and master maintain a respectable image.

Servants were frustrated because some employers did not only control servants' dress, but they also tried to regulate other aspects of the servants' appearance. This lack of sartorial expression upset servants like Margaret Powell who had to wear her hair a certain way:

> When we did get there I said to Mary, 'What do I do now?' She said, 'The first thing you do is to change straight away into your uniform and come downstairs. And by the way,' she said, 'you'll have to do something about that hair of yours, you can't come down like you are.' (…) She scraped it all back off my face; I had pulled it forehead in an effort to make myself attractive. But Mary said, 'The cook won't let you have your hair like that. When you've got your cap on none of your hair must show in the front at all.' So she scraped it all back and she screwed it in a bun at the back (…) When I looked in the glass at my face with not a scrap of hair showing, I thought I looked hideous. (…) I got the uniform on, and oh how I hated it.[95]

Margaret Powell had to hide her hair behind a cap, limiting her capacity to personalise her appearance since she also had to wear a uniform. She disliked the strict tight bun that she had to wear because it was less feminine and made her look older than she really was. Mrs O'Donnel was not able to choose her hair style either when serving in 1924: 'I had my hair "shingled" and that made me the first in Newbiggin to have the new hair style. The mistress was horrified and told me she would have to think over whether she intended to keep me or not.'[96] By preventing women from styling their hair as they wished, employers did not simply regulate an additional aspect of the servants' appearance, they denied them the possibility to define themselves as young women. Doris Bodger, a servant in a stately home in the 1900s was upset about the way that employers prevented her from displaying her

[94] Foley, *A Child*, p. 142.
[95] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 38.
[96] Dawes, *Not in Front*, p. 104.

youthful appearance. She explained when she went to church on Sundays that she 'had to wear black coats and skirts, black shoes, stockings and gloves, and a hat which was called a toque which made a young girl of thirteen looks *like a grandmother* [my italics].'[97] The servants' youth and femininity was seen by employers as a dangerous temptation that could break the social order of the house. For example, a parlour-maid explained that 'servants girls were not supposed to go out wearing hats of their own in case they were mistaken for the 'young ladies' of the house'.[98] Mrs Stone who worked as a housemaid in Essex between the wars remembered the following anecdote: 'with my wages that I had saved, Mother bought some light blue check material and made me a costume, a full skirt down to the ground with a bolero, and a white blouse dotted with pink roses. I went to church on Easter Sunday morning, when the Vicar's wife walked in dressed in a costume almost identical to mine. The next morning, I was sent for and told I was dressed far above my station in life.'[99] Lizzie Grange and Mrs Stone thought that their employers rejected their young and fashionable appearance because it blurred social boundaries. The appearance of the servant should not distract from the social order within the household so that the servant's femininity was tamed in order to prevent her from potentially outshining the family members.

The feminine maid was also rejected by employers because of the potential disreputable suitors and immoral behaviour that she could introduced in the home.[100] The anxiety of the employers regarding their female staff was based on a broader idea of the working class as inherently sinful and easily led astray compared to the middle class.[101] Make up and waved

[97] Ibid, p. 57.
[98] Ibid, p. 205.
[99] L. Delap, "'Yes ma'am": domestic workers and employment rights', *History & Policy* (2012) [http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/yes-maam-domestic-workers-and-employment-rights, 10 August 2018].
[100] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 174.
[101] P. Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London, 1975), p. 63; Delap, *Knowing their Place*, p. 175.

hair, as a result, were seen as dangerous items for a servant to wear because they were suggestive of her sexuality. Margaret Powell complained about the way that the smallest items of clothing could be condemned by the employers:

> They'd say [the mistresses], 'Yes, I had to get rid of her. She was flighty.' You were flighty if you used the slightest bit of makeup. People didn't use a lot of make-up in those days, but if you used any, or if you had your hair waved, or if you wore coloured silk stockings; brown silk stockings were all right, but if you wore coloured ones, and I mean on your off-duty periods not when you were on, you were flighty, and flighty girls came to bad ends.[102]

Some mistresses even felt that it was their right to rule even the most personal items of the servant's dress. Doris Hazell, who was a maid in the 1930s, worked for a woman who picked the type of underwear the servants could wear: 'We were not allowed to wear artificial silk knickers as the slight swishing noise they made "disturbed" milady and might give "wrong ideas" to the menservants… The head Parlour-maid and Head Housemaid were allowed to wear black artificial silk stockings at lunch only (and they weren't permitted to produce that "disturbing" noise either!)'.[103] Doris Hazell's story points out the link between the mistress's ruling on dress and the forbidden sexuality of the young servant. The employers' authority could reach deep into these women's closets and private lives.

The fact that some servants thought that their uniform did not fit with their identity as young and feminine women is not only found in the text of the autobiographies but also in the photographs that sometimes accompany them. Most autobiographies do not include photographs, probably because they were expensive to reproduce. Of those that did include

[102] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 80.
[103] Dawes, *Not in Front*, p. 51.

pictures, it is surprising that very few depicted these women in servants' uniform.[104] Photographs became available to all budgets from the mid-nineteenth century allowing servants to buy pictures of themselves in domestic servants' uniforms if they had wanted to. However, servants preferred to include pictures of their parents, their marriage, and of themselves on vacation or on a Sunday off. The absence of pictures of servants in uniform suggests that many servants did not want to revisit their depiction as servants because they disliked the symbolism of the uniform. Indeed, Jean Rennie claimed in her autobiography that 'In all my years in service, I never once allowed myself to be photographed in what was (laughingly) called "uniform"'.[105] If such pictures existed, they were often commissioned by the employers for the purpose of projecting their status. This was the case for Lilian Westall whose mistress insisted on her dressing as a nurse maid – a servant employed solely to take care of the children in well-off families able to employ more than one servant – whereas she was a simple maid-of-all-work.[106] She recalled that as soon as she got the uniform, her mistress took her to the photographer with the children. Pictures taken of servants like Lilian Westall were hallmarks of middle-class respectability for the employers, but they also froze servants into a fixed occupational identity and social status when many desired to endorse more flexible identities.

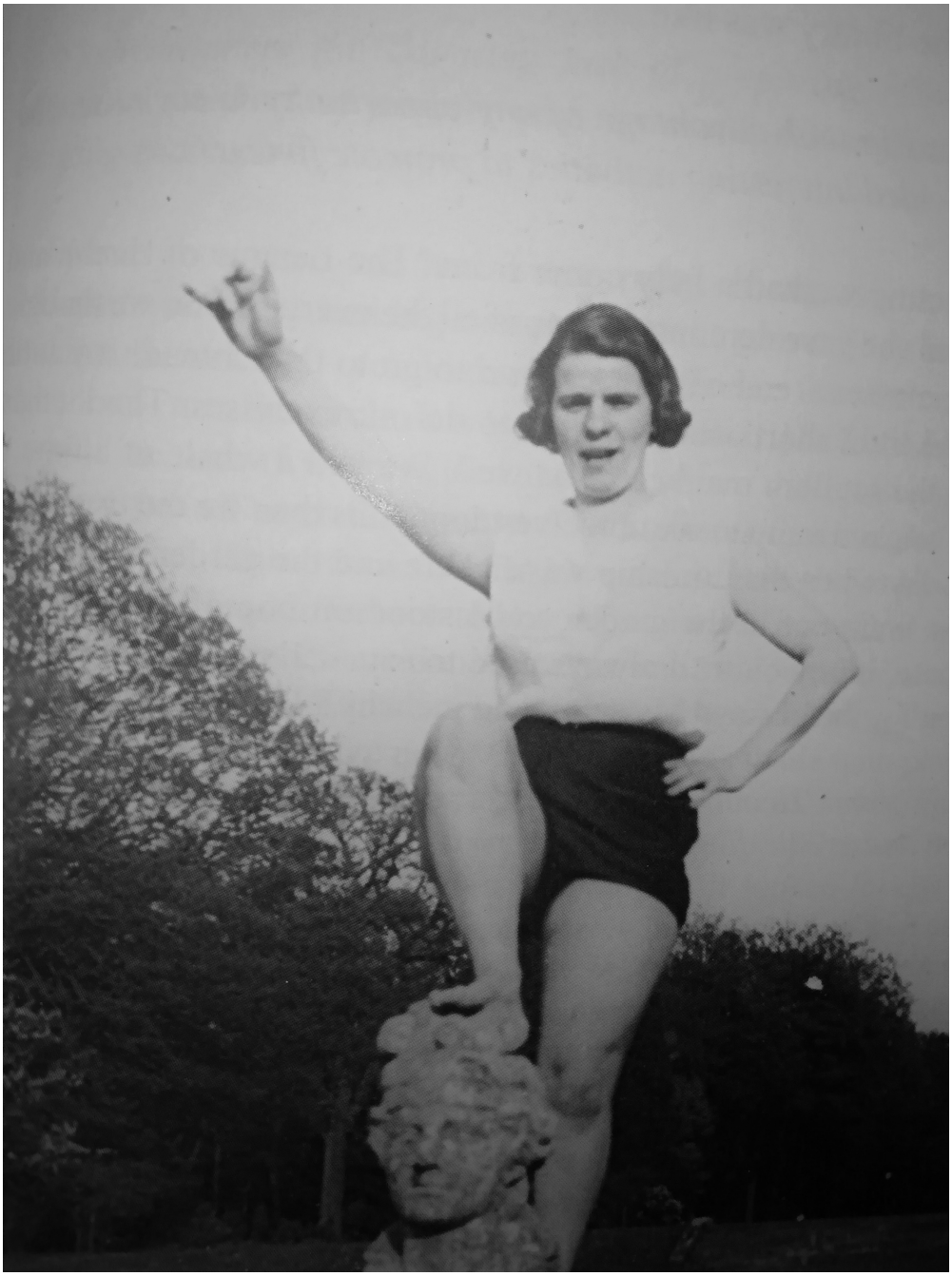
One servant who did include a picture of herself in uniform was Flo Wadlow. The picture, however, were of her donning the uniform of the League of Health and Beauty (WLHB). This uniform fitted better than that the servant's uniform with the image she had of herself as a young independent woman. The WLHB was founded in London in 1930 by Mollie

[104] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 7, p. 11, p. 27, p. 282, p. 322, pp. 346-347, p. 359*;* Noakes, *The Town Beehive,* p. 13, p. 28, p.33, p. 50 p.53, p. 59, p. 73, 79; Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove,* p. 1, p. 5, pp.22-23, p. 47, p. 54, pp. 62-63, pp. 78-81, p 94.
[105] J. Rennie, *Cap-and-Apron to Cap and Gown* (Fakenham, 1985), p. 61.
[106] J. Burnett, *Useful Toil Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 192*0s (London, 1974), pp. 216- 217.

Bagot Statch and her daughter Prunella who was called at the time 'Britain's perfect girl'.[107] The movement argued that beauty came from inner vitality and encouraged all women to do physical exercise, irrespective of social class. The programme insisted on the importance of health and exercise for the future of the race, but the WLHB also became hugely popular because it participated to the promotion of the new image of the modern women.[108] Alongside make up and clothes, a good physique became an important element of modern femininity in the 1930s. Therefore, while Flo Wadlow's clothes and make up might be regulated by her mistress, by joining the WLHB she could work on improving her appearance. The revealing uniform of the WLHB which was composed of black shorts and the white blouse was in starch contrast with the servant's uniform and its starched apron. Flo Wadlow's membership might also have been aspirational since most of the WLHB members were typists or business girls, while working-class girls often frequented cheaper classes organised by local authorities or voluntary organisations.[109] The WLHB uniform insisted on aspects of Flo Wadlow's identity that were not represented by her servant's uniform: her youth, determination and social aspiration as well as attractive body and modern femininity.

[107] I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford, 2010), p. 247.
[108] Ibid, p. 237 and p. 247.
[109] Ibid, p. 254.

Picture 20: Flo Wadlow in the uniform of the League of Health and Beauty (1930s)



Source: Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove,* p. 63.

D. French Servants, Dress and Rural Identity

In contrast with the heavy emotional weight that the uniform bore on British servants, few French servants thought about their work dress as a fraught marker of class within the employer-employee relationship. This attitude partly came from the different composition of the servant labour force. Since around 33% of female servants came from farming families, many of these women were not the obvious inferiors to their employers.[110] The daughter of a farmer who could return to inherit part of the property after her marriage, for example, was not the social subordinate of the next-door farmer or shopkeeper for whom she worked.

The numerous servants who travelled to a town to find a new position found that their clothing cast them apart. This feeling of inferiority, however, was linked to their rural identity rather than their social class. The French servant's slightly old-fashioned clothes, her accent and her unfamiliarity with urban ways marked her as an 'other'.[111] Marie was told by a friend as she stepped out of the train in Paris that her wide brimmed hat looked like a shepherdess' hat and that she should wear a fashionable cloche hat instead.[112] Others noted that their black dresses were old fashioned compared to the more colourful outfits of the Parisian women or that their long-braided hair contrasted with the trendy cropped hair of the 1920s.[113] Although a daughter who was part of a family who owned a small farm might be

[110] C. Villeneuve-Gokalp, 'Les Gens de Maison', *Population* 49/ 3 (1994), p. 776.
[111] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 9; J. Haubenestel, *Active, Propre et Honnête: Jeunes Filles Alsaciennes en Place à Paris, 1900-1960* (Strasbourg, 2002), p. 56 and p. 70; Cretté-Breton, *Mémoires d'une Bonne*, p. 30; Madeleine Leboeuf interviewed by Marie Tassel, 'Récit de vie de Madeleine 1 (1914-1955)', Archives de la Manche, 251 AV 12-1 (2012), http://www.archives-manche.fr/ark:/57115/a011441812887mP73If (accessed 17 December 2016); R. F., 'Histoire d'une femme courageuse', APA, 1966, p. 3; Cécile Cornu, 'Bonne à tout faire', 2002-4349 (2002), Arexcpo en Vendée- C.C. Deux Lays, OPCI-Ethnodoc.
[112] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 156.
[113] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, pp. 114-115 ; M. Bregnard, *Marguerite, Une Delloise à Paris* (Tours, 2005), pp. 72-73.

superior to an urban employee in the strict economic sense of 'class', her rural origins could be used to make her feel inferior. The rural-urban continuum was an alternative system of identity within servants' lives. When Jeanne Bouvier made the mistake of dropping the clean laundry on the floor, for example, her employer severely reprimanded her and called her 'you peasant!'.[114] This incident suggests that her employer used Jeanne Bouvier's rural origins to put distance between the maid and the rest of the family. It also reveals that the insult was meaningful for Jeanne Bouvier who distinctly remembered this precise incident and the humiliation she felt afterwards.

The prevalence of a regional discourse in defining the 'otherness' of the servant is apparent in cultural representations of servants. The strength of the otherness of the rural youth coming to work in the cities as servants was captured in the iconic cartoon, *Bécassine*, published from 1906 in the children's newspaper with a middle-class readership *La Semaine de Suzette*.[115] It depicted the silly but loyal servant wearing a traditional cap from Brittany, a traditional stripped dress and a pair of cogs in the middle of Paris. The traditional outfit of Bécassine was fantasy rather than reality, but it participated to the construction of the servant as an outsider. Advertisements also used the image of the servant in local dress in scenes that were often comic. For example, in an early-twentieth-century advertisement for some chocolate, a coquettish maid wearing a local cap and collar was trying her mistress' skirt and commented 'It suits me just as much as it does my mistress' (picture 21). Even when she was trying to ape her betters, the maid was still distinguished by her local cap, implying that at heart she was a rural girl rather than a sophisticated woman. While readers knew that servants did not all wear caps and other folkloric accessories, the sartorial contrast between

[114] J. Bouvier, *Mes Mémoires: Une Syndicaliste Féministe (1876-1935)* (Paris, 2015), p. 67.
[115] B. Lehembre, *Bécassine: Une Légende du Siècle* (Paris, 2005), p. 32.

town and country was an easily accessible reference for all to identify a domestic servant. Caricatures about servants' dress reveal the important link that existed between the servant and the countryside in the popular imaginary.

Picture 21: Advertisement- 'Carte réclame - franchement cela m'irait tout aussi bien qu'à madame'



Source: 'Carte réclame - franchement cela m'irait tout aussi bien qu'à madame', Mucem, 1995.1.2185.1, https://goo.gl/4rMemk (23 August 2018).

The mass circulation of postcards depicting servants in traditional local dress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is another sign of the bourgeoisie's appetitive for representing the servant as an exotic 'other' through the lens of local culture. There was a boom in postcard circulation between 1890s and 1910s, 'chronicling the urban metropolis, advertising goods for sale, showcasing Belle Époque design, picturing scantily clothed Parisian women' as well as selling idealised rural scenes to an increasingly urban population.[116] The postcards could be drawings, staged photographs of local people or actors recreating aspects of rural life. One postcard depicted a servant from Finistère which looked very similar to the *Bécassine* cartoon with her traditional dress, cap made of white lace and pair of clogs (picture 22). Another postcard showed a servant from Brittany wearing a traditional cap and a stripped shift in a coarse material covering her shoulders and tucked into her apron, which was a staple item in rural women's wardrobe (picture 23). The last postcard portrayed an old maid from Brittany wearing a simpler style of cap as well as neckerchief around her neck (picture 24). Her rural identity was accentuated by her rough clothes and her big clogs. In all these postcards, the servants were also seen performing tasks such as carrying fodder or cleaning utensils like a copper cauldron, which insisted on the peculiarity of the work of the servant in the countryside and added an extra layer of exoticism to the pictures.

[116] S. Hiner, 'Picturing the Catherinette' in M. Belenky, K. Kleppinger, A. O'Neil-Henry (eds), *French Cultural Studies for the Twenty-First Century* (Newark, 2017), p. 126.

Picture 22: Postcard – A servant from Riec, 1909



Source: CPA Bretagne - Finistère - Coiffes Bretonnes – Servante Riec Hamonic 1909, https://www.ebay.fr/itm/CPA-Bretagne-Finistere-Coiffes-Bretonnes-Servante-Riec-Hamonic-1009-/302228406304 (22 August 2018).

Picture 23: Postcard – Servante dans un manoir du Pays de Léon, 1910s



Source: 'Carte postale, servant dans un manoir', Mucem, 019868, https://goo.gl/BG6hQV, (22 August 2018).

Picture 24: Postcard –The old servant of the Kemartin manor house, 1908



Source: 22 - CT51599CPA – Tréguier – Maharit, la vieille servante du manoir de KERMARTIN - Bon état – Côtes-d'Armor, https://goo.gl/zS8K8G, (22 August 2018).

These postcards celebrated folkloric traditions by displaying the otherworldliness of the countryside. Compared to her employers, the figure of the servant in rural costume was ultimately different and uncivilised. The old loyal and hardworking servant of the manor in clogs or the quaint young servant wearing a traditional dress from Brittany were far from being accurate representations of the attire of most servants. In particular, it was unlikely that a servant would work wearing a skirt in a light colour with decorative patterns, a lace collarette and a large cap with ribbons as can be seen in picture 22. This outfit would be inconvenient and too precious to stain while doing house tasks. The cap and collarette were most likely part of a ceremonial costume, but they were presented here in a domestic context to insist on the 'otherness' of the maid. These portraits were the ideal representation of a world in which people knew their place and looked plainly different from their urban and social superiors. These stereotypes reveal how the servants' regional identity served to distinguish them from their more urbanised mistress, without the need for a formal uniform. While both French and British servants had to come to terms with feelings of inferiority in domestic service, their experiences were mediated through different discourses about class and rurality.

III. A New Look: Comparing Servants' and Female Workers' Dress

A. Comparing the British Servants' Uniform: 'A Badge of Servitude' Versus 'the Proudest Badge'

The distinctive uniform of domestic servants in Britain stigmatised them both within the household and made them feel inferior to other workers outside the house. While 50% of active women worked in domestic service in Britain, many of them felt excluded and singled

out by their uniform. The paradox between the important presence of women in servants' uniform in British society and their strong sense of exclusion highlights the important emotional baggage that the uniform carried. Because the uniform was a symbol of power and class, the comfort of anonymity that it could bring to those who worked in cities was glossed over. As servants dealt with suppliers and delivery men to fill their employer's pantry or as they accompanied their mistress on errands, they felt self-conscious about their uniform. The garment marked the distinct status of the domestic servant compared to other female workers. Young women's employment opportunities had radically expended after the First World War as the number of women in industrial, retail and clerical employment increased.[117] Non-manual employment had become a realistic aspiration for working-class women so that by 1931, for example, ten percent of young female workers were shop assistants.[118] Mrs Clearly who began to work as a confectioner in 1922 noted that the war 'made all the difference in the world—you see there was nothing much for girls before—girls of my class I mean—girls—country girls like that, there was nothing for them except service.'[119] These new jobs did not always provide women with higher wages but they offered increased independence and more free time to workers who were not expected to live on their place of work.[120] For example, while most British servants only enjoyed one half-day off during the week and every other Sunday afternoons, most workers had their evenings to themselves and the entire Sunday off. The significance of those changes on the female labour market was heightened by the campaign for women's political enfranchisement which associated women's political emancipation with the public world of work and its promise of social and financial independence. While the factory or the shop girl fitted with the suffrage representation of 'modern and emancipated womanhood', the

[117] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 23.
[118] Ibid, p. 26.
[119] Ibid, p. 23.
[120] G. Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (London, 2007), p. 154.

domestic servant was looked down as a passive and servile worker stuck in the private sphere.[121] From both a social and political standpoint, therefore, domestic service – with its lack of private space, sparse free time and nosy mistresses – was casted as a dated occupation.

However, it is not the case that domestic servants felt singled out because they were the only ones to wear a uniform in the crowd of modern female workers. On the contrary, there was an increasing number of workers wearing uniforms to advertise the company they worked for, distinguish between ranks in organisational hierarchies and assert their professional status in the twentieth century.[122] These new uniforms were nevertheless fundamentally different from those of domestic servants. Diana Crane argues that the nature of uniforms changed in the twentieth century as they became increasingly linked to an occupational status with little bearing on the workers' identity beyond the workplace.[123] In this context, the servants' uniform was dated not only because of its style but because of the broader message that it vehiculated about the servants' place in the social hierarchy. While modern uniforms highlighted the skills or the types of job performed by female workers, the servant's uniform was more encompassing and cumbersome as it defined these women's social status and hierarchical relationship with their employers. As a result, servants suffered from the comparison of their uniform with the dress codes for other occupations. Servants walking down the streets in uniform were sometimes cat-called 'slavey', 'skivvy' or 'flunky' by other workers.[124] The expression 'slavey' compared the similarly powerless position of

[121] L. Schwartz, *Feminism and the Servant Problem: Class and Domestic Labour in the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 4.
[122] C. Williams-Mitchell and J. J. Burn, *Dressed for the Job: The Story of Occupational Costume* (Poole, 1982), p. 101; Ewing, *Women in Uniforms*, p. 61.
[123] Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, p. 22.
[124] L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-century Britain* (London, 2013), p 136; Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, p. 62; M. Powell, *Climbing the Stairs* (London, 2011), p. 51; Mullins and Griffiths*, Cap and Apron*, p. 42

slaves and servants, while 'skivvy' alluded to service as a less honourable occupation which historically recruited waifs, strays and delinquents. A 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction report, based on interviews with a panel of domestic servants and employers, noted that: 'the fact cannot be denied that domestic workers are regarded by other workers as belonging to a lower social status. The distinctive dress which they are required to wear marks them out as a class apart, the cap being generally resented.'[125] A chambermaid felt similarly distressed about the way her uniform was looked down upon by other female workers: 'The greatest trouble with service is having to wear a cap and apron. Shop girls and business girls look down upon servants for that reason.'[126] Domestic servants, therefore, suffered from the comparison of their uniform with the dress codes of the new professions and the more popular occupations in the service sector.

The Nurse

In many British servants' autobiographies, the authors admired the nursing profession and considered its uniform as a standard to emulate. For Anne Kynoch, leaving domestic service for nursing was a personal triumph:

> I had already made several applications to different hospitals for entry as a probationer nurse. Nothing has given me a greater feeling of achievement than the receipt of a letter from the matron of a Yorkshire hospital for infectious diseases. All the world was mine! After drudgery and struggle the ladder was in place now for the climb.[127]

[125] *Parliamentary Papers* (1919), xxix, Ministry of Reconstruction, 'Report of the Women's Advisory Committee on the Domestic Service Problem Together with Reports by Sub-committees on Training, Machinery of Distribution, Organisation and Conditions,' p. 22.
[126] Ibid., p. 39.
[127] A. Kynoch, *The King's Seat* (Letchworth, 1966), p. 184.

The comparison between nursing and domestic service was also frequently made in the press because nursing was seen as an occupation that had successfully transformed itself.[128] Through the influence of Florence Nightingale, nursing was redefined in the mid-nineteenth century from a low-skilled and ill-reputed occupation, to a job that was suited for women who possessed a high moral character.[129] The new nurse rose in status from that of a maid-of-all work in contact with bodies and dirt, to a respectable middle-class woman who was in a position not only to heal the physical diseases but also the moral sins of her patients. The profession also became highly desirable for lower-class girls like Anne Kynoch who had aspirations to a respectable and skilled occupation. As Elizabeth Ewing put it, 'every girl in her teens wanted to be a nurse, just as every boy wanted to be sailor.' [130]

The desire to become a nurse was paired with an admiration of the nurses' uniform. Elsie Oman, for example, commented that before she had to become a servant she and her friend 'both thought we would like to be nurses and wear a smart uniform.'[131] Margaret Powell drew a contrast between the despised servant's dress and the respectable nurse's uniform: 'My mistress wanted me to wear a cap, but I wouldn't. It always struck me as a badge of servitude. I know nurses wear caps but somehow it's different with them.'[132] She thought that the uniform of the nurse had a different and more attractive meaning to the servant's. Rather than as a 'badge of servitude', the red cross uniform was referred as 'the proudest badge'.[133]

[128] 'Improving the status of servants', *Nottingham Journal* (8 April 1930), p. 3; 'The servant problem', *Leeds Mercury* (26 October 1900), p. 7.
[129] B. Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London, 1960), p. 4; M. Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago, 1985), p. 101.
[130] Ewing, *Women in Uniforms*, p. 45.
[131] E. Oman, *Salford Stepping Stones* (Swinton, 1983), p. 25.
[132] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 130.
[133] Ewing, *Women in uniforms*, p. 96.

As nursing had become a respectable occupation, the nurse's uniform and its meaning had changed. The Workhouse Nursing Association noted in 1899 that 'we find neat and becomingly dressed young women in suitable uniform in place of the wretched old creatures who, in pauper dress and black caps, prowled about the beds of our sick poor'.[134] The uniform of the nurse signalled her training and professionalism, but it also stressed her femininity. This was an important component of the uniform to the point that in the second half of the nineteenth-century, Agnes Elizabeth Jones' complained about the uniforms of the recruits of the Nightingale school: 'a kind of grey stuff, very neat, white aprons and caps, rather too round and coquettish I thought for sisters, but a neat, pretty style of dress'.[135] Lady-pupils, that is women who paid to receive training, wore special uniforms to highlight their skills and status, but also to show off their looks. At Guy's Hospital they wore 'stately black alpaca gowns', while at the Middlesex Hospital they were 'arrayed in a dress of violet hue with a small train, three inches in length, which swept the floor behind them'.[136] Florence Nightingale criticised these new aspects of nursing in 1876, complaining that 'entry of ladies with fanciful notions of acting as ministering angels, 'moving about your wards in a very becoming hospital dress and followed wherever you go by loving looks, and murmured blessings, from grateful patients'.[137] But it was that very image of the slightly seductive 'ministering angel' that made nursing and its 'becoming dress' popular. The uniform of the nurse continued to be an object of envy, especially after the patriotism deployed during the First World War, while its style adapted to the fashion standards of the time.[138] The headwear was simplified, and the skirt became shorter.[139] In contrast, the

[134] Ibid, p. 47.
[135] Ibid, p. 45.
[136] Abel-Smith, *A History*, p. 31.
[137] A. M. Rafferty, *The Politics of Nursing Knowledge* (London, 1996), p. 30.
[138] Ewing, *Women in Uniforms*, p. 45.
[139] Williams-Mitchell, *Dressed for the Job*, p. 118.

servant's uniform had barely changed. While the nurses' uniform symbolised a woman in touch with her times, the servants' uniform seemed frozen in the past.

The model set by nursing was followed by nurse maids who worked for upper-class households.[140] In the late nineteenth century, Emily Ward, the founder of the prestigious Norland school for nannies, argued in favour of the professionalization of child nurses and criticised the current system which saw uneducated servants taking care of children and learning their trade as they worked.[141] She transformed child nursing into a profession with a diploma, making the occupation attractive to middle-class girls. Like nursing schools, the Norland school designed a new uniform that symbolised the professionalism of the new type of nanny and distinguished her from the 'common' servant. Her dress looked similar to that of a nurse and its grey colours in winter and white in summer were used to distinguish it from the black and white outfit of the domestic servant.[142] However, while the 'professional' model could be applied to child nursing as some medical, educational and moral skills were required to take care of children, it was impossible to apply the same logic to housework because cleaning and scrubbing were not seen as valuable tasks by the same women who argued for women's participation on the labour market and entry into the professions.[143] Therefore, while nannies proudly donned their new uniform, the common servant's uniform remained a symbol of low-status female labour.

[140] Ibid, p. 118.
[141] J. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* (London, 1972), p. 174.
[142] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 108.
[143] L. Schwartz, 'A Job Like Any Other? Feminist Responses and Challenges to Domestic Worker Organizing in Edwardian Britain', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 88 (2015), pp. 37-39.

The Shop Assistant

The position of shop assistant was another object of envy for servants. When Lily Kerry explained what job she first wanted to do before ending up working as a servant, she painted a sort of hierarchy of the types of employment a young girl could aspire to:

> When I was about 12 or 13 years old, our teacher asked us what we wanted to do on leaving school. (…) I said I wanted to be a nurse, but my teacher said I would be a domestic. Unfortunately, you couldn't start training to be a nurse until you were 17. What I would have liked to have done before then was to work in a shop selling clothes and hats, but my mother had other ideas.[144]

Mrs Clarke also claimed that her mother and herself saw shop work as superior to domestic service. When she was seeking for a job, she recalled that 'there were options to get a job in a shop in the town, but we lived perhaps two miles out of town. We thought the next best thing was into service'.[145] This hierarchy of employment, which placed shop work before domestic service, indicates the popularity of the figure of the shop assistant amongst young women. This trend was bitterly commented upon in the introduction of the 1916 report on domestic service: 'partly owing to the multiplication of other openings for women's work (…) the most promising girls are apt to prefer lower wages, less material comfort, and much less security of employment in shops (…) to the often-quoted advantages of domestic service.'[146] With the rise of the departmental store at the end of the nineteenth century, and the feminization of shop work after the First World War, an increasing number of young and single women were employed in big stores and chains. The number of women working as shop assistants rose from 87,000 in 1861 to 500,00 by 1914.[147] The shop girl came to

[144] Higgs, *Servants' Stories*, p. 170.
[145] Mullins and Griffiths, *Cap and Apron*, pp. 46-7.
[146] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, p. 11.
[147] Holloway, *Women and* Work, p. 109.

'symbolise the social and cultural transformations resulting from women's entry into a vast range of employment'.[148]

Many lower-middle-class and working-class women became shop assistants in the growing numbers of shops and department stores across the country. While working-class women tended to work in smaller shops before the First World War, during the interwar period they gained access to the glamourous department stores that opened all over the country.[149] The proximity to luxury and people of a higher social class was the most important in explaining the popular success of the shop girl. Many girls worked in stores following the popular fantasy that a working-class girl could work her way to the top while being in contact with luxury in the shop and behaving with gentility with the clients.[150] Expectations for the shop girl were more precisely that 'working women might have the opportunity (…) to meet and be courted by men above them in wealth and social station, thereby marking their path toward creating their own domestic sphere.'[151]

Shop work was also desirable because of the independence it gave to these young women, especially after the First World War, when the employees did not have to live at the shop.[152] According to Shapiro Sanders, 'living away from the familial home, (…) female shop assistants occupied a relatively unsupervised sphere of social interaction, and therefore possessed a certain degree of freedom of action both at work and in their leisure practices.'[153] Sally Mitchell's study of girls' magazines between 1900 and 1920 highlights how shop work

[148] L. Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure and the London Shop Girl, 1880-1920* (Columbus, 2006), p. 2.
[149] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 42.
[150] Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies*, p. 3.
[151] Ibid, p. 55
[152] Ibid, p. 101.
[153] Ibid, p. 20.

was valued over domestic work as it replaced paternalism with a market relationship. In magazine fiction, a character who first worked as a companion – a sort of gentile domestic servant – before becoming a shop girl explains that she 'would much rather there was nothing but a "money'' bond between me and my employers. (…) From ten to six I am at his order, but all the rest of the time I am independent, and I needn't feel grateful to him, because my salary is fairly earned and just a matter of business.'[154]

If the shop girl worked in some drapery establishment, she might model the products which were on sale, feeding the fantasy of upward mobility.[155] In most cases, however, the shop assistant wore a discreet uniform and was required to dress all in black or white, sometimes more specifically in black silk.[156] For example, Harrods department store in the early twentieth century asked for the dress of the female shop assistants to be 'neat plain black, made in good taste'.[157] While the colour of the shop girl's uniform was subdued, black silk gave it a sophisticated air.[158] The shop girl's uniform did not represent the prestige of a profession like nursing, but it was nevertheless attractive because its goal was to make young women look beautiful and fashionable to entice clients to buy goods. In contrast, while the maid also had to look good in her afternoon uniform to represent the household, she should not overshadow her mistress and dressed according to her inferior rank. Ultimately, the shop girl's uniform was only worn in the shop and did not encroach on her identity while the servant's uniform was an important part of the servant's life, defining her appearance from dawn till dusk. As a Selfridge employee put it in 1909: 'nobody here cares how we live out of business hours, so long as we're "smart" and look nice'.[159]

[154] S. Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York, 1995), p. 30.
[155] Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies*, p. 3.
[156] P. Cox, 'Shop Girls, Social History and Social Theory', *Revista Brasileira de História*, 37/75 (2017), p. 6.
[157] Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies*, p. 67.
[158] Cox, 'Shop Girls', p. 10.
[159] Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies*, p. 90.

In consequence, many women chose to become shop assistants because it was perceived as more glamorous, social enhancing and freer than domestic service.[160] A girls' magazine named the *Monthly Packet*, summarised the situation of shop workers versus domestic servants when answering the question 'why do so many workers crowd into it [shop work]?' in 1897: 'First, there is the fact of social status… The shop assistant all her life belongs to a higher caste, so to speak, than the domestic servants. She wears better clothes, has a better chance of marriage, and look forward to having her free Sunday'.[161]

The Tea Shop Waitress

Eileen Balderson compared her own uniform to that of a nippy, that is a tea shop waitress:

> The smaller Lyons restaurants were staffed with Nippies, as the waitresses were called. (…) 'Nippy' suggested somebody sharp and prompt. I remember comparing the uniform with my own. Nippy wore a white mitre cap, a Peter Pan collar, soft turned-up cuffs, and a nippy little apron. The black buttons of her black corsage were sewn on with red thread, and she wore a medallion of office. Her skirt was just below the knee, and she wore black stockings and neat shoes. Very smart![162]

While working in pubs or restaurants was not regarded as an appropriate job for a young woman, tea shops with their female clientele were deemed respectable.[163] Like the shop girl, the nippy was glamourous, feminine, and free to a certain extent as she did not live-in, characteristics that were denied to the servant. The nippy uniform described above was created by Lyons and Co teashops – first opened in 1909 – but very quickly spread to other shops. Many aspects of the uniform were reminiscent of the servant's such as the cap, the

[160] P. Horn, *Flappers: The Real Lives of British Women in the era of The Great Gatsby* (Stroud, 2013), p. 101.
[161] Mitchell, *The New Girl*, p. 34.
[162] Balderson, *Backstairs Life*, pp. 78-79.
[163] S. Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Family in Inter-War Rural England', *Agricultural History Review*, 52 (2004), p. 97; D. W. Gutzke, 'Gender, Class, and Public Drinking in Britain During the First World War', *Social History* (1994), p. 27; A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty. Working-class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham, 1992), p. 63.

collar, apron and black dress but other aspects suggested a more modern take on the uniform.[164] Eileen Balderson's suggestion that the skirt was 'just below the knee' and the red thread on the corsage suggested that the outfit was in line with fashion. While servants complained that they were forbidden from wearing make-up, nippies were encouraged to wear make-up, even if its use should not be conspicuous, and their nails had to be manicured – unimaginable expectations for maids who scrubbed floors and dishes all day.[165] The company's badge was also worn on the cap and the dress to distinguish the nippy who worked for a company from the domestic servant, thereby highlighting the contractual relationship between the nippy and her employers.

British servants' rejection of their uniform, therefore, was not solely based on their personal relationship with their employers, but it was also strongly linked to the evolution of the status and appearances of women on the labour market. As female occupations were increasingly articulated outside of the private sphere – with the advantages it entailed in terms of personal freedom – and specialised to the same extent as men's, British servants felt the disadvantages of their occupation and its uniform more strikingly.

B. Comparing French Servants' Dress: The Humble Apron

In France, in contrast, there were few occupations with a distinctive dress to which comparisons could be made. Most active French women worked in farming, factories and small shops where no uniforms were required. [166] Some shop assistants and waitresses in

[164] Williams-Mitchell, *Dressed For the Job*, p. 98.
[165] T. Harding, *Legacy: One Family, a Cup of Tea and the Company That Took on the World* (London, 2019), p. 282.
[166] R. O. Hufton, 'Le Travail et la Famille' in G. Duby, M. Perrot (eds), *Histoire des Femmes en Occident*, 3 (Paris, 2002), p. 30.

large towns and cities wore uniforms and enjoyed a relatively independent lifestyle. Parisian shop assistants in department stores, for example, were referred to as 'the queens of the urban proletariat' because of their lavish clothing.[167] However, most shop assistants kept working for small family-run shops.[168] In these stores, most of the workforce was either family or servants, dressing very far away from the glamorous standards of the shop assistant in a department store and enjoying less independence.[169] These women often simply wore an apron for what was deemed a traditional female occupation in the sphere of the family economy. Because the figures of the servant, the waitress and the shop assistant were intertwined, the apron of the shop assistant and that of the waitress might not have been much more attractive that the servant's apron.

It was also unlikely for French servants to compare themselves to nurses as the professionalisation of nursing was incomplete and the occupation remained dominated by nuns well into the interwar period.[170] The religious roots of nursing were apparent in the nurse uniform, which closely resembled the dress of a nun with a long white veil.[171] Even in the 1930s, the skirt remained to ankle length signalling that this was a religious dress rather than an up-to-date uniform. The failed transformation of nursing was linked to a deep suspicion of women's waged labour in French society. As the ideal of a professional woman clashed with the Third Republic's conservative gender values, the state favoured nuns to work as nurses instead of female civilians, despite the government's secular crusades in other fields. For Katrin Schultheiss, 'women's presence in public institutions like the

[167] Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, p. 61.
[168] M. B. Miller, *Le Bon Marché, Bourgeois Culture and Department Store* (Princeton, 2014), p. 194.
[169] R. Magraw, *France, 1800-1914: A Social History* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), 57-58.
[170] K. Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France, 1880-1922* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 191.
[171] M. Delpierre, *Uniformes Civils, Ceremonial Circonstances 1750-1980 : [exposition], 16 décembre 1982-17 avril 1983, ville de Paris, Musée de la mode et du costume* (Paris, 1982), p. 84.

hospital, unmediated by ties to Church or family (…) suggested a new definition of female citizenship in which women, like men, stood as individuals in direct, unmediated relationship to the state. It was a definition that those in power were not ready to accept.'[172] When a decree on 27 June 27, 1922 established a license for the nurses of the French State, it did not require a diploma as a prerequisite.[173] Therefore, the few nurses who were not religious were unskilled women from working-class or peasant backgrounds, and they were mostly treated as domestic servants.[174] This was the case for Josephine Rochet, who left her job as a maid-of-all-work to work without a diploma or qualification in an hospital in Grenoble during the First World War.[175] In consequence, few women looked up to nursing as a possible occupation since religious nurses kept their dominance over the hospital wards and the popular imagery.[176]

Because of France's traditional values regarding women's work, the nurse maid did not become a professional figure either. She remained a domestic servant working for wealthy families, sought after as a wet nurse rather than for her training and medical skills as bottle feeding was only gradually introduced in France after the First World War.[177] The nanny was a healthy peasant woman rather a professional woman. She either wore the local dress – symbol of the good health of the peasant class – or a luxurious but outdated outfit with long colourful streamers attached to her hat and falling down to the floor which made her a distinctive figure.[178] The latter outfit satisfied the desire of employers to show off their social

[172] Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls*, p. 192.
[173] Ibid, p. 188.
[174] Ibid, p. 116.
[175] J. Rochet, *Souvenirs d'Enfance*, APA, 1747, p. 26.
[176] Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls*, p. 191.
[177] A. Cova, 'Où En Est L'Histoire de la Maternité ? ', *Clio. Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés*, 21 (2005), pp. 189-21; Y. Knibiehler, 'Modes de Garde : Permanences et Changements à Travers L'Histoire', *Spirale*, 30/2 (2004), pp. 15-22; C. Rollet, 'Nourrices et Nourrissons dans le Département de la Seine et en France de 1880 à 1940', *Population*, 37/ 3 (1982), pp. 573-604.
[178] F. Faÿ-Sallois, *Les Nourrices à Paris au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1997), pp. 205-209; M-F. Morel, 'Images de Nourrices dans la France des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, *Paedagogica Historica*, 46/6 (2010), p. 808.

standing through the nanny. None of these outfits, however, presented the nanny as a professional woman deserving admiration and respect. The professionalization of the nanny with a degree and recognition by the state only happened in 1977, symbolising the difficulty for the French state to regard traditional women's work as a profession.[179] The relative absence of popular female occupations with distinctive uniforms that servants could look up to, therefore, highlights the lack of specialisation of women's work in France. In a society where women's work was still significantly happening within the family economy, it was difficult for French servants to make sense of their experiences as a distinct occupational group.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to recover the thoughts and feelings of servants regarding their dress. In Britain, servants were required to wear a uniform to distinguish them from other members of the household and display the status of their employers. The servants' uniform, however, had a multiplicity of meanings depending on the context in which it was worn, whether the servant's home, the employer's house or the street. Some servants had positive memories of their uniform before they went into service because it marked their entry into the world of adults and established their respectable status. For the majority, these fond memories disappeared once they entered the workplace, where a new set of meanings, focused on social hierarchy and control, became dominant. Many rejected the uniform as a 'badge of servitude', an expression that alluded to the historical links between domestic service and infamous institutions like the workhouse, the charity school and the prison which used the servant's uniform to punish and reform inmates. Servants disliked the way that the uniform

[179] L. Lupraz, ' Nounou D'Hier, Assistante Maternelle d'Aujourd'hui: L'évolution d'une Véritable Profession', *Spirale*, 48/4 (2008), pp. 57-73.

stressed their inferior position within their employers' homes. They felt alienated and 'othered' by their uniform which reduced them to their occupational status and denied them the sartorial expression of their sense of self. Servants also struggled with the symbolism of their uniform beyond the home as they compared themselves to other uniformed female workers. As employment opportunities for women expanded and new service jobs offered more free time and independence to workers, servants suffered from the way their uniform symbolised a less flexible and more intrusive type of relationships with the employers.

