

Candidate Number: 1041511

**War and Gender in Provincial France: the
case of the Quercy and Armagnac regions of
South-West France
1940-44.**

Thesis

D. Phil in Modern European History, 1850 to the Present

17th April 2024

Wordcount: 96,749.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the many interviewees without whose participation this work would not have been possible. Their names are given in the Bibliography. Among them, particular thanks are due to Gilles and Véronique de Boisséson for their help and warm hospitality at Lacquy. I am also grateful to Gilles and to Françoise Chapou, Marguerite Noël, José-Marie Orcival, and Philippe Wagner for kindly allowing me access to their respective family papers and for their permission to reprint from them the various photographs that appear in this text, to Sarah Chabert for allowing me to read her thesis on her great-grandfather Jacques Chapou, and for the advice she gave me about him, and to Jacques and Olga Théron for their insights into life in Quercy in the mid-20th century.

The departmental archivists at Cahors, Montauban, Mont-de-Marsan and Pau have all been most helpful, and particular thanks are due to Marie Llosa and Laurent Bessières of the *Archives Départementales du Lot* at Cahors. Eva Maitra and my wife Claire Lesmoir-Gordon kindly proof-read the thesis, and I am most grateful to them for this help.

My deepest thanks are due to my supervisors at Oxford, Martin Conway and Robert Gildea. Martin Conway has given me wise advice and great encouragement over the past two years while I was a D. Phil student, and I would like to thank him warmly for all he has done for me. During the preceding years Robert Gildea gave me invaluable help in shaping the content and method of this thesis and in helping me to prepare for study at Oxford. He guided me with wisdom, patience and good humour and my warm thanks go to him too. I would also like to thank Patricia Clavin for the

encouragement she has given me regarding my work, and I am very grateful to Tanya Bakhmetyeva of the University of Rochester in the USA for her kind guidance on gender theory and gender history. Lastly, I also owe a large debt of gratitude to the encouragement of my friend Sanjit Maitra and of my wife Claire.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1:	
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Sources, Historiography and Methodology.....	22
Chapter 3: A Longer View.....	45
Chapter 4: A Woman Who Talked Too Much:	
Marie-Antoinette Orcival and Montpezat-de-Quercy.....	78
Chapter 5: Tales of Revenge and Silence:	
Yvonne Wagner, Louis Wagner,	
and the massacre at Frayssinet-le-Gélat.....	104
Chapter 6: Temporary Powers: Étienne Verlhac and Madeleine Tavernier.....	105
Chapter 7: The Making of a Heroic Male:	

The Life and Death of Jacques Chapou.....	136
Chapter 8: An Invisible Woman:	
Janine Andrieu, René Andrieu, and the Quercy <i>maquis</i>	168
Chapter 9: Rebellion, Honour, and Power:	
Françoise de Boissésou and her Family.....	196
Chapter 10: A New Man for a New France: Aimé Noël.....	
	226
Chapter	11:
Conclusion.....	257
Table of Illustrations.....	
	264
Bibliography.....	268

(All translations from French texts are the author's.)

ABBREVIATIONS

AS	Armée Secrète
CDL	Comité Départemental de Libération
Cd'EA	Comité d'Épuration Administrative

CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CLC	Comité de Libération de Cahors
CLL	Comité Local de Libération
FFI	Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur
FTP	Francs-Tireurs et Partisans
FUJ	Forces Unies de la Jeunesse
GMR	Gardes Mobiles de Réserve
JAC	Jeunesse Agricole Catholique
JOC	Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne
JOCF	Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne Féminine
LDH	Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l'Homme et du citoyen
LVF	Légion des Volontaires Français contre le bolchevisme
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire
MUR	Mouvements Unis de la Résistance
RPF	Rassemblement du Peuple Français
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
STO	Service de Travail Obligatoire

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose and Background

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how events and experiences reconfigured gendered identities during the Second World War and its aftermath, in the Quercy and Armagnac regions of south-west France. This is undertaken through detailed study of seven individuals, four women and three men, adopting a prosopological approach whereby several lives are studied in depth in order to reach conclusions about wider and longer-term trends. The thesis considers how each individual's sense of themselves, as women or as men, were changed by war. Six of them were either collaborators, or members or active supporters of the Resistance, and/or victims of German and French reprisals; while one, a pacifist, fell outside all these categories. All seven were deeply affected by the events of the war, and their motivations and actions are analysed here in terms of what they reveal about the changes taking place to gendered identities before, during and after it. Additionally, while the thesis is primarily concerned with these seven cases, three of them have entailed study of other individuals with whom the seven main protagonists were closely involved, and so in total ten individuals are dealt with, seven in depth and three less so. The ten comprise five women and five men.

The two world wars in the 20th century involved mass conscription and comprehensive mobilisations of economies and civilians for military ends. War therefore impacted the domestic sphere to a degree and on a scale never experienced before. For France, this

was especially true of the Second World War. It became a theatre of war in 1940 and again in 1944-5, while the German occupation from 1940 to 1944 had profound consequences for French society. The study of changes in gendered identities during periods of wartime has been an increasingly prominent theme of historiographical work. That is generally true across Europe, but has become particularly so in France, where it is recognised that the three waves of large-scale war in France's 20th-century history – the First and Second World Wars and then the Algerian War – all had significant consequences for the gendered identities of French people.¹ The chief impact was disruption. War upended French lives in many ways: there were movements of populations on an unprecedented scale, wives were separated from their husbands and children from their parents, and new labour was required, meaning that new skills had to be learnt. But there was also a broader impact of war in the relatively settled societies of provincial France. This thesis suggests that the impact of drastic change on such societies may have cut deeper than in major cities. The war caused many of the firmly established social norms that had hitherto regulated life to be thrown up in the air. New patterns of life had to be followed, and new challenges, opportunities, and constraints were created. This was evident in forms of social and occupational mobility which, in the rural south-west and even in the larger towns of the region, rarely occurred in other times. These changes applied to gendered identities, where the war sometimes undermined and sometimes reinforced pre-existing models.

¹ One example in respect of both world wars is Luc Capdevila, François Rouquet, Fabrice Virgili, and Danièle Voldman (eds.), *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre, 1914-45* (Paris, 2003). (Chapter 2 here deals with other works.)