In contrast, in France, most servants did not wear a uniform. Only those who worked for the upper classes wore a uniform which was composed of a black dress and a white apron. The rest simply wore an apron over their dress as domestic service was less conspicuous and retained a connection to the productive sphere much later in France. Within the multitude of small family production units spread across the four corners of France, such as artisans, farmers and shopkeepers' households, servants worked alongside their employers and other employees to keep the household running. Their appearance and occupational identity were not distinct from that of other female workers who also toiled within the home. For the servants who left the countryside to find work in towns and cities, nonetheless, clothing did play an important role in their sense of self. Instead of marking their occupational or class identity, these women's clothes often helped to define their status as rural migrants.

Crucially, the uniform pinpoints the different positions that British and French servants had in their respective society. The identity of British servants was much more distinctive because their appearance singled them out as servants and cast them apart from other workers. The idea that domestic service was a singular occupation was repeated many times in British servants' autobiographies, in particular, through accounts of the uniform. In

contrast, French servants did not comment much on their appearances and tended to insist less on the particularity of the servant identity, drawing fewer distinctions between themselves and other female workers, whom a large share continued to work within the home. Many servants started working in another sector before entering domestic service or combined these different activities together according to the seasons. Because service work was invisible and malleable, these women voices were harder to identify and promote. As a result, many French historians have overlooked French servants' autobiographies. This deficiency makes it all the more important to show that it is possible to retrieve French servants' testimonies and explore the complexity of domestic servants' experiences beyond the few elite circles of the Parisian capital.

Chapter Two: 'Knowing Their Place' at the Table: Domestic Servants, Food and Identity

Domestic servants were provided with board and lodging and as such employers controlled servants' mealtimes. This was an exceptional situation compared to most workers for whom mealtimes were a moment out of work. Yet we know very little about mealtimes in domestic service as historians have been over-reliant on sources written by the middle classes which overlooked such issues. Contemporaries preferred to focus on hours of work, wages or, as we have seen, uniforms, issues that are usually associated with workers in the public sphere. Because servants' mealtimes were doubly seen as private, that is a private moment in a job that was anchored within the private sphere, it was barely noticeable. The 1916 enquiry into domestic service by the Women's Industrial Council made little mention of servants' meals, brushing it aside by noting that there were 'not many complaints on this head[ing]'.[1] The 1919 report of the Advisory Women's Committee on the 'domestic service problem' did highlight that 'it is sometimes stated that the differentiation in the quality of the food for the dining room and that for the servants' hall or kitchen is another class distinction which leads to a spirit of bitterness'.[2] However, the report failed to return to the issue and focused instead on more vocational matters such as training and work hours.

Meals, however, are far more than a simple physical necessity or a detail in servants' busy workday. Scholars from a range of disciplines have shown that food is also a significant

[1] C. V. Butler and M. Frances, L. Hanbury and V. W. De Broke, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry by the Women's Industrial Council* (London, 1916), p. 48.
[2] *Parliamentary Papers* (1919), xxix, Ministry of Reconstruction, 'Report of the Women's Advisory Committee on the Domestic Service Problem Together with Reports by Sub-committees on Training, Machinery of Distribution, Organisation and Conditions,' p. 29.

cultural practice. Of seminal importance here has been Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction. Bourdieu argued that the upper classes distinguish themselves not purely on the basis of their economic capital but also by their cultural capital.[3] The latter is manifested in an acquired cultural taste, which encompasses everything from artworks to eating. Historians have also shown how politics, religion and class shaped eating experiences and highlighted how food has been used to create collective identities.[4] Stephen Mennell, for example, drew on Bourdieu's work to connect food preferences to processes of class competition and state formation in France and England from the middle ages to the present.[5] He argued that 'modern' French cuisine came out of the need for aristocrats to maintain their rank through court rituals as their status was increasingly under threat during the Bourbon absolute monarchy. This chapter applies Bourdieu's theory to focus on the creation of communities on a much smaller scale. Food's potential for social differentiation played a key role in domestic service as servants constantly negotiated their place within the household they worked for: they were intrinsic to the good functioning of the house but also strangers standing at its fringe. Focusing on food in domestic service, therefore, contributes to a better understanding of the dynamic among different members of the household.

This chapter also builds on a more recent strand of food studies, in part inspired by gender studies, which explores the role that food could play as an outlet for creativity in people's daily life.[6] Historian Carole Counihan, among others, argues that food was a powerful tool

[3] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London, 2010), p. xxv.
[4] S. Mennell, *All manners of food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford, 1985); J. L. Flandrin, M. Montanari, A. Sonnenfeld, *Food: A culinary history from Antiquity to the Present* (New York, 1999); P. Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste* (London, 2007).
[5] Mennell, *All Manners*, pp. 20-39.
[6] A. Hauck-Lawson, 'Hearing the Food Voice: An Epiphany for a Researcher', *The Digest: An Interdisciplinary Study of Food and Foodways,* 12/1–2 (1992), pp. 6-7; C. Counihan, 'Gendering Food' in J. M. Pilcher (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 100-111; J. Teophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York, 2002); A. Avakian and B. Haber, *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food* (Amherst, 2005).

for self-expression which gave marginalised groups a voice.[7] By refusing to eat the food assigned to them or binging in secret on the employers' food, servants expressed their frustrations and strivings. Through cooking, servants actively shaped their identities by borrowing and creating their own culinary repertoires. Because food was embedded within discourses about gender, class, regions and nations, it helped to connect servants, who have too often been depicted as trapped within middle-class houses, to the rest of society. By exploring the economic, social and cultural underpinning of food in domestic service, this chapter reveals the complexity of servants' identities and food's role in it.

The function of food as a marker of identity is all the more evident given that it was discussed at a great length in servants' autobiographies. Servants described their meals to formulate judgments on their employers while friendships, authority and independence were also embedded within a variety of food experiences from food theft to sabotaging a meal. French servants' autobiographies, in particular, were sometimes barely distinguishable from recipe books. Their writing was accompanied by recipes learned in service which were brandished as a proof of their life's journeys.

In order to fully apprehend the role played by food in servants' sense of self, this chapter is divided into six sections. The first explores the meal arrangements in different types of French and British households in order to represent the social diversity of service. It first analyses mealtime rituals in the houses of the French and British upper class to understand how food was used to enact social distinctions and discipline the staff. Eating is approached as a multisensorial experience involving both what is eaten and the spaces in which it was consumed as dining rooms often physically enacted the symbolic messages carried by food.

[7] Counihan, 'Gendering Food', p. 102.

The section then focuses on the mealtime experiences of servants who worked for the middle classes because they represented the majority of those working in service. Studying mealtimes in lower-middle-class households, where social distinctions between servants and employers were at their smallest, reveals the importance of social dynamics beyond hierarchal class distinctions. It is here, rather than in rich households, that we see a major difference between France and Britain. In the former, servants often ate with their employers, while in Britain servants ate separately. To explain this difference, we explore different understandings of the home and the family in each country, and how these meanings shaped servants' identities.

Where section one examines the structural factors that shaped servants' position within the household on-and-off the dinner table, section two focuses on how servants used food to actively shape their identities. Servants were not just passive recipients of authority at mealtimes when employers used food to assert their status. The section highlights the various ways through which servants used the spaces they were confined in at mealtimes to regain their agency and resist the impositions of their employers. It examines the way that servants used the kitchen space as an outlet for discontent where they occasionally stole food and gossiped about their employers. It shows, in particular, how food theft was central to the formation of a 'servant' community. Because French employers tended to work in the kitchen space with their servants, the section also focuses on the market square as a typical space where French servants exercised their alternative power over food. If section one proves that food was an exclusionary tool in the hands of the employers, section two shows that food and more specifically food theft was a cornerstone of communal relations in households with a large staff.

Section three broadens the chapter's approach to food beyond the relationships between servants and employers within the household. Servants had other frames of reference and food helped them to connect to other social spheres beyond the employers' home. Servants compared food in service and food at home to make sense of their new situation. The section compares the way French and British servants referred to food at home versus the food received in service in order to reveal how they constructed their identities, and in particular, their sense of mobility, on different premises. It shows how the rural-urban divide dominated servants' understanding of their situation in France while British servants made sense of new food in service mainly through the prism of social classes.

Cooking these new foods in the first place also shaped servants' identities and played an important role in servants' narratives of social mobility. Servants' memoirs help fill a gap in the food historiography which has focused either on the figure of the housewife or the male restaurant chef. Forms of domesticity and gender hierarchies within the household have been the preoccupation of the former historiography while artistry and commercial success has been the focus of the latter. Because female cooks' achievements in domestic service fit in neither category, they have been 'overlooked as inglorious and private. They have been restricted to the chopping-board and spice rack'.[8] While there is a growing historiography on female cooks after the Second World War when many women entered the world of the restaurants and cafes, these figures remain absent from the historiography of earlier periods.[9] Servants' autobiographies and their recipe collections help us to navigate around these problems by retrieving female cooks from the shadows of private kitchens. They provide a

[8] M. Symons, *A History of Cooks and Cooking* (Urbana, 2000), p. x.
[9] M. Cable, *Augusta: Life, Love and Food: From Paiágua to Priors Hardwick* (Banbury, 2007); H. Castell and K. Griffin, *Out of the Frying Pan*: *Seven Women Who Changed the Course of Post-War Cookery* (London, 1993); M. Bourelly, 'Cheffe de Cuisine: Le Coût de la Transgression', *Cahiers du Genre*, 48/1 (2010), pp. 127-148; V. Frediani and E. Payani, *Cheffes: 500 Femmes Qui Font la Différence Dans les Cuisines de France* (Paris, 2019).

new understanding of women's cooking in which domesticity and business were deeply intertwined. Section four uses these sources to compare the status of female cooks in France and Britain and reflects on what cooks themselves thought about cooking. It highlights that French cooks invested their sense of self into their mastering of culinary skills to a larger degree than British cooks who mainly saw cooking as a job promotion. Learning how to cook to bourgeois standards was seen by French servants as an important rite of passage into the urban world.

The two remaining sections of the chapter seek to explain why this was the case by placing female cooks within their respective national culinary landscape. Section five deconstructs the discourses that female cooks used to describe their trade and explores their roots in broader societal attitudes towards cooking in each country. It compares middle-class attitudes towards cooking in France and Britain and their impact on the status of female cooks. In the British case, the section links the middle-class repulsion for raw cooking materials and the low status of female domestic cooks. In the French case, it examines the impact of nationalistic discourses around food on French women's attitudes in the kitchen. The section particularly focuses on how the popularity of regional gastronomy among French bourgeois dinners helped servants feel that they had significant culinary skills. French servants believed that learning to cook in urban bourgeois households was a life-changing experience which could catapult them up the social scale. This section offers a more complex understanding of domestic service in France as a constant cultural exchange between the towns and countryside rather than a one way 'cooking' lesson.

Section six offers a more market-based explanation for the different attitudes of French and British cooks. It compares the potential for social mobility offered by cooking through a

series of case studies of French and British ex-servants who became business owners. It turns the disadvantages of autobiographical sources, that is the fact that they tend to over represent successful and socially mobile individuals, into an asset by finding common patterns which made these women successful. These case studies are grounded within an analysis of the economy and in particular the characteristics of the tourism sector in each country in order to understand what opportunities female cooks had beyond domestic service. It shows how French servants successfully tapped into the tourism industry by positioning themselves as intermediaries between middle-class travellers and the countryside while British servants struggled to find a similar profitable space in a market dominated by large firms and foreign cooking. By focusing on the links between cooking and social mobility, this section not only helps to apprehend the different status of French and British cooks, it also broadens traditional approaches to women's mobility which too often focus on marriage rather than skills.

This chapter seeks to understand how food, whether it was consumed or cooked by servants, acted as a marker of their identities. It focuses on both how employers used food to impose sets of identities on their servants and how servants used it to enact their own sense of self. The chapter's comparative approach ultimately aims to show that food was linked to the performance of contrasting 'servant' identities in France and Britain.

I. A Power Struggle at the Dinner Table

Food was a *relational* marker of identity as servants constantly compared their meals to those of their employers. Mealtimes can help us apprehend the different types of relationships that servants had with their employers in France and Britain. This section

explores the mealtime arrangements for servants in upper-class houses, middle-class homes, family shops and country farms. It shows how meals helped in the formation and regulation of communities within the household. Mealtimes generated feelings of belonging or exclusion among servants, and in some cases, contributed to a sense of privacy, a relatively neglected theme in studies of domestic service.

A. Upstairs-Downstairs: Servants' Mealtime Experience in French and British Upper-classes Houses

In rich households with a large staff, servants' experiences at mealtimes were relatively similar in France and Britain. They were characterised by relatively good dining conditions combined with an extensive system of authority which left little room for relaxation and self-expression. Many servants remembered how good and plentiful the food was. In Britain, Jean Rennie noted that when she worked at Sawley Hall in the 1920s she 'ate masses of the very best of food, milk, butter, homemade jam, cakes, and scones; meat, vegetables; and puddings'.[10] In France, Paulette Belair who worked as a chamber maid for the gentry in Dordogne in the 1930s recalled that servants 'always ate well' while another French maid recalled the delicious jams and pies that were made specially for the staff.[11] Even when good food was served, however, it remained differentiated from the food served upstairs to the employers. In Hatfield house, Hertfordshire, kitchen maid Flo Wadlow noted the difference between the servants' and the employers' food:

> The staff meals weren't the same as the dining-room meals – 'course they weren't – but they had good meals really, joint of meat for Sundays and cold on the Monday. Perhaps on Tuesday we might have rabbit brought in from the estate, and we'd have

[10] J. Rennie, *Every Other Sunday* (Bath, 1978), p. 31
[11] Interview with Paulette Belair conducted by the author, 01 September 2016, in the author's possession; Marie, *Mes Patrons et mon Cœur: Mémoires d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1935), p. 145.

> rabbit pie or stew. One day a week we'd have fish. Sometimes this was fried and another time perhaps we'd make it into a fish pie.[12]

In the upper-class household for which Elizabeth Bristow worked, a similar distinction was enforced: 'The standard of food was as good for the staff as the dining room only it wasn't presented the same. If you had a saddle of lamb in the dining room, for the main course, you'd have lamb in the servants' hall, but it wouldn't be in a saddle but it would be lamb.'[13] In France, the servants of the Harcourt household ate well but had to content themselves with big loaves of bread while more refined bread such as baguettes were bought for the employers at a more expensive boulangerie.[14] The transformation of the meat into pie, the fact that the fish was fried or that big loaves were bought for the servants instead of more refined bread was not innocent. It replicated the food standards of poorer classes of consumers who more often ate pies and stews than bigger cuts of meat, or fish and chips than elaborate fish dishes.[15] In France, servants would also have been used to eating loaves of bread at home rather than baguettes which were a Parisian delicacy.[16] The food was transformed to meet the standards of the employees. They were served food that would have been familiar to them, while the same raw product served to produce meals that would satisfy the employers' palates. It can seem normal that cooks would decide to prepare the meals of the servants in a different way than for the employers because they knew each had different tastes. However, in most cases, the differentiation was imposed from above and stressed that employers thought that servants could not eat the same food as them. When Margaret Powell worked as a kitchen maid, she experienced first-hand the power that employers had over

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[12] F. Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove: A Kitchen Maid's Story* (Norwich, 2007), p. 41.
[13] G. Griffiths and S. Mullins, *Cap and Apron: An Oral History of Domestic Service in the Shires, 1880-1950* (Leicester, 1986), p. 51.
[14] P. Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne: Domestiques en 1900* (Paris, 1997), p. 47.
[15] M. Spring Rice, *Working-Class Wives: Their Health and Conditions (*Harmondsworth, 1939), p. 169; Thompson, *The Edwardians:* pp. 24-27; J. K. Walton, *Fish and Chips and The British Working Class, 1870-1940* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 137-161.
[16] S. L. Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 1700-1775* (London, 1996), p. 33.

servants' food as the cook she assisted received each day strict instructions about what servants could and could not eat:

> After we'd had our breakfast it was time for Mrs McIlroy and me to cook for upstairs. Like most of the meals this was very different from what we had. Mrs Clydesdale thought only about our nourishment, so we used to have things like herrings and cod and stews and milk puddings, but none of these nourishing foods ever found their way upstairs. So I was forced to the conclusion that even their internal organs differed from ours, inasmuch as what nourished us did them no good at all.[17]

In Lyon, the Marquis de Fayeux did not allow his servants to drink coffee whereas this was a common item of consumption across all classes by the twentieth century.[18] He might have been following the advice of Mme Pariset, the author of a popular domestic manual, who argued that servants did not need coffee. They should receive instead nourishing food like soup that would keep them full and which was a traditional type of breakfast taken by French people in the countryside.[19] Yvonne, a cook from Brittany who worked for a Parisian bourgeois family in the 1900s, gave a striking anecdote representative of the exclusion of servants from the expensive food and drinks of their employers. Her employer once complimented her about the meal she cooked for him and his guests and offered her a gift of her choice. She knew that he had 'excellent vintages in his cellars' and asked for a bottle of claret. This request antagonised her employer who shouted: 'Oh I will never give up my claret to you', and as if to temper the brutality of his refusal, he added: 'But I will give you a 5 francs coin.'[20] He was willing to give her money but not his wine because expensive wines were status symbols and demonstrated a particular taste associated with the upper class. Her employer was afraid that she might lay claim to the same refined taste as a

[17] M. Powell, *Below Stairs* (London, 2011), p. 58.
[18] M. Beal, 'La domesticité dans la Région Lyonnaise et Stéphanoise: Vers la Constitution d'un Prolétariat de Service (1848-1940); (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2016), vol.1, p. 505.
[19] Mme Pariset, *Nouveau Manuel Complet de la Maîtresse de Maison, ou Lettres sur l'Economie Domestique* (Paris, 1852), p. 158.
[20] Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne*, p. 185.

bourgeois like himself. If a servant had such a bottle of wine, it would imply that she had sensibilities that merited a higher position in the social hierarchy.

We can further interpret the different food served to servants by using Bourdieu's work on taste and social distinction. According to Bourdieu's understanding of taste, which opposes the upper-class aesthetic approach to food to the functional approach of the working class, servants were judged incapable by employers to reach the disinterested and refined pleasures in food of the upper and middle class.[21] Instead, they supposedly only valued the physical or 'nourishing' aspect of eating to which Margaret Powell alluded. In consequence, many employers must have thought that servants were better off consuming cheaper plain food or, in Yvonne's case, wine. Taste in food was used to articulate the social hierarchy within the household. Domestic service in rich households, therefore, could provide good food out of the reach of the servant, but social barriers remained nevertheless.

Servants ate this distinctive food in separate spaces from the employers. Most of upper-class houses had an 'upstairs' where the family lived and a 'downstairs' where the kitchen, the servants' hall and the rest of the servants' quarters were located.[22] Sometimes, the servants lived in one wing and the family occupied the rest of the house.[23] The servants' hall – or *salle des gens* in France – and the whole system of upstairs-downstairs embodied a class boundary that divided servants from their employers. Mollie Moran, a kitchen maid in a rich London household, thought that the layout of the house constantly enacted this social divide: 'Even if he [the master] wanted to, he could no more cross that class divide than he could walk to the moon, his dining room was on the other side of the house, but it may as well

[21] Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique,* p. xxv.
[22] J. Musson, *Up and Down Stairs: The History of The Country House Servant* (London, 2010), p. 52
[23] Ibid, p. 135.

have been 500 miles away, so apart were we. We used different doors, we ate at separate tables, and yet we all lived under the same roof.'[24] This physical division of space ensured that, as Lady Cynthia Asquith wrote in the 1920s, servants and employers 'knew their places, and kept to them as planets to their orbits'.[25] Edith Edwards, a kitchen maid in a rich Macclesfield household who barely saw her employers and was ignored by her mistress when she occasionally visited the kitchen, certainly knew hers. As she was locked all day in the basement of the house, invisible to her mistress, Edith Edwards 'used to feel down here'.[26] She experienced the physical boundary between her employers and herself as a social boundary so that she was not only 'downstairs' but felt 'down here'.

The design and furniture of the servants' hall also enacted the social hierarchy between servants and employers. Margaret Powell thought that in the many places where she worked the servants' hall 'didn't resemble a hall, it was just a room', often lacking in comfort.[27] Marcel Cusenier noted in his thesis about domestic service in France in 1912 that servants' halls tended to be small spaces 'stuck between the kitchen and the service corridor', even in newly-built mansions where one could have expected higher standards.[28] Downstairs spaces were poorly lit, claustrophobic, and often damp. Some had windows above eye level which brought in a modicum of light. As a result, many of these spaces were so dark that the gas had to remain on all day, which could create dangerous conditions when the room was not properly ventilated.[29] Mollie Moran worked in a house on Cadogan Square, London in the 1920s where the servants' hall had 'small windows covered in bars that looked out on to a

[24] M. Moran, *Aprons and Silver Spoons: The Heart-Warming Memoirs of a 1930s Kitchen Maid* (London, 2013), p. 186.
[25] C. Asquith, 'In Front of the Green Baize Door' in N. Streatfeild (ed), *The Day Before Yesterday: First-hand Stories of Fifty Years Ago* (London: Collins 1956), p. 102.
[26] S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford, 2005), p. 191.
[27] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 48.
[28] M. Cusenier, *Les Domestiques en France* (Paris, 1912), p. 84.
[29] Dr. H. Thierry and Dr L, Graux, *L'Habitation Urbaine* (Paris, 1901), p. 25; T. P. Teale, *Dangers to Health in Your Own Houses* (London, 1877).

sparse well between the houses and a bare bulb hanging from the ceiling'.[30] Doris Haze ate in a servants' hall whose windows 'looked out into the area, so dark that the electric light was on almost all day.'[31] The gloomy atmosphere was reinforced by the choice of paint for the room; what Margaret Powell called 'depressing […] chocolate brown half up the walls, and green the rest'.[32]

The furniture in the servants' hall was usually of low quality and composed of rejects from upstairs. Selma Panter, a maid in the 1930s, recalled that 'the servants' hall had a big table on stone slabs, the chairs were rejects, no backs to them.'[33] Margaret Powell also described a servants' hall furnished with 'misshapen wicker chairs which had once graced their conservatory and weren't even considered good enough for that now.'[34] At the Harcourt household in Paris, the servants' table was covered by an old tablecloth with the family crest to remind servants of their loyalty to the family. The tablecloth, however, was old and full of holes as it had been used for the upstairs rooms in the past and had now been relegated to the servants' hall.[35] Using once more Bourdieu's theory of taste and distinction, we can understand the furnishing of servants' halls through the opposition between a taste of luxury and a taste of necessity. Without even directly aspiring to stigmatise servants as social inferiors directly, employers thought there was no need to decorate with attention the servants' hall since servants would only value what was useful. The servants' hall was a constant material reminder of where servants stood.

[30] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 90.
[31] F. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: Domestic Service in England 1850-1939* (London, 1973), p. 80.
[32] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 185.
[33] Mullins and Griffiths, *Cap and Apron,* p. 32.
[34] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 73.
[35] Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne*, p. 46.

The spatial segregation between the servants' hall and the employer's quarters was also the product of the employers' desire for privacy as they wanted to enjoy conversations and confidences away from nosy servants.[36] Servants' own privacy, in contrast, was regularly intruded upon by their employers. They had to be constantly available to serve, even at mealtimes. The staff had their meals at a fixed time, generally a couple of hours before the employers in the morning and after them in the evening. This ensured a good service upstairs as people would always be ready to bring the meals. Flo Wadlow noted that because of this system, kitchen servants did not '[get] much time to have [their] own lunch. You either had it quick beforehand, or else you had it in the middle of the afternoon, when it was past the best.'[37] It could be said that it made sense from a practical point of view, and that many occupations, such as factory workers also had dedicated lunch times. But the servants' case differed because they lived in the house of their employers, where all their meals were regulated while the factory workers only submitted to this regulation for lunch. Winifred Relph noted that it was only on Christmas Day that 'the "gentry" were pledged to give us this hour (one hour in the whole year) and not ring a single bell.' But most of the time, eating times was not understood as a private moment for servants. This idea was expressed in a joke told to Margaret Powell while she was in service: 'I remember a story he told me once about a raw country girl who went into service – it was her very first place – and the lady said to her, "Elsie, I like my breakfast at eight o'clock in the morning." So Elsie said, "Oh, that's all right, Madam. If I'm not down, don't wait for me."'[38] Only a 'raw country girl' could fail to understand that she was expected to adapt her life to serve her mistress' interests, even on what time she should take her breakfast. This joke stresses that it was common knowledge for servants that mealtimes were in the hands of the employers, not the

[36] A. Jackson, *The Middle Classes 1900–1950* (Nairn, 1991), p. 36.
[37] Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove*, p. 39.
[38] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 68.

employees. Many servants – especially kitchen servants – did not even sit to eat their food, as they were too busy working. Sitting down for a meal never had to be taken for granted by the servants.[39] Work for the employers always had to come first, so that the servants were ready to stand at any point. Joan Bellan, for example, was reprimanded by her mistress when she did not stand in her presence because she was eating her dinner.[40] This behaviour could be dismissed as an excess of authority but was in fact profoundly significant. Similar techniques were used in military training and their aim was equivalent: mortify the self.[41] Employers used their power during mealtimes, either through rules or in person, to show that those under their authority had no time to themselves, they had to be completely available to serve.

The *way* that servants ate was also directly regulated in the servants' hall. Even when they were out of view of their mistress and master, in spaces where the family would scarcely venture, servants who were part of large staffs could not act freely at mealtimes. In some houses, the rules of the servants' hall would be displayed on the wall to remind them of the strict discipline they had to follow.[42] These rules were enforced by the upper-servants who reported directly to the master and the mistress – the housekeepers, the lady's maids, the butlers and the valets. The application of the rules was facilitated by the layout of the house. Following the recommendation of architects, the servants' hall was often positioned next to

[39] A. Kynoch, *The King's Seat* (Letchworth, 1966), p. 180; E. Hall, *Canary Girl and Stockpots* (Luton, 1977), p. 2; Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove*, p. 12; R. Scadden, *No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service* (Llandysul, 2013), p. 71; Mullins and Griffiths, *Cap and Apron*, p. 41; M. Higgs, *Servants' Stories: Life Below Stairs in their Own Words 1800-1950* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 157; Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 62.
[40] J. Lakeman and J. Bellan, *Them Days from The Memories of Joan Bellan* (Padstow, 1982), p. 99.
[41] E. Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 22.
[42] Musson, *Up and Down*, p. 207; P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 2010), p. 226.

the butler or housekeeper's room so that he or she could monitor it at all times.[43] However, the butlers and housekeepers did not only survey this space from afar. They often took part in the rules and rituals of the servants' hall at mealtime. Inside the servants' hall, the power structure of the staff was displayed, and mealtime was, as a house parlour maid put it, 'when protocol and snobbery took over'.[44] While the servants' place was downstairs, there was a variety of 'places' one could occupy both spatially and socially within that area. Many homes used a hierarchical seating plan where servants sat at different ends of the table according to their rank. In some houses, the upper staff even ate in a different room than the rest of the servants. The meal itself was served in the order of the servants' position.[45] Eileen, a young housemaid in a country house 'dare not to go to a meal' without the head housemaid, nor could she leave the table without her permission: 'When she put down her knife and fork, we had to do the same, whether we had finished our meal or not'. [46] Like sergeant-majors and school prefects, the upper servants were enrolled to enforce the rules when the staff was outside of the gaze of their employers. Even at the table, servants were in constant contact with authority.

Among the most striking rules enforced by some households was silence at mealtimes.[47] The practice of eating in silence was rooted in religious traditions. It was often used in monasteries to invite the monks to continue their prayers over their supper and maintain their discipline.[48] One servant compared the stringent rules of service to those of a monastery while two others linked it to those of the army. Another parallel can be drawn with how

[43] I. Ware, *A Complete Body of Architecture*. *Adorned with Plans and Elevations, from Original Designs* (London, 1768), p. 413; P. A. Barron, *The House Desirable* (London, 1929), p. 46.
[44] Mullins and Griffiths, *Cap and Apron*, p. 15.
[45] Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne*, p. 48.
[46] E. Balderson, *Backstairs Life in a Country House* (Oxford, 1982), p. 38.
[47] Balderson, *Backstairs Life*, p. 63; Mullins and Griffiths, *Cap and Apron*, p. 16.
[48] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of The Prison* (New York, 1995), p. 317.

children were treated: they also often had to sit straight and eat in silence.[49] Monasteries, the army and schools were all powerful total institutions which were designed to shape individuals, make them compliant and reduce the strength of their individuality.[50] These aims also applied to domestic service in mansions and country houses, in which the servant could not behave like her usual self when she was eating, but had to stay silent and continue to be submissive.

Servants suffered from the constant surveillance and communal living in domestic service. While putting on their uniform for the first time signified for many their entry into the world of work and adulthood, domestic service and its seemingly never-ending stream of rules at mealtimes infantilised servants. Eileen Balderson longed instead for privacy symbolised by a family dinner rather than time alone:

> Often during autumn and winter evenings I used to look down at the cottages as dusk was falling and see the lights appearing in the window, and smoke rising from the chimneys. It looked such a picture of peace and contentment. I could visualise the families sitting down to tea, beside a cosy fire and think how lovely it must be to have one's own little place and someone who really cares.[51]

The need for privacy was not reserved to the upper class. Servants themselves thought that meals should be a haven from work, however unrealistic these ideas were when in reality women would often keep cleaning and cooking as the family ate together. Mealtimes were nonetheless supposed to be a private and grounding moment within the family unit. In French and British upper-class houses, however, they were organised around the needs of the employers. As a result, servants struggled with the lack of boundaries between work and

[49] Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p. 97 and p. 103.
[50] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 178.
[51] Balderson, *Backstairs Life*, p. 104.

non-work which made it difficult to maintain their individuality among the constant flow of protocols and orders.

B. Alone in the Kitchen: French and British Servants' Mealtime Experience in Middle-class Houses

Most twentieth-century servants worked alone or with another person in middle-class households, far from the standards of the aristocracy.[52] In the suburban villas of the British middle class and the Haussmann flats of the French bourgeoisie, the food was not always 'good and plentiful'. There was not enough space either to run an upstairs-downstairs system. This did not mean, however, that distinctions were not enforced. Middle-class households tried to establish distinctions between themselves and their servants at mealtimes to enforce a social hierarchy and preserve their privacy. With limited space and financial means, these distinctions could be blunt and hurtful for servants. In most autobiographies of general maids or servants in small households, the food was described as poor and lacking. Eileen who worked in a middle-class household alongside another servant, described that 'the potatoes were counted so we only had one potato each'.[53] This experience chimes with the conclusion of a report on domestic service published in 1916 which claimed that most complaints about food came from servants in 'small households'.[54] Bad diet in itself, however, was not the most important as many servants would have experienced poor and insufficient food with their family. Central to the accounts of bad food in service was the

[52] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, pp. 34-5; M. Ebery and B. Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914* (Reading, 1976), p. 20 and p. 69; E. Higgs, 'Domestic servants and households in Rochdale, 1851-1871' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1979) p. 53-66; S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and Their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880–1914', *Economic History Review,* 62/2 (2009), pp. 410-15; L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), p. 6.
[53] Scadden, *No Job,* p. 104.
[54] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, p. 46.

distinction between the diets of employers and servants, which symbolised the hierarchy within the household. Eileen had to share one egg with the other servant in a London household for her dinner, mixing it with some water and cornflour to make it more substantial. In contrast, her employers enjoyed an egg each in the dining room.[55] In France, Marguerite's employers asked their servants to eat margarine while butter was reserved for the family.[56] Servants also recalled that they had to eat old eggs or jams and that they were given lower-quality coffee than their employers.[57] In other cases, only employers were allowed to add sugar to their coffee, and to ensure that servants did not steal their precious sugar cubes, they were often kept under lock.[58] Nancy Sharman, a general maid, not only had to eat different food from her employers; the food she was asked to eat was bad: 'The old lady insisted on me drinking any sour milk that was left over, for it would do me good she said and would be a pity to waste it.'[59] Winifred Foley, another maid, also had to eat rotten food: 'Rigor mortis had already begun to set in on the tiny cube of stale corned beef; the dry outside was curling up with mortification for having bothered a clean plate. Sitting in a lonely state on another plate was a wizened apple.'[60] In another job, her mistress would send her to the butcher 'for three penn'orth of cat's meat. The best of these pieces she kept for the cat, and the rest, with a penn'orth of pot-herb, made the stew for our dinner.'[61] Bad food stressed the servants' place at the bottom of the household hierarchy. Servants were acutely aware of the symbolism of these dietary distinctions, one of them asking defiantly: 'How would they [the employers] like food of a cheap or inferior kind got for them?'.[62]

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[55] Scadden, *No Job,* p. 101.
[56] M. Bregnard, *Marguerite, Une Delloise à Paris* (Tours, 2005), p. 66.
[57] Ibid, p. 66; Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne*, p. 162; Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 78; E. Daney, *Une Vie, Toute une Vie,* APA, 2314, p. 16; Y. Cretté-Breton, *Mémoires d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1966), p. 41.
[58] J. Mouillon, *Souvenirs*, APA, 3101, p. 18.
[59] N. Sharman, *Nothing to Steal: The Story of a Southampton Childhood* (London, 1977), p. 63.
[60] W. Foley, *A Child in the Forest* (Cheltenham, 1991), p. 141.
[61] Ibid, p. 176.
[62] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, p. 47.

In some houses, it was quite common that instead of having special food bought for them, servants would eat whatever remained after their employers had their food, a tradition that could be traced back to medieval feasts.[63] Marian Isobel Taylor and her fellow servants 'just had to find what we could and eat it', leading her to sometimes eat 'cold fried fish for breakfast'.[64] However, cookbooks were full of recipes on how to accommodate leftovers and people, even in comfortable middle-class households, ate leftovers so no food went to waste.[65] Eating leftovers, therefore, was not in itself a stigmatising practice. It was rather the scarcity of the left-over food that made servants feel inferior. Anne Kynoch who worked as a maid for a lodger, felt humiliated by the small quantity and bad quality of leftovers:

> Breakfast might be a feast or a famine according to the appetites of the guests, for the staff ate the remains from the dining-room tables. Toast and bread were thrown into a washing basket into which we delved, greedy with hunger, then like animals took our scrounging to some corner of the huge kitchen. Standing there we ate our unappetising food. At lunch and tea, the survival of the fittest was the rule when we fought for the disgusting scraps of fodder in circumstances which were degrading to human beings. How I hated mealtimes![66]

Hunger was a humiliating sign of servants' powerlessness in front of mean-spirited or stingy employers. Yvonne Cretté-Breton recalled the ultimate humiliation in a household where she was only allowed a bit of old bread with thirty grams of meat, weighed by the mistress, and a wizened apple for her meals. Desperately hungry, she ate the meat broth destined for the dog. Like the British servant Anne Kynoch who compared servants eating bad food scraps left by employers to animals, Yvonne Cretté-Breton thought that the lack of food dehumanised servants and brought them, literally in her case, at the same level as animals.[67]

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[63] J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 140-142.
[64] Higgs, *Servants' Stories*, p. 143.
[65] Mennel, *All Manners*, p. 192.
[66] Kynoch, *The King's Seat*, p. 180.
[67] Cretté-Breton, *Mémoire d'une Bonne*, p. 89.

Not all employers, however, should be reduced to mean-spirited people obsessed with enforcing the social hierarchy within their house. In many cases, the bad diet that servants struggled with came from the economic difficulty of middle-class households who employed a servant whereas they could barely afford one financially. To make ends meet, the food provided to the servant was sparse and of low quality so that standards could be maintained upstairs in front of the guests. Even in these types of situations, nevertheless, the fact that the servant ate lower quality food than the simple diet of the employers or that they ate their leftovers perpetuated a sense of social hierarchy. Therefore, the poorly paid general maid had to struggle with the stigma of being a servant and working in a poor household, which placed her at the very bottom of the social hierarchy with an empty dinner plate.

Servants ate their food in the kitchen while employers enjoyed their meal in the dining room. This system protected the employers' privacy and reproduced on a smaller scale the hierarchal distinction in force in the grand houses of the upper class. When Winifred Foley exceptionally ate with her senile employer to care for her, the old lady felt undermined by the lack of spatial distinctions. She warned her 'Don't go getting big ideas that you are a lady's equal', thereby highlighting the hierarchal purpose of the traditional system of spatial distinctions at mealtimes. [68]

Conditions were often dreadful in the kitchens of middle-class houses which further stigmatized servants as inferior beings. Middle-class employers struggled economically during the interwar period which meant that the distinctions were often sharper between the front of the house where they strived to maintain their social status and the back rooms, especially the rooms for servants, for which there was little money left in their limited

[68] Foley, *A Child*, p.134.

budget.[69] Despite the modernization of kitchens during the interwar period, middle-class' kitchens were still often badly ventilated and smelly, with old pieces of furniture and no chairs to sit for a meal or rest.[70] This was because kitchens were often cramped, not much bigger than ten to twelve square meters.[71] Their small size made it difficult for servants to sit down to eat their meal when most of the kitchen space was occupied by cooking and washing up. Ethel Beaumont described her first place as a cook-general in the 1920s where 'the house was exceptionally nice – for the owners. The rooms were well furnished in good taste to give the greatest possible comfort. But in the kitchen – there was only a wooden table and two wooden chairs, one backless. There was no fire to sit by, merely a coke boiler and a gas-stove'.[72] The lack of chairs and other furniture signalled to servants that their well-being did not matter to their employers. The maid could barely see the light of the day or breeze some fresh air in the kitchen, which was often lighted by a small window tile. [73] Some kitchens in the Grenelle and Javel neighbourhood in Paris did not have any windows at all, letting the gas used for cooking accumulate in an unhealthy manner.[74] Toilet piping ran alongside the kitchen walls, carrying bad smells and, if badly maintained, dripping part of their content into the room. These conditions were all the more shocking in the few cases where the maid had to sleep on a fold up bed in the kitchen in places where there were no attic rooms available for her.[75] Bad smells were trapped in small kitchens due to the fact that employers feared that aerated kitchens might lead the stench to reach their own quarters.[76]

[69] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 66.
[70] Ibid, p. 122.
[71] M. Donald, 'Tranquil Havens? Critiquing the Idea of Home as the Middle-Class Sanctuary' in I. Bryden and J. Floyd (eds), *Domestic Space: Reading The Nineteenth Century Interior* (Manchester, 1999), p. 114; Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 84.
[72] Horn, T*he Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Stroud, 1990), p. 199.
[73] Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 85; Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 172; Bouvier, *Mes Mémoires: Une Syndicaliste Féministe (1876-1935)* (Paris, 2015), p. 73; Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, p. 47.
[74] Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 85; A. Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes: La Domesticité Féminine à Paris en 1900* (Paris, 2003), p. 113.
[75] Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 89; Daney, *Une Vie*, p. 41.
[76] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, pp. 47-48.

Therefore, the kitchen's design created an unhealthy but also stigmatizing environment for servants: they were relegated in a fetid and over-heated underworld so that their employers could enjoy some fresh air in their nicely furnished rooms.

C. Mealtimes in British Lower-middle-class Households: Respecting Privacy

Conditions at mealtimes differed in British and French lower-middle-class households. Among the lower echelons of the middle class, social distinctions were not always clear-cut. Some service relationships were interwoven by kinship links. In certain households, servants had friendly relationships with their employers. They were treated better, worked alongside their mistress and even ate the same food as the family.[77] In Britain, however, one distinction tended to remain: servants did not eat with their employers. They either ate in a separate space from their employers or, for those who did not have the luxury of having a kitchen and a dining room, at a different time.[78]

Spatial segregation at mealtimes in lower-middle-class households had more to do with the family's need for privacy than a desire for grand social display like in the servants' halls of grand mansions. Since the mid-nineteenth century, standards of privacy and a narrower understanding of the family unit shaped middle-class domestic ideals.[79] The maid was necessary to the smooth running of family life but, at the same time, she was fundamentally

[77] Pooley, 'Domestic servants', pp. 420-421; Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 47.
[78] P. Thompson, 'Interview with Miss Bailey' in 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973', University of Essex. Department of Sociology, Lummis, T., UK Data Service [distributor], May 12, 2009, SN:2000, Para. 738. http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-2000-1, https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk//QualiBank/Document/?cid=q-3e5b8735-c042-45f3-af5a-34d20f11f605 (10 October 2017).
[79] M. Perrot, P. Ariès, G. Duby, *A History of Private life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 235; L. Davidoff, C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987), p. 180; E. Gordon and G. Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 2003), pp. 107-108.

excluded from it since she was not a family member. The desire for privacy was particularly strong at mealtimes. As men increasingly left the household to work during the day, breakfast and dinners were the only meals during which the family sat together.[80] This need for family privacy led to the segregation of different spaces within the home and in particular the clear distinction between the kitchen where the servant toiled and the parlour where the family ate and socialised.

Exceptional cases in which servants ate with their employers reveal the gendered aspect of this ideology of domesticity and family life. Servants only shared their employers' meals in households from which men were absent. When the family unit was broken or dysfunctional, women tended to be involved in productive activities to make ends meet, which in turn disrupted the idea of the home as a private haven. For example, Elsie Oman worked as a maid-of-all-work for a family who ran a bed and breakfast.[81] Before the war, the family had servants to run the business and adhered to strict distinctions between the family and its servants. During the war and with the husband missing, however, the mistress and her daughter ran the business alongside Elsie Oman and ate their meals together in the kitchen. Within these particular circumstances, the servant could be included at the dinner table because she was not intruding on a moment of repose and retreat from work shared by the family unit. The case of Mrs Jaggard is another striking example of the gender dynamics at play within the relationships between employers and employees at mealtimes.[82] She worked for a lower-middle-class household where the wife came from a shopkeeper's family and the husband was a schoolmaster. She praised the family for treating her with not too much

[80] J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, 1999), pp. 18-21.
[81] E. Oman, *Salford Stepping Stones* (Swinton, 1983), p. 43.
[82] Thompson, 'Interview with Mrs. Jaggard', Para. 151-154, https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk//QualiBank/Document/?cid=q-96b8eaf8-14f4-4040-b5cb-8ceaa85b7b54 (10 October 2017).

distance unlike other middle-class households she worked for and recalled that she took her midday meal with her mistress and the children. However, she had her breakfast and dinner in the kitchen with the children while husband and wife shared these two meals upstairs. This innocent detail is crucial to understand the way that ideals about the family and the home shaped the place of servants in the household. When the master was away to work and the mistress helped her maid with the household tasks, it was acceptable for them to sit down at lunch together. When the husband came back, however, ideals about privacy and companionate marriage excluded the maid from the dinner table so that husband and wife could enjoy this crucial time together.

Privacy, however, was also something that British servants aspired to at mealtimes. While young servants could at times feel lonely in the kitchen, servants did not tend to criticise the segregation at mealtimes. Their comments focused on the bad food or the dire state of the kitchens they had to eat in rather than on the fact that they ate separately from their employers. Mrs Bucknell, for example, justified the fact that her servant ate in the kitchen as a way of giving her some respite from the family – letting her 'eat her meal in peace' – rather than to create social distance'.[83] Mrs Bucknell's explanation made clear that servants were outside of the family circle so that these two different entities each deserved some privacy. In contrast with the situation of servants in large households, the middle-class kitchen could be a place for servants to have a little alone time and, in some cases, enjoy the company of their friends. On Sundays Daisy Noakes could invite her boyfriend for tea and enjoyed 'plenty of food and good conversation'.[84] Daisy England 'loved the little kitchen where Louise and I made ourselves quite comfortable, and where I could eat as much as I

[83] Thompson, 'Interview with Mrs. Bucknell', Para. 72, https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk//QualiBank/Document/?cid=q-6e065a4f-950c-4265-ae4e-d14981c08164 (10 October 2017).
[84] D. Noakes, *The town Beehive: A Young Girl's Lot, Brighton 1910-1934* (Brighton, 1980), p. 84.

liked, and read with the same freedom, after my work was done.'[85] Receiving friends for lunch and reading were activities associated with the privacy of one's home or one's room in the case of servants. Segregation at mealtimes, therefore, could paradoxically helped servants to cope with their work, find respite and, more generally, develop their sense of self beyond service. Eating in a different room from their employers, created healthy social boundaries in servants' lives, although they were often erected in unhealthy dingy kitchens.

D. Sharing a Meal: French Servants Working in Farms and Shops

In the home of artisans, shopkeepers and farmers, French servants were more likely to eat with their employers. This practice highlights an alternative model of family life and a conception of domestic service that is seldom discussed in works which tend to focus on the rising standards of privacy embraced by the middle class.[86] Farmers were the most important social group in France while shopkeepers and artisans were the third most important.[87] Many women's experiences of domestic service happened in these types of households and their accounts tell a different story about the place and status of domestic servants.

Eating together was symptomatic of the connection between the domestic and productive spheres. Artisans and shopkeepers' homes were directly connected to their trade: the family lived in a few rooms at the back of the shop or above it.[88] Employers and their servants engaged in a constant back and forth: they sold items in the shop and fetched products stored in the back rooms, cleaned the counter and the rest of the house, cooked in the kitchen for

[85] D. England, *Daisy Daisy* (London, 1981), p. 100.
[86] A. Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*; P. Guiral and G. Thuillier*, La Vie Quotidienne des Domestique en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1978)*;* Ariès, Duby and Perrot, *History of Private Life*.
[87] O. Marchand and C. Thélot, *Deux Siècles de Travail en France* (Paris, 1991), p. 91.
[88] G. Crossick and H.-G. Haupt, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe 1780-1914: Enterprise, Family and Independence* (London, 1995), p. 91.

the family and the clients. The home was a workplace. On farms, the employers often worked alongside their staff or oversaw their work in the fields, the dairy, the henhouse and the house. The table was not only a place to eat but also a place to work, count money, fix items or preserve harvested fruits. The meals that servants shared with their employers at the table were short.[89] They were seen as a necessity to replenish one's force rather than a ritual in which the family would gather and spend time together. On farms, the food was simple; soups and hotpots meant to fill the stomach rather than to entertain the palate.[90] In a world dominated by work – if no one was in the shop, no profits could be made; if the cows and chickens were not properly tended to, there would be no food for the coming year – eating was not considered yet a leisurely moment. Mealtimes were strongly connected to the productive sphere in which both employers and employees took part.

French servants often came from the countryside and were used to practices of communal eating. For those working in bourgeois households where servants ate separately from the employers, this exclusion was a shock. Marie who came from a farming family and previously worked for shopkeepers, was appalled not to eat with her new employers and remembered with nostalgia the 'pretty table with sixteen people at the farm, employees included.'[91] For her first job, Madeleine instinctively dressed the dinner table for four people and cried after being told by her mistress that she was supposed to eat alone in the kitchen.[92] These statements can also be read as articulating a myth of social harmony in the countryside in order to criticise the depersonalised relationships between urban servants and their employers. The table played an important role in these servants' complaints because it

[89] Ibid, p. 92; P. Piegay, *Domestiques Agricoles et Servantes de Ferme dans les Sociétés Paysannes (de 1900 aux années 1960)* (Paris, 2007), p. 22.
[90] R. Bonnain-Moerdijk, 'L'Alimentation Paysanne en France entre 1850 et 1936', *Études Rurales*, 58 (1975), pp. 29-49.
[91] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 9.
[92] M.-T. Tual, *Ainsi Sont-Ils*, APA, Ambérieu-en-Bugey, 845, p. 35.

symbolised a shared sense of space in an ideal rural society where the servant and her master were bound together in a society of mutuality.[93] Unlike their British counterparts, therefore, French servants did not find solace in the break mealtimes provided from the demands of their employers. They saw it as the epitome of everything that was wrong with modern domestic service.

The rural world that servants were referring back to in their criticism of urban and bourgeois domestic service, however, was far from an egalitarian society. While servants were integrated in the family, they were not treated as equals at mealtimes. Marie ate her breakfast with her male employer in the morning since the two of them were responsible for opening the shop.[94] Even so, while she sat at the same table as the employer, she had to serve the dishes and received her food last.[95] On Sundays, she often had to satisfy herself with the chicken carcass while her employers ate the more tasty chicken breasts.[96] Euphrasie Daney also sat at the same table as her employers who owned a creperie. However, she was once asked to eat the veal kidneys that the son of her employers spat back, so that it would not go to waste.[97] In shop-keeping households, therefore, the servant was not far remote from the family, but she generally remained an employee with inferior rights than her employers.

On farms with male and female employees, distinctions at mealtimes tended to be gendered rather than socially hierarchical. Men who worked as farm hands in the fields received their food first and could pick the few bits of meat from the soup.[98] The maids who worked in the

[93] Similar tropes about the table as a place of unity can be found in nineteenth-century English rural ballades: A. Howkins and I. C. Dyck, "'The Time's Alteration": Popular Ballads, Rural Radicalism and William Cobbett', *History Workshop Journal,* 23/1 (1987), p. 23.
[94] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 39.
[95] Ibid, p. 37.
[96] Ibid, p. 54.
[97] Daney, *Une Vie*, p. 16.
[98] Interview with Florentine Noireau, 'A Propos des Plats Traditionnels, des Repas', UCPC-Métives, 003778_11,

henhouse, the dairy and the house ate last, soaking their bread into the watery soup left behind. In some cases, the men and the employers sat at the table while the maids had to stand up and peep over the farm hands to reach the food.[99] The maids were eating both symbolically and literally 'behind everyone else'.[100] Food represented a hierarchy of skills and physical exertion with the maid whose work was entirely domestic at the bottom of the scale.

Hierarchies at mealtimes, however, were not always straightforward in rural and small family-run enterprises. Domestic service relationships were negotiated on a personal basis depending on the social origins of the maid. Since around 33% of female servants came from farming families, many of these women were not obviously inferior to their employers.[101] In case of small-scale migrations, the social standing of the maid was well-known to the employers. In the cases of longer-distance migrations, however, the maid had to actively negotiate her social status within the employers' household and the dinner table was a key place where she could express herself. For example, a maid insisted – and succeeded – in being served first at lunch time when she sat at the same table as her employers who were shopkeepers, because she learned at school that it was the polite way to serve guests.[102] She did not see herself as an inferior worker but as a guest, working at her employer's house. This was an extreme case, but other servants' accounts suggest that

http://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=75055&fonds=&cid=65 (15 October 2017); 'Discussion avec une Habitante d'Arqueneuf sur son Histoire Familiale et les Objets de sa Maison', Base Inter-Régionale Patrimoine Oral-Bourgogne, 1216a01_01, http://patrimoine-oral.org/dyn/portal/index.seam?aloId=6195&page=alo&fonds=1 (15 October 2017).

[99] Interview with Marcel Baudin, 'A propos des Salaires et de la Nourriture des Valets de Ferme et des Couturières', UCP Métives, A00032_07, http://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=30819 (15 October 2017).

[100] Interview with Agnès Clochard, 'Mme Clochard Raconte qu'elle ne Mangeait Pas Toujours à sa Faim', UCP Métives, 003429_08, http://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=69699&fonds=&cid=282 (15 October 2017).

[101] C. Villeneuve-Gokalp, 'Les Gens de Maison', *Population* 49/3 (1994), p. 776.

[102] Mouillon, *Souvenirs*, p. 17.

the social hierarchy within the household was not always straightforward. Marie who came from a farming family received her mistress's leftover dessert. Offended by the gesture she refused to eat the dessert and told her mistress that she 'did not eat leftovers from others, that I was not used to eating in a dirty plate'.[103] She explained in more detail that 'At my parents (…) we don't eat in the same bowl, like pigs eating in the same through… We each use a clean plate.' These women felt able to leverage their family status to negotiate better treatment from their employers. If their family were small property holders, it was also a form of insurance that made it easier for them to move jobs and leave employers who fed their servants badly.

II. The Kitchen, the Servants' Hall and the Market Square: Subversive Spaces

A. Coming Together around Food Theft

Servants were not passive within this system of dominance and authority at mealtimes. Servants' autobiographies reveal that in households where servants and employers ate separately, servants used the spatial segregation to their advantage. While the dark kitchen in the basement was a symbol of rejection by the employers, it also was a place that allowed various levels of insubordination since the employers rarely ventured there. The kitchen was dominated by the cook who knew how to navigate the many cupboards, or store and larder rooms in country houses, giving her control over this space. In most upper and middle-class households, the mistress would consult her cook in the morning for the day's menu, but she was not welcomed in the kitchen after that.[104] Eileen Balderson, a housemaid, recalled that 'If she [the mistress] did go to the kitchen later, which was rarely, she knocked on the door

[103] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 155
[104] Horn, *Below Stairs*, p. 63.

and waited for cook to say "Come in".'[105] This behaviour was a very obvious reversal of the general code of conduct between servants and employers. This was not an exaggeration from the servants' part. Employers' accounts reveal how they saw the kitchen as a servant-dominated space. One employer described her struggle to find the courage to go downstairs to talk to her servant: 'It requires a very strong sense of duty to make one go where one is so palpably unwelcomed'.[106] The cooks' empowerment can also be read in the fact that many of them called their working space 'my kitchen' whereas the entire place was owned by their employers. Marguerite, a cook for a Parisian household, was happy with her second employers because she felt like 'the mistress of my kitchen'. [107] The phrase was symptomatic of the reversal of power within the kitchen space.

The control that the cook had over the kitchen allowed her to rebel against the employers' choice regarding the servants' diet. The cook in the household Katherine Henderson worked for in the 1910s thought that it was unfair that the staff had to eat 'bread and cheese and cocoa for supper' while the employers had a hot meal.[108] She also rejected this meal because it infantilised the servants: it was similar to the type of dinner served to children before bed.[109] She decided to 'cook extra of whatever the family was having' and serve it to the servants instead. She crushed attempts to infantilize servants by asserting her agency and power in the kitchen. Even after her scheme was discovered by the employers who expressed their discontentment, the cook rebelled again. 'As there was always plenty of food in the store cupboard, which was never locked', she cooked a hot meal for servants. They ate in front of an open drawer in which they could hide their hot meal in case the employers came

[105] Balderson, *Backstairs Life*, p. 17.
[106] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 94.
[107] Bregnard, *Marguerite, Une Delloise*, p. 67.
[108] K. Henderson, 'Had I but know', Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography, Brunel University Library, 2:384, p. 384.
[109] A. Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport, 2007), p. 47.

in the kitchen. Marguerite used the same trick to eat the employer's jam with the lady's maid whereas they were supposed to eat lower quality jam. They ate the jam for their breakfast and hid it in the kitchen drawers when the mistress came in.[110]

From the servant's point of view, stealing food was not a greedy act, on the contrary, it was a way for the community of servants to fight the greediness of the employers. The use of 'we' in many of servants' autobiographical accounts confirms the existence of a community around such actions. If collectivity could be used by employers to discipline servants in the servants' halls, theft also shows its potential for empowerment. The theft of the employers' coffee and the occasional bottle of wine, for example, brought Yvonne the cook, the chambermaid and the valet together; creating links of trust and life-long friendship.[111] In other autobiographies, friends made in domestic service were similarly remembered alongside anecdotes about kitchen-theft, indicating that these acts were strongly linked to feelings of trust and community. Marguerite, for example, presented herself as a good and hard-working servant in her autobiography but she mentioned at some point that she stole some jam from her employers.[112] She shared this anecdote at the same time as she recalled her friendship with the lady's maid, noting that they wrote to each other until her friend's death. By stealing or benefiting from theft, servants were brought closer together. Being able to keep one's job and get a good reference depended on this mutual agreement. Theft was thought as a symbolic act of partnership in service rather than pure transgression.

Theft was considered acceptable only if it remained a communal action benefiting the servants who felt exploited regarding food; it could not serve a servant's personal interest at

[110] Bregnard, *Marguerite, Une Delloise*, p. 66.
[111] Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne*, p. 181.
[112] Bregnard, *Marguerite, Une Delloise*, p. 66.

the detriment of others. At a Sports Day in the country house Daisy Noakes worked at, servants traditionally ate the cakes leftover from the party. However, a temporary maid did not respect the rules and 'put a couple up her bloomer leg' during the event. [113] As soon as this was noticed, she was punished by the other servants who asked her to pick up plates from the ground, resulting in the cakes being turned to mush. The fact that the woman at fault was described as a 'temporary maid' was significant. She was not part of the servant community and did not know nor share its rules concerning how to gain illegal access to food. The condemnation of such acts was much greater when the person at fault was part of the regular staff. When a cook acted on her own to steal some food, she was strongly condemned by Lavinia Banks and the rest of the staff:

> The cook had her perks from the various tradesmen (…). There was undoubtedly some questionable dealing going on in this quarter that was brought to light when a dish of very tainted bacon was served up for breakfast in the Servants' Hall. No one was able to eat it and just made do with bread and jam. However, when it was served up a second morning this was just too much, and we were in a distinctly explosive mood.'[114]

Even in cases of theft and disobedience, the servants worked as a community with organised rules. Outside these rules, acts such as disrobing cakes made for the guests or stealing the bacon bought for the staff were considered as theft and the community of servants condemned them. Theft was understood as a structural adjustment of the balance of power in domestic service carried out by the entire community rather than an individual action.

However, there was no community to regulate or approve of the maid-of-all-work's actions. Few general maids mentioned food theft in their autobiographies. Because of their position

[113] Noakes, *The Town Beehive*, pp. 56-57.
[114] J. Burnett, *Useful Toil Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 192*0s (London, 1974), pp. 227-228.

as the only servant in the household, the one on one situation with their employers made them more directly accountable and thus less likely to risk stealing food. There also was no community to support the transgressions of the servant. Without a group to back their story, it is understandable that many of these women, even if they did occasionally steal food, did not share any insights on this theme in their autobiographies. Because they were on their own, their theft had a higher chance of being viewed as greedy and individualistic. Juliette Mouillon, for example, shared the story of an unsuccessful theft.[115] While the servants mentioned above painted theft as a fair act of transgression against the employers, Juliette's story was shameful and awkward. The maid-of-all-work tried to steal some sugar cubes by putting them in her apron's pockets when her mistress unexpectedly came into the room. Panicked, Juliette rushed to the toilet and let the sugar cubes fall down the toilet pan with an obvious plopping sound. She left the toilets red with shame and never tried to steal sugar again. In this story, the maid was not making fun of the employer by stealing food. On the contrary, she was the ridiculous one, terrified to lose her job because of her failed theft attempt. She had no one to blame but herself and no one to rely on. The silence about theft in maids-of-all-works' autobiographies, therefore, might not mean that these women never stole food; instead it stresses that the community was paramount in justifying and apprehending food theft and subversion in service.

B. Kitchen Drama

Servants also used the spatial segregation between the kitchen and the dining room to play tricks on their employer by altering their food. Nancy Sharman, a house-parlour maid in the 1930s, recalled spilling rice on the floor on her way to the dining room where her employers

[115] Mouillon, *Souvenirs*, p. 18.

were hosting a business lunch. Instead of cooking a new batch of rice, she quickly scooped up the rice and served it as if nothing had happened. She recalled, with a hint of malice, that when she returned to the dining room one of the guests told her to "Thank cook for the lovely dinner. The nutmeg in the rice was simply perfect!"'[116] This anecdote challenged the idea that servants' tastes were underdeveloped and crude compared to their more refined employers. The most eccentric story comes from Margaret Powell who recalled how one morning her employers requested a savoury for dinner using the kipper left from breakfast. To her horror, Margaret Powell realised that she had thrown the kipper into 'the pig bucket under the sink'. Instead of admitting her mistake, she 'rushed to the pig bucket' and 'fished the kipper out'. Since 'it was covered in tea leaves and some other nasty bits and pieces', she gave it a rinse only to drop the kipper 'into my bowl of washing-up water and soap suds'. To mask any bad taste, she mixed the kipper's flesh with some Escoffier sauce. After it was sent upstairs, Margaret Powell recalled with pride and amusement that 'Mrs Bernard sent the parlour maid down with a compliment. She said, "Tell cook that's the most delicious savoury we've ever eaten."'[117] Servants were fooling their employers with food. If employers could determine whether a servant was allowed to eat meat or not, servants in return could decide if the employers' food would be rotten, overcooked or dirty under the cover of a good sauce.

While some of these acts of insubordination might have truly happened, their repetition in numerous servants' autobiographies suggest that they were also widespread and popular subaltern narratives that servants shared with each other to make fun of their employers. These apocryphal stories helped servants gain a sense of independence within a deferential

[116] Sharman, *Nothing to Steal*, p. 96.
[117] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 152.

relationship without actually having to risk getting sacked for spiking their employers' food. Stories about getting the better of the employers by altering their food would probably be told in a kitchen, a space where servants felt safe to speak their mind and mock their employers. The anecdotal nature of these kitchen stories, therefore, does not detract from their significance. They highlight the important role of the kitchen as a social space for domestic servants who worked in households where more than one person was employed. It was a space out of sight from the employers where they could chat, laugh and even gossip about the employers; the mistress's worse nightmare. Monica Dickens noted the stark contrast in the attitudes of the housemaids when they came in and out of the kitchen. As they got ready to go in the dining room, they were 'behaving like people acting in a play' with 'a tense expression of hauteur' on their face.[118] In the brief moment when they could remain in the kitchen away from the employers' gaze, the housemaids could relax, chat and make some comments about the employers' dinner party.

In addition to the stories about spiking food described above, many servants recalled gossiping and making fun of their employers in the kitchen. Mollie Moran and a fellow housemaid would indeed gossip about their employer's affairs when they briefly met in the kitchen, jokingly calling him a 'dirty old scoundrel'.[119] Margaret Powell called these gossiping sessions a 'kitchen psycho-analysis', insisting that employers had no secrets for their servants.[120] At the Harcourt house in Paris, despite the admonitions of the butler, the servants often chatted during meals about the different members of the family, commenting on the appearance of the employer's daughter and making fun of the Marquess for drinking too much wine.[121] These moments of gossip were significant acts of insubordination because

[118] M. Dickens, *One Pair of Hands* (London, 1972), p. 13.
[119] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 329.
[120] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 135.
[121] Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne*, p. 49.

they invaded the privacy of the employers. They broke the 'ideal' contract between employers and employees, advertised in servants' manuals, according to which a servant should honour and respect her employers.[122] Laughing about the failings of the employers broke that trust and subverted their authority. If, in the eyes of Edwardian commentators, privacy was under siege in the middle-class house because of its spying and prying servants, then, the kitchen was the general quarter of the 'enemy'. The kitchen, therefore, stood both as a space for real and imagined subversion as servants exchanged stories which provided them with an outlet for discontent in a deferential and hierarchal relationship.

C. Scams on the Market Square

Not every household had the space and financial means to have an upstairs-downstairs system. In farms and shops where the mistress and her maid worked and dined together in the kitchen, the street stood as an alternative space for servants' subversive power. In France, it was common for cooks to go food shopping at the market or local shops rather than get the food delivered as in Britain. The world of small shops and noisy market squares was another space from which the employers felt excluded and at the mercy of their cook. Shopkeepers often informed servants about new jobs made available. They served as alternative employment offices and knew far more than official agencies about the character of the employers through the chats and bits of gossip that they exchanged with the neighbourhood's maids.[123] In the busy streets and shops, cooks also took advantages of their power over the employers' food budget. Many servants collected what was called *l'anse du*

[122] *The Lady's Maid; her Duties, and how to Perform Them* (London, 1877), p. 32; J. Williams, *The Footman's Guide: Containing Plain Instructions for the Footman and Butler* (London, 1847), p. 23; J. McKenzie Hill, *A Guide to Edwardian Servants* (London, 1922); A. Maloney, *Life Below Stairs: True Lives of Edwardian Servants* (London, 2015), pp. 135-137
[123] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 181; Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, p. 45.

panier that is cutting the cost of the food shopping and keeping the difference for themselves.[124] They also received *le sou du franc* which was either a food bonus or five percent off the bill, given by shopkeepers to servants who were good customers. With this money, servants could buy themselves better food than their employers intended. For example, Caroline, a maid in Chartres in the 1920s, made six extra *sous* on green beans to purchase some cream cheese for the staff; a delicacy that servants could not get through their employers because it would be deemed too lavish.[125] By falsifying the food budget and enjoying better food than their employers authorised, these women subverted their employers' authority and affirmed their self-worth by regaining control of their diet. These subversive acts should nonetheless be qualified. While employers complained about *l'anse du panier* and *le sou du francs*, these practices were widely accepted as part of the inevitable vicissitudes of domestic service. Therefore, by bragging about these perquisites, French servants were able to voice their independence without directly confronting their employers nor actually putting into question the hierarchal system of domestic service.

III. Food at Home, Food at Work: The Social and Geographical Mobility of Domestic Servants

This chapter has described in great detail what, where and how servants ate in service. It has focused on the way servants made sense of the differences between the food of their employers and their own. However, servants did not solely apprehend food in comparison to their employers. Home was a strong alternative standard against which food in service was compared. Food tends to be associated with the comfort and intimacy of ones' home.

[124] Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, pp. 226-227.
[125] Cretté-Breton, *Mémoire d'une Bonne*, p. 35

Eating new and unfamiliar food, therefore, was a strong emotional experience associated with moving to a new place.

When the food that servants were fed by their employers was poor, they often compared it to what they usually ate at home to protect their sense of self-worth. Eileen complained that her employers barely gave their servants any eggs while at home she was used to eat an egg each day.[126] Food from home helped her to condemn the behaviour of her employers as petty and ridicule their false sense of pride. Home was also a refuge in case of bad treatment. In the rare instances when servants went home, their mothers would also not hesitate to tell their daughters to quit their jobs if they came back bearing clear sign of undernourishment.[127] In France, comparing bad food in service to better food at home was all the more common because servants often came from small-propertied rural families. Many women experienced domestic service as a moment between childhood and marriage when they accumulated savings and learned new domestic skills rather than as an occupational lifeline to escape poverty. Therefore, comparing food at home and in service helped servants put their situation into perspective. For example, the mother of Agnès Clochard gave her daughter some packages with figs and chocolate bars to help her fill up her stomach as she did not like the food that her employers made. Agnès Clochard complained that her employers never had meat and that she had to drink her coffee black while at home she would usually have it with milk, a sign of affluence. She also felt disgusted by the fact that everyone on the farm ate from the same dish using their fingers. On another farm, the farmers kept the fat from the goats they killed and preserved it into jars. After some time, the fat turned yellow and smelly, so Agnès Clochard could not bring herself to eat it. She noted: 'I

[126] Scadden, *No Job,* p. 101.
[127] Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 35; Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 30; Cretté-Breton, *Mémoires*, p. 52; Hall, *Canary Girl*, p. 32.

wasn't used to that, at home we always ate something good and clean, without being wasteful either. But eating something that smelled, I just could not do it.'[128] Bad meals paradoxically contributed to Agnès Clochard' sense of superiority and reinforced her pride of coming from a well-off family of farmers.

For those who were in 'good places' where they were fed well, food could be a source of pride. French and British servants, however, commented on different aspects of their new diet as they left behind urban or rural communities. Despite a general improvement in diet since the end of the nineteenth century, many British servants did not have access to a great variety food at home.[129] A survey made by Seebohm Rowntree in York in 1901 comparing the food of the servant-employing class to the diet of those earning less than 18s a week revealed the wide gap in terms of food that existed between the different classes in British society.[130] Despite the introduction of tinned meat, the labourer's diet was still lacking foods such as meat, eggs, milk and butter and 'there were innumerable Edwardian families in which only one good meal was eaten a day'.[131] In the poorest urban homes, the diet would often only be 'tea and bread with jam and dripping'.[132] Even among the skilled working-class, meat and eggs were scarce.[133] The situation was often more difficult for women because they were the first one to go short. Their diet mainly consisted of 'bread with a little butter or dripping, a plain pudding, and vegetables', and would include bacon at rare occasions.[134] Margaret Spring Rice's study of working-class wives' diets in England in the 1930s brings into light the monotony of the food eaten by these women. Mrs S. of Rhondda's

[128] Interview with Agnès Clochard.
[129] John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day* (London, 1979), p.154; Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p. 23.
[130] B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty, A study of Town life* (London, 1901), pp. 222-251.
[131] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, p. 153; Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p. *23.*
[132] Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p. 23.
[133] Ibid, pp. 128-129.
[134] Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, p. 164.

diet, for example, consisted of 'bread and butter and on Sunday a little meat for eleven. She never [ate] eggs or fish and only a little vegetables on Sunday'; Mrs N. of Rotherham had an 'egg twice a week, a bit of fish about once a month, no supper and for the rest a slice of bread and marg' while Mrs T. of Liverpool ate 'bread and marg', tea with condensed milk, one egg a week and occasionally carrots or turnips.'[135]

The types of food lacking in many working-class diets – meat, milk, eggs and butter – were often used to demarcate the difference between food in service and food at home. For example, Daisy Noakes recalled that: 'I did not know what egg and bacon tasted like till I left home and went into service at 14 years of age.'[136] Mollie Moran similarly remembered the contrast between food at home and in service: 'When you grow up poor with not much meat, to be able to cook and eat it nearly every day is wonderful.'[137] Mrs Lambert focused less on the quantity of meat and more on the pints of milk at her employers' house to show off her new lifestyle in service. She insisted on the fact she had porridge for breakfast when she was in service, which she held as a symbol of abundance compared to the piece of bread that she usually ate at home.[138] Because of their proximity to wealthier social classes, servants who came from poorer urban communities had access to more nourishing food in service than they would normally eat at home.

The diet of the French women who left the countryside to enter domestic service was less bleak. While they ate smaller quantities of meat and sugar than town men and women, their diet included meat like pork as well as vegetables often cooked in a soup.[139] Women were

[135] Rice, *Working-Class Wives*, p. 180.
[136] Noakes, *The Town Beehive,* p. 6.
[137] Moran, *Apron and Silver*, p. 216.
[138] Thompson, 'Interview with Mrs. Jaggard'.
[139] Bonnain-Moerdijk, 'L'Alimentation Paysanne', p. 32.

also used to drink milk with their coffee in the morning so that their diet was not entirely deprived of the form of fats that British servants seemed to discover when they entered service.[140] Rural French women' diet, however, contained little variety and was mainly composed of staple local dishes. Eclectic and exotic food from different regions and countries were mostly found in the cities. As a result, when these women migrated to enter domestic service, they commented on specific foods that were not common in the region they came from rather than on the abundance of meats and milk on the employer's table.

When she first entered service, Yvonne Cretté-Breton recalled how her 'appetite was open by so many new dishes'.[141] Similar feelings were expressed by servants, like Louise, who made unusual lists of food that they discovered in service: 'steamed potatoes, watercress, seabream, oven-cooked fish, grilled lamb chops and little custard tarts'.[142] This eclectic list does not make much sense for the modern reader accustomed to a varied diet. The odd showing off of sweet and savoury dishes, however, went to the heart of Louise and other servants' identities: they were the credentials of the successful urban migrant. French servants experienced new foods in service as a clash between a rural and urban way of life, or more precisely, between localism and cosmopolitanism. The discovery of a multitude of new dishes, therefore, was used to describe the successful transition between home and service. Sonia, a maid from an Alsatian village who worked in Paris, remembered with enthusiasm: 'for my first Christmas, I had been so spoiled with foie gras and oysters that I threw away the cake sent by mum!'.[143] In service, Sonia was turning her back on the food from home to embrace a new identity associated with a higher social class and symbolised

[140] Ibid, p. 35.
[141] Cretté-Breton, *Mémoire d'une Bonne*, p. 20.
[142] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre,* p. 71 and p. 72. See another list in Cretté-Breton, *Mémoire d'une Bonne*, p. 21.
[143] Ibid*,* p. 58.

in sophisticated dishes such as foie gras. Both dishes, however, were also completely alien to Alsatian gastronomy since the oysters were characteristic of the Atlantic regions and the foie-gras was from the South-West. Marguerite, a cook from a village in Bourgogne who worked for a Parisian upper-class family in the 1910s, also discovered food which would have been geographically unattainable to her if she had not travel while in service. She recalled that when her employers were on vacation by the sea, she discovered cider, which made her conclude 'It was going to my head, I had the feeling to be on a sort of holiday, like the employers!'.[144] By having access to what they would deem exotic food and drinks, servants felt that they were moving up in the world as well as literally moving through the different regions of France.

IV. Female Cooks, Narratives of the Self and Social/Geographical Mobility

French servants not only saw the new food they discovered in service as a symbol of their social and geographical mobility, learning how to cook these foods was a pillar of their new metropolitan identity. Learning how to cook was attractive for financial reasons. Cooks were paid more than normal servants and cherished because of their importance in the life of their employers: a badly cooked meal had immediate negative consequences for the employers destined to eat it and if it was shared with guests it could also ruin the host's reputation. However, cooking meant more than a simple pay rise for French servants. One servant looked back on her time in service as formative years where she 'learned proper French, cooking, and gained a finer sense for beautiful things'.[145] Learning how to cook had a greater

[144] Chabot, *Marguerite, Une Delloise*, p. 106.
[145] R. F., *Histoire d'une Femme Courageuse*, APA, 1966, p. 3.

significance that extended beyond the kitchen walls; it was a rite of passage into the urban world.

French servants mainly came from the countryside where cooking was done by boiling a soup mixture in a pot over a fire. They had very little knowledge of how to cook food for their employers. Marguerite, a maid from Alsace, whose lack of culinary skills was associated with a restricted knowledge of French recalled that she had 'no understanding of cooking whatsoever and (…) didn't understand the cooking jargon either'.[146] Another maid was used to helping her mum at home but noted that 'the cooking that we did had nothing to do with what I discovered in Paris.'[147] Learning how to cook meat and vegetables in new ways was a source of pride in French servants' autobiographies. They insisted on their initial ineptitude at cooking according to urban bourgeois standard to show off the education and skills they had gained in service. Madeleine, a cook from Normandy who worked in a parish house in the 1920s recalled how she initially struggled to cook new dishes but ultimately succeeded:

> I had never cooked anything else apart from pancakes and soup. How am I going to manage – I asked mum – I won't know how to cook? I ended up tying the menus to the fireplace, and then I was telling myself what do I need to cook today? Some boeuf a la mode… I had never cooked any of these thingies. We didn't have any *hors d'oeuvres* where I came from. But in the end, I did not do too bad.[148]

Similarly, Marthe complained about her initial lack of culinary skills, only to announce that she was very proud when her employers finally congratulated her about the delicate pastries she had learned to make.[149] Many women shared funny stories about their initial lack of

[146] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre,* p. 70.
[147] Chabot, *Marguerite, Une Delloise*, p. 51.
[148] Interview of Madeleine Leboeuf, 'Récit de vie de Madeleine 1 (1914-1955)', 251 AV 12-1, Archives de la Manche, http://www.archives-manche.fr/ark:/57115/a011441812887mP73If (accessed 29 January 2018).
[149] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre,* p. 71.

aptitude in the kitchen. For example, Marie-Thérèse, described a comic disaster in the kitchen due to her lack of knowledge about what a middle-class family was used to eat: 'They put me in the kitchen and asked me to make a blanquette. A blanquette? Blanquette… Blan-… Blanc: that could be milk! I boiled the meat in some milk!...'.[150] Juliette Mouillon overcooked a chicken in the oven and subsequently explained to her employers that it had burned because it was 'too skinny', which resulted in a general hilarity around the dinner table at the 'naivety' of the maid.[151] Similar to servants' anecdotes about spiking the employers' food, the recurrence of funny stories about cooking mishaps in servants' autobiographies suggests that while servants made mistakes in the kitchen, these anecdotes were also storytelling devices. Juliette Mouillon, for example, concluded her anecdote by claiming that, at the time, she was 'a real Bécassine'. Dressed in a traditional rural costume made of a lace cap and a pair of clogs, Bécassine embodied the stereotypes of the maid as a naïve rural migrant. These stereotypes focused on a variety of themes including cooking. In one story, Bécassine misunderstood what her mistress wanted when she asked for a '*poulet sur canapé*', that is a chicken on toast, and instead took it literally as a chicken on a sofa (picture 25). Bécassine and a wide range of popular and folkloric stories about naïve and inept maids from the countryside provided French servants with narratives to make sense of the cultural shock that they experienced as they migrated from the countryside to a new town or city.[152] Food played a particularly important role in these stories, both as a real skill that servants had to learn and a metaphor for the unknown. Food, indeed, is seen in in most societies as a symbol of home and stability. In contrast, unfamiliar food was used as a device in servants' stories to highlight what could go wrong when uprooted migrants left home and discovered a completely new environment. Laughter was another key dimension in these

[150] M.-J. Hazard, *L'Entrée de Service, Employées de Maison et Gardiennes d'Immeubles à Paris* (Paris, 1992), p. 30.
[151] Mouillon, *Souvenirs*, p. 17.
[152] L. Moch, *The Pariahs of Yesterday: Breton Migrants in Paris* (Durham, 2012), pp. 74-76.

stories because it created distance from the initial experience of discovery.[153] These anecdotes might have been shared by older servants with young recruits to make them feel better about their initial ineptitude in the kitchen. By laughing at their past cooking failures, servants highlighted the long learning route they had taken and created a coherent narrative of social and geographical mobility through service. They were inexperienced Bécassines no more, but good cooks who knew the codes of bourgeois cuisine and were therefore full-blown member of the urban world. Because food was strongly associated with mastering the codes of a cosmopolitan lifestyle, cooking played a crucial and positive role in France servants' sense of identity.

[153] L. Delap, 'Kitchen-Sink Laughter: Domestic Service Humor in Twentieth Century Britain,' *Journal of British Studies*, 49/3 (2010), p. 22.

Picture 25: 'Bécassine suit les orders à la lettre', *La Semaine de Suzette*, n. 44, 2 February 1905



Source: 'Bécassine suit les orders à la lettre', *La semaine de Suzette*, n. 44 (2 February 1905).

The discourse of British servants around their culinary skills was articulated differently. They were proud of acquiring new skills but viewed cooking mainly as a way to go up in the servants' hierarchy and obtain higher wages. After a long description of her first day at work as a kitchen maid, learning techniques and recipes, Nancy Jackman focused mainly on the cook's cosy apartment, which made her conclude 'I so want to be cook and have all these nice things'.[154] Similarly, after struggling in the kitchen and washing piles of dirty dishes, Mollie Moran, kitchen maid, commented: 'I'll have the best job in the house one day. You wait and see. I'll make cook. I'll show'em all'.'[155] Cooking was not invested with the same cultural meaning as it was in French servants' accounts. It was a simple mean to a pay rise.

In order to understand why cooking stood as an important mean of self-improvement in France while it was mainly seen as a job upgrade in Britain, the next two sections study the place of cooking and female cooks in their respective societies. The first section focuses on employers' views on cooking and their cooks. The second section explores the types of opportunities that cooking could lead to beyond domestic service.

V. The Impact of Middle-class Attitudes to Cooking on the Status of Female Cooks

A. Cooking in Britain: A Messy and Demanding Task

In Britain, cooking was considered demanding and burdensome. The fact that a mistress did not know how to cook and relied on her maid was often seen as proof of her aloofness and gentility.[156] While housework was gradually seen as an enjoyable task that could be

[154] N. Jackman, *The Cook's Tale* (London, 2012), p. 84.
[155] Moran, *Apron and Silver*, p. 65.
[156] C. Driver, *The British at Table, 1940-1980* (London,1983), pp. x-xi; K. Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain Through its Cooking* (London, 2007), pp. 293-295.

performed by the middle-class mistress using an array of new gadgets, cooking was still a taboo. Even when labour-saving appliances like the stove were advertised, it was implied that they would be used by the servant rather than the mistress (picture 26).

Picture 26: Advertisement for gas, *North Devon Journal*, (21 September 1922), p. 2.



Cooking and Comfort

A Servant Problem Solved

A GOOD maid is not secured, much less kept by high wages alone. The modern servant rightly expects not only efficient appliances but reasonably comfortable conditions.

The All-Gas Kitchen is cool in summer, in winter it is warmed by a radiant gas fire. The All-Gas Kitchen makes a pleasant sitting room for the servants throughout the year. Their work is not irksome and their leisure can be spent in cheerful, clean surroundings.

Install a Gas Cooker and ensure an Efficient, Happy Household

Gas Economy Leaflet No. I. post free on application.

THE BRITISH COMMERCIAL GAS ASSOCIATION HEAD OFFICE 30 Grosvenor Gardens

6

Source: *North Devon Journal*, (21 September 1922), p. 2.

Contemporaries thought that the only remedy to the servant problem and the decreasing number of cooks was to make kitchens more comfortable for them by, for example, buying a stove. If no servants could be obtained, employers would have to 'purchase prepared food instead of purchasing raw food.'[157] Frank Schloesser's cookery book published in 1904 insisted on the use of a chafing dish to prepare quick meals when one did not have access to a cook.[158] With the chafing dish, cooking was limited to reheating pre-cooked ingredients to create dishes such as prawn wiggles – a combination of prawns and cooked green peas mixed with a sauce of milk, butter and flour – or skinned sardines from the box served on buttered toast. If more complex ingredients were to be used, Schloesser assumed that there would be a servant available to give them to his or her employer.[159] This attitude regarding cooking persisted in the interwar period. Rather than encouraging middle-class women to spend more time in the kitchen, *Woman's Life* magazine in 1926 advised their servant-less readers to give supper parties instead of dinner parties because they could involve one pot cooking or even canned food, which necessitated hardly any cooking.[160] Without a servant, tinned food was the best way for women to put food on the table without having to engage in any kind of cooking activities as was argued in an advertisement for tinned sardines in 1926: 'Oh Tomkins, this is your evening out, is it not? Just lay the table for supper and put out the tin of Skippers (there's a tin in the cupboard). We'll open it ourselves'.[161] Opening a tin seemed to be the most that a middle-class woman could do in a kitchen at the time without staining her dress and respectability. Similarly, to reduce the mess of carving meats, mousse became increasingly fashionable for the servant-less housewives during the interwar period.[162] American breakfast cereals were also adopted to simplify breakfast and replace the cooking

[157] 'To solve the servant problem', *Cheltenham Chronicle* (25 February 1905), p. 7.
[158] F. Schloesser, *The Cult of the Chafing Dish* (London,1904), p. 2.
[159] Ibid, p. 198.
[160] Mennel*, All Manners,* p. 242.
[161] Ibid, p. 243.
[162] Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain*, p. 333.

of kedgeree and cutlets previously done by the domestic cook and now rejected by the housewife.[163] The middle class, therefore, was reluctant to cook and restricted food preparation to the bare minimum using pre-cooked ingredients and cooking methods that created 'hardly any *mess* at all in the dining room'.[164]

These attitudes were apparent in the cookbooks published in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century. Most of them were written by middle-class housewives who saw cooking as a household chore similar to cleaning or dusting.[165] With the growing servant crisis, they dealt more with cooking as a problem to be solved by the housewife who was lacking a servant than an activity to be enjoyed for itself. For example, Catherine Ives argued in her 1928 cookbook *When the Cook is Away* that servant-less housewives should aim to cook one-pot dinners for simplicity and limited washing-up.[166] Elizabeth Craig's *Standard Recipes* – another best-seller during the interwar period – offered plenty of dishes for the servant-less housewife. She relied on a combination of fresh and canned food to produce tinned prawn mayonnaise, ready-made baked custard and stewed fruit for lunch, while dinner consisted of tined cream-of-tomato soup with roast lamb and mint sauce.[167] Cooking was a worrying task without a servant and canned food helped the strained housewife to keep up appearances.

The amount of canned food used in recipes and advice manuals can be partly explained by the need for quick and convenient foods in an urbanised and industrialised society. People's daily work rhythms had altered to such a degree that it was difficult to find time to prepare

[163] Ibid, p. 335.
[164] M. X. Boulestin, *The Best of Boulestin* (Melbourne, 1952), p. 145.
[165] Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain*, p. 325; Mennel, *All Manners of Food*, p.2 63; Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 117 and p. 121.
[166] C. Ives, *When the Cook is Away* (London, 1928).
[167] E. Craig, *Elizabeth Craig's Standard Recipes* (London, 1934).

dishes such as soups or stews which had to be watched and stirred for a long time on the stove.[168] Instead of preparing a cooked breakfast, women could rely on ready-made cereals which could be ready in no time and fit more easily with the timetable of their husbands who quickly had breakfast before arriving to their office on the dot.

The bad reputation of kitchen work, nevertheless, was also the product of a repulsion from raw food. Marcel Boulestin, a famous French chef based in London in the late 1930s, noted that in Britain 'the *mot d'ordre* [was]: not pay any attention to anything *so gross* as food'.[169] Employers enjoyed food, but they avoided contact with the ingredients. Dealing with the raw materials was left to the servant. Repulsion from raw food built on the new bacteriology science and domestic science movement that became widely accepted from the 1880s onwards.[170] Scientists extended the idea of filth beyond faecal matter and by doing so they brought the kitchen into a new light. With the discovery of the concept of bacteria, the kitchen transformed itself into a place of danger and disease, following what Nancy Tomes called the 'flies, finger and food' infective trio. [171]

The rhetoric of germs spread by the domestic science movement made women personally responsible for the health of the members of the household. Infections and diseases were not due anymore to Providence or fate; they were seen instead as a product of the negligence of the homemaker. In spite this moralising discourse, middle-class women did not decide to cook their family's meals themselves and continued to employ a servant to do so. Letting a stranger in charge of something so important as food went against the principles of domestic

[168] Broomfield, *Food and Cooking*, p. 11.
[169] Boulestin, *The Best of Boulestin*, p. 37.
[170] J. Mokyr, 'Why Was There More Work for Mother? Technological Change and the Household, 1880-1930', *Journal of Economic History*, 60/1 (2000), pp. 13-20.
[171] N. Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 102.

science. The middle class were frightened of the potential infections – particularly syphilis and tuberculosis – that could be transmitted from the servant to the family.[172] Increasing attention was paid to the wet nurse who was in direct physical contact with the children and could pass her diseases to them. As a result, more women started to breastfeed their own children in the name of hygiene in the latter part of the nineteenth century.[173] In the same fashion, the fear of food contamination by the servants – identified with the disease-ridden lower class versus the clean middle class – should have pushed women to do their own cooking instead of rejecting it. However, few of these arguments were used to argue that employers should be directly in charge of cooking to ensure it was clean. The middle and upper classes had a deep-rooted conception of cooking that was powerful enough to offset their hygiene concerns.