The case of Janine Andrieu, analysed in this thesis, well illustrates how the war both enabled social mobility and allowed for two successive forms of gendered change, a transgressive one that was followed by a reversion to older norms. This woman moved from the working class into the bourgeoisie as a consequence of her marriage to the forceful and ambitious Communist intellectual René Andrieu, whom she met within the Resistance. At the same time, her work with her *maquisard* comrades exposed her to danger and gave her significant responsibilities, neither of which would she have been likely to experience in 'civilian' life. After the war, however, her life returned to a more familiar model, as her identity became subsumed within that of her strong-willed, successful, and well-known husband.

Janine Andrieu's case is valuable in that it demonstrates how the impact of the war on gendered identities was often complex: new freedoms developed, but they were not necessarily permanent; while new constraints (and dangers) also came to the fore. Taken collectively, the cases presented in this thesis do not offer a unidirectional account of emancipation or repression. Instead, the trajectories they chart are more nuanced ones, where external forces, chance, life experiences, and gendered identities intersected in diverse ways. While allowing for these nuances and diversity, the thesis nonetheless concludes by setting out which types of change were more profound and enduring, and which were less so.

A broad approach is taken to analysing the impact that the war years had on the identities and lives of the men and women who form its cohort. In particular, the thesis analyses how much new authority was conferred upon or assumed by women as the result of

the widespread absence of adult men and of other circumstances of war, and to what extent and how lastingly that new-found authority was later reappropriated, as men came home. Regarding masculinity, it considers the threats to established gender norms posed by the debacle of military collapse and surrender; and then by German occupation, the imprisonment of many soldiers, and the pressure for large-scale collaboration with a superior power. It goes on to describe how some men sought to reassert their masculinity, as events during the latter war years provided new contexts for engagement in which their status could be reclaimed: as resistance activists, newly enrolled soldiers, enforcers of punishment against collaboration, or workers involved in the process of national reconstruction. In contrast to these reassertions of power, it also highlights the example of the pacifist Aimé Noël, whose life expressed a newer and quite different form of masculinity.

Particular consideration is given to how far the immediate postwar years may be regarded as a period of gender 'normalisation'. To help address this, the reverberations of war are placed in the context of a lengthier renegotiation of gender relations that took place during the periods of European peace before and after. Accordingly, the focus on the years from 1940 to 1945 is set within the evolution of gendered identities over a longer period, from the early 1930s through to the end of the Fourth Republic. This 'longer view' of the evolution in gender relations, given in Chapter 3, allows the concluding chapter more easily to reflect on which of the wartime changes had a deeper and more permanent impact on gender norms.

The choices that were made as to period, geography, and methodology have developed out of the research that I began while

considering postgraduate work in modern French history some years ago. I have lived in Quercy (near Cahors) for part of each year since 2005, and full-time since 2020. In the small town nearest to where I live, Montpezat-de-Quercy, there is a plaque high on a wall in the main square that commemorates the death of Marie-Antoinette Orcival:



Figure 1: Orcival Plaque, Place de la Mairie, Montpezat-de-Quercy, (Author's photograph, 2019).

In 2016 I began to investigate this woman's story and was able to contact her surviving relatives and friends, who had memories of her and some papers about her. Coming across a memorial stone in remote countryside outside the town (Figure 2, overleaf), I discovered that the night before her arrest a *maquisard* had opened fire on German troops at Salvetat, a hamlet just outside Montpezat-de-Quercy. This had provoked reprisal massacres in and around the

town, as well as her own subsequent arrest. I then learnt that Marie-Antoinette, whose deportation and eventual death in Germany (following the chaos of the Third Reich's last weeks) had devastated her family, and the massacres, which had devastated the town, had both been largely forgotten in the collective memory, and that the various plaques and commemorative stones in and around the village no longer meant much to the majority of people now living there. Research into Marie-Antoinette Orcival developed into the first case study presented here, in Chapter 4.



Figure 2: Salvetat Memorial, Montpezat-de-Quercy, (Author's photograph, 2019).

Quercy, like all of France, is replete with monuments to *poilus* fallen in the First World War. (*Poilu* being a colloquial term for French troops of that war.) ‘Sites of memory’ commemorating people and events in the second conflict are also present, though fewer. During the twentieth century, and even in the twenty-first, Quercy has been among the slowest of French regions to change, and today the landscape, villages, and the smaller towns can look and feel much as they would have been in the 1950s and 1960s. These Second World War memorials thus suggest a dramatic past of seemingly quite recent date, but one which appears nonetheless to be largely absent from the collective memory, as evidenced by the people I know and those that I have interviewed for this thesis. It was this apparent disconnect with the recent past that particularly triggered my interest in these Second World War memorials. Of the thousands of visitors to Issy l’Évêque, the Burgundian village in which Irène Nemirovsky had written ‘Suite Française’, the historian H.R. Kedward has stated that they ‘want to make the places of history real for themselves’, and this was my own desire when I wondered what stories really lay behind the few words on the memorials.²

Enquiries into Marie-Antoinette Orcival led to research into other comparable cases, often again prompted by seeing more plaques or memorial stones elsewhere. With Yvonne Wagner, the subject of the second case study (Chapter 5), my interest in what had happened to her in 1944 began when I was driving through Frayssinet-le-Gélat, the village in which, I later discovered, she had been the schoolmistress and outside of which she was murdered. I noticed a mysterious painting of a haunted man which dominated its centre, and enquiries about this eventually led to Yvonne

² H.R. Kedward, *The French Resistance and its Legacy* (London, 2022), p. 79.

Wagner. Later case studies originated either because one led naturally into another, or by chance, such as hearing from friends about a man making Armagnac in Gascony whose aristocratic grandmother had founded a *maquis* group that ‘no one has heard of’.

This research developed into the microhistorical, oral historical, and case study methodology that the thesis deploys, and which is explained in Chapter 2. The choice of this ‘close-up’ approach was prompted by an interest in individual agency but also by a concern to understand more about the internal dynamics of the provincial societies in which these individuals lived, and in particular the role played by gendered norms and behaviour in responding to and in shaping those dynamics. This question can be approached in a number of ways but, given the subject matter and the sources available to me, it seemed that a case study approach was best adapted to the questions I wished to address. Specifically, these would be case studies that would examine, in a fine-grained, ground-level fashion, the lives of a small number of individuals, and whose objective would be to reveal with some precision why people had considered, chosen, and acted as they did. This method also led me into drawing on the techniques of family history and of anthropology, by reconstructing the social networks within which my individuals operated, and any ‘descendent’ networks existing today.