The middle-class rejection of cooking was intrinsically linked to the material aspect of the task. In the first half of the twentieth century, middle-class women started to do their own cleaning because of the servant crisis and the availability of new technologies which made it easier and more efficient. In contrast, in spite of the gradual appearance of modern cooking appliances which advertised for 'clean cooking', cooking remained messy, involving cutting up and degutting dead fish and birds.[174] Jean Rennie, a kitchen servant, felt that she 'lived in a greasy, chaotic muddle' as she was constantly 'hot and sticky' while she took care of various jobs in the kitchen.[175] Mollie Moran, a kitchen maid in the 1930s, remembered with emotion, the first bird she had to prepare: 'As I whipped my trembling hand out, the contents of the bird's insides – entrails, intestine and maggots – slithered out and landed with a soft

[172] Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View*, p. 22; Mokyr, 'Why Was There', p. 13.
[173] Mokyr, 'Why Was There', p. 21.
[174] Examples of clean cooking adverts: *Burnley News* (18 April 1931), p. 16; *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald* (11 July 1931), p. 10.
[175] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 75.

slapping noise onto the floor of the game room. The rancid smell that rose to meet me was so sharp I gagged and ran screaming from the room.'[176] The smell associated with cooking came repeatedly in servants' accounts, insisting on the bodily experience of the cook who was in direct contact with the food through her senses. As Kate Colquoun insists in her description of cooking during the interwar period, 'roasting made you hot, frying made you smell'.[177] Housewives likes Mrs Peel writing for the Daily Mail in 1919 worried about the effect that cooking tasks could have on their hands, complexion and temper.[178] Similarly, Catherine Ives mentioned in her cookbook that many housewives were anxious of getting rid of the smell of onions on their hands.[179] The smells and fluids involved in cooking were very different from the limited body experience of cleaning for the housewives who had a vacuum cleaner to separate them from the dirt and detergents to supress any bad smells. Dishwashers, a significant innovation which reduced the physical contact between women and food or waste only became common in the 1950s. Stoves, the main cooking innovation before the Second World War, made cooking more efficient and less time consuming but in no way did it altered the intense sensory contact with the ingredients. Cooking, therefore, was the final domestic task that housewives resisted undertaking.

The repulsion for raw food and dirt has been analysed in a different context by anthropologist Mary Douglas. In her study of taboos and pollutions in 'primitive societies', she argues that eliminating dirt is highly symbolic: by deciding what is pollution and what is not, society is expressing a general view of the social order and the relations between the different members of the community.[180] In other words, according to Elizabeth Shoves,

[176] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, pp. 113-114.
[177] Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain*, p. 325.
[178] Mrs C. Peel, *The Daily Mail Cookery Book* (London, 1919), p. 32.
[179] C. Ives, *When the Cook is Away* (London, 1928), p. 8.
[180] M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 2002), p. 4.

'describing people, things or practices as clean or dirty is not a socially neutral enterprise.'[181] Perceptions of dirt reinforce 'dominant value systems and social boundaries'.[182] This approach can help us to understand the status of kitchen servants in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century. The association of food with mess and fluids led middle-class households to hide food preparation away in obscure reaches, literally in the dark rooms that were servants' kitchens. Leaving food preparation to the servants drew boundaries between order and disorder or in other terms between the respectable middle class and the lower class who were more in touch with their body and would not mind the mess associated with cooking. Earlier in the 1860s, the love affair between Arthur Munby, a middle-class man who had a fascination with rough working-class women, and Hannah Cullwick, a maid-of-all-work, was a striking illustration of the relationship between dirt, femininity and social class. Arthur Munby revelled in the contrast between the femininity of the upper-class lady and the dirty 'kitchen drudge', visiting his lover's kitchen with horror and delight. In his diary, he described in details 'the kitchen she had to scour, the big kitchen grate that she had blacked (…), the scullery where she cleaned the sink (…) and the scene of many another sordid but necessary tasks' which he contrasted with the mistress's luxurious bedroom.[183] While Munby's attachment to Cullwick was eccentric to say the least, he relied on a common conception of dirt and particularly kitchen dirt as antinomic to middle-class femininity, which continued to define women's relationship with their kitchen long into the 1930s. As the middle class rejected cooking because of its proximity with dirt and mess, it contributed to establish a social hierarchy. In consequence, the handling of food was stigmatising for servants. In big households where servants specialised in different tasks, Jean Rennie who had been a kitchen maid in the 1920s, remembered that 'the housemaids were jealous of the

[181] E. Shove, *Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience: The Social Organization of Normality* (Oxford and New York, 2003), p. 88.
[182] B. Campkin and R. Cox, *Dirt: New Geography of Cleanliness and Contamination* (London, 2007), p. 5.
[183] M. Hailey, *Victorian Working Women: Portraits from Life* (London, 1979), p. 28.

good things *we* always had to eat, but at the same time they considered themselves very much above us in the social scale (…) cooking was a very "low" occupation indeed!'[184] Monica Dickens, who was a cook-general in the 1930s despite coming from a relatively privileged background was 'haunted by the thought that the smell of the kitchen still hung about me, as if domestic service were loath to let me go from its clutches' after she left domestic service.[185] 'The smell of the kitchen', symbolic of the contact with raw food and the messiness of cooking, was associated with a low social status that she sought to shed. Therefore, there was nothing aspirational about cooking in British servants' accounts because British society, in general, saw cooking as a messy and ungratifying task.

B. Cooking in France: Celebrating the Nation

The French did not frown upon cooking; on the contrary, they celebrated food and its ingredients.[186] French women who lived on farms or whose husbands ran businesses within their homes might have had more time for cooking than their British lower-middle-class counterparts as the timetable of family businesses was more flexible and therefore conducive to home-made cooking than the factory or office regularised working hours. However, even upper- and middle-class women did not think that it was degrading to cook. In 1914, *Femina* magazine was advertising cookery classes with famous chefs where both the mistress and her employee would attend and learn more about the art of cooking. In the picture accompanying the article, upper-class women – recognisable thanks to their ornate hats – were depicted in the heat of the kitchen, apparently much less scared of its fumes and smells than their British equivalents (picture 27). *Les Dimanches de la Femme* magazine was

[184] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 103.
[185] Dickens, *One Pair*, pp. 317-318.
[186] Mennel, *All Manners*, pp. 238-250.

claiming in 1936: 'nowadays women don't refuse to *mettre la main à la pate*, and some great ladies flatter themselves during a gala dinner, to have cooked a dish whose recipe they secretly keep for themselves.'[187] Magazines even exchanged recipes with precise instructions on how to handle game and other types of raw food, a task that repulsed the British middle class.[188] Cooking was a skill like any other, as advertised by Vogue in 1939 among other activities such as drawing and nursing: 'Are you gourmet, curious about mixes, careful and attentive? Get interested in cooking.'[189]

[187] In French, 'kneading the dough' is an expression to describe someone lending a hand. Therefore, this metaphor is particularly relevant in this context.; 'La Cuisine Moderne', *Les Dimanches de la Femme* (19 January 1936), p. 4.
[188] For example: Moules quiche recipe in *La Femme de France*, (1 July 1928), p. 22; Mennel, *All Manners*, p. 240.
[189] 'Les Dernières Leçons', *Vogue* (1 January 1939), p. 15.

Picture 27: ‘La Leçon de Cuisine’, *Femina* magazine (1 February 1912), p. 73

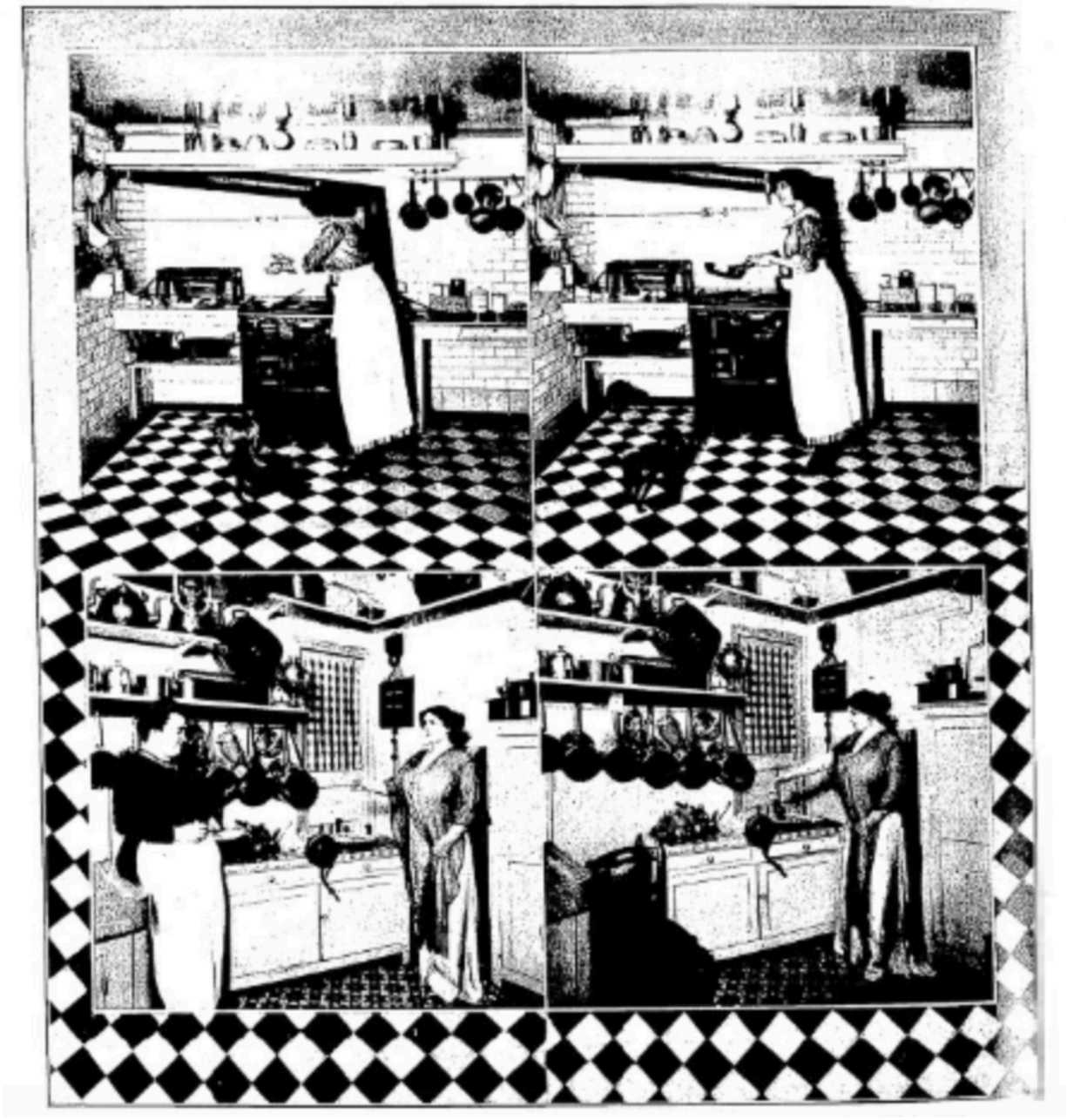


Source: La Leçon de Cuisine au Cercle’, *Femina: publication bi-mensuelle illustrée*, (1 February1912), p. 73.

If French women from the high society were expected to cook, it was often thought that they would have help in the kitchen. In 1911, *Femina* ran an article on the opera star Mme Litvinne in which she explained that she loved cooking and gave some of her best recipes to the readers such as the Chicken Litvinne, a dish named after her.[190] Since this piece was promotional for the artist, showing off her culinary skills was thought to increase her popularity at the time. There was no shame for middle and upper-class women in being in the kitchen, to '*mettre la main à la pate*' as the journalist highlighted. Nonetheless, the promotional picture accompanying the article adds another dimension to this claim (picture 28). A servant is present in the third picture wearing a recognisable black dress with a white apron. She seems to be listening to the advice of her mistress about the dish. Despite the rehearsed aspect of the scene, we can learn much about the expectations of the time. Madame Litvine was showing off her middle-class status by including her maid on the pictures. However, she was also in control in the kitchen, actively guiding the maid and sharing her own knowledge about cooking with her. Even if they had a servant who would do most of the cooking, French middle-class women could take some pleasure in creating dishes in the kitchen and be proud of having a certain culinary knowledge.

[190] 'De la Scène à la Cuisine', *Femina* (15 November 1911), p. 612.

Picture 28: ‘De la Scène à la Cuisine’, *Femina* magazine (15 November 1911), p. 612



Source: ‘De la Scène à la Cuisine - November 1911’.

This taste for cooking was linked to a discourse of domesticity, and perhaps more surprisingly, matrimonial intimacy. Cooking was associated with the need to please husbands and maintain harmonious households. *The Journal de la Jeune Fille*, a magazine edited by the *Union Chrétienne des Jeunes Filles*, claimed in 1928 that cooking 'is a necessity for those who want to get married as, according to the maxim "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach".'[191] This discourse was not limited to Christian magazines, *La Femme de France* mentioned in 1928 that 'the young woman absolutely needs to learn how to cook. In a house where food is bad, the husband goes to the restaurant with his friends.'[192] Cooking was thought of as an intimate gesture. The cook was directly attending to the husband's stomach and his mood, making good food paramount to a healthy intimacy. While the British dismissed the kitchen as a dark underworld close to bodily needs and, therefore, disrespectable; the French, for the same reasons, brought it back into the light and integrated it into their discourse of domesticity. In many households, however, this discourse was complicated by the presence of a maid who would perform these domestic duties. Because cooking was so closely linked to the satisfaction of appetites and bodily needs within the household, the wife had to ultimately be in charge. In the same way that servants were increasingly not welcomed in their employers' bedrooms and bathrooms to preserve the employers' intimacy, the kitchen had to be guarded by the mistress. Cooking could not be left to a perfect stranger. 'There is nothing more disastrous than a cook in a home where the mistress ignores everything about cooking' warned *La Femme de France* magazine in 1933.[193] The mistress had to be involved in the kitchen in order not to let another woman in charge of attending to her husband's stomach, and, as it was often feared, his body. The solution to this paradox was for the mistress to be the domestic 'brain' who knew what was

[191] 'Savoir', *Journal de la Jeune Fille* (15 February 1928), p. 28.
[192] 'Les Femmes sont-elles des Gourmettes?', *La femme de France* (1st July 1928), p. 22.
[193] 'Les Plaisirs de la Table', *La femme de France* (30 April 1933), p. 26.

good for the house and what would please her husband, while the maid simply followed her orders. The introduction of the cookbook *La Cuisine Moderne* insisted on the necessity of knowing how to cook, even if one could employ a servant: 'A satisfied stomach will make a happy marriage. Bad cooking and difficult digestion are enough to bring disputes and divorce. For an accomplished housewife, it is not an obligation to spend her life in the kitchen. But a domestic cook will try her best if she knows her mistress is a cookery expert and can appreciate her good work.'[194] Even if the maid did the cooking, the mistress was ultimately in charge of the kitchen whether she assisted her cook in person or gave her precise instructions on how to make a dish that her husband liked.

In consequence, French servants did not feel sullied and degraded because they cooked. It was seen as a valuable skill that all women should have for their household to flourish. Unlike in Britain, it was not a tool to differentiate the servant from her mistress. Many servants described receiving help from their employers in the kitchen. For example, Charlotte's mistress was a young newlywed and studied cookbooks with her each day to plan the meals. Anne, a maid in the 1920s, learned directly from her mistress how to cook a dish: '"I will show you" my mistress repeated … "to cook the endives slowly, put them straight in a copper dish and add a pinch of salt".'[195] It was especially common for employers to cook in lower-middle-class households. When Marie worked for a family of shopkeepers, her mistress explained to her that she 'loved to cook' and would be in charge of preparing dinners a few times a week.[196] While Marie's mistress insisted that her maid did the cleaning to establish her respectable status, cooking was seen as flattering skill for a woman to have.

[194] *La Cuisine Moderne Illustrée* (Paris, 1927), p. 5. See also Docteur M. Lambling, Docteur A. Moreau, *La Cuisine et la Table Modernes* (Paris,1922), p. viii.
[195] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 72.
[196] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 37.

Learning and loving to cook like their mistress, therefore, was seen as good training for servants' future domestic responsibilities after their marriage.

Cooking was also closely associated with the pride of being French. Priscillia Parkhust Ferguson, in her analysis of the 1913 cookbook *Les Bons Plats de France: Cuisine Régionale*, stresses how food and national identity were intrinsically linked and contributed to the idea of a 'culinary country' standing against the various waves of modernity and change.[197] This was especially true after the First World War when worries about a loss of identity grew across the political spectrum.[198] Marcel Rouf in his best-seller series *La Vie et la Passion de Dodin-Bouffant-Gourmet* published between 1921 and 1924 celebrated French food to foster the pride of the French nation after the destruction of the First World War, describing cooking as 'one of the oldest and most essential traditions of his country'.[199] Food show-cased the strength and glory of France in this type of widespread chauvinistic rhetoric: 'Everywhere else, people eat; in France alone, people know how to eat,' wrote Rouff.[200]

In this discourse of culinary nationalism, national and regional cuisines were intrinsically linked. Cooking participated to nation building by reconciling the centre and periphery. By celebrating the diverse dishes of France, politicians and journalists were celebrating the country's capacity to build on and benefit from the richness of its regions. Marthe Daudet's cookbook, *Les Bons Plats de France-Cuisine Régionale,* had a section on 'National Dishes' which celebrated the food produced by the provinces of France.[201] Edmond Richardin's *La Cuisine Française du XIVe au XX siècle- L'Art de Bien Manger* published the same year is

[197] P. Parkhurst Ferguson, 'Culinary Nationalism', *Gastronomica*, 10/1 (2010) p. 104.
[198] P. Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of the French Cuisine* (Chicago, 2004), p. 122.
[199] M. Rouff, *La Vie et la Passion de Dodin-Bouffant-Gourmet* (Paris, 1924), p. 11.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Pampille [M. Daudet], *Les Bons Plats de France—Cuisine Régionale* (Paris, 1913), pp. 5-6.

another typical example of culinary nationalism.[202] Richardin gave a patriotic description of the food produced in the different regions of France, including Alsace-Lorraine which was still German at the time, to celebrate the many strengths of the country. Significantly, the book was on the recommended school reading list of the Ministry of Public Education, indicating the extent to which regional cooking was an important aspect of nation-building.[203] Such rhetoric was also apparent in tourist guides, which saw local food as well monuments as paramount to a larger French identity.[204] In 1932, Gaston Derys, author of the guide entitled *Où Manger: Indicateur des Bons Restaurants de France,* used the rhetoric of culinary nationalism to stress the importance for tourists of tasting the food of different regions: 'France is not only a pilgrimage to museums, palaces, castles and cathedrals: it also for every man of taste a constantly renewed exploration of the culinary treasures of our country.'[205] The famous interwar food critic Maurice Curnonsky spent his life praising local cuisine, calling it 'one of France's best treasures'. He used the same nationalist rhetoric as Richardin, Derys and many authors of his time: 'Gastronomy is a Great School of Regionalism and Traditionalism,' he wrote in *La France Gastronomique*, 'which makes us feel, understand, and love the prodigious variety, all the fertile diversity, of French earth.'[206] To help him promote regional cuisine, Curnonsky created the Gastronomes Academy in 1928, which gathered food critics and writers in a similar fashion than the French Academy to discuss and praise local dishes. In parallel, he published with Austin de Croze *Les Trésors Gastronomiques de France* in 1933, which quickly became a best seller gathering recipes

[202] E. Richardin, *La Cuisine Française du XIVe au XX siècle- L'Art de Bien Manger* (Paris, 1916).
[203] Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, p. 128.
[204] P. Whalen, 'From "Bat-Filled Slimy Ruins" to "Gastronomic Delights": Geography and Gastronomic Tourism in Modern Burgundy', *Environment, Space, Place*, 3/1 (2011), pp. 101-102.
[205] G. Derys, *Où Dejeunerons-nous?: Indicateurs des Bons Restaurants de France, 4000 Adresses* (Paris, 1932), p. x.
[206] M. S. Curnonsky and M. Rouff, *La France Gastronomique—Guide des Merveilles Culinaires et des Bonnes Auberges Françaises*, vol. *Le Périgord* (Paris, 1921), p. 22.

from all over France.[207] The Gastronomes Academy was only one club among many others. Gastronomic clubs were multiplying rapidly to celebrate the success of regional cuisine: the Academy of Taste Psychologists and the Association of the Regionalist Gastronomes were created in 1923, the Lady Gourmet Circle opened its door in 1929 and the Association of the Gastronomes Who Like Fish began its work in 1937.[208]

There was a third pillar in this discourse celebrating food and the nation: women as guardians of tradition. Women were associated with the domestic and the local and stood as symbols of the culinary richness of the regions. Men, in contrast, were associated with the centralised and male public sphere, and, in the culinary world, with the haute cuisine of the restaurants. Gastronomy brought centre and periphery, men and women together for the good of France. Auguste Escoffier, one of the most influential French chef in the twentieth century recognised the role of women and home cooking alongside male haute cuisine in making French cuisine world-renowned: 'For a country to have a good cuisine, it needs a long past of courtly life that leads people to appreciate the pleasure of a good meal among friends; it needs as well solid domestic traditions that transmit the secrets of good food *from mother to daughter*.'[209] Paintings, as well as cookbooks, novels and magazines all contributed to a 'national culinary consciousness' which put women at its centre.[210] For example, in 1906, Jules Benoit-Levy presented at the Salon of French artists a painting of a

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[207] M. S. Curnonsky and A. De Croze, *Le Trésor Gastronomique de France* (Paris, 1933).
[208] Freedman, *Food, The History of Taste*, p. 287.
[209] A. Escoffier, *Souvenirs Inédits—75 ans au Service de l'Art Culinaire* (Marseille, 1985), p. 172.
[210] See for example: Literature: M. Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (4 vols, Paris, 1989); Cookbooks: Richardin, L*a Cuisine Française*, Curnonsky and Croze, *Le Trésor Gastronomique*; F. Foucou, *Manuel Pratique de Cuisine Provencale* (Marseille: Samat, 1920), Pampille. *Les Bons Plats*; M. Durand-Lefebvre, La *Meilleure Cuisine* (Paris, 1925); Catherine, *Les Conseils de Catherine: 920 Recettes Pratiques pour la Maitresse de Maison* (Paris, 1929); M.-C. Finebouche, *La Cuisine de Madame. Trois Cents Recettes Eprouvées* (Paris, 1929); *La Bonne Cuisine, Simple et Pratique* (Paris, 1934); Newspapers: 'A vos Poêles Mesdemoiselles', Femina (1 August 1910), p. 421; 'L'homme de Ménage', Les Dimanches de la Femme (8 December 1929), p.4; 'Cordon Bleu en Herbes', Les dimanches de la femme (3 March 1935), p. 14; Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, pp. 130-133.

group of Bretons dressed in local costumes and eating some pancakes prepared by two female cooks in the background (picture 29). In 1912, at the Salon of the National Association for Fine Arts, Cécile Desliens depicted a female cook preparing a local dish of cabbage soup in front of a parish priest (picture 30). In 1920, Alfred Guillou presented at the Salon of French Artists a painting of a female cook preparing a shrimp soup for her employer (picture 31). These women were depicted preparing traditional dishes in settings that were idealised versions of the French countryside. They were centre stage in the depiction of an immemorial French cuisine.

Picture 29: J. Benoit-Levy, *Les Crêpes à Pont-Croix,* 1905



Source: J. Benoit-Levy, *Les Crêpes à Pont-Croix,* 1905, RMN Grand-Palais, http://www.histoire-image.org/etudes/gastronomie-cuisines-regionales (24 March 2017).

Picture 30: C. Desliens, *Une Excellente Soupe aux Choux*, 1912



Source: C. Desliens, *Une Excellente Soupe aux Choux*, 1912, RMN Grand-Palais, https://www.histoire-image.org/de/etudes/gastronomie-cuisines-regionales (24 March 2017).

Picture 31: A. Guillou, *La Pêche du Patron,* 1920



Source: A. Guillou, *La Pêche du Patron,* 1920, RMN Grand-Palais, https://www.histoire-image.org/de/etudes/gastronomie-cuisines-regionales (24 March 2017).

In return, culinary nationalism influenced the behaviour of French women in the kitchen, both directly through domestic economy courses and indirectly through magazines and cookbooks.[211] While the army and schooling transformed men across France into citizens of the French republic, cooking was an alternative way of indoctrinating women with the ideals of the republican tradition. By cooking 'proper' French food, they were responsible for the French identity and heritage. The recipe columns of the *Dimanche de la Femme* magazine, for example, constantly exhorted its female readers in to 'use all the good products which show the wonderful fertility of our country'.[212] This discourse influenced both middle-class women and their servants who saw cooking as a matter of tradition and identity. Whereas dirt and mess in the kitchen were seen as daunting and dangerous for the British middle class, French women embraced the mess of cooking in the name of national traditions.

Nationalist discourses about cooking led servants to think about food in different terms. Cooking was mainly a way of nourishing oneself in the countryside, symbolised by the inevitable daily soup. Special dishes marked religious feasts and events, but none were understood in relation to the individual who made them. They were made and consumed by the whole community.[213] In urban service, despite cooking for someone else, servants came to see cooking as a personal and meaningful experience. In contrast with the oral culinary tradition of the French countryside, urban bourgeois cooking was often done following cookbooks that presented recipes as individual creations. Cookbooks insisted on the 'special touch' of the cook while employers praised her 'talent'. Marcel Proust, for example, called his cook Francoise an 'artist' in *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu.*[214] Despite its domestic

[211] See the Cordon Bleu school created in 1895 and the cookery school of the Club des Gourmettes in 1929 dedicated to women's cuisine.
[212] 'La bonne table', *Le Dimanche de la Femme* (16 June 1935), p. 16.
[213] Piegay, *Domestiques Agricoles*, pp. 144-146; H. Luxardo*, Rase Campagne: Fin des Communautés Paysannes, 1830-1914* (Paris, 1984), pp. 159-160.
[214] Proust, *À la Recherche*, vol.1, p. 475.

and private setting, cooking could bring the individual into the spotlight. Possessing culinary skills meant that someone was a good woman with honed domestic skills and a good citizen who recreated in her kitchen the treasures of French gastronomy. The popularity of regional cooking, in particular, made servants feel that they could make a more personal contribution. For example, Irma recalled about a dessert from the north-east of France: 'My boss liked my plum and apple tarts; he was going all around Paris to find the right fruits'.[215] The tart that Irma baked was more than a sweet treat shared with the family on Sunday in her home village, it became a trade mark and speciality of hers. The nationalist discourse around cooking produced by the urban bourgeoisie, therefore, enabled servants to see cooking as an individual skill and a means of self-improvement, a theme ever so present in their autobiographies.

VI. Cooking: A Recipe for Social Mobility?

A. From Service to Business: French servants and the Shopkeepers' Class

French servants also viewed cooking as a form of self-improvement because of its potential for social mobility. Historians have long argued that domestic service was an important channel of social mobility in France.[216] Theresa McBride, for example, claimed that in Versailles in the 1850s 8% of female servants' spouses were shopkeepers and 17% were artisans.[217] Leslie Page Moch showed that female Breton servants in Paris were more likely to marry men of a higher social standing than other migrants of the same class.[218] We lack

[215] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre,* p. 74.
[216] A. Chatelain, 'Migrations et Domesticité Urbaine en France, XVIIIe siècle – XXe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, 47/4 (1969), pp. 506-528.
[217] T. McBride, 'Social Mobility for The Lower Classes: Domestic Servants in France', *Journal of Social History*, 8/1 (1974), p. 68.
[218] Moch, *The Pariahs of Yesterday*, p. 200.

data, however, to study the ways in which such mobility was made possible. While male servants' occupation can be traced back through the censuses, female servants tend to disappear under the category of 'wife' after their marriage. The study of servants' autobiographies fills the latter gap in our knowledge. They give agency to these women by showing that social mobility did not simply culminate in a good marriage but involved skills and strategies. These accounts, however, should in no way be treated as evidence of the frequency of social mobility in domestic service. They are biased towards successful women who wished to put together their 'success' stories. They are crucial sources, nonetheless, to understand the important role that culinary skills played in servants' personal trajectories of social mobility.

Many French servants learned culinary skills in service that they later used to open their own business or help their husband running one. Before they became servants, these women knew how to make soup and other traditional local dishes, but such a repertoire was not useful to open a successful business. This type of cuisine was mostly eaten in the countryside by peasants and farm workers with limited financial means. Entering service and learning a *cuisine bourgeoise* opened up a new realm of possibilities. This style of cuisine had more variety and was consumed by a wide range of people from rich bourgeois to urban skilled workers who could afford a good meal or a sweet treat once in a while.[219]

Augustine Pépin, for example, learned to cook and bake in service. After her marriage, she pooled her savings with her husband to open a patisserie boulangerie.[220] Her husband was responsible for making bread while she made cakes and sweets for the clients and nearby

[219] Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, p. 284.
[220] A. Pépin, *Histoire de ma Vie*, APA, 3116, p. 13.

restaurants. Her specialty was cream puff, a delicate pastry filled with cream. This pastry required a lot of skills in order to obtain the puff effect, which was something that she would have learned from another cook in service. The recipe also asked for relatively expensive and 'urban' ingredients like large quantity of sugar, cream, butter and milk, which were rare in the Pas de Calais countryside where Augustine Pépin came from, but quite common in the cupboards of the middle class. By using the baking skills that she had learned in service, Augustine Pépin could attract a wealthier clientele to her husband's boulangerie.

Culinary skills learned in service were also particularly useful for running boarding houses. Catherine Perez, for example, learned a cooking style in service that was 'more varied and refined than the one practiced in the Ossau valley' where she came from.[221] After her marriage with a shoe-cog maker in the nearby town of Pau, she opened a '*pension*', a sort of boarding house where only food was provided. She served her clients with a filling and simple cuisine learned in service. One of her specialities was lamb stew, a classic bourgeois dish made with large quantities of meat simmered in white wine and accompanied by fresh vegetables.

Ex-domestic servants' businesses were not solely urban ventures. Some women returned to their villages to open a shop or a boarding house. Mrs Marie, for example, left the village of St Jean-Le-Thomas to work as a cook for a middle-class household.[222] She learned there a cuisine bourgeoise, which was so appreciated by her employers that they brought her with them on their regular trips to America. She left service in 1910 and married a man from her home village who worked as a butler also for the *grande bourgeoisie*. Because they were

[221] C. Perez, *Catherine*, APA, 2959.30, p. 4.
[222] Interview of André Robidel, 'Une famille attachée à Saint jean' and 'Une cuisine bourgeoise', 99 AV 1294, Archives Départementales de la Manche, http://www.archives-manche.fr/ark:/57115/a0114418132907vgOL2 (31 January 2019).

high-ranking servants in rich establishments, the couple had sufficient savings to buy a boarding house in their home village. The husband, who started his career as a driver, had a carriage service to help businessmen and tourists to move around the countryside before the arrival of the railway. Mrs Marie cooked for the clients, replicating the standards of cooking that she learned in service. She served them roasts and sautés, which meant that she had access to a stove, a modern cooking appliance in the countryside where most foods were still boiled in a pot above a fire. She also used large quantities of cream to make veal cutlets with cream sauce and cooked fish regularly, a dish that was relatively unpopular in the countryside, but appreciated as a delicacy in bourgeois households.

The clientele of these *pensions* was mostly lower-middle-class men working in the civil service. In their autobiographies, women explained that they cooked for teachers, railway clerks, quarry employees, civil engineers and other civil servants. These men did not eat in the *gargottes* and other working-class restaurants which offered cheap and simple fare, but they could not afford either the more costly restaurants that the *grande bourgeoisie* frequented for lunch.[223] *Pensions* with their fixed price menu were the best alternative before the widespread opening of state-sponsored canteens. Ex-domestic servants, therefore, cooked for lower-middle-class men whom they would have probably cooked for in service. They were well placed to know their tastes and habits, and, had contacts with domestic servants or shopkeepers which helped them reach this clientele.

Becoming a domestic cook could be a way of entering another social class. Cooks' social mobility, however, should not be romanticised. These women did not have to answer to a

[223] P. Girodin, *Restaurants et Restauration en France* (Paris, 1995), p. 11; M. Bruegel, 'Workers' Lunch Away from Home in the Paris of the Belle Epoque: The French Model of Meals as Norm and Practice', *French Historical Studies*, 38/2 (2015), p. 263.

mistress anymore, but they still lived a life of hard labour and endured long work hours as they ran their shop.[224] We should be careful not to caricature them as *nouveaux riches*. Their stories are ones of access to small property, not comfortable bourgeois standards. Becoming a shopkeeper was nonetheless an important landmark in these women's stories because it provided them with a new urban identity. As it has been highlighted earlier in this chapter, the strong links between geographical and social mobility are key to understand French servants' experiences. Women who married shopkeepers often came from families of small farm owners. Rather than moving up the economic scale, female servants' experiences were ones of transition from rural to urban small property. In many cases, women opened a business with their husband in the town or city to which they had migrated when they became servants. Owning a shop was the culmination of an urban lifestyle and grounded the shopkeepers within the urban network of their town and *quartier* – it was rare for shops to move locations – in sharp contrast with the mobility of the domestic servant.[225] In other cases, servants returned to their rural village to open a business with their savings. This does not mean, nonetheless, that they surrendered their urban identity. Mrs Marie's move to open a boarding house in her home village with her husband is a particularly interesting example of the complex interaction between rural and urban identities in servants' lives.[226] The couple ran a boarding house that was mainly used by workers travelling each day from the nearby town to work in the village quarry. Their clientele was not the local farmers and farm workers who had no interest in the type of cuisine cooked by Mrs Marie. The couple's business and identity were based on their knowledge of urban mores. The boarding house, however, also included some land with a few cows and chickens as well as a cider press. The farm activities provided food for the hotel and in some cases supplemented the couple's

[224] Crossick and Haupt, *Shopkeepers and Master*, p. 48.
[225] G. Massard-Guildbaud, 'The Genesis of an Urban Identity: The Quartier de la Gare in Clermont-Ferrand, 1850-1914' *Journal of Urban History*, 25/6 (1999), pp. 796-797.
[226] Interview of André Robidel, 'Une famille attachée à Saint jean'.

income. The business was in between a farm and a hotel. Mrs Marie and her husband, however, saw themselves as hotel-owners rather than farmers, an important distinction in their personal story of social mobility. Owning a small hotel, even in a rural village, was associated with a new social status. Such commercial ventures were possible as the countryside was increasingly connected to the towns with the development of the railways, and benefited, as the next section will now discuss, from the rise of tourism.

B. *The Success of the French Female Cook: How Servants Harnessed the Power of Tourism and Regional Gastronomy*

Servants had successfully made the transition from service to shop-keeping for generations. The popularity of regional food and the rise of tourism enhanced servants' opportunities of social advancement. The population became more mobile with the growth of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century followed by the spread of cars in the twentieth century. This led to the expansion of tourism and the opportunity for the smallest village to advertise its production.[227] Moreover, while in the early twentieth century, tourism had been reserved to a cosmopolitan elite who could afford luxurious hotels and restaurants, from 1936, annual leaves made tourism available to a broader public. Tourist lobbies, travel clubs and hotel associations multiplied to accompany this mass movement of people with motorcars around the country.[228] The Michelin Guide was initially dedicated to help car drivers on their travels by providing lists of gas stations and mechanics. However, from 1914, it also included a list of restaurants as well as a gastronomic map allowing drivers to visualise which food was

[227] Whalen, "From 'Bat-Filled Slimy Ruins'", p. 100.
[228] P. Young, 'La Vielle France as Object of Bourgeois Desire' in R. Koshar (ed) *Histories of leisure* (New York, 2002) pp. 169-89; E. Furlough, 'Une Leçon des Choses: Tourism, Empire and the Nation in Interwar France', *French Historical Studies*, 25/3 (2002), pp. 441-73.

available in different parts of France.[229] The guide then started awarding stars to the best restaurants in France from 1923. The evolution of the Michelin Guide towards a greater focus on restaurants needs to be contextualised within the explosion of interest in local food from the tourist lobbies. Indeed, the Tourist Commission launched in 1919 an *Annuaire de la Route*, which detailed the best French restaurants while the *Club des Cent* created a directory in 1923 giving a list of the best 'small' restaurants in France. In 1921, Marcel Rouff and Curnonsky also began the series *Un Tour de France Gastronomique,* which indicated the best restaurants serving local dishes in each region of France. Catherine Bertho-Lavenir argues in her study of interwar touristic maps that they participated to a new touristic experience in which visitors 'ate their way through the countryside'.[230] Gastronomic tourism redefined the regional landscape away from museums and monuments. Instead, the countryside was transformed into a subjective, immersive and sensorial experience for tourists. The tourist boom worked hand in hand with the promotion of local gastronomy to the point that the alliance between tourism and local food was nicknamed the 'Holy alliance'. By 1925, hotels, restaurants and inns were 'sprouting like mushrooms' according to famous gastronomy critic Marcel Curnonsky.[231]

Within this context, some servants opened restaurants and found fame. Most of these celebrities, known as the *Mères Lyonnaises* were concentrated in Lyon. This was partly because of the campaign of the Lyon's mayor, Edouard Herriot, to transform the city into a gastronomic and touristic centre to compensate for the death of the silk industry. Many special events were organised to draw the attention of the public towards the food of Lyon such as the *Semaine Gastronomique* in 1933 and the *Foire de Lyon* in 1934 with a building

[229] A. Parizot, *Le Bibendum Michelin et ses Bibs* (Paris, 2004), p. 25.
[230] C. Bertho-Lavenir, *La Roue et le Stylo: Comment nous Sommes Devenus Touristes* (Paris, 1999), p. 178.
[231] M. Curnonsky and G. Derys, *Anthologie de Gastronomie Française* (Paris, 1936), p. 34.

dedicated entirely to food.[232] Nevertheless, female cooks also encountered some success in other parts of France. Annette Boutiot, nicknamed *Mère* Poulard, was born into a family of market gardeners in Antwerp in 1851.[233] She left to work as a domestic servant and became a chambermaid in 1871 to the family of Eduard Corroyer, who was an architect for the National Heritage sites. She discovered the Mont-Saint-Michel on a trip with the family in 1872 as Corroyer was the main architect responsible for the restoration of the building. On this trip, she met Victor Poulard, the son of a baker who had recently obtained the lease for three hostels on the High Street of Mont-Saint-Michel. They got married in Paris in 1873 and then returned to Mont-Saint-Michel to run the *Hôtel Teste d'Or*.[234] The hotel was so successful that the couple ended up progressing to a bigger establishment, the *Hôtel du Lion d'Or* in 1888. They retired in 1906 continuing to enjoy a commission from the *Mère* Poulard brand that they had helped to create. The success of *Mère Poulard*'s business was linked to the rise of tourism as well as the position of Mont-Saint-Michel as a centre of faith. Even if it was not on the same scale as the mass tourism that was to come in the interwar period, in the early twentieth century there was a growing interest in visiting the provinces of France thanks to the railway. In the late nineteenth century, Mont-Saint-Michel hosted some important religious ceremonies. For example, in 1877, the Cardinal of Bonnechose crowned the statue of Saint Michel in the name of the pope Pius IX in front of thousands of pilgrims.[235] Mont-Saint-Michel also began to host many artists around this time as the renovation of the Mont attracted national attention.

[232] M.-A. Privat-Savigny, *Gourmandise, histoire de la Gastronomie à Lyon*, http://www.calameo.com/books/0004089346fcfa92ab6ff (15 May 2017), p. 11.
[233] E. Couillard, *La Mère Poulard* (Paris, 1931), pp. 3-4.
[234] Ibid, pp. 4-5.
[235] Ibid, p. 8.

These successful female cooks were called 'mothers' in French in reference to mothers cooking traditional food for their family in private rural households. The term insisted on their identity as housewives instead of professional chefs. *Mère* Brazier's legend, for example, was partly based on her motherly attitude towards customers. Curnonsky described her in 1925 in the following terms: 'A cook, yes, a real cook, plump, imposing, cheerful, nice and important. She was the perfect embodiment of the woman to whom one can entrust the honour of his table.'[236] Similarly, while the account of *Mère* Poulard's life, written in 1932 by *l'Abbé* Couillard, insisted on the quality of her cooking, it did not picture her as a professional chef despite the reputation of her restaurant. She was described as 'a mother welcoming her children with an unfeigned eagerness and a straightforward simplicity.' [237] To escape from the contradiction of women operating in the male dominated sphere of restaurants, the *mères*' position as cooks and business owners was justified through a rhetoric based on women's virtues in the private sphere. However, these women's biographies demonstrate that the success of their cooking came from their training in bourgeois households.

Domestic servants were the perfect intermediary for middle-class tourists who wanted to discover the 'wild' terroir and the ancient culinary traditions of rural France. Gastronomy critic Marcel Boulestin, one of the main instigators of the regional food trend, acknowledged the key role that servants played for the masses of avid middle-class explorers of a highly romanticised French countryside:

> There it is, time honoured leitmotiv, steaming on the long oak table. A bunch of garlic hangs from the ceiling, and a ham in the chimney; and the two candles in pewter candlesticks give less light than the big log fire. They sit down to it, farmer

[236] 'Les Toques Blanches Lyonnaises', http://www.toques-blanches-lyonnaises.com/file/telechargement/ToquesBlanches2016.pdf (15 May 2017), p. 23.
[237] Couillard, *La Mère Poulard*, pp. 10-11.

> and stable boys, and women, heavily, solemnly. They do not talk much, they eat. Or, on a summer evening, they sit just by the door, holding a plateful on their knees. The day's work is over, the last lazy cow back in the stable after a last mouthful at the edge. The twilight is blue and peaceful, only disturbed occasionally by the guttural song of some frogs in the ditch. The earth smells. But its perfume is not, to them, as sacred as that of the soup. For these were and are still the traditional soups. Our versions have been adapted by the peasant women, who have adapted themselves, risen to the rank of cook, and left the fields for the country house or the provincial town. So that these admirable dishes, without having become more civilised; they are no more a complete meal, but a pleasant and appetising prelude.[238]

Servants played on their image as *other* from the countryside to attract bourgeois dinners who wanted to enjoy new thrilling experiences and reconnect with a simpler rustic French identity. However, they were also careful to present themselves as an unthreatening other, 'civilised' by their experience in service in order not to scare their clientele. They were exotic creatures from the countryside but also familiar figures who stood in every bourgeois' kitchen.

The success of Annette Boutiot and the fame of the hotel-restaurant in the Mont-Saint-Michel, for example, came from her ingenious idea to deal with the irregular flow of visitors. She decided to serve omelettes at any point during the day instead of establishing a fixed menu for lunch and dinner; this formula proved to be a success. *Mère* Poulard's cooking was romanticised because of its simplicity and peasant roots. She was said to cook her omelettes, for example, with a 'frying pan with a handle about a yard and a half long', which was a traditional pan used over an open fire in the countryside.[239] The public was also fascinated that she did not clean the pan but only wiped it like an 'old-fashioned French country cook.'[240] *Mère* Poulard's cooking technique and her recipes had strong links with the cooking done in the countryside. When she heard the rumours about the recipes of her

[238] Boulestin, *The best of Boulestin*, p. 40.
[239] Couillard, *La Mère Poulard*, p. 64.
[240] Ibid, p. 65.

famous omelettes, she supposedly answered: 'Can you believe that I would have wasted the egg whites? No. I used all the eggs and whipped them as they were. Concerning the cream, this is pure invention.'[241] In contrast with the extravagance of haute cuisine, Mère Poulard was obsessed with saving food and minimising costs. Through her disdain for using cream or wasting egg whites, *Mère* Poulard depicted herself as housewife who cooked simply and economically. The omelette was also a famous culinary trope for women's 'plain' cooking. In 1825, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin celebrated the omelette in his famous work *Physiologie du Goût*.[242] He held a simple omelette prepared by the cook of the local vicar as a culinary treasure. The success of *Mère* Poulard's omelette, therefore, came from its simple ingredients but also from its cultural symbolism associated with rurality, femininity and domesticity. The rest of the menu also gave the image of a simple cuisine. Lunch consisted of ham omelettes, salt marsh chops, buttered roasted potatoes, roasted chicken, salad and dessert while dinner included pot-au-feu, boiled beef, fish, veal steak, roasted leg of lamb, salad and dessert.[243] Roasted potatoes and ham omelettes were typically associated with home cooking, while the pot-au-feu, a dish slowly cooking on a fire all day and that could be served in different ways for many meals, was a famous example of peasant cooking. However, the abundance of meat on the menu was far removed from the diet of the peasantry or the working class.[244] While the restaurant was advertised as 'a humble pied-a-terre' or 'a poor village inn', *Mère* Poulard established her reputation on a bourgeois ideal of rustic cooking. [245] Her experience in domestic service would have given her the right idea of what middle-class customers desired to have on their plate.

[241] Ibid, p. 13.
[242] J. A. Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût* (Paris, 1975), p. 164.
[243] Couillard, *La Mère Poulard*, p. 17.
[244] Y. Lepage, 'Evolution de la Consommation d'Aliments Carnés aux XIXe et XXe siècles en Europe Occidentale', *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 80/4 (2002), pp. 1459-1468.
[245] Couillard, *La Mère Poulard*, p. 38.

The reputation of *Mère* Fillioux in Lyon also came from her twist on rustic dishes to please her middle-class clientele. Born in 1865 in the Puy-de-Dome, *Mère* Fillioux started to work as a maid-of-all-work for a bourgeois household in Grenoble.[246] She was then employed as a domestic cook for Gaston Eymard, director of an insurance company in Lyon. After leaving domestic service to marry a wine merchant, Louis Fillioux, she cooked for the clients of her husband's wine shop. From 1890 onwards, *Mère* Fillioux began to be known outside Lyon and reached the apogee of her career in the 1900s. Her specialities included foie gras and artichoke, roasted quenelles with crayfish sauce and *demi-deuil* chicken with truffles. She famously insisted that she only used the same two knives during her whole career to prepare these chickens.[247] This statement stressed the simplicity of the *Mère* Fillioux and her cooking style. However, this simplicity contrasted with the costly ingredients present in her cooking such as *foie gras* and truffles. While truffles were expensive, they nonetheless appealed to an ideal rural cuisine. Boulestin claimed that 'truffles, of course, stand for Périgord, and no doubt, it is only in a remote country like Périgord that we can feel the months moving, things growing, and the charm of the revolving seasons.'[248] *Mère* Fillioux's cooking, like the truffles, was based on that ambiguity between luxury and tradition. Despite the rustic reputation of her dishes, she presented a menu tailored for wealthy dinners thanks to a knowledge of middle-class tastes that she had gained in service.

The speciality of *Mère* Léa was another obvious example of the embourgeoisement of regional cuisine in the kitchen of the *Mères Lyonnaises*. Léa Bidault was born in 1908 in the Creusot.[249] Her family's poverty forced her to work as a maid for the Schneider family who

[246] J.-C. Renard, *Arrière-Cuisines: Enquête sur les Petits Secrets de la Gastronomie Française* (Paris, 2014), p. 26.
[247] Privat-Savigny, *Gourmandise*, p. 19.
[248] Boulestin, *The Best of Boulestin*, p. 185.
[249] 'L'Histoire de Léa Bidault', http://www.lavoutechezlea.com/index1.html (16 May 2017).

owned the Creusot iron factories. When she turned 14 years old, Léa Bidault left to learn how to cook at different restaurants before opening her own business in Lyon in the 1930s, receiving one Michelin star at the end of the Second World War. She was famous for her champagne sauerkraut, a dish of cabbage and sausages from Alsace-Lorraine made attractive to the middle class by the addition of champagne in the sauce; and her leg of lamb, which was cooked using a mixture of mustard, sage, basil, rosemary, garlic and, once again, champagne.[250] The addition of champagne to the simplest dishes shows, in an exaggerated form, the way that these cooks successfully repackaged simple dishes into extravagant delicacies for the bourgeoisie.

Eugénie Brazier was the most famous of these female cooks for her mastering of regional gastronomy. She was born in 1895 in a small village in Bresse called Dompierre, where her parents owned a farm. [251] After the death of her mother when she was ten years old, she began to work as a maid at a nearby farm. At nineteen, she had an illegitimate child and was expelled from the farm. She left her child to be nursed in the countryside and started work in 1914 as a nanny for the Milliat family in Lyon, who owned a bakery.[252] She first started to cook as she accompanied the family to the seaside while the usual cook stayed in Lyon. After leaving domestic service, she began her training at the restaurant of the *Mère* Fillioux. Nevertheless, she returned to work for the Milliat family during the summer holidays when the restaurant was closed. [253] Eugénie finally left to open her own restaurant in 1921. The move was partly motivated by her encounter with Pierre, a chauffeur for the bourgeoisie.[254]

[250] C. Champion, 'Mères Lyonnaises' in B. Didier, A. Fouque, M. Calle-Gruber (eds), *Le Dictionnaire Universelle des Créatrices*, vol.2 (Paris, 2013), p. 2894.
[251] 'Toques Blanches', p. 120.
[252] E. Brazier, *La Mère Brazier: The Mother of Modern French cooking* (London, 2015), p. 22.
[253] Brazier, *La Mère Brazier*, p. 27.
[254] La mère Brazier, la mère Fillioux, la mère Léa, la mère Blanc. Les mères à l'origine de la gastronomie lyonnaise, *France Culture, La Fabrique de l'histoire radioshow* (23rd november 2010), https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/les-nuits-de-france-culture/la-fabrique-de-lhistoire-les-meres-lyonnaises-histoire-de-la (16th November 2017).

While they never married, he remained a close associate of hers during her business career. Pierre had a large network of contacts through his work and he used these to help Eugénie attract a prestigious clientele to her restaurant, including Edouard Herriot, the mayor of Lyon and many of Lyon's factory owners. The small restaurant, which could initially welcome only 15 customers, kept expanding.[255] In 1929, Eugénie Brazier opened a second restaurant outside of the city in a chalet at the *Col de la Luère*, which enjoyed a similar success.

Her menus included a wide selection of dishes, such as crayfish in mayonnaise followed by a pigeon with peas and an apple flambé in rum. The presence of game on the menu signalled that the restaurant targeted a certain type of clientele as this meat would not have been available to all. Lobsters *belle aurore*, another specialty of hers, were served with a mix of brandy and cream. It was a dish made straight for the palate and budget of the middle and upper classes.[256] One of her most decadent dishes used the leftovers of her truffled poultry *demi-deuil* in a broth made with egg yolks and thick cream, accompanied by truffles cooked with Cognac.[257] While her dishes were not considered elaborate in the sense that she did not use the stocks and reductions characteristic of the *haute cuisine*, Eugénie Brazier nonetheless produced a bourgeois cuisine.

In comparison, when she was in service on the farm, Eugénie Brazier's diet was very poor as she usually had light broth for breakfast, cabbage and potatoes cooked in bacon fat for lunch, and soup for dinner.[258] The lack of meat in Eugénie Brazier's diet was typical of the peasantry at that time. On Fridays she was allowed a thin waffle with prunes as a special treat. Sweets and desserts were exceptional for a farm servant. The first dishes she learned

[255] 'Eugénie Brazier, la Sainte des Gastronomes' http://merebrazier-epicerie.com/l-histoire/ (16 May 2017).
[256] Brazier, *La Mère Brazier*, p. 98.
[257] Ibid, p. 143.
[258] Ibid, p. 18.

to cook, corn porridge and potato gratin, were very different from the indulgent meals that she later served in her two restaurants. One of the only dishes from the farm that made it to her restaurant menu was the gratin of macaroni 'cooked first in water, then seasoned with a béchamel of flour, butter, water and cream'. The use of butter and cream made it a special treat on the farm since 'milk had to be kept back to make butter and cheese, precious products and the surest source of cash for us peasants', as well as a popular dish in her restaurant because of its appealing simplicity for her bourgeois customers.[259] Similarly, while she made waffles at the farm, Eugénie Brazier admitted that 'the amount of butter changed' in the recipes she used for her restaurants.[260] Therefore, the regional dishes inspired by Eugénie Brazier's life in the countryside and acclaimed by gastronomy critics were a very romanticised version of the food eaten by the peasantry. Eugénie Brazier, while building on the popularity of regional food, knew very well the difference between the expectation of the middle class and the real diet of rural France.

The success of these women also came from their cosmopolitan menus. While they served regional dishes, the food was not solely from Lyon and its region. Their eclectic menus highlight their training in domestic service, which gave them the opportunity to explore many regions of France and different types of cooking. This was not the cuisine of peasants who remained all their lives in the same village but that of active and mobile women. The menu of *la Mère* Bourgeois' restaurant offered dishes from the four corners of France, even from regions that she did not visit but got acquainted to through the recipe books in her employers' kitchen. Born in 1870 into a family of seven children in Villette, a village in the Ain region, *la Mère* Bourgeois first started working as a maid for a bourgeois household and

[259] Ibid, pp. 18-19.
[260] Ibid, p. 23.

then travelled in diverse seaside and spa resorts to work as a domestic cook.[261] In 1908, she married and acquired a former coach house in Priay, which she transformed with success into a restaurant. In 1923, her cooking was crowned by the famous gastronomic club called the *Club des Cent* and in 1933, she received three prestigious Michelin stars.[262] Her main dishes were hot pork pie, saddle of rabbit with cream, crayfish, buttered trout and cream puffs.[263] While crayfish and trout are specialities of the Lyon region, the hot pork pie comes from Champagne Ardennes and Lorraine. The cream puffs were also typical of the *cuisine bourgeoise* that Marie Bourgeois would have learned while in service. The recipes which made Eugénie Brazier famous were another example of this cosmopolitan yet regional cuisine. Her classics included *foie gras* and artichoke, *quenelles en gratin*, the truffled poultry *demi-deuil* and bressane pancakes.[264] While the *quenelles* were a traditional dish of Lyon, this eclectic collection of dishes was not solely dedicated to the food of the Lyon region: the artichokes were a dish from Périgord in the South West of France, the pancakes were a specialty from the home region of Eugénie Brazier while the truffled poultry *demi-deuil* was a specialty of the *Mère* Fillioux with whom she had trained. She also cooked snails with butter and wine, which was a speciality from Burgundy, *pied-paquet*, a culinary speciality from Marseille made of sheep's feet and stuffed sheep's tripe stewed together with tomatoes, and *fondue Savoyarde* with added truffles and kirsch.[265] The menu of the *Mères'* restaurants echoed the eclectic lists of dishes that other domestic servants gave in their autobiographies as proof of their cosmopolitan identities. It shows how these women used tourism and the urban bourgeoisie's culinary culture to their advantage. They mastered their employers' culinary discourse and appropriated it to present themselves as the heiresses of

[261] Renard, *Arrière-Cuisines*, p. 27.
[262] 'Toques Blanches Lyonnaises - L'album des 80 ans' *Lyon People*, 30 June 2016, https://issuu.com/lyonpeople/docs/lp_juin_2016 (16 May 2017), p. 118.
[263] 'Toques Blanches Lyonnaises', p. 188.
[264] Brazier, *La Mère Brazier*, p. 51, p. 56, p. 142 and p. 248.
[265] Ibid, p. 71.

a certain form of rustic French cuisine. These women were not only successful business owners, they had also made a complete transition from rurality to urbanity. It was, indeed, the pinnacle of an urban identity to be able to look back at their former rural lifestyle through the length of bourgeois discourses and present their everyday food as a touristic attraction.

C. Cooking up to French Standards: The Struggle of British Female Cooks

Cooking was presented in a less favourable light in British servants' autobiographies because it opened fewer opportunities outside of domestic service. The food sector was dominated by French cuisine and male French chefs, therefore, leaving very little room for British female cooks to carve a niche. Because fewer people lived in the countryside, British servants were less likely to be able to claim a knowledge of regional cuisine in order to raise their social status and open their own business. Even for those few who did come from rural areas, especially Welsh servants, there was no public interest in this type of cooking. The movement in favour of regional food was a failure in Britain despite a variety of attempts at publicity through the period.[266] The movement's main instigator was Florence White who, inspired by the popularity of French regional cooking, tried to promote a similar trend in England. She founded the English Folk Cookery Association in 1928 and visited hundreds of cooks around the country to enquire about old regional and family recipes. These recipes were published in *Good Things in England* in 1932 in 'an attempt to capture the charm of England's cookery before it is completely crushed out of existence'.[267] White's search for regional dishes accompanied the rise of the folk revival movement in Britain. The folk revival movement mainly focused on the transcription and recording of traditional British

[266] Driver, *The British At Table*, p. 8.
[267] F. White, *Goods Things in England* (London, 1999), p. 9.

songs, but it also extended to other fields like cooking. The beginning of a trend can be seen in the successive publication of regional cookbooks. In 1925, Hilda Leyel, the founder of the Society of Herbalists, wrote *The Gentle Art of Cooking,* which similarly to White's work, detailed different recipes across Britain.[268] In 1929, the first Cornish recipe book was published by Edith Martin while several Women's Institutes also published local recipes books such as the Women's Institutes of Cornwall in 1933.[269] In 1934, Lucy H. Yates published *The Country Housewife's Book,* which focused on traditional methods of cooking from rural areas.[270] However, this trend did not develop into a popular phenomenon. There was a limited number of folk cookbooks and few restaurants served local food. According to Christel Lane, 'the decline of regional cooking was not reversed.'[271]

The tourist boom from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards did not help to revive regional cooking as it did in France. On the contrary, in the twentieth century, tourism decimated the few inns in which female cooks often worked. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, inns were intrinsic to coach travelling.[272] They offered boarding and lodging to coach passengers and, stabling and fodders for the travellers' horses. Innkeepers often had previous experience of domestic service, which gave them the management skills to run their establishment and a knowledge of codes of politeness and affability which helped them attract clients.[273] In particular, the wife could use her culinary skills to attract clients while the husband's knowledge about horses could prove to be useful. Theresa Mackay has found evidence of female entrepreneurs, windows and singletons, who

[268] H. Leyel, *The Gentle Art of Cooking* (London, 2004).
[269] E. Martin, *Cornish Recipes* (Truro, 1929); E. Martin, *Cornish Recipes Ancient and Modern* (1933).
[270] L. H. Yates, *The Country Housewife's Book: How to Make the Most Out of Country Produce and Country Fare* (London, 1934).
[271] C. Lane, *The Cultivation of Taste: Chefs and the Organization of Fine dining* (Oxford, 2016), p. 21.
[272] A. Everitt, *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London, 1973), p. 7.
[273] K. Greens, 'Urban Innkeepers, their Inns and their Role in the Economic and Cultural Life of Leeds and York, 1720 –1860' (M.A. by research, University of York, 2015), pp. 57-61.

successfully ran inns in the Highlands thanks to their domestic and managerial skills often learned in service.[274] Opening an inn was, like in France, an avenue for social mobility.[275] The development of the railway, however, killed the inn business.[276] Trains only stopped at designated stations, often in towns rather than in the countryside where inns were situated. Train companies, moreover, developed their own hotels to welcome their clients near the train stations.[277] By 1914, there were hotels in nearly every city in Great Britain.[278] These hotels offered rooms as well as restaurants, thereby, diminishing the demand for smaller and more local food provision by local women. With the arrival of the motorcars during the interwar period, road businesses were revitalised but the local communities who ran inns were long gone. Most inns were bought by trusts and new employee-managers were shipped to the countryside to run them.[279] Tourism, therefore, hampered the possibility for small business ventures headed by women to make a profit. One of the only areas where women could still be in business was lodging or boarding houses. With a small capital, women could buy a place and rent rooms to migrant workers – like shop employees and domestic servants – and travellers, especially in seaside resorts.[280] The lodging-house keeper was also expected to provide food for her clients so that culinary skills might be a useful asset. However, lodging houses were mostly servicing a working-class clientele during the interwar period. While the ability to take in lodgers could only be managed at a certain level of income, lodging houses were nevertheless seen as a make-do business to supplement an inadequate male income or the death of the head of the household rather than a venture for self-

[274] T. Mackay, 'Women at Work: Innkeeping in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland 1790-1840', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 37/2 (2017), p. 166.
[275] Greens, 'Urban Innkeepers', p. 60.
[276] M. Cathcart Borer, *The British Hotel through the Ages* (Guildford, 1972), p. 156.
[277] J. Simmons, *The Victorian Hotel* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 13-14.
[278] J. Simmons, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain 1839-1914', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 19/2 (1984), p. 205.
[279] Simmons, *The Victorian Hotel*, p. 19; Borer, *The British Hotel*, p. 237.
[280] E. Cuming, *Housing, Class and Gender in Modern British Writing, 1880-2012* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 76.

improvement.[281] Co-living arrangements of single men and women in boarding houses gave their owners a questionable reputation while female-only boarding houses were also sometimes suspected to be brothels. Lodging houses carried 'moral opprobrium' because they went against dominant norms of domesticity.[282] Leonor Davidoff shares the example of 'the daughter of an ex-nursemaid married to the manager of a grocery shop' who was not allowed to play with the children of a neighbouring family that took in lodgers because of their disrespectable status.[283] The lodging house business, therefore, did not provide the same potential for self-improvement as access to small property in the shop-keeping business in France.

Tourism did not help develop a general interest in regional cuisine so that the food industry remained foreign dominated. Instead of celebrating its own cuisine, the British society was keen on continental cuisine, especially French food. The hotels along roads and railways served standardised food.[284] Kate Colquhoun describes how 'package tours and private foreign travel, imports and – in place of chop houses and taverns – restaurants serving French, Italian and German dishes all meant that by the last decade of the nineteenth century, rather mangled recipes for foreign food were being widely presented to and embraced by the middle classes.'[285] Back in the capital, the most popular food was also of foreign inspiration. The most popular Soho restaurants that offered a meal for £2 or less, were serving French food. For example, the menu of the Comedy restaurant was written in French and offered many French and Italian dishes:

[281] J. K. Walton, *The Blackpool Landlady: A Social History* (Manchester, 1978), p. 85.
[282] L. Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century England', in S. Burman (ed.) *Fit Work for Women* (London, 1979), p. 68.
[283] Ibid, p. 69.
[284] J. Burnett, *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present* (Harlow, 2004), p. 159.
[285] Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain*, p. 307.

Hors d'oeuvre variés
Consommé Caroline Crème a la Reine
Sole Colbert
Filet Mignon Chasseur
Lasagne al Sugo
Bécassine Rôtie
Salade de Saison
Glace au chocolat
Dessert [286]

By the interwar period, the trend had not diminished. French and Italian food remained the most popular type of cooking in hotels and restaurants as local rural cooking did not fit into the growing mass market of tourism and food production.[287]

In an environment in which the cuisine of another country was celebrated and British home-cooking was not positively valued, it was difficult for British cooks to put themselves forward. These women did not feel that their culinary skills were something valuable to share, except if they mastered the foreign art of French cooking. The condescension and depreciation that British cooks faced compared to French chefs was omnipresent in popular culture. Female cooks were often mocked for their incapacity to cook vegetables like the French. The journalist George Augustus Sala in the early twentieth century, for example, ridiculed British domestic cooks:

> For £25 or thirty pounds a year you can get a female cook who is able to make… about a dozen soups… [and] an equal number of plates of fish… she will be a good roaster and boiler and a tolerable adept with the gridiron and the frying pan; her pies, puddings and sweets will be as a rule irreproachable and she will be able to give you a few simple entrees such as hashed mutton, stewed rump steak, haricot mutton, veal cutlet and bacon, or minced veal. For £40.. you shall have a cook who will be able to make a bisque of lobster or cray fish who can curry tripe or eggs… twenty different entrees… and who will even be able to send up a truite au bleu, a saumon à la

[286] Burnett, *England Eats Out*, p. 162.
[287] Driver, *The British at Table*, p. 10 and p. 148; Burnett, *England Eats Out*, pp. 130-131, p. 140 and pp. 309-310.

> Chambord, or a dariole of oysters. But unless you have a cook at £50… I will wager she will be wholly unsatisfactory as a preparer of vegetables for the table.[288]

Similarly, during the interwar period, Boulestin, a famous French chef and journalist, looked down on them: 'I am also assured that many English cooks find cooking a tedious drudgery; perhaps that is because they have no imagination, or are not given a chance of showing any initiative. It certainly must be extraordinarily dull to send up boiled potatoes and boiled cabbage meal after meal. No one could take an interest in work of that kind'.[289] In the eyes of her employers, the British cook did not possess a precious and traditional knowledge that she could share with her employers. On the contrary, she was deemed to lack the common sense of the French chef and was often criticised for not meeting the standards of French cooking.

Within such a culinary horizon, there were few opportunities for female domestic cooks outside of domestic service. The case of Rosa Lewis, the only successful female cook figure of the first half of the twentieth century, reveals in more detail why cooks could not look forward to successful careers outside of service. Rosa Lewis, far from being an English 'mother' celebrated for her home-cooking, had a successful business based on two key aspects: her knowledge of French cuisine and her position in the semi-domestic service sphere, that is the hotel-country house. Even the most successful female cook did not truly succeed to impose herself outside of domestic service.

Rosa Lewis née Ovenden was one of nine children born in 1867 to an east London watchmaker.[290] Her education ceased when she was twelve years old and she was forced to

[288] Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain*, p. 307. See also Schoessler, *The Chafing Dish*, p. 5.
[289] M. Boulestin, *Recipes of Boulestin* (London, 1971), p. ix.
[290] A. Masters, *Rosa Lewis: An Exceptional Edwardian* (London, 1977), p. 5.

leave behind her dreams of becoming a governess to work as a general servant for a middle-class family. At sixteen years old, she left for France and entered the house of the Comte de Paris as an under-kitchen maid. She explained that it was there that she 'learnt to think that it was not a stupid thing to cook.'[291] Despite the poor reputation of kitchen work, she came to realise that cooks were independent and powerful figures. A more specific anecdote partly explains why she aspired to be a cook:

> Rosa first met Edward [Prince of Wales] at a dinner party during the course of which she was called from the kitchen to sing 'God Bless the prince of Wales' in the absence of a pianist. Rosa obliged the drunken company, was confused by the Prince of Wales for the cook, and later given a sovereign from a purse he apparently kept specifically for these occasions.[292]

The higher wage of the cook and her privileges must have been attractive to Rosa Lewis. As many other female cooks, she saw cooking as the way to a good pay rise rather than a meaningful skill. After five years spent in France, she began to work as a temporary cook for the Comte de Paris' son in England. She was the only British member of the staff and used the opportunity to learn French cooking. In 1887, aged twenty, she became cook to Lady Randolph Churchill and replaced the over-worked chef on his days off.

In 1890, she was employed by Lord Savile who was Master of Ceremonies to Queen Victoria's household. He detected Rosa Lewis' talent for cooking, discretion and administration and thought to put it to use: 'Gentlemen's calling on ladies who belonged to other gentlemen, wife-swopping in country house parties, the Prince of Wales's sexual appetite, all were situations which required Rosa's management'.[293] In 1893, she married Excelsior Lewis, a twenty-nine-year-old butler to Sir Andrew Clarke, who had connections

[291] Ibid, p. x.
[292] Ibid, p. 20.
[293] Ibid, p. 28.

with the Prince of Wales. Her biography suggests that the marriage was arranged by Excelsior's current employer and Rosa's previous employer so that they could serve as concierges to a private house, which functioned like a brothel for the aristocracy.[294] As the couple's relationship turned sour and Excelsior Lewis began to drink, Rosa Lewis started to work as a cook on a freelance basis. She continued to cook for the aristocracy, serving the likes of the Kaiser, Edward VII and Sir William Eden. Outside-catering was an activity dominated by popular male chefs. It was thought from the mid-nineteenth century onwards that 'in the case of men of moderate fortune, it is very likely a first-rate man cook, French or English, will be introduced for the occasion [of special dinners], and come the day before the dinner to make preliminary arrangements, and to give directions to, and to aid the ordinary woman cook of the household'.[295] However, Rosa Lewis managed the competition well as her services were increasingly popular.

In December 1899, at thirty-two years old, Rosa Lewis took on the catering at the White's Club. Her appointment was controversial as the male members disapproved of the presence of a woman. She admitted in her autobiography that 'women didn't run the kitchens of clubs in those days. I am the only woman who ever did.'[296] In 1902, given the difficulty of her position, she quit the job and bought the Cavendish hotel, which became one of the most popular venues for the Edwardian aristocracy.

Rosa Lewis' success was not only the result of her delicate contacts with the aristocracy but also her encounters with French chefs from whom she learned much about French cuisine.

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[294] Ibid, p. 32.
[295] Symons, *A history of Cooks*, p. 316
[296] Masters, *Rosa Lewis*, p. 45. Male chefs also dominated Oxford colleges kitchens. Helen Clifford uncovered only one female cooks on the inventories made by Vice-Chancellor's Court of the University between 1400 and 1800, See H. Clifford, 'Oxford College Cooks, 1400-1800' in H. Walker (ed), *Cooks and People: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1995* (Totnes, 1996), p. 59.

She was an admirer and friend of Escoffier, as she declared in her autobiography 'I consider Escoffier one of the greatest chefs of France, and one of the greatest in the world. He is the greatest gentleman among the bourgeoisie and of the few Frenchmen I ever had any respect for.'[297] She built on her knowledge of French cuisine to differentiate herself from other British cooks. For example, in her autobiography, she insisted on her obsession with vegetables, which were usually seen as a dish that British cooks could not produce:

> What I have always done (which no other cook ever does) is to cook the potatoes, and the beans, and the asparagus myself. I do not give these to the charwoman or the scullery maid – or a person without brains – because they are more expensive than the meat, and more essential than anything else in the dinner. I would take more trouble with the cabbage than most people would with a chicken.[298]

When she became famous in 1909 and that her name regularly appeared in the press, she positioned herself as an heir to French cuisine bringing knowledge to the more limited British cooks. In the *Daily Mail* on 25 February 1909, she wrote about the French art of grilling meat: 'You can cook the most delightful things on a grill. (…) The grill is the thing, and Englishwomen should give it the place of honour in their kitchen.'[299] Her success and image were linked to her mastering of French cooking and the contrast it created with the figure of the apathetic British domestic cook. Her fame also owned much to her clever positioning within the culinary market.

In her biography, Rosa Lewis explained why she transformed the Cavendish hotel into an hotel-country house: 'I had never had a hotel before, and I had only been accustomed to very nice people with very nice houses, and I didn't like anything hotelly or cheap, or any servants who had ever been in a hotel. I trained all my servants myself. I wanted it to be like one's

[297] Masters, *Rosa Lewis*, p. 45.
[298] Ibid, pp. 28-29.
[299] Ibid, p. 77.

own home. I didn't want to have it like a hotel.'[300] Rosa Lewis decorated the hotel accordingly and turned sets of rooms into suites to create an atmosphere between club and country house. The hotel entrance, for example, was decorated with traditional wooden furniture and gilded mirrors (picture 32).[301]

Picture 32: The entrance of the Cavendish Hotel



Source: Masters, *Rosa Lewis*, p. 102.

The furniture, the array of servants but also the dishes reproduced as closely as possible the atmosphere and services of a country house. One of her menus from 1908 reveals the extent to which her cooking appealed to the British upper class's obsession with French food:

[300] Ibid, p. 56.
[301] Ibid, p. 58.

Consommé aux Ailerons
Truite froide à la Cavendish
Blanchailles
Soufflé de Cailles à la Valencienne
Pièce de Boeuf à la gelée en Bellevue
Jambon de Prague aux fèves
Poularde froide à la Parisienne
Salade
Asperges en branches
Pêches à la Marron
Bombe glacée dame blanche
Friandises
Laitances à la diable[302]

The fact that the menu was written in French and the sheer number of dishes indicate how Rosa Lewis' establishment clearly imitated the formal dinners served in upper-classes houses. Nonetheless, the dining room looked very much like the setting of a restaurant with separate tables instead of a large dining room centred around one table (picture 33).

[302] Ibid, p. 76.

Picture 33: The dining room of the Cavendish Hotel



Source: Masters, *Rosa Lewis*, p. 103.

With the Cavendish hotel, Rosa Lewis could continue to reproduce the model of cooking that she experienced in domestic service without any intense competition from male chefs who worked in clubs and restaurants. Her success was linked to her adroit market positioning in the interstices of bourgeois life, between the public and the private. A *Daily Sketch* article described her both as a chef and a cook in 1914: 'ENGLISHWOMEN CAN BE THE BEST COOKS IN THE WORLD, SAY MRS ROSA LEWIS, MOST FAMOUS OF WOMEN CHEFS, ONCE A KITCHEN MAID.' [303] Cooks were understood to be women working in

[303] Ibid, p. 100.

the domestic sphere while chefs were men working in restaurants. Rosa Lewis was the only woman of her time to be called a 'chef', and even though, she remained for many a cook working in the private sphere rather than the glitzy restaurants. The figure of Rosa Lewis continues to be celebrated as an example of social mobility in modern popular culture. A 1970s TV show 'The Duchess of Duke Street' nostalgically portrayed her life as tale of mobility from scullery maid to 'queen of cooks'.[304] A careful analysis of Rosa Lewis' personal trajectory, however, reveals a more complicated picture. The upward trajectory of her career was unusual, if not unique due to the particular position of her business at the frontier between restaurant catering and domestic service. Indeed, the very nature of her success highlights the scarcity of career enhancing opportunities for female cooks outside of domestic service as the cooking scene was dominated by French male chefs. Lewis' story may dominate cultural depictions of kitchen servants, but it was far removed from to the experience of British cooks.

The general lack of career opportunities in Britain is reflected in cooks' autobiographies. While French cooks continued their life stories beyond marriage to include their new business ventures, British cooks ended their story with their marriage and did not comment on their cooking any further. Margaret Powell was the only woman to reflect on how she tried to use her culinary skills in her everyday life. She cooked 'a lot of fancy dishes' after her wedding because she thought that her husband would like it. She had to alter the original recipes that she used in service by buying cheaper ingredients, but she nonetheless tried to produce impressive dishes. However, her husband was indifferent to her culinary efforts, commenting 'Not bad, old girl, but I'd just as soon have fish and chips.' Margaret Powell eventually gave up trying to cook similar food to what she had learned in service. She wrote:

[304] The Duchess of Duke Street, dir. John Hawkesworth (1976-1977).

‘Well, every art required appreciation, doesn’t it? I mean people who paint, sculpt, or write books want an audience, that’s the reason they’re doing it, and it’s the same when you’re a cook. You need somebody who savours it, not one who just says, ‘Oh, it’s not bad.’[305] In a society with limited opportunities for female cooks, servants’ culinary skills often went to waste because there were very few people to savour their food. After leaving domestic service, food soon became an everyday domestic chore rather than a way for self-fulfilment and personal expression.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn a detailed picture of servants’ experiences as consumers and producers of food. It has shown that mealtimes were constitutive of servants’ identities, helping them digest the experience of migrating and working in someone else’s home. Mealtimes were a daily enactment of the relationships between employers and their servants. Food was often imposed on servants at mealtimes and used to underline the hierarchy in the household. In the households of the French and British upper class, servants ate different food from their employers under the watchful eyes of the upper servants in the regimented servants’ hall. Lower down the social scale, servants’ experiences at mealtimes were different in France and Britain. In British middle and lower-middle-class households, servants often ate bad food in dingy kitchens. British servants’ experiences, however, were not entirely of mistreatment. This chapter has shown that servants could be treated well at mealtimes, receiving the same food as their employers. Servants nonetheless continued to eat in separate spaces – no matter how good their relationship was with the employers – in the name of privacy. Mealtimes were seen as a precious moment when a family gathered and, therefore, servants were excluded. In contrast, French servants shared their meals with

[305] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 193.

their employers in lower-middle-class households, especially when they worked for shopkeepers and farmers. As work and family were not clearly separated among a large portion of the French population, the servant had her place at the table. Studying servants' experiences at mealtimes reveals how different understandings of the family and privacy shaped the type of relationships that employers and servants had in each country.

Servants were not passive recipients of authority regarding food but had some agency. They could use to their advantage the spaces that were designed to hide them by hiding in return their acts of subversion from their employers. In the kitchens and servants' halls, servants could play tricks on their employers by altering their meals, steal food, and enjoy many perquisites from suppliers at the expense of their employers. The kitchen was also an important social hub where servants could share bits of gossip and stories about their employers, which provided them with an outlet for discontent within a deferential work relationship. In France, where employers tended to have a stranglehold on the kitchen space, the street and the marketplace served as similar spaces for the exercise of alternative power. Here maids from the neighbourhood could meet up, get perquisites from suppliers and use the grapevine to find new jobs. While some of these subversive acts defied the employers' authority, many did not radically overturn the servants' subaltern position in domestic service but rather allowed servants to voice their complaints and articulate a sense of independence and autonomy within the hierarchal system of domestic service. Servants, therefore, derived an important source of power from their segregation at mealtime and the relegation of food matters to them *within* the bound of the service relationship.

Servants, however, did not solely engage with food to compare it with the employers' and battle for their share of power within the household. Another strong frame of culinary

reference was home. French and British servants attempted to make sense of the new food they ate in service through different standpoints. British servants were impressed by the quantity and quality of food that they enjoyed in service thanks to their proximity to a higher social class. French servants focused instead on specific dishes that were unavailable at home and saw food in service as an expression of their social and geographical mobility. Being able to eat a large variety of foods rather than just the local dish contributed to French servants' pride in acquiring a new urban identity.

Where and what servants ate gave them a sense of place within the household, and more generally, within society. Servants' identities were also shaped by their responsibilities in the kitchen, although cooking played a different role in French and British servants' accounts. British servants only saw cooking as a way to get a better job and a pay rise in the domestic servants' hierarchy. Even if British cooks earned better wages than other servants and had authority over the kitchens staff, cooking in Britain was commonly seen as a messy and demanding task, which led British kitchen servants to feel like social inferiors. Given that the food sector outside of domestic service was dominated by French male chefs, the lack of opportunities also contributed to the unattractive status of the British female cook. In contrast, cooking played a key role in French servants' experiences. Learning how to cook a *cuisine bourgeoise* in contrast with the simple soups eaten in the countryside was seen as a symbol of one's integration into the urban world. French servants' positive attitude towards cooking partly came from the willingness of French mistresses to help in the kitchen. As servants were introduced to a bourgeois culinary discourse which presented cooking not only as an important domestic skill, but also as a national duty, servants came to see cooking as a tool for self-improvement rather than survival. French servants also had more opportunities to use their culinary skills beyond domestic service in a society with a

large proportion of small businesses. Some servants married into the shop-keeping class and opened a shop or a restaurant where they cooked dishes that they had learned in service. Knowing how to cook was turned into human capital and gave them a footing in the urban world of shopkeepers. As regional gastronomy grew in popularity and tourism expended the consumer market, French female servants came to feel that they had valuable culinary knowledge, which was distinctive from the *haute cuisine* of the male chefs. French servants used the discourse of regional gastronomy to their advantage, positioning themselves as intermediaries between the culinary countryside and the bourgeoisie to open successful businesses.

When considering servants' uniforms, the previous chapter demonstrated that dress played a crucial part in British servants' lives because it represented a clearly defined occupational identity. In French servants' accounts, in contrast, servants did not wear a specific uniform. Service was not apprehended as a distinctive occupation in an economy where domesticity and production often mixed together within small family businesses. Chapter two reveals an opposite pattern for cooking: it was a crucial part of French servants' accounts while it mattered less to British servants who mostly saw it as an avenue for promotion. This finding confirms the picture painted of domestic service in the previous chapter as a more casual and flexible type of employment in France compared to Britain. Because the style of cooking learned in service was an urban domestic skill, which opened many doors to the rural migrant – better jobs in service but also more advantageous marriages and the potential to open a business – it played a key role in French servants' identities. The most crucial part of French servants' stories was their encounter with urban domesticity rather than the servant job itself. Research on cooking in domestic service ultimately shows that while both French

and British servants' autobiographies were at first sight accounts of life in service, these two groups of women were telling dramatically different stories.

Chapter Three: From the Servants' Hall to the Dance Hall: Domestic Servants and Leisure

> Mary and I heard about a social club for servants – it turned out there were quite a few of these – so we went along to see if there might be dancing. Well, there was a bit – but it was very prim and proper, and we were lectured a bit about our moral welfare. This annoyed me so much we gave it up. We wanted the sort of smooching that wasn't allowed. (…) But then we discovered the Hammersmith Palais. How we loved it. (…) Jazz bands were the big thing at the Palais back then. Although I loved waltzing and the foxtrot and other old dances, we loved trying the new ones, partly because older people really hated them but also because they left you so breathless with excitement.
>
> Rose Plummer[1]

> One evening I was invited to a ball. It was marvellous but also quite funny to be among young people whom I did not know. (…) I had many dance partners, and as long as we did not talk it was fine. Until a man while we were dancing asked me 'what are you doing tomorrow morning?' Poor me, if I was bold enough to lecture the children at my job, in that instance, I did not know what to say. I gave no answer and felt like an idiot. But it did not matter, and we kept dancing together all evening. The next day during breakfast, I told my mistress what happened, and she laughed at me saying: 'But my dear little Euphrasie, you should have answered him: I will be making breakfast, Sir!'
>
> Euphrasie Daney[2]

In the late 1930s, Rose Plummer, a maid employed in London, rejected the leisure activities offered by employers' sponsored clubs for servants and craved instead mass-leisure open to all. Imagining Rose Plummer dancing to jazz music at the Hammersmith Palais instead of spending her day at a servants' club contradicts the common depiction of servants as a lonely class of workers excluded from other communities because of the strict discipline imposed on them by their employers.[3] Euphrasie Daney, a maid from Brittany who worked in Paris,

[1] R. Plummer, *The Maid's Tale: A Revealing Memoir of Life Below Stairs* (London, 2011), p. 149.
[2] E. Daney, *Une Vie, Toute une Vie,* APA, 2314, p. 37.
[3] S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford, 2005), p. 200.

also wished to escape her servant identity during her leisure time. Her mistress's reaction to her adventure, which brought back Euphrasie Daney to her occupational identity and low social status, was hurtful. It shows a disconnect between the one-sided view that employers had of servants and the many identities these women endorsed in and out of work. Rose Plummer and Euphrasie Daney's accounts call for an investigation of French and British servants' leisure in the first half of the twentieth century that takes into account the new development in leisure during this period and its impact on the way servants thought of their occupation.

Mass leisure emerged in the third quarter of the nineteenth century; a time when workers had more free time and surplus income and were better educated. Urbanisation, secularisation, and mass commercial production shifted the basis of leisure away from local, class and work communities and fostered instead new types of behaviours and broader identities.[4] In parallel, mass culture provided narratives of progress, individualism, and self-advancement for all. Young people, despite gender, regional and class differences, were important consumers of these new forms of leisure. The rise of a specific youth labour market from the late nineteenth century onward accompanied by a flurry of mass-produced leisure goods aimed at a youthful consumer market during the interwar period has led historians to argue that a youth culture existed before the Second World War.[5]

[4] C. Langhamer. *Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960* (Manchester, 2000), p. 93; B. Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester, 2005), p. 44; D. Kalifa, La *Culture de Masse en France, 1860-1930* (Paris, 2001), pp. 4-5; D. A. Pettersen, *Americanism, Media and the Politics of Culture in 1930s France* (Cardiff, 2016), p. 4.
[5] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure;* D. Fowler, *The First Teenagers. Young Wage-Earners in Interwar Britain* (London,1995); D. Fowler, *Youth culture in modern Britain, c.1920-c.1970* (Basingstoke, 2008); J. Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875-1945* (London, 2008); M. Tebbutt, *Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years* (Manchester, 2012).

Historians have argued that leisure was a key site of identity construction, empowerment and resistance. Modern historians have explored, in particular, the pivotal role that leisure played in constructing the new figure of the 'teenager'.[6] While a large share of the historiography has focused on the leisure of working-class men, a group of historians has addressed the invisibility of women in historical studies of leisure and explored the role that leisure played in redefining working-class femininity in the first half of the twentieth century.[7] Claire Langhamer has provided a comprehensive study of young women's leisure between 1920 and 1960 which questioned how these women 'not only used their spare time but also conceptualised their "leisure" activities'.[8] She argued that leisure experiences varied according to life cycle and that young women saw leisure as a right legitimated by their participation in paid employment. Selina Todd has also studied how young women's increasing access to leisure between 1918 and 1950 contributed to 'a collective, generational identity that strengthened [their] feeling of entitlement to independence'.[9] However, historians of leisure have ignored servants in their study of the different consumers of leisure goods in the twentieth century. Because servants were deemed to have low wages, little spare time, and, therefore, no access to leisure, female factory workers and office girls have dominated the story of young women's leisure.[10] However, in 1911, 57% of British domestic servants were younger than twenty-six years old and in 1906, 40% of French domestic servants were younger than twenty-four years old.[11]. By ignoring the leisure habits of

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[6] Fowler, *The First Teenagers*; Fowler, *Youth Culture*; Savage, *Teenage: The Creation*; Tebbutt, *Being Boys*; B. Cacérès, Allons au-devant de la Vie: La Naissance du Temps des Loisirs en 1936 (Paris, 1981);.
[7] Langhamer, Women's Leisure; Todd, *Young Women;* Davies, *Leisure, Gender*; C. M. Parratt, *More than Mere Amusement: Working-class Women's Leisure in England, 1750-1914* (Boston, 2002).
[8] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 39-113; J. Giles, 'Book review', *Women's History Review,* 11 (2002), p. 138.
[9] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 224.
[10] Ibid, p. 203; Todd, 'Flappers and Factory Lads: Youth and Youth Culture in Interwar Britain', *History Compass*, 4/4 (2006), p. 4.
[11] 1911 Census of England and Wales, K. Schürer and E. Higgs, Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM), UK Data Service (2014), SN: 7481, http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7481-1; 1906 French Census.

servants, we do not have a complete picture of young working women's leisure in the first half of the twentieth century.