Quercy and Armagnac³

³ The information on Quercy is taken mainly from: Pierre Laborie, ‘Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle’, in Jean Lartigaut (ed.), *Histoire du Quercy* (Paris, 1993), pp. 213-43; Pierre Laborie, *Résistants, Vichyssois et autres, l’évolution de l’opinion et des comportements dans le Lot de 1939 à 1944* (Paris, 1980), pp. 13-26, 155-9, 294, 311-12; Anne Issolan, ‘La Condition des femmes dans la société Française, 1914-1945’ (Masters thesis supervised by Pierre Laborie, University of Toulouse, 1996, consulted at Archives Départementales du Lot, ADL BR1 art. 466); and Jean Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris, 1979), pp. I-XIII, 12-20, 27-8, 36, 75, 131-91, 235.



Q = Quercy. B-A = Bas Armagnac.

Figure 3: modern map of south-west France. (Bas-Armagnac is the sub-division of Armagnac that is relevant to Chapter 9.)



Figure 4: map of Quercy (Royal administration, 18th century.)⁴

For several reasons, the Quercy and Armagnac regions appeared to be fertile territory on which to site an investigation into how the Second World War impacted individual identities. As mentioned earlier, both areas witnessed significant Resistance and reprisal

⁴ Lartigaut (ed.), *Histoire du Quercy*, p. 158.

actions in 1944-5, and yet despite this, neither has received much attention from scholars, certainly as regards gender and individual actors. Quercy occupies a large territory, including all of the Lot department as well as tracts of the departments that border it. Cahors is its principal town and lies on the Lot River, after which the department is named. Figeac is the department's second town. Armagnac is smaller than Quercy, and is located further south and much closer to the Pyrenees and the Basque country. Pau, although lying to the south of Armagnac, is the town most relevant to the individuals examined in the case study in question (Chapter 9, on Françoise de Boissésou). These towns, and the villages in their hinterlands, collectively offer a broadly representative picture of second-tier provincial urban life in the south-west. In neither Quercy nor Armagnac are the towns substantial, and there have generally been strong links between townspeople and the surrounding agricultural communities, such that urban and rural lives can often be studied together, as in several of the case studies here. (Following the usage of the historian Pierre Laborie, this thesis employs the terms Lot and Quercy interchangeably, unless stated otherwise.)

The principal focus of attention is on Quercy since eight of the ten individuals were Quercynois, while only Louis Wagner (Chapter 5) and Françoise de Boissésou had roots elsewhere. Quercy lies between the Massif Central to the east, and the plains of Aquitaine to the south-west and of Languedoc to the south-east. Its economic and social histories have been shaped mainly by the nature of the *causses*, which account for two-thirds of it. These are limestone plateaux on which the land is scrubby, rocky, and broken by tracts of dwarf oak. The soil is largely infertile, and the *causses* remain sparsely inhabited today. Land that is favourable to cultivation is

mostly limited to the valleys of the Lot and Dordogne rivers, which cut through the region from east to west. In addition, the topography has encouraged neither the development of an economic nexus, nor of material economic links across the region. Quercy thus remained poor, and its communities isolated, at least until the last quarter of the twentieth century. The industrial revolution passed it by, such that by 1939 there was very little industry (the Ratier aircraft components factory at Figeac was the only significant exception) and agriculture remained mostly unmechanised. At that same date, around 80 per cent. of the working population was engaged in agriculture (versus just under 50 per cent. nationally); and this comprised mainly subsistence polyculture on farms of less than one hectare. Towns were in consequence small: Cahors, the largest, had 13,000 inhabitants in 1939.

Quercy's twentieth century history divides into two phases. The first, ending around the late 1950s and early 1960s, was dominated by the effects of a steeply declining population, a trend that had started in the mid-nineteenth century and continued until the mid-twentieth. By 1954 it had fallen to 150,000, compared with around 295,000 during the Second Empire, a near halving. In the years from 1931 to 1954 the rate of decline slowed, and thereafter it began to rise modestly but at a growing pace – by annual averages of 0.5 per cent. from 1954 to 1962, and then 2 per cent. from 1962 to 1968. Underlying the loss of people in the century from around 1850 was poor land quality and the consequent low returns from agriculture. As elsewhere in France, inheritance laws effectively encouraged a constant division of landholdings into ever smaller, and thus ever less economic, parcels. This and the meagre land drove a continuous decline in marriages and a desire to restrict

family numbers, so birth rates were lower than the French average. Relative poverty led to relatively weak healthcare, and so death rates were higher than average, including higher infant mortality. These factors ensured that the birth rate rarely matched the rate of deaths. In addition, while industry developed elsewhere in France, it did not in Quercy, and this encouraged migration from the countryside to the towns and more significantly to industrialised towns outside Quercy. It was especially the young who left, and this aged the remaining population, to a significantly higher degree than the French average. By 1939, Quercy had become the reality of the '*pays de vieux*', the fate that natalists feared would befall all France.⁵

The improvement from the late 1950s was due to nation-wide economic growth, and has allowed Quercy to be included as part of '*les trentes glorieuses*', the three decades of sustained growth in French GDP that prevailed from circa 1945 to circa 1975. Growth was stimulated by postwar reconstruction, relative political stability and, to some extent, state policy.⁶ It was accompanied by mechanisation and other technological improvements in farming, the development of the tertiary sector (the secondary remaining insignificant relative to France overall), and the arrival of modern facilities and consumer durables in the home (running water, electricity, washing machines, and television). These changes brought greater productivity and reduced economic inequality.⁷

However, on the eve of the Second World War most Quercynois remained, as they had been throughout history, *paysans*, and *paysans* who mostly consumed a large part of what they produced,

⁵ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', p. 214; Laborie, *Résistants*, pp. 5, 25.

⁶ See for example, Richard Vinen, *The Politics of French Business 1936-1945* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 226-9.

⁷ Fourastié, *Les trentes glorieuses*, p. 27; Issolan, 'La condition des femmes', p. 197.

leaving almost no opportunity for capital accumulation. There were pockets of modest wealth among the families who produced Cahors red wine along the Lot valley, but even their wealth tended to be static. For most people life was lived at the margin. The social and cultural consequences of economic stagnation and population decline included attitudes that were conservative, wary of innovation and of ideas or products that arrived from the 'outside world', and prone to passivity. Adherence to traditional values and customs was further strengthened by the continuous ageing of the population. Social mobility was rare, both as to class and (other than from outward migration) geography. Without economic growth, and with few regional political dramas, for the majority there was scant social or cultural change, but rather stasis. The evolutions taking place in Paris and the wider world were of course reported and known, but their impact was modest. Quercy's leading modern historian, Pierre Laborie, born and raised near Figeac, has written that the Quercynois could be serene in their self-sustaining isolation, though they were also resigned and looked to an imagined, sentimentalised past of greater bounty and ease, and of perpetual peace. This pastoral idyll had in reality never existed, as life had always been hard on the *causses*.

Laborie has described Quercy as a 'land of silences and discreet bonds of comradeship', whose people have had a closed mentality formed of a 'rock-like immobility', an aversion to disorder and especially to war, and a tendency not to act but rather to look on as inert spectators observing the playing out of their own decline. He ascribed to its people a 'certain *art de vivre*', and a strong cultural identity of deeply held values and attitudes that were rooted in the effort to make a living from the land. In what Laborie has termed 'a silent revolution' from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, the product

of the demographic and economic growth just outlined, the 'immobile' attitudes of the Quercynois became tempered by greater optimism and greater determination to 'move up in life' and away from subsistence.⁸

While a high-level social and cultural distinction must be drawn between rural, provincial France on the one hand and Paris and the other major cities on the other, Laborie drew a further distinction, between Quercy and other regions of rural and provincial France. In his view, Quercy has been distinctive because outlooks and attitudes there changed at an even slower rate than they did elsewhere in rural France.⁹ Although this claim of exceptionalism may be partisan, it is consistent with the region's relative economic performance, and also in relation to its religion and its politics. The Quercynois were for the most part both practising Catholics and politically loyal both to the *laïc* Republic and the *laïc* Radical party. Neither monarchism nor Bonapartism were strong, although there was an anticlerical minority, mainly in the towns and allied to the Socialist Party (SFIO). The war saw a temporary switch of allegiance among many from Radical-Socialism to Communism, and after the war there was a brief attachment to the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP), but in the 1950s and 1960s the majority swung back to its traditional home on the moderate left: the Lot voted for Mitterrand in both 1965 and 1981.¹⁰ As important as religion and party politics was pacifism. Quercy had lost men in the First World War on a scale comparable to the national level, but 80 per cent. of those who did not return were *paysans*. This added to the troubles in the countryside and helped fuel a deeply held desire for peace during the 1920s, which found renewed force in

⁸ Issolan, 'La condition des femmes', p. 3; Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', pp. 213-43.

⁹ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', p. 213.

¹⁰ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', pp. 213-43.

the later 1930s as prospects of another major war steadily strengthened.

The penultimate case study (Chapter 9) is not set in Quercy. The subject of that study, Françoise de Boissésou, founded her *maquis* group in the small pocket of Bas-Armagnac. This subsection of Armagnac forms part of the region of Gascony, and lies well to the south-west of Quercy (see Figure 3 above). What has been described above about Quercy broadly applies in this period to Gascony too, though Armagnac itself was somewhat wealthier given the presence there of numerous Armagnac *vignerons* (of whom the de Boissésous were one). That said, conditions in Armagnac are not much relevant to Françoise de Boissésou, since her roots lay more in a cosmopolitan and sophisticated world, one that looked to Paris, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Pau, and England, and much less to rural Gascony.

Quercy, together with the Corrèze and the Limousin to its north, became among the most significant of French regions in terms of military and civilian conflict during the spring and summer of 1944. As elsewhere in France, this was driven in large part by the growing likelihood, and then the actuality, of Allied landings in France, following the progress of the North African and Italian campaigns. Anticipation of invasion fed the confidence of Resistance fighters and led their numbers to swell rapidly. Additionally, many among the Resistance leadership, particularly the Communists, came to the view that a generalised offensive against the Germans should be mounted in advance of the landings. Pre-invasion attacks might trigger civilian uprisings, which in turn could culminate in the expulsion of the invader and the formation of a radically new postwar political settlement.

In Quercy and the two more northerly regions, local geography is important in explaining the scale of conflict, and in determining how Resistance ambitions played out in the field. The *causses* provided excellent natural cover for Resistance groups in hiding or on the move. Moreover, all three regions are bisected by the main north-south rail and road networks that connect Toulouse, Montpellier and rural south-west France with Paris and the north. It was on those routes that German troops moved north during the course of the summer in order to bolster the Channel defences, thereby presenting targets for Resistance guerrilla-style attacks. Both before and during the movement north, German troops were also charged with eliminating Resistance forces, as well as with severing links between the Resistance and the civilian population. The German aim was to deprive Resisters of the material support from communities on which they depended for survival, and to turn civilian opinion against them. This they did by punishing civilian communities in response to nearby Resistance actions. This occurred in many villages in Quercy, including at Montpezat-de-Quercy (Chapter 4 here) in early May 1944 and at Frayssinet-le-Gélat (Chapter 5) later that month; and then most notoriously at Oradour-sur-Glane, further north and in the Limousin, in July. In all three cases, the infamous *SS Das Reich* division was responsible.¹¹

By June the conflict in Quercy had developed into a generalised military and civil war, in which the participants comprised the German army, the Resistance, Vichy paramilitary forces, real or suspected collaborators, and civilian communities and individuals

¹¹ See for example, Max Hastings, *Das Reich, the March of the 2nd SS Panzer Division through France* (London, 1983) pp. 71-128; H.R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis, Rural Resistance in Southern France 1942-1944* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 165-212; Laborie, *Résistants*, pp. 246, 317-20; Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French, Life Under the Occupation* (London, 2007), pp. 313-39. On Oradour-sur-Glane, see Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village, Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).

that became victims of reprisals from the various armed groups. Over the summer, emotions in the region were forced into a pressure-cooker in which fear, hatred, and the desire for revenge set the scene for a bitter *épuration*. In the words of Laborie, ‘a struggle without mercy’ took place, creating ‘a climate of terror’.¹² Conditions in Gascony were less fraught than in Quercy, but it too saw significant Resistance activities and a troubled *épuration* (meaning the purge of collaborators or those alleged to be). Not all historians see France’s *épuration* as having been savage. The question of the character and import of the *épuration* is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Case Studies