Historians of domestic service have not denied the existence of certain forms of leisure in twentieth-century servants' lives. However, because they have tended to focus on a specific 'servant's leisure', it has led them to overemphasise the role of servants' clubs.[12] While other young women appeared to enjoy new types of leisure activities, servants have been pictured taking part in servants' balls organised in mansions, having tea with other servants at clubs directed by upper-class ladies or singing folkloric songs with fellow women from their region. In contrast, servants recalled another type of leisure, one that has been more difficult to capture in sources because it was not defined by domestic service.

This chapter uses a sample of French and British servants' autobiographies, interviews of French rural servants as well as two Mass Observation surveys on leisure habits that include servants' interviews.[13] These sources give us access to servants' personal experiences of leisure, which were more diverse than suggested by the records of institutions devoted to the provision of servants' leisure activities. Servants' leisure experiences, in return, help us understand how these women managed to escape their occupational status and endorse

[12] P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud, 2010); T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (London, 1976); L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-century Britain* (London, 2013); A. Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes: La Domesticité Féminine à Paris en 1900* (Paris, 2003) ; P. Guiral and G. Thuillier, *La Vie Quotidienne des Domestique en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1978); F. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: Domestic Service in England 1850-1939* (London, 1973); P. Taylor, 'Women Domestic Servants 1919-1939', *Stencilled Occasional Paper of the University of Birmingham* 40 (1976), pp. 1-19.

[13] 20-2-D, *Directives Replies*, READING HABITS 1937-47 [Topic Collection], University of Sussex, Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Mass Observation Online, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3166/Documents/Details/TopicCollection-20 (Accessed 23 January 2018); 51-2-J to K, *Leisure and Clubs Questionnaire Jan 1941: Bermondsey and Paddington*, and 51-3-G *Youth Questionnaire, June 1943: Paddington*, *YOUTH 1937-1943*. [Topic Collection] University of Sussex, Adam Matthew, Marlborough, Mass Observation Online, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3166/Documents/Details/TopicCollection-51 (Accessed 8 January 2018).

alternative identities based on age and gender to socialise with other young people. The presence of French rural servants' accounts in the sample also contributes to our understanding of the changing leisure patterns in the countryside. By gathering the experiences of both urban and rural servants, a more nuanced and complex picture of servants' leisure can be obtained. Using these servants' accounts, this chapter first establishes the extent to which servants in both countries had access to leisure. It compares the different constraints that servants had regarding their leisure time, such as the amount of spare time and pocket money, to those faced by other young female workers. Once this chapter has established that both French and British servants did have access to leisure, although to varying extent, it then uncovers the role played by servants' and regional clubs in these women's leisure time. It examines the type of leisure activities offered by these clubs and their attitude towards new types of leisure activities. The conservative outlook of servants' clubs on modern leisure led many to pursue their leisure elsewhere. In consequence, this chapter then analyses the impact that mass-leisure had on servants' identities by paying attention to the dances, songs, movies, magazines, books and tea shops that servants enjoyed. It analyses the various messages spread by these forms of leisure, the different spaces and communities they helped to create and how these were perceived and used by servants to express new and more attractive identities outside of service. Finally, this chapter examines what the new leisure experience of servants meant for the 'servant problem' that is how servants used leisure to curb their employers' paternalism and negotiate a new service relationship with them.

I. Servants' Access to Leisure: 'Bird[s] in a Cage'?[14]

A. Time Off

Domestic servants had long working hours and because they mostly lived-in, their leisure time was further restricted. However, they did have some time-off and their autobiographies reveal that they were not as constrained as the common depiction of servants suggests. Until the 1910s, most British servants had at least one afternoon off, mostly on Sunday. During the interwar, the amount of leisure time available increased as servants often had one half-day off during the week and every other Sunday afternoon. In France, servants had less leisure time than in Britain, in part, because many worked in households like farms or shops where their labour was needed continuously. There might have been fewer incentives to grant servants some additional leisure time when the employers enjoyed little down time themselves in a setting where work and home remained deeply intertwined. As the peasant, shopkeeper and artisan's *time* remained 'porous' and rhythmed by the flow of clients or the seasons rather the ticking of the clock or the factory's timetable, many French servants enjoyed relatively less leisure time than in urbanised Britain.[15] Most only got their Sunday afternoon off every fortnight and had between two to six hours off to enjoy themselves on that day. Mme Clochard, for example, went to church on Sunday at noon and had only one or two hours for herself after the service before she had to return to take care of the cows at the farm.[16] Victorine Durieux who worked as a maid-of-all-work in a café in 1911 could only leave her work for one hour to go dancing on Sunday evening before she had return

[14] R. Gibbs, *In Service: Rose Gibbs remembers* (Bassingbourn, 1981), p. 6.
[15] A. Corbin, *L'Avènement des Loisirs: 1850-1960* (Paris, 1995), p. 10.
[16] Interview with Agnès Clochard, 'A Propos d'une Journée de Travail à Courlay', UPCP-Metives, 003429–10, https://cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=69704&menu=&cid=127 (13 March 2018).

and help her employers serve the clients.[17] Nonetheless, other servants, and particularly those working for middle-class household in urban areas, did not have to go home so early in the evening and could enjoy the balls and cafés.

This general pattern varied as a function of the age of the servant, the strictness of her employers, the location of the house and her position within the household. Cis Parker, for example, was too young in the 1910s to have the evenings off according to her employer who told her 'you'll have to have your time off during the day and be back at 6 o'clock.' Cis recalled that Mrs Cadbury told her that 'What Mother allowed me [to do] when I come home to Walsall was a different thing'. As long as Cis worked for them, she had to follow 'their rules.'[18] In the Manche department of France, in the late 1940s, R. complained that 'my employers don't want me to go to any meeting [of the Catholic Agricultural Female Youth Club] because they say we learn some stupid things there.'[19] Because of her strict employers, she did not go out but hoped, nevertheless, that 'when I will turn twenty-one, I will do whatever I want and my employers won't boss me around like that.'

Servants were also limited by their surroundings as many grand houses were far from the nearest village and with few transport links. Jean Rennie had to face the double obstacles of strict employers and an isolated house:

> When the winter days came in, quite apart from the fact that the normal working day was about seventeen to eighteen hours, seven days a week, there was just no point in having an afternoon or evening off. We were one and a half miles from the village, which had only a church and some cottages. Maybe it had a pub, I don't know. I had

[17] M. Beal, 'La domesticité dans la Région Lyonnaise et Stéphanoise: Vers la Constitution d'un Prolétariat de Service (1848-1940); (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2016), vol.1, p. 501.
[18] M. Higgs, *Servants' Stories: Life Below Stairs in their Own Words 1800-1950 (*Barnsley, 2015), p. 104.
[19] P. Piegay, *Domestiques Agricoles et Servantes de Ferme dans les Sociétés Paysannes (de 1900 aux années 1960)* (Paris, 2007), p. 184.

> never been in one (…) We were eleven miles from Ripon and no means of getting there.[20]

In France, Marie lived further away from the town than her other friends in service. She always lost an hour on her day off as she had to walk down the hill to meet them.[21]

Finally, servants were also limited by the type of job they performed for their employers. Nannies and lady's maids had little time for themselves and the closest they got to time off was when they accompanied their charges to their respective leisure activities. Rosina Harrison complained that when she was working as a lady's maid in the 1930s, 'I could never rely on having time off so I could rarely make any plans.'[22] Similarly, Brenda Ashford suffered from this lack of time off in the late 1930s:

> Being a nanny is a fairly isolated life, at least in terms of adult company, and you don't go into it if you expect a full and busy social life. There is only so much you can fit into one half day off a week, after all. (…) Socialising below stairs or with one's employers was unthinkable and many of us found ourselves alone with our charges for the majority of the week.[23]

In France, the only semblance of leisure Catherine had was when she brought the employers' children to the nearby public park.[24] These issues also applied to other types of servants like cooks and kitchen maids who had to adapt to their employers' timetable. When she was a kitchen maid at Hatfield house, Flow Wadlow had a half-day a week and rarely enjoyed a Sunday off because she often had to cook for her employers' 'big week-end party'.[25] Yvonne, a French cook, could not enjoy a Sunday off either because of the amount of work

[20] J. Rennie, *Every Other Sunday* (Bath, 1978), p. 54.
[21] P. Olivero, *La Mère Inconnue: Lettre de Philadelphie* (Paris, 2002), p. 75.
[22] R. Harrison, *Rose, My Life in Service* (London, 1975), p. 30.
[23] B. Ashford, *A Spoonful of Sugar* (London, 2012), p. 181.
[24] C. Blanc, *Une Nourrice Piémontaise à Marseille* (Forcalquier, 2004), p. 52.
[25] F. Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove: A Kitchen Maid's Story* (Norwich, 2007), p. 47.

she had to do.[26] She 'never had the leisure to go outside' and 'discover the department stores' that she longed to visit. Even general servants were not exempt from having to reduce their time off to accommodate for their employers' timetable. Mrs Goodman was a general servant in the 1930 and recalled that 'If they had anybody there you didn't get a Sunday off'.[27] In France, Marcelle who was a maid-of-all-work did not have time to go out on Sunday 'once she had finished dusting and cleaning the kitchen.'[28] These complaints were widely shared by French domestic servants.[29] *Le Réveil des Gens de Maison*, a French newspaper published by a servants' trade union, commented that employers' receptions, which required their servants' labour, were quite common on Sundays.[30] They argued that employers were 'hypocritical' as many were Christians and believed that Sunday should be a day of rest. However, the rest was mainly for them and not always for the servant who had to prepare sumptuous lunches for their employers' Sunday gathering.

While French and British servants enjoyed different amounts of leisure time, both groups had significantly less time off than other female workers in their respective countries. In comparison with the relatively strict timetable of British domestic servants, female workers had most of their evenings and the entire Sunday off. In her study of young female wage-earners in the Manchester district in 1937, Joan Harley found that 'the approximate average length of working day is ten hours, allowing in most cases at least four hours' leisure in the evening.'[31] At the national level, in 1938, girls' average working hours were recorded at

[26] P. Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne: Domestiques en 1900* (Paris, 1997), p. 187.
[27] G. Griffiths and S. Mullins, *Cap and Apron: An Oral History of Domestic Service in the Shires, 1880-1950* (Leicester, 1986), p. 31.
[28] J. Caroux-Destray*, Un Couple Ouvrier Traditionnel* (Paris, 1974), p. 82.
[29] See also: M. Cusenier, *Les Domestiques en France* (Paris, 1912), pp. 165-167.
[30] J.-M. Lebleu, 'Faites ce que Je Dis, Ne Faites Pas ce que Je Fais', *Le Réveil des Gens de Maison* (March 1928), p. 3.
[31] J. L. Harley, 'Report of an Enquiry into the Occupations, Further Education and Leisure Interests of a Number of Girl Wage-Earners from Elementary and Central Schools in the Manchester District, with Special Reference to the Influence of School Training on their Use of Leisure'(M.Ed. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1937), p. 200.

45.3 per week, leaving some time for leisure in the evening and the week end.[32] Similarly, servants had less time off than other female workers in France who worked ten hours per week before the First World War and eight hours per week after 1919. The laws were applied more consistently to those who worked in large industries while in other sectors women tended to work longer hours. In a Parisian dry cleaning business, women worked nine hours and a half; in a cork factory in 1922, ten hours; and in a mechanics shop in a Parisian suburb of Paris in 1923, ten and a half hours.[33] Despite these variations, servants consistently worked longer hours than other female workers, between 14 to 18 hours in the worse cases. Most servants started their day between 6 and 7 am and finished between 8 and 9 pm.[34] Their day could even stretch to midnight and later when the employers had a dinner party. Moreover, when most servants only had a Sunday off every fortnight, which sometimes consisted of just a few hours, other female workers did not work on Sunday following the 1906 law.

However, if servants had less time off work, they could have more time *to themselves*. Because servants lived separately from their families, they did not have to help at home with household tasks like other working girls. Indeed, young women, even if they were not the main caretaker in their families, had to help their mothers clean the house in the evening and completed many other tasks. Morgan studied a group of girls who left school in Manchester in 1942 and found that despite finishing work at 5.30 pm, many girls had to do housework at home so that 'the majority of the girls are free for leisure occupations from 7 to 7.30pm,

[32] S. Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Family in Inter-War Rural England', *Agricultural History Review*, 52 (2004), p. 795.
[33] S. Schweitzer, *Les Femmes Ont Toujours Travaillé: Une Histoire des Femmes au Travail* (Paris, 2002), p. 104.
[34] Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 165.

each evening in the week, from about 1.30 to 2pm on Saturday and all day Sunday.'[35] Francis Moore and Henry James also uncovered that girls in a working-class district spent on average more than one hour minimum on Saturday completing household duties.[36] These tasks were particularly gendered on Friday night when young men went out to seek leisure while most young women stayed at home to help their mothers.[37] In France, a national survey of 1947 showed that mothers received help from their children and in particular the eldest daughter for on average between two and half hours to three hours per day.[38] Daughters who stayed home also provided emotional support in addition to domestic support in the evening.[39] Many young women were expected to keep company to their mothers, often while men were absent as they worked long hours or frequented the pub.

In contrast, most French and British were exempt from this domestic and emotional burden because they did not have the chance to return home with any frequency. G. could only see her parents twice a month as she lived too far away from them, while another servant could only go home twice a year.[40] For those working in towns and cities, it was particularly unlikely that they would see their families on their day off as most had migrated from the countryside. Given these conditions, a servant in Ambleside in the early twentieth century recalled that 'you had more of your own time' in service than at home.[41] An Alsatian servant also thought that, in the evening, her room in Paris was a haven. She enjoyed 'being so

[35] O. Morgan, 'A Study of the Training for Leisure Occupations Offered in a Senior Girls' School in an Industrial Area, Together with an Enquiry into the Use Made of this Training by the Girls, After their Entry into Employment' (M.E.d dissertation, University of Manchester, 1942), p. 26.
[36] H. James and F. Moore, 'Adolescent Leisure in a Working-Class District Part II,' *Occupational Pyschology* 18/1 (1944), pp. 29-30.
[37] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure,* p. 95.
[38] J. Stoetzel, 'Une Etude du Budget-Temps de la Femme dans les Agglomérations Urbaines', *Population* 3/1 (1948), p. 58.
[39] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 206.
[40] Piegay, *Domestiques Agricoles,* pp. 184-185.
[41] S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and Their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880–1914', *Economic History Review,* 62/2 (2009), p. 425.

tranquil on her own' and was very happy to 'have nothing to take care of' past 9 pm.[42] Therefore, although servants had less free time, they could feel more in control of this limited time than when they lived with their families.

B. Pocket Money

A common misconception in the historiography is that servants were so badly paid that they could not afford any leisure activities on their days off compared to other young women.[43] However, these claims lack proper evidence on the amount of pocket money that servants enjoyed. For example, Selina Todd argues that servants did not have the means to partake in leisure consumption during the interwar period and quotes the case of Eileen Balderson who worked as a part-time domestic servant and still lived at home.[44] Her example is flawed: if Eileen Balderson received only 6d of pocket money when she was working part time, when she became a full-time resident maid, the whole money package – 7s and 6d – was hers.[45] Because domestic servants did not live with their families, data on their spending was not captured in household surveys of working-class neighbourhoods. Given the absence of any survey of domestic servants' pocket money, autobiographies are the only way to gain some information. Without claiming to be representative, the sample of servants' autobiographies used in this thesis can guide us in observing that many servants, even some in badly paid domestic service positions such as kitchen maid or maid-of-all-work, were not without spending money compared to other working-class girls.

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[42] J. Haubenestel, *Active, Propre et Honnête: Jeunes Filles Alsaciennes en Place à Paris, 1900-1960* (Strasbourg, 2002), p. 63.
[43] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 203; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 89; Parratt, *More Than Mere Amusement*, p. 88.
[44] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 203.
[45] E. Balderson, *Backstairs Life in a Country House* (Oxford, 1982), p. 9 and p. 12.

While some servants remitted all their wages to their families of origin, others kept their wage packet and lived independent lives because they did not have to pay for their keep given their residential status. Board and lodging came with the job. In Britain, Eunice who earned 5 shillings a week, 'didn't have to send any money home' and used her wages to buy clothes and entertain herself on her days off. She added that her mother 'didn't really need it by then.'[46] Annie who earned £1 a month also used her wages to buy clothes, adding that 'Mum didn't expect anything from me, because she liked me to keep myself respectable.'[47] In France, Claire used her first wage to buy herself a blue two-piece suit and Marie spent her 30 francs a month on herself, buying handkerchiefs and new shoes.[48]

British servants in my sample were not outliers in terms of the amount of pocket money received by young working-class girls. They received on average four shillings and seven pence in pocket money. In comparison, Harley found that the weekly pocket money given to a sample of young working women in Manchester in the 1930s varied from sixpence to six shilling and six pence, with an average amount of two shillings and three pence.[49] The servants in my sample seemed to have enjoyed slightly more disposable income than the average, which might be explained by the fact that many worked in London. This result is even more striking since the average wage in Harley's sample was 14 shillings, higher than most servants' wages in my sample. The servants in my sample also received slightly more pocket money than the young adult women in families above the poverty line from Rowntree's second survey of York in 1935 who got on average 2 shillings and 8 pence in pocket money per week.[50]

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[46] R. Scadden, *No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service* (Llandysul, 2013), p. 117.
[47] Ibid, p. 118
[48] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 76; Marie, *Mes Patrons et mon Cœur: Mémoires d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1935), p. 40, p. 46 and p. 103.
[49] Harley, 'Report of an Enquiry', p. 101.
[50] B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York* (London, 1941), pp.127-42.

The data for France is less detailed as fewer servants disclosed how much pocket money they retained for themselves. Only Elise detailed that she had 200 francs of pocket money left once she remitted 250 francs to her mother in the late 1930s.[51] In more general terms, nonetheless, 54% of the autobiographies did not mention sending any money back home and 12.5% did send some money home but kept a share of their wage for themselves. Numerous women also mentioned buying coats, fashionable hats and handkerchiefs with their wages, which suggest that they had disposable income. Marcel Cusenier, in his doctoral thesis on domestic service written in 1912, estimated that young servants often kept five to ten francs for themselves per month on an average wage of 30 francs in 1912.[52] This was much more than the pocket money that other young female workers would receive before the First World War. To establish the beginning of a comparison, we can retrieve some data on the pocket money of young female workers who lived with their family from the household budgets published between 1901 and 1904 as part of *Les Ouvriers des Deux Mondes* series instigated by Frederic Le Play and completed by Pierre du Marousse, Fenelon Gibon and other collaborators. The young working women in these budgets received on average 1.5 francs per month which was between 1 and 3% of their initial wage.[53] This suggests that servants received more pocket money since, according to Cusenier, they often kept between 17 to 33% of their wage package. Even if they had to pay for their own clothing, estimated to cost around 2 francs or in other terms, 7% of their monthly budget, servants were left with between 3 to 8 francs per month, a higher sum than the pocket money received by most young female workers in the monographs.[54] The servants in my sample, therefore, had a similar if not superior amount of pocket money than other working-class

[51] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 76.
[52] Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 252.
[53] There is limited inflation between 1901 and 1912 which makes the results directly comparable with Cusenier's observations in 1912. *Les Ouvriers des Deux Mondes* 3/12 (Paris, 1905), p. 284, p. 410, p. 418.
[54] Cusenier, *Les Domestiques*, p. 251.

girls, which suggests that they were not excluded from leisure activities by financial constraints.

C. Discipline and Restrictions

It is also often argued that employers controlled their servants' free time, preventing them from engaging in a variety of leisure activities. The sample of French and British autobiography studied here confirms that employers often imposed curfews and made sure they behaved appropriately outside the house. Flo Wadlow's employers, for example, asked 'the under chauffeur' to take the servants to the dance and bring them back home in time for curfew so there was 'no hanky-panky.'[55] For some, the limited perimeter of their leisure activities was directly determined by their employers who told servants to go to a specific church or park. This was the case for Rose Plummer in London whose employers had told her 'only to go to Kensington Gardens and not Hyde Park' because the later 'was not suitable for a young girl.' She added that 'like an idiot, I did as I was told and went down to Kensington Gardens, which was further than Hyde Park.'[56] In some isolated country houses where the only transport was provided by the employers, servants' time off was strictly controlled as the employers decided at what time the servants should depart and return from the house. Eileen Balderson's employers provided transport to the nearby market town of Bridgenorth. However, the car 'left the house at 2 pm and returned at 4 pm', which meant to Eileen Balderson's disappointment that the servants 'went to town for two hours per fortnight!'[57] Similarly, when she worked in Burrell Park, except for going to mass on Sunday, 'The only other possible change was a brief sortie by private bus, lasting less than

[55] Wadlow, *Over a Hot Stove*, p. 26.
[56] Plummer, *The Maid's Tale,* p. 70.
[57] Balderson, *Backstairs Life*, p. 54.

two hours on an afternoon off, to the nearest town 10 miles away.'[58] Jean Rennie had similar complaints about her days off at the country house she worked in: 'We were thirteen miles from town, with not a hope of getting there. Except once a month, on an afternoon, we were sent, alternately, leaving at two and returning at 5.30 in the big, open, red Daimler.'[59] In large households, restrictions could also be orchestrated by the upper-servants who echeloned the employers' authority. A housemaid at Thornby Hall in the 1920s explained that 'You had to be in at ten or else the old cook-housekeeper came out of her sitting room.'[60] Upper servants had the key to the service doors and could decide at what time they would shut.[61]

The restrictions of domestic service did not, however, put servants apart from other young female workers. Parents controlled to a similar extent resident daughters' access to leisure.[62] In France, Mme Bernard explained that in the 1920s, she had to be accompanied to the ball by her older sisters while Simone Corbel was told by her mother that she could not go to the ball at all.[63] Marie, who worked as a maid-of-all-work, even explained that she had more opportunity to go dancing in service than when she was living with her parents as 'there were a few village feasts, but my dad did not allow his daughters to go.'[64] Young British women experienced similar levels of parental control over their access to leisure. A young

[58] Ibid, p. 64.
[59] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 54.
[60] J. Lakeman and J. Bellan, *Them Days from The Memories of Joan Bellan* (Padstow, 1982), p. 103; D. Noakes, *The town Beehive: A Young Girl's Lot, Brighton 1910-1934* (Brighton, 1980), p. 81; N. Jackman, *The Cook's Tale* (London, 2012), p. 152.
[61] C. V. Butler and M. Frances, L. Hanbury and V. W. De Broke, *Domestic service: An Enquiry by the Women's Industrial Council* (London, 1916), p. 56.
[62] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 205; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 96-97.
[63] Interview with Mme Bénard, 'Témoignages sur les Bals', *Entretien aupres de Madame Tifagne à Rouen*, Fonds Philippe Gleises, 0590-05, http://patrimoine-oral.org/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=24405&fonds=2&cid=234 (12 November 2018); Interview with Simone Corbel, 'Témoignage sur le Bal à Pont-Erambourg', *Entretien auprés de Mme Corbel de Sainte-Honorine-la-Chardonne*, Fonds La Loure, 0990-14, http://patrimoine-oral.org/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=33075&fonds=4&nat=3&cid=261 (12 November 2018).
[64] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 57.

working woman in the 1920s explained that leaving school did not loosen her parents' grip over their daughter's free time:

> I as a girl still came under the same restrictions as I did at school, and I wasn't allowed out at night unless they knew where I was going. By that I meant I was allowed to go round to a friend's house just round the corner, but no, no, there was very strong discipline and restriction on girls … oh I was terrified if I was a few minutes late.[65]

Similarly, in the 1930s. Jessie's father would only let her 'go to a dance if it was down at the church'.[66] Many young people, therefore, had their leisure limited by the head of the household, be it a parent or an employer.

Servants have been excluded from the historiography on leisure because they were thought to not have the time, money or freedom to take part in activities outside of work. In contrast, this thesis has shown that if servants' free time was restricted, it did allow for some time off. Servants also had a sufficient amount of pocket money that allowed them to consume similar leisure goods as other working girls. Finally, if a servants' life was regulated by her employers, many young working women faced similar constraints, only in their case through the exercise of parental authority. These conclusions call for a more detailed analysis of the types of leisure that servants enjoyed.

[65] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 205.
[66] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 98.

II. Clubs and Balls: Philanthropic Leisure in Domestic Service

Given the constrains on servants' time off, the historiography has mistakenly presented servants as entirely reliant on specific servants' leisure.[67] Anne Martin-Fugier mainly looked at the servants' balls advertised in the newspapers of servants' trade unions to build a picture of servants' leisure in early twentieth century France.[68] According to the *République Française* newspaper, a servants' ball organised by the Genet union, 'had the appearance of a true and imposing solemnity.'[69]. Another ball frequented exclusively by servants was the Wagram ball. There, according to the Figaro newspaper, servants were 'naturally in great dress' and, according to the *Guide des Plaisirs à Paris*, the spectator did not expect to see any cancan dancing since 'the girls […] try to keep up appearances a little.'[70]

Regional clubs taking care of those who migrated to the cities, among which were many domestic servants, have also been presented as key providers of servants' leisure. One of these clubs was the *Paroisse Bretonne*, created in 1897 by the cleric Francois Cadic to care for the Breton migrants in Paris. [71] The *Paroisse Bretonne* gave support, in particular, to the numerous maids from Brittany, more than 14 000 female domestics by 1911, who came to Paris to find employment with more or less success. The *Paroisse* also offered some leisure activities and provided guidance to its members through its newspaper. Another regional club in Paris was the *Union Alsacienne d'Activité Chrétienne* created by the minister Muller in 1919, which gathered hundreds of Alsatian girls.[72] The *Union Alsacienne* organized some

[67] Horn, *Life Below Stairs*; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*; Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View*; Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*; Guiral and Thuillier, *La Vie Quotidienne*; Dawes, *Not in Front*; Taylor, 'Women Domestic Servants'.
[68] Martin-Fugier, *La Place des Bonnes*, pp. 283-285.
[69] Quoted in 'Le Bal', *Journal des Gens de Maison*, 1 February 1897, p. 1.
[70] André Warnod, 'Les bals des gens de maison', *Figaro*, 6 September 1921, p. 4; *Le Guide des Plaisirs à Paris* (Paris, 1899), p. 102.
[71] Moch, *The Pariahs of Yesterday*, p. 76-84.
[72] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, pp. 96-98.

religious services and some leisure activities including teas, games and day trips to nearby villages.

In Britain, historians of domestic service have often focused on the glitzy servants' balls hosted by rich employers. Lady Malcolm's Servants' Ball held by a British-American actress at the Albert Hall in London in the 1920s is often mentioned in the secondary literature and described as 'the only night of the year when they [the servants] would be able to dress up and dance until midnight, and meet other servants.' [73] Similarly, Pamela Horn describes how during the interwar period 'In large country houses, employers often provided facilities for social activities. Dances and whist-drives were held fortnightly'.[74] Still according to Horn, 'For domestics in single-handed places, friendships formed outside the home were particularly important and that often involved having access to a suitable club or society.'[75] The role of the Girls' Friendly Society is also often put forward in descriptions of servants' leisure within clubs.[76] The GFS was a philanthropic society created in 1875, which targeted unmarried girls and young women from poor backgrounds, mostly servants, to provide a social space designed around education. It supplied 'every working girls of unblemished character a friend in a class above her own'.[77] These ladies would pass their knowledge to the girls and make appropriate leisure choices for them.[78] The society also offered an employment registry, a retirement and convalescence home, as well as some social activities for those who were lonely including bible classes, sewing, talks and games.

[73] S. Keyte, 'From the Archives: The Royal Albert Hall entertains London's Domestic Staff at Lady Malcom's Servants' Balls, Thursday 12 September', https://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/news/2013/september/from-the-archives-the-royal-albert-hall-entertains-londons-domestic-staff-at-lady-malcolms-servants-balls/ (2 August 2017).
[74] Horn, *Life Below Stairs,* p.136.
[75] Ibid, p. 131.
[76] Ibid, p. 132; Higgs, *Servants' Stories*, p. 116; L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), p. 90.
[77] V. Richmond, '"It Is Not a Society for Human Beings but for Virgins"', The Girls' Friendly Society Membership Eligibility Dispute 1875–1936', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 20/3 (2007), p. 304.
[78] A. L. Money, *History of the Girls' Friendly Society* (London, 1911), p. 36.

These accounts imply that servants enjoyed leisure based on their occupational identities as they frequented specific balls and clubs that catered for servants only. Moreover, the solemnity and luxury of these events conveyed the idea that servants identified with a corporation of which they could be proud. However, servants' balls and other activities organised by clubs and employers were not the only source of leisure available to female servants. They have tended to monopolise historians' attention because country houses and clubs left more easily accessible archival sources than the anonymous maid in a suburban villa. In contrast, the experience of the numerous maids-of-all work in my sample of autobiographies shows that servants' balls organised by employers were reserved to those few who worked for the very rich. As most households employed one or two servants, the sample of servants' autobiographies rebalances our views of servants' leisure.[79]

Clubs which organised leisure activities specifically for servants often had strict rules which discouraged many from joining. The clubs' policies were part of a broader trend in favour of the organization of workers' leisure.[80] While there were concerns about the leisure activities of the population before the Industrial Revolution, from the late nineteenth century the critique of workers' leisure was cast in terms of the danger of the 'masses'. The new laws reducing the number of hours of work, the rise in living standards, and the higher literacy rate of the population lead to the growth of 'mass leisure'. As cafes, theatre, balls and later cinemas offered cheap prices to the mass of workers, a new discourse linked such activity to the debauchery of the working class. Replacing in part the worries of the elite concerning the danger of alcohol for the lower-class, popular culture became the new

[79] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, pp.34-5; Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 6; Pooley, 'Domestic Servants', pp. 410-415.
[80] A.-M. Thiesse, 'Organisation des Loisirs des Travailleurs et Temps Dérobés (1880-1930)' in Corbin (ed) *L'Avènement des Loisirs*, pp. 406-407.

poison.[81] Without guidance from the elite, the working class supposedly enjoyed mind-numbing leisure instead of using their free time for more edifying and improving activities. Among the population unfit to choose appropriate leisure for themselves, servants were good candidates as they were both 'innocent' females and 'ignorant' rural migrants and thus, it was alleged, unprepared for the hidden vices of the city.

In Britain, The Girls Friendly Society only admitted girls on the condition that they were chaste and did not encourage encounters between the two sexes. [82] The girls had to forfeit their card as soon as they married and were excluded if any 'unvirtuous' behaviour came to the society's attention. The summary of meetings and festivals published in *Friendly Leaves*, the GFS's official magazine, help to reconstitute the type of leisure that was considered acceptable. On July 7th 1900, for example, the Festinog branch organized its first annual Festival and welcomed over sixty members and associates.[83] The day started with a church service which included an address from the rector. This was followed by a tea at the local National School, one of the schools subsidised by the Church of England's National Society for Promoting Religious Education, and a visit of the 'beautiful grounds of Plas Tanybwlch' which was the estate of the rich Oakeley family.[84] The day ended with a 'lecture by Mr. Allport'. Most of the entertainment provided aimed at educating with a particular focus on moral standards. The event only gathered female members, which made it far different to the experience a servant could get if she went courting at the cinema or the dance hall.

[81] Thiesse, 'Organisation des Loisirs', p. 396.
[82] Richmond, 'It Is Not a Society', p. 304.
[83] 'Reports of Diocesian Meetings', *The Girls' Friendly Society Advertiser*, December 1900, p. 29.
[84] G. Sutherland, 'Education' in F. M. L. Thompson (ed.) *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 129-130; P. Silver and H. Silver, *The Education of the Poor: The History of a National School, 1824-1974* (London, 2007), p. 9.

The interactions between 'members' from the lower classes and 'associates', who were mostly gentry and middle-class women, imitated the relationship between servant and mistress on a broader level. Associates were supposed to socialise in a motherly fashion with the members and lead by example.[85] In contrast, the GFS members were described by The Friendly Leaves magazine in February 1884 as:

> Happy and modest looks.
> Respectful and retiring manners.
> Gentle and soft voices.
> Neat and quiet dress.[86]

These qualities could also have easily applied to the perfect servant. They were those of a young woman who knew her place as the adjectives 'modest', 'respectful', 'retiring', 'soft' and 'quiet' indicate. She was far removed from the young women who used clothes and make-up to be noticed by men on the dance floors.

In France, while in the nineteenth century philanthropists tried to protect the lower strata of society from 'bad leisure' by introducing them to rational recreation, the vision in the twentieth century was that the people were incapable of appreciating this type of educated leisure.[87] Instead, salvation would come from a 'true popular culture' conserved in the countryside.[88] Traditional folklore was used by the elite to fight the rural exodus, and particularly the dangerous exodus of young and single women coming to cities to work as servants. For those who had already migrated, philanthropists hoped that folklore could reform their corrupted urban lifestyle and give them back a sense of self. For example, the

[85] Richmond, 'It Is Not a Society', p. 304.
[86] Girls' Friendly Society, *The Girls' Friendly Society Advertiser,* February 1884, p.35.
[87] Thiesse, 'Organisation des Loisirs' pp. 408-411.
[88] Ibid, p. 408.

creator and director of the *Paroisse Bretonne*, Francois Cadic, argued that by attending the reunions of the club, the young maid would not lose her way in the city. The *Breton de Paris* newspaper published by the *Paroisse Bretonne* warned in February 1922:

> Where there is danger, there is perversion, we know how to stay clear of it. The balls are (…) dangerous. There are multiples circumstances that push people to vice. Indecent clothing, misplaced familiarity between young people of both sexes, exciting music, lustful dances, risky close contacts…[89]

Young women who enjoyed commercial leisure were described in the newspaper as 'mad virgins who go on Sundays to the cinemas and the ball rooms'.[90] The female figure and the reference to Sundays invoked the image of the servant, falling unconsciously into the traps of the capital. By using religion and folklore as substitute activities to modern leisure, the club sought to protect the inexperienced maid freshly arrived from Brittany. This discourse on folklore was found even outside of religious associations. The *Amicale des Bretons de Paris*, a secular society for Breton migrants explained in its magazine on February 1920 that 'The Bretons of Paris need some distraction. The young people especially exposed to all the temptations of Paris, must find with us the occasion to enjoy leisure honestly and intellectually.'[91] The *Amicale* organized banquets and balls where folkloric dances were preferred to modern ones and women were encouraged to wear traditional dress. Importantly, these discourses about leisure came, not from the servants themselves, but from above. The directors of these regional associations came from the upper-class and the clergy. The *Paroisse Bretonne* was created by a cleric, the Alsatian Union for Christian Activities by a pastor while the secular *Amicale des Bretons de Paris* was created by a rich surgeon.[92]

[89] C. Lemans, *Les Bretons et leurs Associations à Paris entre les Deux Guerres* (Perros-Guirec, 2008), p. 41.
[90] Lemans, *Les Bretons*, p. 43.
[91] Moch, *The Pariahs of Yesterday*, p. 172.
[92] A. Calvé, *Histoire des Bretons de Paris* (Spezed, 1994), p. 95 and p. 112; Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 96.

There was a paternalistic dimension in these discourses on local identities as the upper-strata of the migrant group lectured the poorer ones about how to behave in Paris.

In a world where access to leisure was democratised, these clubs' memberships declined after the First World War.[93] The GFS lost 38 326 members between 1913 and 1919 as well as 6537 associates to the point that Lady Cunliff, the president, warned her associates in 1918 that 'Our Society is in danger of losing the confidence of the young if we Associates do not try to place ourselves in close touch with present-day conditions.'[94] The decline was not reversed and the society became peripheral after the Second World War. In France, the *Paroisse Bretonne* did not gather the majority of the maids from Brittany. It had 15 000 members in 1907 while there were 109 091 Bretons in Paris in 1911 and 18 606 Breton female domestic servants.[95] The *Union Alsacienne d'Activite Chretienne* created by the minister Muller in 1919, only gathered hundreds of Alsatian girls while there were around 11 000 Alsatians-Lorrains in Paris in 1900 among which were 4000 domestic servants.[96] The *Union Alsacienne* lost its members gradually until its collapse at the start of the Second World War.

The social hierarchy inherent in the GFS system and other societies was eroded in a climate of rising social emancipation to the point that the relationships between members and associates felt outdated.[97] Moreover, the relaxation of religious laws during the interwar period gave more freedom to women as the tropes of vice and fallen women became less

[93] B. Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls' Friendly Society 1874-1920', *Past and Present* 61/1 (1973), p. 135; Calvé, *Histoire des Bretons*, p. 97; Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 101.
[94] Harrison, 'For Church, Queen', p. 137.
[95] Lemans, *Les Bretons*, p. 40; T. Perrono, 'Les Bretons Face au Concept de Diaspora', *En Envor* 6 (2015), p. 38; A. Chatelain, 'Migrations et Domesticité Urbaine en France, XVIIIe siècle – XXe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, 47/4 (1969), p. 525.
[96] Haubestenel, *Active, Propre*, pp. 15-16 and p. 96.
[97] Richmond, 'It Is Not a Society', p. 306.

prevalent.[98] The prevalence of religion both in the message of the GFS and its daily activities with sermons and Bible Class became increasingly problematic as British society was increasingly secularized. There was a similar decline in France as Albert Greiner, an Alsatian pastor, thought that 'the pietist and sentimental style of the Union [*Alsacienne*]'s sermons' were increasingly old-fashioned.[99] Therefore, if some servants benefited from such clubs as it helped them socialize and feel safe in a new place, others did not. Many women felt limited by their strict rules and strong occupational identity. Marie, a French maid working for a bourgeois household in Paris in the 1920s, was disappointed after accompanying her friends to a ball and discovering that it was frequented only by servants. After dancing with a man who revealed that he was a valet and wanted to 'get married to a serious maid', she was appalled that they were 'totally in our own social sphere'.[100] Marie's disillusionment with the servants' ball highlights that she was aware of other ways to enjoy herself on her day off. She consequently decided to stop spending her Sunday with her friends and explored the pleasures that Paris had to offer on her own. In Britain, Mollie Moran and Flo felt bored at a servants' ball organised by some rich employers whereas they were excited to attend a town dance hall 'thronged with young people', which Mollie 'had longed to go to since I was thirteen'.[101]

French servants were not solely determined either by their regional identity. Alsatian servants did not only want to meet other Alsatian and sing in their local language. Neither did Breton maids only wanted to wear traditional costumes and perform Breton dances on their days off. Servants' autobiographies show that local identities did matter: Lilianne sang

[98] Ibid.
[99] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 96.
[100] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 175.
[101] M. Moran, *Aprons and Silver Spoons: The Heart-Warming Memoirs of a 1930s Kitchen Maid* (London, 2013), p. 226.

in German with the cook who was from the same village as she was; Josephine went to the Bockstall, an Alsatian restaurant to meet other young women from her village.[102] But these were only one facet of servants' experiences on their day off. Marguerite' account is a perfect example of the many identities taken by servants when off duty: while she missed her hometown and shopped for presents to send home on her days off, she also went to the cinema and to fairs in Paris.[103] Her local identity did not define her entire experience of leisure time. The domestic servants of the first half of the twentieth century were more modern and urban in their leisure time than the *Paroisse Bretonne* or the *Union Alsacienne* suggest. The new opportunities offered by mass leisure were much more exciting for some servants than an afternoon with other female members in a club, directed by upper-class ladies or clerics who would organize some social activities but also lecture them about morals.

III. 'Living it up': Mass-leisure, Domestic Servants and Identity

A. Leaving the Servants' Hall for the Dance Hall: Servants and Youth Communities

Servants' autobiographies reveal that they enjoyed a variety of activities in an environment dominated by mass-commercial leisure. They were not restricted to attend servants' clubs and enjoyed similar leisure activities to other young women. [104] British and French servants went to the cinema, the dance hall, the café or the teashop. They also spent their free time

[102] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 103.
[103] M. Bregnard, *Marguerite, Une Delloise à Paris* (Tours, 2005), p. 55 and p. 87.
[104] Folwer, *The First Teenagers*, p. 109; Morgan, 'A Study', p. 26; James and Moore, 'Adolescent Leisure', p.140; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 58; P. Wild, 'Recreation in Rochdale, 1900-1940', in Clark, Critcher and Johnson (eds) *Working-class culture*, p. 141; H. Cunningham, 'Leisure' in J. Benson (ed) *The Working-class in England 1875-1914* (London, 1985), p. 140; J. R. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven, 2012), p. 202.

reading novels and magazines or, walking around with friends in the streets, countryside or nearby parks. Dancing, nevertheless, played a particularly important role in providing servants with a space where they could meet new people outside their social sphere and share a dance culture that was specific to the younger section of society. Juliette Sauget who attended the *Elysée Montmartre* in 1908 and an Alsatian maid who went to the Moulin Rouge both enjoyed dancing the French cancan.[105] The cancan involved dancers of both sexes throwing their legs in the air. The dance was very different from the conventional waltz of the servants' balls in which couples danced a foot apart. Cancan was considered depraved by the good society of the early twentieth century and reserved for students and popular balls.[106] In the late 1930s, Micheline, in Nogent, danced the java which similarly broke with conventions.[107] The java was a faster and more sensual version of the waltz; men often put their hand on their partner's buttocks in a provocative way when they danced. [108] While the java was danced at every popular ball in the first half of the twentieth century, it was not appropriate for the dance halls of the elite groups in society.