The events and experiences of war were therefore particularly intense for many inhabitants of Quercy and Armagnac. The central section of the thesis, comprising Chapters 4 to 10 inclusive, consists of the seven case studies. Each illustrates how the extraordinary impact of war served to modify or reinforce gendered identities, and maintains a focus on the individuals’ motives for action and on the ways in which the war changed (or ended) their lives. The first deals with Marie-Antoinette Orcival. She was a 34-year-old unmarried nurse who was arrested and deported following the German reprisals at Montpezat-de-Quercy in May 1944, dying of her ill-treatment a year later. The chapter centres on her defiant attitude towards the German forces during her arrest and interrogation, and on why the Occupation prompted a strong-minded and unusual woman to act in ways that were not in keeping with established expectations of women’s behaviour at that time and place. The second case concerns Yvonne Wagner, a 23-year-old schoolteacher, married with two small children, who was summarily

¹² Laborie, *Résistants, Vichyssois et autres*, p. 246.

executed in June 1944, most probably by the Resistance for having allegedly denounced her fellow villagers to the Germans, and thus for having contributed to a significant massacre by German forces. Shortly thereafter, her husband Louis, an outsider from the Lorraine, was also executed. The chapter discusses Yvonne's motives, in the context of gender, while also explaining how the village has rewritten the stories of itself and of her in order to render them more palatable.

The third case investigates the life of Étienne Verlhac. He was a 56-year-old married man and Communist Resister, an activist and journalist who came to wield considerable power during the *épuration* in Cahors. His only son had been one of the victims of the massacre in Yvonne Wagner's village. This chapter seeks to explain how participation in the Resistance and the *épuration* provided Verlhac with opportunities to refashion his life in a purposeful and action-oriented way, and how this culminated in the seizure of power in Cahors in August 1944 by him and other Communists. It analyses how these experiences altered and hardened his male identity, and perhaps also helped to assuage the tragedies and disappointments in his personal life. The study also describes how the circumstances of the Occupation had encouraged one of Verlhac's main targets, the young unmarried Madeleine Tavernier, to behave in a differently gendered fashion, causing outrage to him and others. She is an example of a woman who transgressed several norms: age, class, and gender. The fourth case concerns 35-year-old Jacques Chapou, a charismatic *maquisard* leader in Quercy, who turned to Communism in the war's final stages and who died in an ambush by German forces in July 1944. The study shows how Chapou's increasingly nerve-wracking involvement in the war led his behaviour and his sense of himself as a man to

escalate into personal crisis, and compares this with the trajectory of Étienne Verlhac.

This is followed by a study of Janine Andrieu (Chapter 8), a young and unmarried Resister from the Figeac area. Her decisions to act and to court extreme danger during the Occupation lay in her unusual upbringing and in the attitudes of her parents during the 1930s. However, and as mentioned earlier, her marriage after the war to an older, highly ambitious, and dominant man, René Andrieu, was accompanied by her resuming a more traditional gendered identity. The next study is of the life of Françoise de Boisséson (Chapter 9), a widow in her forties during the war who belonged to the upper class. She founded a Resistance group based around the *château* and estate that she owned in Armagnac. She also embarked on an open, transgressive, and adulterous affair. The chapter examines how far her choices were driven by a rebellion against her aristocratic and socially conservative family, and how far her behaviour suggested a need to atone for perceived dishonour as a woman, by seeking honour in the male world of combat and then, briefly, in local politics. It moves on to show how the powers that she had assumed during the war were taken from her at its end, and how she has been remembered by her family. The final case study (Chapter 10) deals with Aimé Noël, who during the war was, like Janine Andrieu, young and unmarried. He was the most seriously religious, and pacifist, of all the individuals studied here. After being taken prisoner by the German forces in 1940, he escaped from his POW camp in Germany, and succeeded in returning to France. However, he neither joined the Resistance nor supported Vichy, and at the Liberation took up journalism and Christian Democrat politics. He steadfastly maintained his commitments to Christianity and pacifism throughout his life, and

in this respect his story presents a sharp contrast with all the other cases in terms of the consistency of its trajectory. His gendered identity was also quite different from the types of overt masculinity manifested by Verlhac and Chapou, and the chapter argues that he represented a new type of man in mid-twentieth century France.

Commonalities

Looking at the individuals in terms of the conventional categories of age, social class, occupation, and gender, at the time of the war the ten individuals varied in age from those who were in their early twenties to those in late middle age. They break into three generational cohorts. The largest consists of five individuals who were born towards the end of the First World War or in the early 1920s. Their formative years were thus in the 1930s, and by 1944 they were in their twenties. Two individuals were born in 1909 and 1910, so were mainly formed in the years immediately following the end of the First World War, and were in their mid-thirties by 1944. Lastly, three were born around the end of the nineteenth century, and so their formative years fell during and after the First World War. By 1944, these three were in their mid-forties to mid-fifties. A key distinction, with all these individuals and indeed with Europeans in general, was between those who had lived through (and in two cases here fought in) the First World War, and those who had not.¹³ The thesis shows how adults from different generations reacted differently to their particular exposures to the events of the second war, and offers some scope for the examination of inter-generational relations in the mid-twentieth century.

¹³ Richard Vinen, *A History in Fragments, Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2000), pp. 92-105.

As to class, the largest category of the ten people consists of six who were born either as *paysans* or among the urban artisan and working classes but who during their adult lives moved into the bourgeoisie, by dint of marriage or educational and professional advancement. Such upward social mobility is suggestive of the unusual nature of the group, given the slow-changing nature of the Quercynois society of which they formed part. Two were born into and remained in the bourgeoisie (of whom Marie-Antoinette Orcival could be deemed haute bourgeoisie), while one was born and (as far as we know) remained working class. Finally, one was noble. As to occupation, at different times in their lives, the individuals were employed in teaching, healthcare, journalism, estate management, accountancy, insurance, the military, and secretarial work. There is no case study of a *paysan* who remained one during the war, reflecting the effacement of most *paysans* as identifiable individuals in the collective memory and in the archives.

While the individuals thus vary in terms of class and occupation, the dominant group consists of members of the provincial bourgeoisie, professional people most of whom belonged to both rural and urban communities. Several of the individuals in this category also knew each other, had paths that crossed, or were linked in other ways, and these connections are present in four out of the seven cases. Étienne Verlhac, Jacques Chapou and René Andrieu all knew each other, and René Andrieu was married to Janine Andrieu. Verlhac was the main persecutor of Madeleine Tavernier, and René Andrieu was probably involved in her first trial and sentencing. Verlhac's son Georges was killed in the massacre for which he, Verlhac, pointed the finger at Yvonne and Louis Wagner, and it can be inferred that he ordered her execution. These seven people thus had varying degrees of involvement with

each other, and Verlhac sits at the group's centre, in Cahors. This group to an extent formed a network within French provincial society in and around that town. Marie-Antoinette Orcival, Françoise de Boissésou and Aimé Noël lie outside that group, and had no connections to each other.

As to religion, four were explicitly anticlerical or nonbelievers. The other six were practising, with varying degrees of commitment. In this respect too, therefore, the group may not be representative of Quercy, given that levels of religious participation there were fairly high, but probably not so unrepresentative in respect of the region's urban populations.¹⁴ In political terms, there is broadly a balance between left and right. Four became Communists during the war, all having previously been on the non-Communist left. Four may be counted among the traditional Catholic-monarchical right, one had been apolitical for many years but by the war's end had become an enthusiastic Christian Democrat, and one had no apparent political leanings or interest in ideology. Again, this political mix does not reflect the region as a whole, which as noted earlier was predominantly conservative but Republican, with the Radical Party traditionally the most popular. It does, however, reflect the important, albeit temporary, inroads that Communism made in attracting support during the war.¹⁵

The source material means that it is generally not possible to define the sexuality of the individuals studied. For those who married, or had other heterosexual relationships which we know of, we can surmise that at the very least they presented themselves to the outside world as heterosexual. Among these, three were or were

¹⁴ Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire, 'Le contraste des tempéraments régionaux', in eds. Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse de la France Contemporaine*, Vol. 2, 1880-1930, (Toulouse, 1986), p. 186; Laborie, *Résistants, Vichyssois et autres*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁵ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', pp. 223-6, 232-9.

alleged to have been unfaithful spouses (two men and one woman), while a third man had an unfaithful first wife. Only two couples appear to have had stable and monogamous marriages. How representative this behaviour was in the aggregate cannot be known with any degree of certainty. Marie-Antoinette Orcival and Madeleine Tavernier never married. Orcival is referred to as a '*garçon manqué*', a term used to imply gender non-conformity, and which can sometimes also suggest a lesbian identity, but there is no evidence of this.

Themes

Several themes run through the thesis. The first and most important is gender. The thesis is predicated on the belief that gender does not 'stand alone'. The individuals shown here, the decisions they made, and the actions they took were formed by multiple components of their identities, of which gender was one. Other components, including class, occupation, financial status, age, personal appearance, and religious and political affiliations, are all important, and in this thesis are treated as interacting with each other and with gender. It is also recognised that all these components of identity, including gender, are fluid, malleable, and change over time. Adopting this 'intersectional' approach to gender means that the thesis is also an observation of inter-generational differences, of the evolution of social class, of evolving relations within communities, and of the various political and occupational regimes of the era. And so, reference is made to socio-economic change and to wider evolutions in social norms within and beyond the region.

Secondly, emotion is an important feature of all the case studies. Individuals are shown reacting to events with strong and sometimes extreme emotions. Among the more important here are

anguish, guilt, grief, rage, outrage, hatred, sexual passion, religious passion, loneliness (and its avoidance), desperation, shame, and the joy and euphoria of comradeship and shared ideals. Emotions have also been significant vectors for the creation and development of memory of the people and events described in the case studies, and memory is a third theme that runs through the thesis. With four of the cases the source material offers significant insights into this branch of historical enquiry, both as regards the subsequent effacement of people and events that were – as noted earlier – matters of great drama at a fairly recent time, and as regards how collective memories have been (and in one case still are) deliberately managed and distorted. These four cases are those on Marie-Antoinette Orcival, Yvonne Wagner, Janine Andrieu, and Françoise de Boissésou. All were women, and their stories – along with the continuing controversy surrounding the wartime actions of Yvonne Wagner – indicate how issues of memory have become entangled with narratives of gender. Because these issues, as well as the postwar lives of those of the protagonists who survived the war, are covered within the case studies, this thesis does not contain a separate chapter on memories and afterlives.

Next, the case studies go beyond the individual, by locating each in the village and town communities to which they belonged. This is particularly so with Marie-Antoinette Orcival and Yvonne Wagner, whose lives were markedly less itinerant than the others. In the case of Françoise de Boissésou it proved more appropriate to treat her family as the main locus of her relationships rather than the several wider communities of which she was loosely a part. The final important general theme that characterises the thesis is that it deals with exceptional people. That they were distinctive in terms of social categorisation has already been suggested, but it must be

particularly emphasised that most of the ten individuals were highly unusual individuals, and were generally seen as such by their contemporaries. Their stories illustrate moreover that this exceptionalism was a necessary condition for their actions, and for the ways in which they remain visible in the archives today. It would therefore be incorrect to claim that, individually or collectively, they were typical of the wider population. Instead, this is a study of individuals who by the circumstances of the time stood out as different or exceptional. Their unusual characters led them to make important choices in response to their experiences of war, and then to act upon those choices. In all the cases here, the choices were highly important at the individual and family levels. So were the resulting actions, which were also often extremely dangerous. This differentiation does not however make these individuals inappropriate for study. Indeed, it is their difference (in its various forms) which enables them to emerge as illustrative of wider changes in gendered identities. Richard Cobb wrote of the work of the historian: 'He can only make one man witness for many by the selective use of the individual 'case history' as a unit in historical impressionism.'¹⁶ While the great majority of French people treated the war as an event to be endured and to survive, most of those studied here did not, and were able in effect to use it as a framework for constructing different and more intense lives. Therefore, the thesis does not intend to present a 'representative' picture of the population of the south-west in general, and even less of France as a whole, but rather seeks to interrogate the views and behaviour of these atypical people, and thereby to assess their wider and longer-term impact.

Argument

¹⁶ Richard Cobb, *A Second Identity, Essays on France & French History* (Oxford, 1969), p. 47.