In Britain, Rose enjoyed new swing dances like the Charleston, described in 1927 as 'the young people's dance'.[109] She loved swing dances 'partly because older people really hated them but also because they left you so breathless with excitement'.[110] Mrs O'Donner, a scullery maid in a manor house in 1924 was also 'pop music mad' and loved dancing Charleston.'[111] The informality and free form of dances imported from America, allowed more autonomy and personal expression. They did not have to be danced as a couple but

[105] M.-J. Mouillon, "Un Exemple de Migration Rurale de la Somme dans la Capitale: Domestique de la Belle Epoque à Paris (1904-1912)," *Etudes de la region Parisienne* 44 (1970), p. 6.
[106] N. Maruta, *L'Incroyable Histoire du Cancan: Rebelles et Insolentes les Parisiennes Mènent la Danse* (Paris, 2014).
[107] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 105.
[108] H. Joannis Deberne, *Danser en Société*, (Paris, 1999), pp. 72-73.
[109] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 24 January 1927, p. 3.
[110] Plummer, *The Maid's Tale*, p. 149.
[111] Dawes, *Not in Front*, p. 143.

could be enjoyed individually or with a group of friends. The rhythm and movement of the dances also allowed the body to move more freely and liberated the dancers from the bodily and social constraints of more classical dances like the waltz.[112] These dances did not figure on the programme of the servants' ball organised by Lady Malcom in 1936, which comprised only waltz and foxtrots.[113] They were part of an emerging youth culture which was not easily shared with employers. A journalist commented with concern that 'girls, shivering as they wait for the tram or 'bus, twist about their feet in the most ridiculous fashion…In the big offices of the city typists indulge in impromptu steps the moment their employer turns his back.'[114] Rose dancing the Charleston at the house of her employer was no different. She explained that she loved swinging to the annoyance of her employers as she was 'practising the Charleston in my room back at the house and being told off for making such a racket with my heels on the floor.'[115] Mrs O'Donner also learned to dance with her fellow servants by 'hanging to the back of our chairs, until the mistress would come down saying "Whatever is all this dreadful noise?".' Older upper servants were also sometimes excluded alongside employers from this new dance craze. Daisy Noakes recalled that 'evenings seemed dull so we bought a second-hand portable gramophone and a few records from Woolworths, 6d a time, and we did a few dance-steps round the hall. But the butler said there were complaints from the private quarter that we were too noisy'. [116]

Once they mastered these new dance moves, servants could frequent dance halls where they had the opportunity to break their homo-sociability and meet men irrespective of occupational and/or local connections. In the British countryside, for example, in the 1930s,

[112] Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 206 and p. 222.
[113] Lady Malcom's Servants Ball, http://www.duckie.co.uk/vintage/lady-malcoms-servants-ball (24 October 2017).
[114] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 28 February 1927, p. 3
[115] Plummer, *The Maid's Tale*, p. 149.
[116] Noakes, *The Town Beehive*, p. 164.

Jean Rennie, who worked at Sawley Hall in Yorkshire, went to a local dance hall where she danced with men of the estate but also with 'a boy from the village who had a motor-bike'.[117] In urban areas, soldiers were among servants' most common partners. In the 1920s, Dorothy danced with 'Douglas Farrant, a naval officer who was 'very good looking and also a good dancer.'[118] At a Bastille day ball in Paris in the 1920s, Marguerite fell in love with a soldier.[119] Both servants and soldiers were highly mobile, detached from their communities and part of hierarchical institutions which gave them little means of self-expression. As a result, the two groups might have found it easier to approach each other rather than risk their luck with young people who were more strongly integrated within the local community. In France, many servants also mentioned flirting with the sons of shopkeepers and other apprentices. Josephine remembered meeting some apprenticed butchers at a dance in the late 1930s, and Frieda recalled dancing with a variety of men ranging from bakers to shopkeepers and butchers.[120] These men offered, at least for an evening, the fantasy of social mobility into the lower middle class, which would become a reality for some servants as discussed in chapter two. Finally, in this list of encounters, the most surprising might be that of Kathleen, a housekeeper in a small country house and 'Micky the boxer', a semi-professional boxer, at a dancehall in Leicester in the 1920s.[121] This relationship more than any other shows that dance venues which catered for a mass-market gave the servants the opportunity to meet almost anyone. Marie's reaction as she spent the evening flirting with the son of a shopkeeper at the ball symbolised the power of leisure: 'The Bourdet house? My problems? All of that doesn't exist at the moment. I am transformed.'[122] Thanks to the social diversity of the dancehall, Marie transcended her servant status. She gained access to people outside

[117] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 83.
[118] D. Fudge, *Sands of Time: The Autobiography of Dorothy Fudge* (Wimborne, 1988), p. 17.
[119] Bregnard, *Marguerite*, p. 60.
[120] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, pp. 103-105.
[121] K. Clifford, *Cocoa at Midnight* (London, 2013), pp.147-154
[122] Marie, *Mes Patrons,* p. 59.

of her social sphere, she could behave simply as a young woman instead of a servant and dream of better days. Her 'transformation' demonstrates the impact that the liberalisation of leisure had on the life of servants and other young women. This desire for anonymity and redefinition at the dance hall was so strong that some servants even lied to their boyfriends about their occupation to maintain the illusion. For example, Margaret Powell recalled that: 'if you said you were in domestic service it was still the same old story, you could see their faces change. The less polite ones used to say, "Oh, skivvies!" and clear off, and leave you cold.'[123] Rose Plummer also stated that 'you'd never show him your hands as no boy wanted a girl in service.'[124] This attitude reveals how important leisure was for servants as an escape from the physical and emotional confines of service. The dance hall was a space where they could reinvent themselves and some were very careful not to let their occupational identity dictate their courtships.

B. Veillées and Dances: Servants' Leisure in the French Countryside

British servants who lived in the countryside tended to work in country houses and resided there temporarily before moving to London for the 'season'. As a result, they did not abide by the rules of the rural communities that they occasionally frequented on their day off and preferred driving to a nearby small town with a cinema or a dance hall. In contrast, many French servants were at the forefront of the cultural change affecting leisure practices in rural areas. A traditional aspect of social life in rural areas were the *veillées* in winter which gathered neighbours together in a room of the farmhouse in the evening to work but also share songs, games and dances. In this context, servants remained under the watchful eyes

[123] M. Powell, *Below Stairs* (London, 2011), p. 173.
[124] Plummer, *The Maid's Tale*, p. 91.

of their employers and had little opportunities to enjoy some anonymity. Village dances were also organised during the summer and in particular, at harvest times. According to Michael Marrus, at these events, dancing used to be a 'celebration of village solidarity, a visible demonstration of unity'.[125] Jean-Michel Guilcher argued that village dances 'unite[d] generations more than it separate[d] them.'[126] These celebrations were a ritual controlled by the entire community, where participation depended on one's position in the social hierarchy of the village. Custom defined what was danced, with whom and even the order of the dances. Dancing used to be less about 'recreation' or 'pleasure' and more about monitoring behaviour and building community-based 'human capital'. The fact that most of these dances were performed in lines reinforced the symbolic links of the community. Some dances even mimed the gestures of specific occupational groups further linking dances and leisure with fixed identities within the village community. In these small tightknit communities, servants could not disassociate themselves from their occupational status during their leisure time. There were relatively fewer opportunities for individual hedonism and redefinition at these various social events which were policed by the rural community.

The social life of French rural villages, however, was changing.[127] The strong cultural links of the village communities started to shift from the second half of the eighteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, these changes became more marked.[128] Military service for men established in 1798 led rural young men to discover new parts of France and, crucially, to adopt a national as opposed to a regional overarching identity. This horizon-broadening experience in military service was complemented by the influence of new

[125] M. R. Marrus, 'Modernization and Dancing in Rural France: From la Bourrée to le Fox-Trot', *Dance Research Journal* 8/2 (1976), p. 2.
[126] J. M. Guilcher, *La Tradition Populaire de Danse en Basse-Bretagne* (Paris, 1963), pp. 50-51.
[127] J.-C. Farcy, 'Le Temps Libre au Village (1830-1930)' in Corbin (ed) *L'Avènement des Loisirs*, pp. 299-362.
[128] Farcy, 'Jeunesse Rurale', pp. 322-323.

organisations in the twentieth century that promoted alternative approaches to young people's leisure time. Societies that aimed to take care of young people and protect them from the new 'vices' of modern leisure further broke down the communal ties of the village. They led young people to think of leisure as an 'individual practice' by allowing them to experience leisure at a different level than the village community, within regional and even national youth movements.[129] The technical progress in agriculture which led to the end of subsistence crises further loosened the links that were important for the survival of the community. With better lighting and heating as well as more disposable goods, it was less necessary to gather all together in the evening at the *veillées* to keep warm and sew clothing items. The First World War as well as the rural exodus, by diminishing the number of young people present in villages, also interfered with the villages traditions generally performed by the younger generations. Finally, the spread of commercial mass-leisure in the twentieth century meant that the village gradually ceased to generate a distinctive culture.

Given this multitude of factors, young people tended to take part less often in village celebrations and organise their own social gatherings where they could freely meet the other sex.[130] The *veillées* ceased to be a central event of village life and became more family based. Jean-Claude Farcy gives the example of the Vendée region at the end of the nineteenth century where there was distinction between the 'neighbours *veillées*', which were more traditional and focused on games, and the 'youth *veillées'* which gathered young people from different parts of the village and were dedicated to dancing.[131] By the interwar period, the *veillées* were gradually abandoned by young people who preferred to organise their own parties. At these events, before the First World War, the avant-deux and the American

[129] Ibid, p. 333.
[130] Ibid, p. 331.
[131] Ibid, p. 324.

quadrille replaced the older form of the quadrille and other styles of line dancing by creating smaller groups of dancers. After the First World War, new dances like the polka, the waltz, the mazurka, and later the Charleston came to dominate. These dances invited men and women to dance in closer contact compared to the previous line dancing and included only two individuals instead of four like in *l'avant-deux*. As Marrus noted, while 'village dancing served as a vehicle for group expression; dancing in the modern style was inclined to do the opposite, to articulate the needs and feelings of individuals.'[132] The dances required a wooden floor to dance on, which meant that dances were often no longer held outside on the village square but were instead hosted by in-keepers and café owners. Inside these venues, young people were hidden from the eyes of the public and freer behaviours could take place. Dances also increasingly occurred alongside parish fairs and, as a result, young people travelled to neighbouring villages to enjoy a dance without parental supervision and potentially interact with other people whose occupational status they did not know.[133] In the twentieth century, young people had finally conquered some 'autonomous leisure spaces' and servants benefited from this movement.

As the dance became less monitored, servants had more chance to behave freely and dance with men who would have been inaccessible to them in a formal village dance. Marie could dance with the son of 'proprietors' at a small party with unsupervised young people. Even if servants were not usually invited to these parties, once she managed to get invited, there was no adult to enforce distinctions between classes.[134] Marthe also explained that in her village 'there were some young people who danced at the café so we danced together on Sunday afternoons', underlining once again the new fluidity of dancing in rural areas as

[132] Marrus, 'Modernization and Dancing', p. 6.
[133] Y. Cretté-Breton, *Mémoires d'une Bonne* (Paris, 1966), p. 65.
[134] Marie, *Mes Patrons,* p. 59.

young adult mixed together more easily.[135] French rural servants were starting to taste the freedom that leisure could offer.

C. Escaping Domestic Service: Dreams and Reality

French and British servants' access to mass-leisure not only allowed them to meet new people and engage with a growing youth culture. The narratives spread by this new culture also gave them the possibility to build alternative and complex identities outside of the houses of their employers. At the turn of the century, occidental societies came to believe in a new rhetoric of progress and self-betterment accompanied by the rise of consumerism.[136] The idea that 'individuals had the inherent ability to define the course of their fate' spread under a variety of forms, influencing politics, philosophy but also sports, diets and leisure activities.[137] Producers and advertisers used the idea of success and mobility for all to disseminate and sell their products which included a large quantity of leisure goods like songs, magazines and movies. Therefore, leisure was more than a simple item of consumption, it was also a mode of social behaviour increasingly accessible to all. The new ideology of self-confidence spread by mass-media meant that ordinary people like servants could experience a form of social mobility through leisure, not only by having access to similar leisure goods as higher social classes, but simply by acquiring 'social poise and psychological confidence' through leisure.[138]

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[135] Interview with Marthe Ginard, 'Loisirs avant le Marriage (le Bal, le Piano Mécanique, la Mer)', 'Centenaires ou Presque', Archives de la Manche, 251 AV24, http://www.archives-manche.fr/ark:/57115/a011441812982In5hOh (12 November 2018).
[136] Todd, *Young Women*, p. 216.
[137] J. Malnig, 'Two-Stepping to Glory: Social Dance and the Rhetoric of Social Mobility' in A. Dils, A. Cooper Albright (eds), *Moving History/Dancing cultures: a dance History Reader* (Middletown, 2013), p. 276.
[138] Malnig, 'Two-Stepping to Glory', pp. 277-78.

This social poise could be cheaply obtained by visiting one of Britain's many teashop chains. British servants enjoyed going to tearooms chains because these large venues ensured a certain anonymity and provided a glamourous experience. Tea shop chains built on the idea that success was accessible to all by producing cheap copies of upper-class tea shops. Everything was made to transport the customer into another world. These teashops, especially chains like Lyons, offered enticing art deco furnishing, smart waitresses and 'sparkling imitation silver canteen cutlery'.[139] Some servants went to Lyons Corner Houses – different from Lyons tea shops – which were large complexes with brasseries, restaurants and tea shops with a live orchestra. The display of cakes in the picture below of the Lyons Corner Shop on the junction of Coventry Street and Rupert Street in Piccadilly, London gives us a taste of the upper-market image that these shops tried to recreate (picture 34).

[139] Walkowitz, *Nights Out*, p. 207.

Picture 34: Lyon's Corner House, c. 1930s



Source: 'Circa 1930: Lyon's Corner House on junction of Coventry Street and Rupert Street in Piccadilly, London W1' Sasha Keystone, https://flashbak.com/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-lyons-cornerhouses-and-their-nippy-waitresses-35186/ (10 March 2018).

In Paignton, a seaside town in Devon, Miss Goof, a maid-of-all-work, went to the Addison's café, an establishment 'patronised by their majesties the King and Queen' according to its advertisement, which was offering 'morning coffee, luncheons and Devonshire cream teas' with an orchestra.[140] It also offered a view of the bay from its veranda and its table covered with white cloths suggested a certain middle-class respectability (picture 35).

Picture 35: Addison Café, 1906



Source: Postcard, Royal Addison Café, c.1906.

Miss Goof also went to the Deller's café in Paington. There are no pictures of the interior of the café, but we can imagine its atmosphere by looking at its second branch in Exeter (picture 36).

[140] Horn, *Below Stairs*, p. 132; 'Addison Royal café and creamery', *Western Morning News*, 13 August 1932, p. 5.

Picture 36: Deller's Café, Bedford Street, Exeter



Source: 'Deller's Cafe, Bedford Street', http://demolition-exeter.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/dellers-cafe-bedford-street.html (31 July 2017).

The decorated and plastered walls, the roman columns and the white tablecloths created a smart atmosphere. The design of these places and the live music was used to transform these teashops in more than a halt for white-collar workers and servants. An East End teenage customer to a Lyon Café recalled: 'When you went into the Corner House, you felt like a film star because someone waited on you and the china matched and the tea was in a tea pot, the milk in a jug and sugar in a jar. This was not to mention the cutlery.'[141] The charming and stylish tea rooms gave servants a place to dream of better days. Their atmosphere suggested that with a bit of money, anyone could move up in the world. The experience of being served and even called 'Madam' by the waitresses while they spent most of their time

[141] Walkowitz, *Nights Out*, p. 207.

serving other people was a delight. The first time she had tea at a Lyons restaurant, Eileen Balderson 'really thought' that she was 'living it up!'.[142] Mollie Moran also described with excitement 'sandwiches with the crusts off and tea from a fancy pot' as well as the 'art deco gold entrance' which led to the inside of the shop where 'all was serene, calm and restrained chatter as ladies and gentlemen took afternoon tea on tables laid with starched white tablecloths'. She concluded that 'Having tea at Lyons corner house in Marble Arch was a dazzling experience,' and most importantly, it made her 'feel like the other half'.[143] Rose Plummer 'felt like [she] was getting somewhere' when she went to the tea shop. 'Sitting by the window sipping [her] tea and eating lovely iced buns', she thought that she 'had come such a long way from Hoxton.'[144] Jean Rennie was also glad that she 'could forget cap and apron and that [she] was a servant' when she went to have tea.[145] These tea-shop chains provided a space where servants could reinvent themselves.

Other types of mass-leisure goods provided servants with the opportunity to escape from their every-day life and dream of better days. Films, music, magazines and novels conveyed stories that presented young working women escaping their social classes through successful marriages. While nineteenth-century domestic servants were already reading sensational novels, to the horror of their employers, reading became even more accessible in the twentieth century as working-class people reached higher levels of literacy and print was cheaper and more widely available. Twentieth-century servants read countless love stories and light fiction in novels and magazines. Margaret Powell and her friend Gladys were 'avid readers of those women's magazines of the time; things like *Peg's Paper*, *The Red Circle*

[142] Balderson, *Backstairs Life,* p. 78.
[143] Moran*, Aprons and Silver*, p. 176 and p. 186.
[144] Plummer, *The Maid's Tale*, p. 143.
[145] Rennie, *Every Other Sunday*, p. 56.

Magazine, and the *Red heart*.'[146] Other servants read *Eve's Ow*n and *Red Letter*.[147] The cultural production of these types of cheap magazines aimed at a female working-class readership, providing servants with stories in which they could experience romance and success.[148] Margaret Powell recalled how 'between their pages many a poor and lonely heroine ended up marrying some Rudolph Valentino sort of man, or a Rothschild with loads of money.'[149] The heroine was often a mill girl such as in the stories 'I will be a lady or a mill girl's ambition', 'From mill to mansion' or 'Maggie of Marley's mill' published in *The Home Companion*.[150] However, she could also work in domestic service. *Peg's paper* specialised in this type of fiction as its readership was mostly made of working-class girls who were to be or become domestic servants. On May 15th 1919, the very first story published in this magazine was 'Mary the madcap'.[151] Mary, an orphan girl who was supposed to be employed as a housemaid but ends up being the companion of Lady Melrose after being mistaken for the new lady's maid on her arrival. Despite many hurdles on her way including a man trying to blackmail her to get some money, she ends up marrying the son of Lady Melrose. Similar stories were found in cheap magazines such as 'Laughter and the little men' published in Cassell's magazine. In this short piece, an orphaned kitchen-maid inherits three-thousand pounds from her uncle who was a horse dealer of Connemara.[152] The heroine gets into trouble as she decides to get into the horse dealing business without any prior knowledge or training and loses most of her money. However, she ends up falling in love with a wealthy horse trainer who does not regret her lost fortune

[146] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 103.
[147] Dawes, *Not in Front*, p. 144.
[148] J. Périn, *Devenir grande*, APA, 934.00, p. 61
[149] Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 103.
[150] 'I Will Be a Lady; or a Mill Girl's Qmbition' , *The Home Companion*, 27 July 1912, p. 29; M. St John, 'From Mill to Mansion', *The Home Companion* , 26 October 1912, p. 22; M. St john 'Maggie of Marley's Mill, *The Home Companion*, 27 March 1926, p. 29.
[151] 'Mary the Madcap', *Peg's Paper*, 15 May 1919, p. 3.
[152] E. Woodward, 'Laughter and the Little Men', *Cassell's Magazine*, 1 May 1927, p. 28.

or despise her past life as a domestic servant. In *Woman's Weekly*, the serial story 'The prince and Mollie, an unconventional love story', was about a nurse maid who discovers that her childhood sweetheart is the crown prince of Saxe-Seltona.[153] They randomly meet in the forest they used play in when they were children and confess their love for each other. After many troubles, including the prince's father refusing to accept the union and the son of the nursery maid's employers trying to sabotage the wedding because he is jealous, they end up happily married. The pages of these cheap women's magazines were bursting with stories of typists, mill girls and domestic servants marrying men of a superior rank thanks to their charm and personality. This type of fiction allowed servants to enjoy some escapism and fulfilled, as Cynthia White put it, 'the need of hard worked poorly paid girls and women to escape from their drab surroundings into a colourful, action-paced dream-world where love and riches were for once within reach.'[154]

The romance novels and novelettes read by servants fitted the same purpose. A servant working alongside Monica Dickens read *Flames of Desire*, which made her 'cry buckets'.[155] She summarised the story as that of 'a Duke who falls in love with one of his mother's maids. Her pride is her barrier, and she turns him down, but he wears her down with obstinate persistence, and they elope. Mind you, he does the right thing by her, it's that sort of book'. In a British survey on reading habits conducted by Mass Observation between November 1937 and January 1938, two servants emerged from the list of respondents. The first one, described as a 'young woman (Domestic Servant)' explained that the last book she read was by Denise Robins, a successful romance novelist.[156] To a question concerning other books she might be interested in, she answered 'I've read a lot like it by Ruby M. Ayres', another

[153] B. Ruck, 'The Prince and Mollie, an Unconventional Love Story', *Home Chat*, 19 September 1908, p. 43.
[154] C. L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London, 1970), p. 98.
[155] M. Dickens, *One Pair of Hands* (London, 1972), p. 209.
[156] 20-2-D, *Directives Replies*, READING HABITS 1937-47, p. 1340.

romantic novelist. The second woman described as 'Lily, domestic servant' gave a more detailed list of the books she had read, which were romantic staples from lending libraries at the time: 'Dearest (Helenas Grose), Glad Surrender (Helena Grove), Freckles (G. Sinatron-Portes), Valley of Enchantment (Kathlyn Rhodes).'[157] When asked why she decided to read the last book she read, the first servant answered, 'because it was a love story, and I only read love stories and I like them to be light,' and the second one explained that it was for 'romance + escape from everyday problems'. In France, when Marie read romantic novels, she 'repeated to [herself] every time: how good it would to live life like in a book, because in all of the books [she] read, the ending works out for the hero. (…) the reality is very different.'[158] Reading helped servants escape their condition alongside other young women and dream of better days.

In France, music-hall artists like Mistinguett or Chevalier dominated the scene with songs telling the stories of poor young women marrying millionaires. Servants recalled listening to Chevalier's biggest hit, '*Faut pas s'en faire*', a hedonist hymn which swore that money problems would disappear by themselves.[159] The stars of the music-hall were also symbols of these new emerging values. The two biggest stars Mistinguett and Chevalier shared the same story of upward mobility: Minstinguett's father was a day-labourer and her mother was a seamstress while Chevalier's father was a house painter and his mother was a bookbinder. Even if servants did not take these stories literally, they provided an imaginary social world and a language which could help them to formulate new ideas and identities. Marie, for example, rejected the advances of a fellow servant and became infatuated with a cashier at the post office. While she thought that she was 'not good enough for a civil servant

[157] 20-2-D, *Directives Replies*, READING HABITS 1937-47, p. 1400.
[158] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 101.
[159] Haubenestel, *Active, Propre*, p. 92 and p. 103.

even a low-class one' because she was a servant, she nonetheless 'dream[t] of something else', imagining how a lucky romantic encounter might help her escape domestic service.[160]

The cinema provided a stronger type of escapism through visual and, later, sound effects. It reached both urban and rural servants in France and Britain. In the French countryside where many French servants worked, the cinema was less accessible, but it was nonetheless available first through fairs before the First World War and then actual projections rooms during the interwar period. The French Ministry of Agriculture's pressure to show agricultural propaganda movies in the countryside in the 1920s had led to the development of cinemas showing both state and commercial films.[161] The cinema was popular because it provided an immersive experience while allowing servants to get some rest. It was, indeed, a rather more relaxing experience for servants to sit in a cinema after scrubbing floors and running up and down the stairs all day than dancing the Charleston and swinging their tired legs all night. In Britain, Margaret Powell 'used to go to the nearest cinema and get all [her] romance second-hand. It took a lot less energy' after an entire week of hard work.[162] When Winifred Foley went to the cinema, she was 'bewitched with surprise and delight; soon (…) [her] domestic shortcomings and even homesickness faded from [her] consciousness.'[163] She added that 'It was heaven to go inside the warm dark picture house, where tear stains did not show. Here I could exchange my lot for one of the glamour queens of Hollywood. Afterwards I returned to reality.'[164]

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[160] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, pp. 176-177.
[161] Y. Chevaldonné, Nouvelles Techniques et Culture Régionale: Les Premiers Temps du Cinéma dans le Vaucluse (1896-1914) (Laval, 2004); A. J. Murray Levine, 'Cinéma, Propagande Agricole et Populations Rurales en France (1919-1939)', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire,* 83 (2004), https://www.cairn.info/revue-vingtieme-siecle-revue-d-histoire-2004-3-page-21.htm.

[162] Powell, *Below Stairs,* p. 101.
[163] Ibid, p. 129.
[164] W. Foley, *A Child in the Forest* (Cheltenham, 1991), p. 142.

Because of the nature of the film industry, with its large diffusion and pricey production cost, films were not customised to please a female working-class audience to the same degree as novelettes and cheap magazines. In consequence, domestic servants were often minor characters and tended to fit common caricatures of servants as unattractive objects of ridicule. In 1934, for example, Davina Craig played a maid in *The Black Abbot* by George A. Cooper.[165] Her character looked run-down, with a bad posture, a cockney accent and a simple mind. One scene highlights how the servant was typically part of a farce while other characters were given more depth and passion. After that two upper-class lovers kiss passionately in the garden on a cold night, the camera turns to two servants sitting on a bench. The maid argues that the butler does not kiss her passionately as he used to do at the beginning of their romance. Their lines are an accumulation of jokes and funny words. When the butler comments that it is too cold and therefore 'not the sort of night for courting', the maid answers 'well you are cooling off, there was a time you wouldn't have mind if it was snowing and you would catch a cold'. The maid then complains: 'I believe your love for me is ebbing away… ebbing away', leading the butler to ask her if she is drunk. She then asks him 'Why don't you kiss me like in the movies', making a clear reference to the scene with a passionate kiss that the audience has just seen before. But the butler answers 'I am not that sort, I don't like to rush things, I like to feel me way'. She then tries to hug him, but he pushed her away to reveal a potted flower. She thinks it is a present for her, but he explains that it is one of the flower prizes of his master, and they end up both admiring the flower. The two servants are represented as the antithesis of romance and passion. Their courting is ridiculous and passionless, and, in the end, they care more about the business of their masters than their own relationship. Servants' romantic involvement was not taken seriously on screen.

[165] T*he Black Abbot,* dir. George A. Cooper (Film, 1934).

Similarly, there were countless comical maids in French cinema. For example, in 1935, Paulette Dubosc played a maid-of-all-work in *La Rosière des Halles,* directed by Jean de Limur.[166] In this comedy, a bourgeois decides to spend an evening with his maid at a club to spy on his wife who he suspects of being unfaithful. However, there is nothing seductive about the maid. She is portrayed as an innocent white goose who does not really understand what she is doing. In a scene in which her master forces her to dress up with her mistress' clothes before going out, the maid is presented as a sort of asexual childish being. She does not know how to put the dress on properly and complains that she feels naked in it. The master comes in and does not think she looks the part for their evening at the club. He decides to do her make up himself while the maid reacts with horror. She has never put make up and starts crying when he applies foundation on her face, which she thinks is lard. The master also thinks that her hair looks ridiculous and proceeds to take off the ribbons that she tied in. She defends her hair style by telling her master that she 'wore the ribbons for my first communion', to which he replies 'yes, that is exactly the problem'. Compared to her mistress who is presented as a glamorous and attractive woman, the maid is portrayed here as childish and unsophisticated (picture 37). She is the antithesis of the modern woman seen in Hollywood films.

[166] *La Rosière des Halles,* dir. Jean de Limur (Film, 1935).

Picture 37: Paulette Dubosc in *La Rosière des Halles*



Source: *La Rosière des Halles,* dir. Jean de Limur (Film, 1935)

Marie, a French servant, complained in her autobiography about the way her occupation was depicted on screen:

> None of the girls were proud of their work, because they knew that for most people, a maid-of-all-work was nothing more than a good for nothing. To be sure of it, you just have to take a look at how the writers, painters and film directors depict them: they are always sappy, ugly and ridiculous.[167]

However, most servants stayed silent on the potentially hurtful depiction of service in movies. Instead, they seemed to have been capable of identifying just as well with the many shop girls or factory girls who exceeded class expectations and found love on the big screen. Two of Eileen Balderson's favourite actresses, Janet Garnor and Joan Crawford, were both

[167] M. T. Tual, *Ainsi Sont-Ils*, APA, 845, p. 37.

famous for their role as working women who ended up finding love and success.[168] Janet Gaynor became a popular actress thanks to her performance in *A Star is born* whose plot focuses on a young farm girl who tries to become an actress. To survive in Hollywood, she works as a waitress and ends up catching the eye of a famous actor who helps her to achieve her acting dreams. One of the best success of Joan Crawford was *Our Blushing Brides*, a movie in which she played a 'shop girl-Cinderella' who happily falls in love with the son of her boss. We do not know what Eileen Balderson thought of these movies, but the plot might have spoken to her current situation, her difficulties and her dream of escaping the drudgery of domestic service.

D. Domestic Servants, Fashion and Self-fashioning

Indulging in fashion on their day off was way through which domestic servants partook in a youthful leisure culture and redefined their identities away from domestic service. The ideal woman in interwar Britain was supposed to be 'glamourous', a term made popular by Hollywood movie stars. Sally Alexander argues that the mass production of clothing and rising living standards meant that during the 1920s and 1930s 'via the high street or the sewing machine, the mantle of glamour passed from the aristocrat and courtesan to the shop, the office, or factory girl via the film star'.[169] Being able to stroll around, particular on Sundays, wearing fashionable clothes instead of work clothes was an important marker of young working-class women's respectable status.[170] The historiography has left servants out of these new modern horizons because past societal discourses depicted servants as

[168] Balderson, *Backstairs Life*, p. 71.
[169] S. Alexander, 'Becoming a Woman in London in the 1920s and 1930s,' in D. Feldman and G. Stedman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations since 1800* (London, 1989), p. 263.
[170] H. Harden Chenut, *The Fabric of Gender. Working-class Culture in Third Republic France* (University Park, 2005), p. 217.

antonyms of modernity and showed contempt for these female workers who were part of an institution that was deemed to stuck in the past. As Chapter One revealed, the cap and apron worn by domestic servants were seen as a 'badge of servitude' in stark contrast with the dress of shop girl or the professional woman, which stood as symbols of a new and modern form of femininity. Servants' autobiographies, however, reveal that service did not cut these women entirely from modernity as many partook into new 'glamourous' identities. The message according to which women had to be glamourous must have been particularly relevant to domestic servants who had to wear 'outdated' uniforms for most of the week. When they could dress as they wanted on their day off, many young girls were careful to put their best look forward. Fashionable clothes were also important for servants because they helped them build up their confidence with men or as one servant put it, 'impress the boys'.[171] In this case, following fashion could be more than a 'temporary' creative escape for domestic servants. On her day off, a prettily attired servant could hope to attract a man who would marry her and definitively free her from service.

Servants who appeared in the Mass Observation Youth Questionnaire in 1941 and 1943 often answered that they spent their money on clothes. When asked what she did when she had some time off, one eighteen-years-old servant said that she went to 'have a look at the shops'.[172] A sixteen-years-old servant detailed the list of her expenses as following: '1) Clothes 2) Cosmetics 3) Papers, magazines 4) Sweets'.[173] Appearances through clothes and cosmetics but also through the papers and magazines that gave advice to young women on how to look attractive, were central to this servant's life. She had little time off as the interview revealed, only one afternoon and one night out, but she nonetheless invested in

[171] Foley, *A Child*, p. 152.
[172] 51-2-K, *Leisure and Clubs Questionaire Jan 1941: Bermondsey*, p. 1721.
[173] 51-2-K, *Leisure and Clubs Questionaire Jan 1941: Bermondsey*, p. 1732.

her appearance. Despite the drudgery of domestic service, she spent her money to look her best when she was not wearing the dreaded cap and apron. In her autobiography, Mollie Moran recalled that she went to Pontings to 'use that half a crown we got for Christmas to buy some flash material' for a dress while Margaret Powell spent her money on 'fripperies (…), on silly things that I saw in Selfridges' Bargain Basement'.[174] As Mollie Moran wore her new 'black silky-satin dress' or as Winifred Foley changed from her servant uniform into her 'pale-green silk dress' with 'a wide-brimmed lacy straw hat with green ribbons' as she had seen Hollywood Joan Crawford wear, these servants fashionable dress transformed them into modern young women indistinguishable from the factory or shop girl in the crowd of the dance hall. [175]

French servants' accounts referred more often to the figure of the 'Parisian woman' than to the 'glamour' of Hollywood stars. At the time, the French fashion brands still dominated the national market and led Hollywood to play only a secondary role in fashion until the Second World War.[176] Young French women sought to attain the look of the 'modern woman' defined by her make-up enhanced beauty, short hair-cut and trendy fashion choices.[177] Like their British counterparts, French servants used the narratives around the 'modern woman' or the 'Parisian' to carve new identities outside of service. In the countryside, the cinema worked as a transmission belt for modernity by introducing rural populations to new fashion, behaviours, objects. In 1910s, a French servant called Marie was criticised by her employers for following fashion with avidity as she bought some 'yellow leather shoes when there are

[174] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 176; Powell, *Below Stairs*, p. 100.
[175] Moran, *Aprons and Silver*, p. 179; Foley, *A Child*, p. 152.
[176] S. Kurkdjian, 'Être Moderne, c'est Être Belle, Jeune et Mince. La Nouvelle Féminité des Années 1920 à Travers la Rhétorique Publicitaire de Vogue Français', *Apparence(s)*, 7 (2017), http://journals.openedition.org/apparences/1369 (8 January 2018).
[177] F. El Amrani, *Les Jeunes Filles des Milieux Populaires en Anjou* (PhD thesis, Université de Rennes, 2012), p. 196.

some mistresses who do not even own them yet'.[178] In the 1920s, Marguerite sewed her own clothes and bought some from a department store to keep up with Parisian fashion.[179] In Paris, she bought her first dress in a bright coloured fabric, which was a 'revolution' for the women of her village back home who were used to lighter colours that did not attract the attention. Moreover, during the interwar, buying a complete garment with a label on it instead of just buying fabric to make a dress was a fashion statement when most women still sewed their own clothes or altered cheap dresses to make them chic.[180] Elise, an Alsatian servant who worked in Paris in the late 1930s bought a coat and a hat from the *Samaritaine* department store with her first pay check.[181] She also paid a lot of attention to her hair as she went every week to the hairdresser and had a perm done. Claire, another Alsatian servant, was proud to buy her very first suit that made her look professional and refined.[182] Even Henriette Klinger, an orphan girl placed into service by a charitable institution, used her wages in 1937 to buy a variety of fashionable items such as a new coat, a suit and a fur collar, a status item that appears repeatedly in servants' accounts.[183] Portraits of servants taken at the photographer's shop on their day off gives us a more direct illustration of the way these young women dressed up (pictures 38, 39, 40). These portraits were often destined for friends or lovers. They were often not the more formal portrait that would be sent to the family.[184] In these, servants showed to an urban and young audience that they mastered cultural codes regarding modernity and fashion.

[178] Marie, *Mes Patrons*, p. 40.
[179] Bregnard, *Marguerite*, p. 74.
[180] C. Roberts, 'A Price for Fashion: A Young Working-Class Woman's Wardrobe in 1930s London ', *Apparence(s)*, 7 (2017), http://journals.openedition.org/apparences/1359 (9 January 2018)
[181] Haubestenel*, Active, Propre*, p. 75.
[182] Ibid, p. 76.
[183] Beal, 'La domesticité', vol. 2, p. 128.
[184] Ibid, pp. 107-198.

Picture 38: Cécile and Alice, 1937 (Coll. A. Hoch, Wingen)



Source: Haubestenel*, Active, Propre*, p. 106.

Picture 39: Catherine and Emma, Boulevard Saint Martin, Paris (coll. E.Blaess, Saverne)



Source: Haubestenel*, Active, Propre*, p. 106

Picture 40: Jeanne (1930), Coll. R. Hollner



Source: Haubestenel, *Active, Propre*, p. 106.

Jeanne, Catherine, Emma, Alice and Josephine all showed off coats with big fur collars in their portraits. The trend of fur coats came from film stars and represented a sense of elegance and sophistication.[185] The fur cuffs of Catherine and Emma were an extra touch of luxury that was usually reserved for the upper class. The fashion industry made this style affordable for working-class women, in particular through credit-club system. Decorated hats, leather gloves, handbags and pearls were also put on display. Thanks to mass production of clothing which allowed servants and other young women to buy copies of more expensive outfits, servants could put their best selves forward and present themselves as fashionable modern women.

Being modern, or 'glamourous' sometimes meant more than just a nice outfit, it could also be a certain way of behaving. As part of the Mass Observation survey, an eighteen-years-old servant told the interviewer that she spent her money on 'go[ing] to the pictures, cigarettes (buy them but don't smoke), make-up, dancing, cafes + buses'.[186] It is intriguing that this servant bought cigarettes but did not smoke them. It could be that this young servant did smoke cigarette but felt uneasy admitting it in front of the person doing the survey for Mass-Observation. It could also be because these cigarettes were a statement item. She wanted to copy the glamourous stars on screen but did not dare to smoke or maybe did not like the taste. While women who smoked were considered deviant before the First World War, during the interwar, the cinema alongside big advertising campaigns presented cigarettes as sophisticated.[187] Cigarettes as well as make-up were props to attain the desired look that many saw on screen. In her autobiography, Hilda Newman recalled that she tried to smoke one evening as she was spending some time with the other young servants of the

[185] Roberts, 'A Price for Fashion'.
[186] 51-2-J, *Leisure and Clubs Questionaire Jan 1941: Paddington*, p. 1751
[187] Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, pp. 129-130.

household. One young footman motivated her by insisting that 'It'll do you good (…) you should live a bit!'.[188] The cigarette was associated with the idea of youth and hedonism. Hilda Newman worried that her parents, if they were there, would condemn the 'fast behaviour' of their daughter. Her apprehension reveals a generational divide between the young people who adopted new behaviours like smoking – spread through the cinema, the magazines and adverts – and their parents or employers. Similarly, Elsie Oman bought cigarettes and smoke them when she went to have tea at a Lyon's café with a friend. She felt proud to have 'a lovely meal, finishing off with coffee and a cigarette', as well as being able to tip the waitress.[189] The nice tea shop and the cigarette as well as the tip fitted with the image of a modern and independent woman, which Elsie Oman temporarily adopted on her afternoon off. The discourses around modernity and glamour even reached what a woman should drink. At a village dance, Brenda Ashford, a nursery maid, hesitated about what to order from the bar: 'I'd far rather have had a lemonade, but I didn't want to appear unsophisticated. But what to ask for? Beer was a man's drink and wine wasn't really available. Gin and tonic always struck me as a glamourous drink.'[190] Brenda Ashford had never drunk alcohol before, but she paid a lot of attention to how she looked and aspired to be 'glamorous' at the dance, a context prone to courtship. Fashion and 'glamour' helped servants to disconnect from their occupational status and endorse new identities based on modern womanhood which enhanced their confidence on their day off and helped them secure a good match.

[188] H. Newman, *Diamonds at Dinner* (London, 2013), p. 214.
[189] E. Oman, *Salford Stepping Stones* (Swinton, 1983), p. 54.
[190] Ashford, *A Spoonful*, p. 220.

E. 'Servante en Déroute': French Rural Servants, Songs and Authority

While rural servants in France gradually abandoned the old dances and started to frequent the cinema, oral culture did not entirely disappear in the countryside with the arrival of mass-leisure. French rural servants recalled songs that they sang at *veillées*, weddings and feasts.[191] These songs were different from the new popular songs, which praised the power of love. They told the story of a different social world in which romance could ruin a girl's life if she was not careful. While most of the songs were light and funny, they insisted on the right kind of union and romance that were accepted by the community. There were clear rules to be followed and those who broke them exposed themselves to ridicule and judgment.

Florentine Noiraud was a maid in a farm in the 1920s. When she was interviewed in old age to tell the story of her life, she was also invited to share any songs she recalled from that time. Even if these songs are recollections and therefore do not represent the whole repertoire that Florentine Noireaud might have known at the time, they still give us an idea of the cultural world she inhabited. In the song '*Je suis lasse d'être fille*', a fifteen-years old girl longs to get married but she is told that she must wait to be twenty years old.[192] The fourth verse warns young girls against the danger of romance: 'a man's promise means

[191] 'La vie quotidienne dans l'ancien temps sur le Mont Lozère', Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme – Phonothèque, D18, D19-12 (1978), http://phonotheque.mmsh.huma-num.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=3931 (23rd March 2018); Florentine Noiraud, 'A propos des noces d'autrefois', Enquête auprès de Florentine Noiraud aux Herbiers CERDO UPCP-Métive 003778 (1977), https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=75060&menu=DO14&cid=478 (23rd March 2018); Florentine Noiraud, 'A propos des occupations de veillées', CERDO UPCP-Métive, 003778 (1977), https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=75056&menu=DO14&cid=478 (23rd March 2018); Agnès Clochard, 'Comparaison entre les manières de s'amuser d'hier et d'aujourd'hui', Enquête sur la vie de ferme autrefois avec Agnès Clochard, UPCP-Métive, 0037787 (1977), https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=75321&cid=472 (23rd March 2018); Thérèse Fuzeau, 'Chanson en poitevin-saintongeais', Chansons et témoignes par Thérèse, UPCP-Métive, 002270 (1973), https://cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=58817&fonds=0&menu=&cid=466 (23rd March 2018).

[192] Florentine Noiraud, 'Chanson je suis laisse d'etre fille', Répertoire chante de Florentine Noiraud, UPCP-Métive, 000228 (1972), https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=76769&cid=414 (23rd March 2018).

nothing in matter of love'. Florentine also had a variety of bawdy songs in her repertoire, which warned both men and women against the consequences of extra-marital sex such as '*Chanson sur la Montagne*'. The song makes fun of a young girl who tries to reassure her mother by telling her that she can manage to live with her illegitimate young child. The chorus ends with the mother asking the girl where she will find the money to feed and clothe the child, and the girl answering, 'I will earn my money under the moonlight… I will earn my money in the bushes', a half-veiled reference to prostitution.[193] By making fun of the poor pregnant girl, the song reinforces the social traditions within the community and condemns incorrect behaviours such as having sex before marriage.

Thérèse Fuzeau, another maid on a farm in the 1920s, sang a repertoire of 24 songs, many learned when she was in service. They also illustrate the social rules of rural society, punishing the infidelity of men and women while telling young girls to be careful before contracting a marriage. The song '*L'autre jour en m'y promenant*' tells the story of a man trying to convince a young female shepherd to kiss him.[194] She gives in but warns him not to tell anyone at the village as 'my dad would make a fuss' and would keep her at home to clean instead of letting her take care of the cattle. In the same genre, the song '*Mariez moi bonne maman*' makes fun of a fourteen years old girl who is too keen to have her first sexual encounter and her lover who falls asleep before he can take her virginity.[195] Both are depicted as grotesque characters and ridiculed for breaking the accepted social rules around courting. There was little place for dreams in these songs. A large part of these women's

[193] Noiraud, 'Chanson Sur la montagne (ana.)', https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=76759&cid=414 (23rd March 2018).
[194] Thérèse Fuzeau, 'Autre jour en m'y promenant (l') (ch.) par Thérèse Fuzeau', Chansons et témoignes par Thérèse, UPCP-Métive, 002270, (1973) https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=58818&fonds=0&cid=397 (23rd March 2018).
[195] Fuzeau, 'Chanson par Thérèse Fuzeau', https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=58810&cid=383 (23rd March 2018).

repertoires was focused on the danger of courting and sexuality while men were depicted as sometimes funny but most often ominous figures in a woman's life. These songs potentially echoed the worries and insecurities of young female domestic servants who were subject to the authority of their master, sometimes to the point of abuse, with few mechanisms through which to seek redress in case of rape or unwanted pregnancy.

Servants also sang songs related to domestic service which they learned at *veillées* and parties. These songs did not celebrate the dignity of the servants' labour but instead ridiculed them and insisted on the hierarchical relationship between masters and servants. Many songs made fun of employers who could not control their servants as well as lazy servants who did not perform their work properly.[196] A lazy, insubordinate or incompetent servant was a laughing matter because in reality, her occupation required long hours of backbreaking work following the orders of her employers. In one song, a servant is made fun off because she is clumsy and does not do her job well: 'I made her dress the table… she broke all the dishes… I made her clean the windows… she broke all the windowpanes'.[197] In another song, the employers lamented 'oh the wretched maid… she will never be good to do anything… Everything I told her to do… She told me she won't do'.[198] In another, the maid of the priest is made fun of for her inability to work.[199] As the priest goes to the fair, she begs him to buy her some new white shoes. He answers that she will only get them when she will know how to work properly. This prompts a funny response from the maid 'Oh then I will die without them'. Other songs made fun of the alcoholism of some maids which made them lazy,

[196] Ludovic Charrier, 'Servante est en deroute', EA-00749, Arexcpo en Vendée.
[197] M. Audoux, 'Chanson de la servante qui fait tout de travers (ana.)', UPCP-Métive, 004048_01 (1979), https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=60290&cid=376 (23rd March 2018).
[198] Camille Cornevin, 'Y me gagit une servante', Arexcpo en Vendée, EA-03000.
[199] M. Bibi, M. Lavignac, 'Chanson Le curé et sa servante (ana.)', Chansons enregistrées dans le cadre du stage OSTOP de Juillac-le-coq, UPCP-Métive, 004132-08 (1972), https://www.cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam;jsessionid=eded8f0138b74e467d11ead27973?page=alo&aloId=83364&cid=5 (23rd March 2018).

suggesting that this was a common problem or at least a common representation of those who spent their day labouring and had few distractions.[200]

Some songs referred to servants in an urban context, in most cases 'Paris', to depict another type of service. Standing as social and moral warnings, these songs made fun both of the ambitious maid and her urban employers who thought they could exploit young girls from the countryside. The songs reveal the stance of the rural community towards the city as a place of ultimate transgression. '*La servant qui se farde*' makes fun of a servant in Paris who wants to be as pretty as her mistress.[201] She goes to the shop to buy a cream to make her beautiful, but it turns out that the shopkeeper makes a joke on her and give her some shoe polish. The next morning, she walks around with her face covered in black grease. This warning about keeping your station in life must have resonated in the mind of the thousands of girls who hoped to find a place as a domestic servant in a town and city in order to move up in life. Another song mentions the topic of masters trying to abuse new maids recently arrived from the countryside. In this song, the maid first appears quite naïve, in conformity with the clichés that were common in urban popular culture at the time: 'Timi under her Breton cap… a very distressed little maid… Yes, Sir she told the little old man…Yes, Sir, I ask no better… But as I am from the countryside… I don't know what is usually done in Paris… Yes, Sir, she said happily… To please you, I will always say yes'.[202] While the old

[200] Laurent Renaud**, '**Servante, lève toi matin', Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, 111209 (1996), raddo-ethnodoc.com/archive/111209 (23rd March 2018); 'La servante qui boit le vin du maître O-101' in C. Laforte, *Le catalogue de la chanson folklorique française*, vol. II (Quebec, 1958), p. 816; 'La servante ivre 06305' In P. Coirault, G. Delarue, Y. Fédoroff, S. Wallon, R*épertoire des Chansons de Tradition Orale,* vol. I (Paris, 1996).

[201] Amicie Pilot, 'Chanson A Paris y a une dame (ana.)', Chansons traditionnelles et évocation des assemblées de villages par Amicie Pilot et Mme Moinard., UPCP-Métive, 002286-13 (1973) https://cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=59977&fonds=0&menu=&cid=362 (30 March 2017).; 'La servante qui se farde', Dastum, 202, http://dastumla.blogspot.fr/2017/05/202-la-servante-qui-se-farde.html (23 March 2018); Julien Tiersot, 'La servant etait coquette', in *Chansons Populaires, Recueillies dans les Alpes Françaises (Savoie et Dauphiné)*, (Grenoble, 1903), p. 202

[202] Mme Renaudeau, 'Chanson de la petite bonne qui se présente chez un vieux garçon (ana.)', Enquête chez M. Renaudeau à Availle Thouarsais , UPCP-Métive, 004040-03 (1978),

man plots to take advantage of her sexually, the maid breaks the plot by answering him 'But as I am from Saint Ouin… That I know these things well… Before I say yes… You must give me a lot of money.' The denouement of the lyric turns the cliché of the country bumkin on its head by presenting the maid as a shrewd young woman who knows how to play the game. It was the old and sexually frustrated employer who was left looking foolish: the butt of the joke. However, underneath the comedy of the situation was a strident warning for young female servants against the dangers and perversions of the city.

Although there were countless jokes and caricatures about domestic servants in urban culture, this type of discourse played a more much significant role in rural servants' lives because of the context in which these songs were sung. Thérèse Fuzeau explained that she learned the songs mentioned above from her master at the *veillées* when she was a young maid. In this setting, with masters and servants sitting next to each other, the songs were more than innocent jokes. Under the cover of a funny story, these songs reinforced the social hierarchy of domestic service. Folkloric songs in the countryside often served to condemn bad behaviours by ridiculing them. Songs about servants were within the same tradition. A lazy servant was ultimately a bad servant and deserved to be the butt of the community humour, a humour that, of course, operated to enforce conformity, discipline and industry. While the urban servant could freely decide how she would spend the few hours of leisure that she had on Sunday, perhaps choosing to go for a walk in the park instead of watching the latest comedy about a 'dumb' servant at the cinema, it was difficult for French rural servants to escape from the *veillées* where they would be repeatedly told off and put back in their place by their employers under the cover of entertaining songs and tales. The presence

https://cerdo.fr/dyn/portal/index.seam?page=alo&aloId=80832&fonds=0&menu=&nat=1&cid=349 (30 March 2017).

of both types of songs, old folkloric ones and modern ones must have presented conflicting social discourses for young people in the countryside. It was a world in which the rules and power of the community was disappearing as the villagers did not gather as often as they used to in order to celebrate the harvests and feasts, but also one which differed from the urban world as bad behaviour, insubordination in service and especially unwanted pregnancies would have been quickly noticed and judged. The interplay of these modern and traditional messages created a contradictory environment which both encouraged and warned these young women against dreaming of escaping service.

IV. 'What I Do Outside the House is None of Your Business': Leisure and the Servant Problem

Leisure changed the equilibrium of the service relationship and gave servants new expectations that employers had to meet. It was at the heart of the servant problem and the rejection of paternalism in service but very few middle-class commentators acknowledged this issue. They focused instead on servants' lack of access to leisure and tried to organise acceptable activities for them. In Britain, Christina Butler wrote in her 1916 report on domestic service that 'Almost all servants, whether they are personally contented or discontented, agree that lack of liberty is the dominant cause of the unpopularity of service.'[203] As domestic service entered a crisis and fewer women wanted to become servants, government reports argued for more clubs and societies, despite the increasingly unpopularity of the GFS. The 1916 report explained that to solve the problem of lack of liberty and companionship in service 'probably all that is wanted in towns is a development, on rather more up to-date lines, of what is already being done by the Girls' Friendly Society

[203] Butler, *Domestic Service: An Enquiry*, p.13.

and Young Women's Christian association; while elsewhere, especially in London, there would be opportunities for self-governing clubs, managed, if not promoted, by servants themselves.'[204] The 1919 report by the Women's Advisory Committee on the Domestic Service Problem also recommended 'the inauguration of social clubs' to make domestic service more desirable to young women.[205] These clubs would be dedicated both to education and recreation in a model very similar to other philanthropic societies. Ignoring the options given by commercialised leisure, the 1916 report commented that such clubs 'would occupy long wet Sunday evenings, which cannot be filled completely by the most regular church-goer.'[206] In France, the magazine *La Croix* wrote a summary of the conclusion reached at a conference on 'The condition of rural servants' given by Father Ploq. He argued that if rural service was unpopular, it was partly due to the bad housing conditions that servants suffered but also the lack of appropriate leisure. He argued in favour of gathering servants every Sunday in a place where they would be 'sure to find friends, pens and paper to write, good books, good newspapers, good stories to read. It would be excellent to have in these places the parish bulletins from where they are from. We will give them some games to play and we will create for them some societies dedicated to gymnastic, shoot and choir singing. The oldest servants will guide the youngest and a priest or a good catholic will always be present to keep an eye on them.' These reports were in stark disconnect with the young people who desired and often enjoyed mass-leisure where they could meet men freely and endorse various identities. The 'servant' problem' was not so much servants' lack of leisure but rather their increasing access to mass-leisure, which

[204] Ibid, p. 14.
[205] *Parliamentary Papers* (1919), xxix, Ministry of Reconstruction, 'Report of the Women's Advisory Committee on the Domestic Service Problem Together with Reports by Sub-committees on Training, Machinery of Distribution, Organisation and Conditions,' p. 4.
[206] Butler, *Domestic service: An Enquiry*, p. 24.

provided them with enticing narratives about alternative ways of life beyond the 'drudgery' and subservience of domestic service.

Servants were all the readier to question the social hierarchy in domestic service and call employers' practices outdated as they felt freer during their leisure time. The sense of agency that servants had on their day off was at the heart of the servant problem. Nancy Sharman who worked as a cook in the 1930s let her kitchen maid Daisy 'come back really late from a dance on Wednesday or on her Saturday evening off'.[207] She went against the rules of the employers because she 'didn't see why she [Daisy] should suffer'. A French hotelkeeper in Chateauroux was told after arguing with her maid that 'as long as I do my work, what I do outside the house is none of your business'.[208] Since servants were not limited by their occupational identity when they went out, it was increasingly difficult to mould them into quiet and perfect servants when they returned to their employers' home. Servants' increasing access to mass-leisure led many to treat domestic service as 'just a job', living for the weekend, or in most cases, for Sunday. Leisure strengthened these women's individuality and contributed to their assertion that they were more than simple 'servants'. It sometimes meant that servants and employers clashed over these new demands as employers often ignored new forms of leisure and preferred more controlled ones, despite the increasing unpopularity of clubs and societies for servants. In the 1930s, two young British servants on a country estate complained that they could not go to the cinema as they had to catch a bus before the movie was over in order to be back home in time. One of them 'was fed-up with this hole' and did not think she would stay 'much longer'.[209] She thought that the leisure offered with the position – mainly walks in the countryside and church services – was not

[207] N. Sharman, *Nothing to steal: The Story of a Southampton Childhood* (London, 1977), p. 152.
[208] A. Pawlowski, 'La Crise des Domestiques', *Journal des Débats politiques et Littéraire,* 22 July 1907, p. 3.
[209] M. Dickens, *One Pair*, p. 174.

'good enough' and claimed that she would give her resignation to 'that old cow straight-out.' Mrs Cleary who worked as a maid-of-all-work in the 1920s was insulted and called 'a common little slavey' by her employers after that she bobbed her hair following the latest fashion.[210] This was potentially distressing for her employers because the new hair style was associated with an image of modern womanhood and signified a newfound independence that was difficulty compatible with traditional paternalist relationships in service. Instead of adopting a submissive attitude in the face of her employer's abuse, however, Mrs Clearly defiantly turned her back on her mistress and left the room without a word. In France, in 1907, middle-class readers of the *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires* were shocked to hear of a servant who 'exceeded the unimaginable' by asking to go out in the evening because she had a boyfriend. [211] A middle-class household in Mance-en-Soannois, Sarthe, regretted that their maid went dancing and explained that 'it is a tolerance that we need to have today if ones want to employ a farm girl.'[212] Therefore, if tensions within domestic service came from outdated paternalist relationships and busy timetables, it also resulted from servants' endorsement of alternative identities and behaviours on their day off.

Conclusion

Servants' leisure has often been denied or seen exclusively through the lens of servants' clubs. In contrast, this chapter has gathered a collection of autobiographies, transcripts of interviews and Mass Observation surveys to reveal that servants had access to the same type of leisure activities as other young working women. While British servants tended to have slightly more time off than French servants who worked for small-family businesses, both groups of workers enjoyed an increasing access to mass-leisure. Modern leisure not only

[210] S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900–1950', *Past and Present*, 203/1 (2009), p. 195.
[211] Pawlowski, 'La Crise des Domestiques', p. 3.
[212] Piegay, *Domestiques Agricoles*, p. 37.

allowed servants to escape from the strict rules of clubs, it also provided them with a language and a space to define themselves as other than servants. Dance halls, girls' magazines and other forms of leisure helped both urban and rural servants to endorse broader and more flexible identities based on age. They provided spaces in which servants could take part in an emerging youth culture, court young men more freely and connect with other young working women of their age. In parallel, the idea of self-betterment conveyed by mass-leisure helped servants to envision themselves in more positive and ambitious ways. Tea-shops chains provided an environment in which nearly anyone could experience a cheap copy of a fashionable lifestyle and reinvent themselves. Music-hall songs, novels and films also helped servants' escape from their daily cleaning routine and dream of better days. Fashion played a particular role in helping servants build on their newfound confidence and enact alternative identities such as 'the modern woman' or the 'Parisian'.

In the French countryside, where a significant proportion of servants lived and toiled, the changes provided by new forms of leisure were more gradual. The 'porous' nature of time in these rural communities where work, home and leisure were intertwined meant that French rural servants' leisure remained connected to their workplace. Employers continued to regulate servants' social interactions at the village dances. At the *veillés,* they also maintained a clear social order by singing songs which warned servants of the terrible consequences of laziness, pretentiousness and insubordination. French rural servants, therefore, had less opportunities for self-expression and redefinition through leisure than their urban counterparts in France and Britain However, these rural institutions were weakening during the first half of the twentieth century and even French rural servants started to feel emboldened by the new individualistic discourses spread of mass-cultural goods and the opportunities offered by autonomous leisure spaces where they could behave more freely.

Guided by such narratives, French and British servants thought of their occupation as a temporary and marginal moment of their lives, which did not define them in any way. Therefore, servants' leisure experience can help historians of domestic service to better understand the tensions between employers and employees within the home as it reveals how servants enjoyed both greater freedom in parts of their lives which drove them to reject the paternalistic nature of domestic service. With the development of mass-leisure in the twentieth century, occupational status was not a central fixture of servants' identities outside the home and shaped in exchange what it meant to be a servant within the home.

Conclusion

Domestic service was one of the main occupations for women in France and Britain between 1900 and 1939. Most servants lived and toiled in their employer's home whether it was a farm, a shop, a suburban villa, a Haussmann flat or a country house. The duties of domestic servants varied according to the type of households in which they were employed, their position within the servant hierarchy and the presence of other servants to share domestic duties. Nonetheless, for the majority who worked alone for middle-class employers, every day was occupied by a variety of tasks that kept the household running. They woke up at the crack of dawn to light the fire for the range, boil water for tea or coffee, prepare breakfast for the family, clean the boots and sweep the various rooms. Once they were done, they prepared the breakfast table and called the family. While they sat down to eat their own breakfast after one or two hours of hard work already, they might be interrupted by their employers for a cup of tea or an extra cube of sugar. As soon as the family's breakfast was over, it was time to clear the table and tidy the kitchen. The hot water, soap and soda burned their roughened hands as they stood washing the dishes at the sink. Then, they cleaned the bedrooms, dusted the shelves, beat the carpets, scrubbed the floors, made the beds and emptied the foul contents of the chamber pots. The rest of the morning was dedicated to deep cleaning a room of the house, which would involve moving every piece of furniture to carefully clean it. If their employers had a shop or farm, they might also help them by carrying bags, cleaning the shop, feeding the pigs or milking the cows. At lunch time, they cooked food for everyone and prepared the table again, followed by the usual round of washing, scrubbing and drying the various dishes and pots. The afternoon was often dedicated to lighter work like cleaning silver, sewing or ironing which, even if it did not involve moving furniture or kneeling down for hours, kept the mind and fingers busy. These

activities were often interrupted by visitors and callers who needed to be taken care of. If their employers had children, they also fetched them from school or entertained them as they completed their daily round of tasks. As the afternoon drew to a close, they prepared dinner and laid the table again, while also making sure that the bedrooms were ready for the night. After having their meal, they had to clear, wash up and scrubb dinner things. Finally, once the kitchen was in order, sometimes as late at 9 or 10 pm, they could go to their room to get some rest before starting all over again the next day.

The endless rounds of tasks that domestic servants had to complete each day can easily mask their individuality. Their world seems, at first, to be entirely dedicated to their employers' kitchens, pots and brooms. As a result, when historians first began to study domestic service, they focused on the gendered and class-based exploitation of domestic servants. They presented domestic service as a total institution in which 'working-class' women were exploited and socially isolated from their communities to the point of becoming deferential workers absorbed by their employers' life. The tendency to define servanthood as a 'total and overwhelming' identity, however, hides the complex layers of servants' sense of self.[1] These studies have often neglected other aspects of servants' experiences and identities which were not directly related to the power relationships they had with their employers. As servants patched the households' linen in the evening, they might chat about their lovers, or if they were on their own, they might think of home and hum a popular tune. Even as they went along to do their work, chopping the vegetables for dinner, these women might also see themselves as housewives or businesswomen in the making, rather than servants who were simply fulfilling their jobs and filling their employer's stomach. In the interstices of everyday life, beyond the cleaning, washing and dusting, laid a more complex reality.

[1] L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), p. 31.

The everyday life of domestic servants and the subtle processes of self-definition which accompanied it cannot be accessed through the sources traditionally used by historians like domestic manuals, reports and novels which tell us more about employers' expectations than servants' personal experiences. In this thesis, I have drawn upon a large sample of French and British female servants' accounts to uncover how servants constructed diverse identities in their everyday life. I have put together, in particular, the first sample of French servants' memoirs and made an important contribution to the relatively sparse literature on domestic service in France. By focusing on servants' accounts, I have followed a new generation of British historians who have explored the emotional complexity surrounding domestic service and argued in favour of 'detachment', that is, the fact that for many women service was not a total institution but rather just a job. In this thesis, nevertheless, I have gone beyond the latest research on domestic service by focusing on servants' everyday life. While historians like Selina Todd and Lucy Delap have mainly studied servants' relationships with their families and belonging to 'working-class communities' following the traditional dichotomy between the workplace and the home, in the present thesis, I have focused on servants' mundane everyday life experiences at the interstice between these two spheres. I have argued that while we should not caricature servants into alienated victims, we nonetheless need to pay attention to the specificity of their occupation: servants lived and worked in the same place.

Focusing on the everyday experiences of servants in the home is crucial to understand the transformation of domestic service in the first half of the twentieth century. The Victorians thought of service as a stable institution. Their Edwardian and interwar successors, however, were forced to confront the 'servant problem' as young women's aspirations and expectations of social independence clashed with the paternalist authority of their

employers. When viewed through the prism of labour and work, the notion of a servant's crisis may appear misplaced or exaggerated. There were no pay rises, significant reduction of the number of hours that servants worked nor successful strikes. This was in part because, despite heavy workloads, work itself was not the main object of servants' complaints. Indeed, their domestic toil was gradually eased by the introduction of labour-saving appliances through the period, but the servant problem did not disappear. Rather, the primary source of their grievances was the system of residential domestic service in which servants' everyday life was regulated and constricted by the intrusive rules of their employers. It would only be with the disappearance of residential service and its replacement by part-time cleaners in the post-war period that these tensions would disappear.[2] Therefore, I have focused on the intimate and mundane realm to uncover the subtle changes and silent battles which transformed domestic service. In order to understand how servants' experiences and identities changed during this period, I have examined three aspects of everyday life which were the most present in servants' memoirs: their dress, food and leisure. I have explored how unassuming moments of servants' daily life informed these women's sense of self by defining their place in the household and, more broadly, in society.

This focus on the micro-level of domestic servants' lives has been combined with a comparative analysis in order to contextualise servants' testimonies within a specific social, cultural and economic environment which differed in France and Britain. The comparison between the two countries has revealed the foundations of the 'servant problem' by highlighting how the intensity of the crisis around domestic service was linked to different conceptions of the employer's home as a haven of domesticity or productivity in each

[2] Although some of these tensions subsist for modern-day au pairs: R. Cox, *Au Pairs' Lives in Global Context Sisters or Servants?* (London, 2015); R. Cox, 'The Au Pair Body: Sex Object, Sister or Student?', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14/3 (2007), pp. 281-296.

country. Ultimately, this comparative study of French and British servants' experiences with dress, food and leisure has led us to interrogate what it meant to be a servant and deconstruct the category of 'servanthood' in the first half of the twentieth century.

French and British servants suffered from the everyday rituals of domestic service in which employers asserted their authority and, often, their superiority. British servants had to wear a uniform which differentiated them from the other women in the household and subdued their personality so they could be as unobtrusive as possible. Many, as a result, thought of the uniform as a 'badge of servitude' because of the way it signalled their servile position within their employers' home. Their dislike of the uniform, however, was also linked its symbolism in the broader society. As modern professional women in uniform, like nurses, arose onto the public sphere and more working-class women gained access to white-collar occupations, a shadow was cast on the servants' uniform. The servants' uniform was dated not only because of its style but because of the broader message that it vehiculated about the servants' place in the social hierarchy. While modern uniforms highlighted the skills or the types of job performed by other female workers, the servant's uniform was more encompassing and cumbersome as it defined these women's social status and hierarchical relationship with their employers. In a society in which women had better employment opportunities and more independence, servants saw their uniform as a stigma excluding them from modernity and new forms of femininity.

Servants felt their inferior social position through other types of everyday experiences. British servants usually ate their meals separately from their employers in the kitchen or, in larger households, in the servants' hall. The segregation of servants at mealtimes stemmed from a concern about the privacy of the employers, but it also created hierarchical

distinctions. This was especially the case in houses where servants were forced to eat in dingy little kitchens with no fresh air or even a chair to sit on while their employers enjoyed a pleasant meal in relaxing surroundings. The food that French and British servants were served at mealtimes also often underlined their inferior status. The practice, in some houses, of giving servants poor food or leftovers from their employers' dinner made them all the more aware of their low position within the household. The regulations on servants' access to leisure was another way through which French and British servants were made to feel inferior and servile. The curfews that servants had to respect and the interrogatory that some employers put their servants through after their day off infantilised them and made them painfully aware of the control employers had over their life. In particular, the ban on welcoming boyfriends or, often, any friends at all in their employers' house was particularly resented by servants because it restricted their capacity to form relationships beyond their work.

These experiences of 'inferiority', however, were apprehended differently by French and British servants. The latter tended to make sense of the rituals of domestic service like the uniform and segregation at mealtimes through their position in the social structure while the former referred more often to the differences between rural and urban mentalities. British servants adopted various definitions of social class, but they nevertheless tended to see their relationships with the employers as the 'workers', the 'working-class', or simply the 'poor' or 'respectable poor' versus the middle class, the upper class, the employers or the idle. The uniform, in particular, represented more than a single power relationship within the household. For many British servants, it symbolised the humiliation of the poor and destitute in society. The expression 'badge of servitude' which was used by many to describe the uniform alluded to similar garments worn by the poorer and 'less respectable' section of

British society in infamous institutions like the workhouse, the charity school and the prison. Experiences in domestic service, therefore, were enmeshed in a broader discourse about the social structure of Britain.

French servants were as critical as British servants about the injustices and bad treatment that they suffered in domestic service. However, since most servants in France were rural migrants, their experiences were mediated through a discourse about migration and the discovery of an urban lifestyle. French servants, for example, dressed differently from their employers but they did not tend to wear a uniform outside of a few upper-class and bourgeois households. It was the simple and outdated style of dress worn by French servants which made them feel out of place in their employers' household and on the market square. They were set apart by their unfamiliarity with the urban ways and, more particularly, urban fashions. French servants made sense of their segregation at mealtimes through the same discourse about rurality and urbanity. They contrasted these practices to their own experiences on farms or in other rural households where both employers and employees gathered at the same table to eat their meals. Therefore, while both French and British servants had to come to terms with feelings of inferiority in domestic service, their experiences were mediated through different discourses about class and rurality.

Inferiority, however, was not the only experience that domestic servants had in service in the same way that class or rurality were not the only axes of self-definition available to French and British domestic servants. The reality was more complex as servants sometimes worked for relatives or employers who were from a similar social standing or the same local area. Servants, therefore, used different categories based on age, religion or occupation to differentiate themselves from their employers. For example, some complained that the

uniforms they had to wear were too old fashioned and, in particular, the skirts too long compared with the garments worn by most young women. Other distinguished themselves from their employers on the basis of their religion. Servants who worked for Jewish households in the East End of London, for example, recalled being treated with friendliness by their employers but complained about the food restrictions on the Shabbat. Finally, some servants negotiated their relationships with their employers on the basis of their occupation. French servants coming from farming families, for example, sometimes attributed the pettiness of their employers at mealtimes to their status as shopkeepers which they saw as a form of individualism in stark contrast with the communal values of farming communities.

The various identities endorsed by domestic servants were not solely defined in relation to their employers. The way servants negotiated the everyday rituals of domestic service show their capacity to redefine their meanings and construct new types of discourses and identities around them. British servants, for example, deemed the uniform a 'badge of servitude' but they also attributed a more personal meaning to it. Many saw it a symbol of their entry into the world of work and their transition from childhood into adulthood. They also customised their 'impersonal' uniform with frills and lace to express their sense of self and femininity. An object made to reduce individuality and control its wearer, suddenly became a prized possession and a small fashion statement. The uniform, therefore, was not only understood in terms of power and class struggle, it was also connected to the gendered and generational identities of domestic servants. Similarly, some servants used the spatial segregation imposed on them at mealtimes to their advantage. They took this time away of their employers' watchful gaze as an opportunity to enjoy some privacy and relax a little. In households which employed more than one servant, the kitchen could also be a space of socialisation where servants could chat, laugh and even gossip. While the dark kitchen in

the basement was a symbol of rejection by the employers, it also was a place where servants could obtain some privacy and create a community.

Likewise, French servants redefined their experiences in the kitchen of their employers on their own terms. In the pokey, smelly and cramped spaces that servants occupied to prepare their employers' meals, they fostered a discourse of self-improvement around food. Being able to eat and cook a large variety of foods rather than just a local dish contributed to French servants' pride in acquiring a new urban identity. In a society with a large proportion of small businesses, French servants also had the opportunity to use their culinary skills beyond domestic service. Learning to cook could give them a footing in the urban world of shopkeepers, innkeepers, lodgers, café and restaurant owners. Cooking food for someone else, therefore, was not solely an experience of inferiority and exploitation, it was also an opportunity for social and geographical mobility. French servants' capacity to invest new meanings in their everyday experiences in the kitchen went even further. They created their own culinary discourses and positioned themselves as intermediaries between the culinary traditions of the countryside and the bourgeoisie. They played, in particular, on their image as *other* from the countryside to attract bourgeois dinners who wanted to enjoy new thrilling experiences and reconnect with a simpler rustic French identity. However, they were also careful to present themselves as an unthreatening other, 'civilised' by their experience in domestic service. The success of this specific brand of cooking which led some to become famous cooks, highlights these women's capacity to use othering discourses about rural migrants and servants to their advantages.

Finally, while French and British servants tended to have less time off than other workers, they nonetheless used this time to enjoy a variety of leisure activities which helped them

create alternative identities to service. Attendance at servants' clubs where leisure was regulated by the employers' authority declined through the period. Servants were increasingly critical of the paternalism of these clubs which sought to entertain but also educate and moralise domestic servants. Many turned instead to modern activities which provided them with a language and a space to define themselves as other than servants. Dance halls, girls' magazines and other new forms of leisure enabled them to endorse broader and more flexible identities based on age. They created communities that helped servants break their loneliness by giving them the opportunity to court young men more freely and to connect with other young working women of their age. Modern leisure activities not only gave servants an alternative community within which to integrate, they also provided them with a new rhetoric of progress and self-betterment. The new ideology of self-confidence spread by mass-media meant that ordinary people like servants could experience a form of social mobility through leisure, not only by having access to similar leisure goods as higher social classes, but simply by acquiring 'social poise and psychological confidence' through leisure.[3] Leisure gave servants an opportunity to 'forget cap and apron' and helped them navigate class boundaries with greater confidence.[4] This had repercussions on the behaviours and types of identities servants endorsed back at home. Servants were all the readier to question the social hierarchy in domestic service and call employers' practices outdated as they felt freer and more independent. Studying servants' everyday life, therefore, has shown that servants carved out some space and time for themselves in which they could develop more positive narratives about their experience and adopt various types of identities detached from the service relationships they had with their employers.

[3] J. Malnig, 'Two-Stepping to Glory: Social Dance and the Rhetoric of Social Mobility' in A. Dils, A. Cooper Albright (eds), *Moving History/Dancing cultures: a dance History Reader* (Middletown, 2013), pp. 277-78.
[4] J. Rennie, *Every Other Sunday* (Bath, 1978), p. 56.

While this thesis has highlighted the diversity of experiences in service, two contrasting trends have nonetheless emerged about the way French and British servants defined themselves. British servants tended to have a more clearly defined occupational identity than French servants. In a society in which the family was increasingly separated from the 'productive' sphere, family farms and shops which used to employ servants to supplement the family's labour were gradually replaced by corporate companies as a dominant mode of production. As a result, the British maid solely performed domestic tasks for her employers and constantly felt the distinction in her everyday life between the family she worked for and herself. This delicate position at the border between the private and public sphere came to define servants' experiences. The mix of paternalism and intimacy with strict rules and segregation was key to the specific occupational identity of domestic servants. Servants, for example, were well aware of their occupational status at mealtimes when they ate in the kitchen, separately, no matter how good and friendly their relationship with their employers. Moreover, because British servants were part of a structured female labour market, they tended to articulate a distinctive occupational identity to other workers. The uniform, in particular, played a key role in establishing this identity. As many working women wore uniforms to advertise the company they worked for, to distinguish between ranks in organisational hierarchies or to assert their professional status in the twentieth century, servants were all the more conscious of the symbolism of their own uniform. They often compared their dress to those of more glamourous and popular occupations and resented to have to wear an outdated cap or a longer skirt. The uniform, therefore, clearly defined the woman who wore it as a servant both inside and outside the house. The specialisation of women's occupations in Britain also meant that the tasks performed by servants were increasingly specialised and distinct from those undertaken by other workers. The strict distinctions which existed between cooking in service and in restaurants, for example,

illustrates the clearly defined boundaries of domestic service. Cooks were ultimately domestic servants at the service of their employer rather than individuals in training hoping to better themselves by owning their own business one day.

In contrast, French domestic servants experienced their occupation in a more fluid fashion. In French society, since the family largely remained part of the productive sphere, the distinction between domestic service and other types of job was unclear. Servants took care of the animals on the farm, worked in the shop, sold food in the market, distributed oats for the coachmen's horses, made deliveries by bicycle, alongside cleaning the house and caring for the children. As a result, servants drew fewer distinctions between themselves and other workers. The casual nature of servants' jobs was felt beyond their work and into their everyday life. They often did not wear a uniform which would distinguish them from other workers since the tasks they performed were so similar to those undertaken by many other women who laboured in the domestic sphere. French servants also often ate alongside their employers and, in farms or shops, other employees as all members of the household participated to the running of the house. French servants did not experience to the same extent the 'rituals' of domestic service described by British servants because there was a lesser need to establish a distinction between the private world of the family and the world of work when both were in fact intertwined. The fluid nature of domestic service also had repercussions for the way that these women approached their careers. In contrast with the unilateral trajectories of British servants in the sample of memoirs, many French servants went from the agricultural and industrial sector into service and vice versa. A lucky few even left service with enough experience and skills to open their own shop or restaurant with their husband. Except for a few specialised domestic servants like lady's maids, housemaids and housekeepers, French servants did not tend to experience domestic service as a clearly

defined occupation and career path since for most French women work and domesticity were intertwined.

While both groups of workers in each country were called similar names – '*domestiques*', '*servantes*', 'domestic servants' – and performed domestic duties inside their employers' home in exchange for a wage as well as board and lodging, this thesis has shown that what it meant to be a servant in the first half of the twentieth century differed in France and Britain. Domestic service was a specialised type of occupation dedicated to the care of the home and its inhabitants in Britain, while the same category in France corresponded to an older understanding of service – common in Britain until the eighteenth century – in which servants were not only those who performed domestic tasks but anyone who left their home to live and work in someone else's. The different types of work and status attached to the 'servant' occupation in each country, therefore, should encourage labour historians to question census categories in the modern period, a practice otherwise commonly reserved to early-modern historians. There is much to learn by focusing on 'occupational identities' from the point of view of the workers rather than on occupational categories compiled by statisticians and administrators.

This thesis has highlighted the significant presence of 'atypical' households where work and family remained intertwined in the twentieth century. It is a starting point for further research on the experiences of women who worked in and, sometimes owned, small corner shops, farms and lodging houses in France and Britain. While research on domestic service has highlighted the institutionalisation, contractualisation and casualisation of service in the twentieth century as cleaners working for institutions slowly replaced resident servants in private households, this thesis invites us to focus instead on forms of work which partly

resisted this process of ‘modernisation’. The world of small business owners which remains a key part of current economies deserves our attention to better understand the various experiences of female workers and, more broadly, to gain a more nuanced understanding of ‘domesticity’ in the twentieth century.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: British servants' memoirs

NAME	FIRST NAME	P/UN/O	SOURCE	DECADES ACTIVE
Ashford	Brenda	P		1930s
Bailey		O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1910s
Balderson	Eileen	P		1930s
Bell	Rosa	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1930s
Bellan	Joan	P		1910s
Blenkin	Lily	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s-1920s
Blewett	Nora	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s
Boyce	P.	O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1920s
Bristow	Elizabeth	O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1920s
Bucknell		O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s
Burnham	Dorothy	P		1920s
Button		O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s-1920s
C.	Margaret	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1920s-1930s
Cable	Annie	O	George Ewart Evans Collection	1900s

Clark	Agnes Mary	O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1930s
Clifford	Kathleen	P		1920s-1930s
Cosh	Mary	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s
Costello	Carline Bessie	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1910s
D.	Margaret	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
Davey	Dolley	P		1930s
Dickens	Monica	P		1930s
England	Daisy	P		1920s-1930s
Ewen	Cissie	Un-reproduced	Servants' Stories, Michelle Higgs	1920s
Firth	V.	P		1910s
Flint	Elizabeth	P		1910s-1920s
Foley	Winifred	P		1930s
Freeman	Suzie Annette	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s
Fudge	Dorothy	P		1910s-1920s
Furman	Alice Eleanor	Un-reproduced	Servants' Stories, Michelle Higgs	1900s
Gibbs	Rose	P		1900s
Gilbey	Agnes Beatrice	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s
Goodman		O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1930s
Greenhow	P.	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1920s
Hall	Edith	P		1920s

Hanna	Helen Brodie	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1910s
Hannan	Edith Mabel	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s
Harris	Queenie	Un-reproduced	Servants' Stories, Michelle Higgs	1920s
Harrison	Rosina	P		1930s
Hayward	Grace	P Collection	Hasting Voices	1910s-1920s
Henderson	Katherine	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1920s
Henderson	Jessie Beatty	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s
Jackman	Nancy	P		1920s-1930s
Jaggard	Alice	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1910s
Jermy	Louise	P		1900s-1910s
K.	Mary	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1920s
K.	Dorothy	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1920s
Kerry	Lily	Un-reproduced	Servants' Stories, Michelle Higgs	1930s
Kynoch	Anne	P		1920s
Lewis	Rosa	P		1900s-1910s
Martin	Grace	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s-1920s
Mathias	Mary Ann	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s-1920s
Matthews	Doris Alexandra	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s-1930s

Meadowcroft	Charlotte	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s-1920s
Milgate	Millie	O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1920s
Moran	Mollie	P		1930s
Morris	Bronwen	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s
Moyle	Anwyn	P		1930s
Nash	Rosemary	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1920s
Newman	Hilda	P		1930s
Nixon	Rachel	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1910s-1920s
Noakes	Daisy	P		1920s-1930s
Oman	Elsie	P		1910s-1920s
Oman	Elsie	Un-reproduced	Servants' Stories, Michelle Higgs	1910s
Panter	Selma	O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1930s
Parker	Cis	Un	Walsall Local History Centre	1910s
Phillips	Irene	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s-1920s
Pickersgill	Madge	O-reproduced	Cap and Apron, Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths	1930s
Pidgeon	Alice	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s-1920s
Plummer	Rose	P		1920s-1930s
Powell	Margaret	P		1920s
Prendergast	Mollie	Un	LSE Library	1920s
Redpath	Ruth	P Collection	Hasting Voices	1910s-1920s
Relph	Winifred	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1920s-1930s

Rennie	Jean	P		1920s
Rose	Amy Grace	Un	Cambridgeshire Archives	1900s
Santer	Louise	P Collection	Hasting Voices	1910s-1920s
Saunders	Eleanor	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1920s
Savage	Priscilla	O	George Ewart Evans Collection	1900s
Sharman	Nancy	P		1930s
Spence	W.	O	George Ewart Evans Collection	1900s
Squire	Dorothy	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s
Stroud	Alice Elizabeth	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s
Swainbank	Lavinia	Un-reproduced	Burnett, J., Useful Toil	1920s
Taylor	Marian Isobel	Un-reproduced	Servants' Stories, Michelle Higgs	1930s
Thompson	Elsie	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1910s
Thompson	Irene	O	Leicester Oral History Archive	1930s
W.	Mary	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
Waldow	Flo	P		1920s
Wallis	Bessie	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1910s-1920s
Webster	Elsie Margaret	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1920s
Westall	Lilian	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1900s
Williams	Jeannie	O	Paul Thompson, 'Family Life and Work Experience Before 1918, 1870-1973'	1900s-1910s
Wooland	H.	Un	Burnett Collection of Working-Class Autobiography	1920s

	Annie	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Elizabeth	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1920s-1930s
	Hilda	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	May	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1920s-1930s
	Phyllis	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1920s-1930s
	Megan	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Ceinwen	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Morddfa	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Nellie	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Nancy	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Miriam	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Doris	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Hazel	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s
	Eunice	O-reproduced	No Job for a Little Girl, Rosemary Scadden	1930s

Appendix 2: French servants' memoirs

NAME	FIRST NAME	P/UN/O	SOURCE	DECADES ACTIVE
A.	Elisabeth	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
A.	Marthe	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
A.	Adrienne	O	Universitée d'Aix Phonotèque	1930s
Andrieu	Catherine	Un	APA	1900s
Anonymous		O	Universitée d'Aix Phonotèque	1930s
B	Anne	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
B.	Marguerite	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
B.	Marie-Thérèse	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
B.	Jeanne	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
B.	Claire	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
B.	Marie-Thérèse	O- reproduced	Entrée de Service, Jo hazard	1930s
Belair	Paulette	O	Personal	1920s-1930s
Bouvier	Jeanne	P		1900s
Brazier	Eugénie	P		1900s-1920s
Briend	Augustine	Un	APA	1900s
Chabot	Yvonne	P		1900s
Charrier	Marie	O	Ethnodoc	1920s-1930s
Clement	Simone	O	Ethnodoc	1920s-1930s
Clerjaud	Elise	O	Ethnodoc	1930s
Clochard	Agnès	O	UPCP-Métives	1920s-1930s
Cornu	Cécile	O	Ethnodoc	1930s
Cretté-Breton	Yvonne	P		1900s-1910s
Daney	Euphrasie	Un	APA	1930s

Desfontaines	Isabelle	O	Ethnodoc	1930s
Dubois	Madeleine	O- reproduced	Mémoires de femmes, Gérard Boutet	1920s
E.	Madeleine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
E.	Mélanie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
E.	Catherine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
F.	Renée	Un	APA	1930s
Fuzeau	Thérèse	O	UPCP-Métives	1910s-1920s
Ginard	Marthe	O	Archives de la Manche	1920s-1930s
H.	Marie-Madeleine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
H.	Elise	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
H.	Lucie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
H.	Charlotte	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
H.	Odile	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1910s
Hammani	Jeanne	Un	APA	1930s
Heraud	Marie-Louise	O	Ethnodoc	1930s
L.	Caroline	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
L.	Thérèse	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
L.	Ida	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
L.	Fridolin	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
Leboeuf	Madeleine	O	Archives de la Manche	1910s-1930s
M.	Lucie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
M.	Jeanne	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
M.	Amélie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
Marcos	Janine	Un	APA	1930s
Martineau	Augusta	O	Ethnodoc	1930s

Montcharmont	Camille	O	Portail du Patrimoine Oral	1930s
Mouillon	Juliette	Un	APA	1900s-1910s
N.	Suzanne	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
N.	Emma	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
Noireau	Florentine	O	UPCP-Métives	1920s-1930s
O.	Suzanne	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
O.	Liliane	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
Olivero	Maria	Letters	La Mère Inconnue, Phillipe Olivero	1920s
Pardina	Rosa	Un	APA	1910s-1920s
Pépin	Augustine Marie Joseph	Un	APA	1920s-1930s
Périn	Hortense	Un	APA	1900s
Pfaadt	Marguerite	O- reproduced	Marguerite, Michel Bregnard	1910s
Pillet	Hélène	O	Ethnodoc	1930s
Q.	Alice	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
R.	Caroline	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
R.	Marie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
R.	Frieda	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
R.	Lina	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1910s
R.	Irma	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
R.	Emma	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
R.	Charlotte	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
Rochet	Josephine	Un	APA	1930s
S.	Catherine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1920s
S.	lisbeth	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
S.	Sonia	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s

S.	Irène	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
S.	Gerturde	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
S.	Madeleine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
S.	Colette	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
S.	Andrée	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1910s
S.	Irene	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
S.	Marie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1910s
U.	Catherine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
W.	Alice	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
W.	Jeanne	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
W.	Caroline	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
W.	Gerda	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
W.	Joséphine	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
W.	Marie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
Z.	Marie	O- reproduced	Active, Propre et Honnête, Jean Haubenestel	1930s
	Juliette	O- reproduced	Juliette, Chemins des cerisiers, Marie Chaix	1930s
	Marie	P		1920s
	Marcelle	O- reproduced	Un Couple Ouvrier Traditionnel, Jacques Caroux Destray	1910s-1930s
	Francoise	O- reproduced	Entrée de Service, Jo hazard	1930s

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