Was the war's contribution to change particularly significant, when compared with the evolutions that preceded and followed it? Or conversely was it, in the words of Luc Capdevila and others, 'merely a parenthesis, without great change in the assumed division of tasks between the genders?'¹⁷ Was it the case that the wartime changes, while substantial at the time, were essentially short-lived, a curious symptom of a relatively brief and entirely exceptional period, whose aftermath in the postwar years saw a reimposition of the status quo ante, namely of a bourgeois patriarchy, typified by the image of the 1950s housewife, tied to the home, and living for and at the behest of her salaried husband? Indeed, some French women took this view. Shortly after the war, the Resister Célia Bertin wrote with reference to the condition of French women in its aftermath, 'Trained to modesty by centuries of Judaeo-Christian morality, women allowed themselves to become subject to the old habits'; and some historians have broadly accepted this thesis.¹⁸ The concluding chapter begins by recalling that during the period 1940-5 France experienced a series of major social upheavals and changes of political regime. By showing how the war led individuals to behave in ways that contested or exaggerated conventional gendered norms, the case studies demonstrate that newer ways of thinking and acting, as well as revived or repurposed older forms, were at the time crucial at the individual, familial, and communal levels. By placing the cases in the context of the 'longer view' chapter, the conclusion argues that over time, and with respect to both women and men, the newer forms of behaviour generally proved to be durable, while the resurgent version of a more traditional form of masculinity turned

¹⁷ Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et femmes*, p. 215.

¹⁸ Quoted in Mechtild Gilzmer, Christine Levisse-Touzé, Stefan Martens (eds.), *Les Femmes dans la Résistance en France* (Paris, 2003), p. 104. As to historians who seem to concur with the Bertin thesis, see for example, Claire Duchon, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968* (London, 1994).

out to be only a passing phenomenon. This argument is qualified in a number of ways, but the principal claim is that, through careful study of individual cases, one can detect the multiple elements of change which during the war years, but also over the longer mid-century timeframe, redefined how gendered identities were constructed and adapted, partly under the control of the individuals concerned, and partly in response to wider changes in societal norms. The wartime changes cannot be seen in isolation; but they were accelerative of the trends that had preceded them and were, on the whole, further carried forward during the 1950s. Thus, in respect of gendered identities, the changes in the mid-century, and more especially during the war, set the stage for the major reordering of gender norms that marked the period circa 1964 to circa 1974. Considering what the case studies show, the conclusion proposes that the wartime changes were both substantial and lasting in nature, and suggests that the social history of twentieth-century France cannot be properly understood without reference to them. In reaching these conclusions, the thesis also suggests (although the proofs lie outside its scope) that the social impact of war in rural areas of provincial France may have been more profound than in the large cities; in the tight-knit, slow-changing structures of rural France the destructive impact of the war – and the divisions it generated – were felt particularly deeply.

Chapter 2

Sources, Historiography, and Methodology

Sources

Several categories of primary source material have been used in this thesis: papers from regional, departmental, municipal, and local Resistance archives; newspapers and magazines; memoirs; family archives; oral testimony; monuments; and ceremonies, commemorations, and other events. Whenever possible, oral testimony has been used. This has been the case in respect of eight of the ten individuals studied, the two exceptions being Madeleine Tavernier and Janine Andrieu; there are no living descendants in the case of Andrieu, and none that can be traced in the case of Tavernier. Interviews with the main protagonists and principal witnesses have not been possible, as they are dead, and so interviews have been largely restricted to descendants and friends of the protagonists, more distant witnesses, and local historians and archivists. Oral testimony is of particular value in studying the local history of wartime France. Clandestine resistance necessarily generated few paper records; while overt collaborationist activities were similarly little documented.¹⁹ However, the use of oral testimony often presents numerous difficulties, of reliability and of retrospective perceptions. Therefore, combining oral interviews with documentary work has been central to the way in which this research has been conducted. This was a circular process, whereby interviews raised questions to which the answers sometimes lay in the public archives, which in turn led back to further questions to the interviewee. The two elements sometimes confirmed each

¹⁹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, p. vii.

other; but sometimes diverged or contradicted. In the case of Yvonne Wagner, using both in combination proved to be essential: had oral history and the archives (both departmental and Resistance) not both been used, and had reliance been placed only on one, then the tales of secrecy and revenge that slowly surfaced would have remained buried.

For **Marie-Antoinette Orcival's** story, the Prefectural files in the Tarn et Garonne departmental archives at Montauban were of more use as a tool for confirming dates and other details than providing substantial insights. The family archive includes the letters that she wrote from prison, and that are testaments to her fortitude under duress; as well as several photographs which provide striking clues as to her life and personality. The interviews conducted about Marie-Antoinette, particularly with her nephew José-Marie Orcival, were important for forming a picture of her character and of how others saw her. He never knew her, being born less than a year before her deportation in 1944, and so most of his memories of her came from his parents (his father Raymond had been one of Marie-Antoinette's two elder brothers) and from family friends. Those memories, though second-hand, were vivid as to her strong and distinctive personality, and emphatic as to how the family wishes to preserve and honour her memory. The length at which José-Marie spoke about Marie-Antoinette demonstrated the impact she had on his parents and their contemporaries, and thence on him. The testimony of her sister-in-law Marguerite, recorded in the 1990s, was also important. In addition, several residents of Montpezat-de-Quercy and its environs were interviewed, one of whom was the town's mayor for several decades from 1977. A local show that is staged annually in a nearby hamlet was a valuable additional

source for understanding how present-day inhabitants sometimes wish to imagine their past.

With **Yvonne and Louis Wagner**, the sources were tangled and conflicting, reflecting this emotive and fraught story. In summary, there is an established version of what happened, carefully guarded by local historian and deputy mayor, Daniel Sourt, who was first interviewed in 2018. Supporting his 'official' version is his own archive on the events of 1944, including transcripts of oral-history interviews that he conducted around 15 years ago with the witnesses who were then still alive. The Prefectural files in the Lot departmental archives at Cahors, and Sourt's papers, mostly substantiate his account. However, the papers in the departmental *épuration* files in Cahors propose an entirely different, second account, which reflects the perspective of the Wagner family. Furthermore, after several hours of being interviewed, Sourt finally revealed a third version (which was itself incomplete). The 'official' story turned out to be a façade covering something that was quite different, and much darker.

Persistence and patience were essential in the work on this material. This was especially so of the many hours spent with Sourt but also, eventually, with the Wagner family. After three years of fruitless searching for descendants of Yvonne and Louis Wagner, contact was finally made in late 2022 with their two grandsons. Several interviews were conducted with them, and they have provided access to the Wagner-Bories family archive, which has many papers about and photographs of Yvonne and Louis, and of their parents. However, use of this resource has also presented difficulties. The grandsons are keen to prove that their grandparents were innocent of the charge of collaboration with the German authorities, and hoped that this thesis would provide that

proof. Because of a lack of evidence, that has not been possible, but nonetheless they are continuing to pursue their case. Being looked to as an unofficial judge and jury over an affair from the past which is much contested within the local community and remains 'open' has been an uncomfortable experience and explains why a dispensation of three years was sought (and has been granted) for consultation of Chapter 5 of this thesis in the Bodleian Library.

Little oral history was possible for the Chapter on **Étienne Verlhac and Madeleine Tavernier**. Interviews were conducted with Étienne's niece and with his grandson Jacques. Though his niece had distant memories of Étienne, Jacques barely knew him, and his own father not at all: he was five when his grandfather died, and a baby when his father was executed. However, there is considerable material on Étienne in the departmental archive, especially in the *Fonds Verlhac*, a set of papers donated by the family after his death in 1948. These concern primarily his public life, but also provide useful clues as to his personality and to the vicissitudes of his private life. His vengeful pursuit of Madeleine Tavernier and other young women who consorted with German soldiers was recorded, largely by his own efforts, in the press and the minutes of the *Comité Départemental de la Libération* (CDL) in Cahors; and Madeleine's subsequent journey through the legal system can be followed through the regional judicial files at Agen (Lot-et-Garonne). It has not been possible to trace any descendants of Madeleine, nor scarcely any information about her life after her emergence from the judicial system. It is probable that, like many women punished at the Liberation, she moved away from Cahors and sought to develop a new life elsewhere.

By contrast, contacts with the Chapou family proved highly useful in researching the Chapter on **Jacques Chapou**. Very few private

papers about him survive, and there is almost nothing by his own hand, other than impersonal military communications. Almost everything in the archive about him has been written posthumously, and because of the mystique which even in his own lifetime developed around him, this absence of contemporary source material made it difficult to untangle the man from the myth. The principal source for his life is a biography by Georges Cazard, published in 1950.²⁰ This is a substantial work of 350 pages and while it is, in the words of historian H.R. Kedward, ‘rhapsodic’ in its portrait of Chapou and is an example of ‘resistencialist’ writing, it provides a fair account of his life, and the observations that it makes as to the characters and motivations of the man and of those with whom he was most involved are consistent with other sources.²¹ Cazard, a year or so younger than Chapou, knew him well: they first met in 1923 when schoolboys in Figeac and they remained close thereafter. The biography is based on first-hand memories, interviews with and contributions from contemporaries, as well as on some archival documents. This Chapter also draws on two masters’ theses written in 2021-2 by Chapou’s great-granddaughter Sarah Chabert, a post-graduate student at the University of Avignon.²² Her work is based on a detailed review of all the available sources. Sarah Chabert made helpful comments on this Chapter, and also provided an introduction to her grandmother, Chapou’s daughter, Françoise Chapou (b. 1940), who also gave access to the family archive. Interviews were held with both Sarah and Mme. Chapou, and both women talked openly. They are aware of the distinction to be drawn between the man and the

²⁰ Georges Cazard (with Marcel Metges), *Capitaine Philippe; une histoire du maquis du Lot au travers de la biographie de J. J. Chapou* (Cahors, 1950).

²¹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, p. 128.

²² Sarah Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou, créateur et animateur du maquis du Lot’, (Masters thesis in two parts, 1 and 2, supervised by Frédéric Monier, University of Avignon, 2022, copy provided by Sarah Chabert).

legend, and gave no impression of wishing to present an enhanced picture of Chapou. The memoirs and testimonies of other Resisters were also reviewed. Lastly, the circumstances of his death were investigated in depth by the historian Pierre Laborie in 1984, and that work has been referenced here.²³

Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview **Janine Andrieu** before her death in 2022; and, although she recorded an interview for the *Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation* (MRD) in Cahors about her Resistance past not long before her death, this adds little to what had already been set down in her memoir, *La Joconde dans le maquis*. This was mostly written in 2003 and 2004, so around 60 years after the events that it describes. It is the main source used for the Chapter, supported by several male Resistance memoirs, and the Lot departmental archives. *La Joconde* covers the period from her childhood until 1951, when she returned to Paris after four years abroad; she was then still only 27. The narrative is focused throughout on the details of everyday life, and on the personal. The reader is directed towards her perceptions of others and of how she imagined others perceived her. It is an account of small incidents and of sentiments, contains almost no dates and is disjointed in places. It is preoccupied with a world of feelings and impressions rather than of chronology and events. *La Joconde's* style and focus are far removed from those of the memoirs of her most important male counterparts, those of her Resistance chief Robert Noireau (published in 1978) and of her future husband René Andrieu (published in 1996). It also stands in contrast to the local Quercynois histories of Resistance life during the summer of 1944.²⁴ The high-level narrative in *La Joconde* is not in conflict with

²³ Pierre Laborie, 'Sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort: un essai de bilan', *Quercy-Recherche*, No. 59-60, (Sept.-Dec. 1984), pp. 4-22.

²⁴ Robert Noireau, *Les temps des partisans* (Paris, 1978); René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?* (Paris, 1996); Raymond Picard and Jean Chaussade, *Ombres et Espérances en Quercy*

these various other works, but the men's writings are oriented towards military action and strategy, organizational changes, the timings and sequences of events and personal and political rivalries. Their tone is hard-edged, unsentimental, and much less reflective and discursive than Janine's. These male accounts depict the authors as decisive, tough, full of energy and, particularly with René Andrieu's work, also betray a self-regarding braggadocio. Another of Janine's bosses in 1944 was Jean Marcenac (1913-84) the Surrealist poet, philosopher, and Communist. His 1982 memoir is different in many respects from the other male accounts. Laced with poetry and philosophical reflection, it is more reflective, meandering, and allusive than those of other male authors. Like *La Joconde*, it is short on dates. But it too tends to paint its author as a master of events at a key moment in history and, in that sense, also contrasts with Janine's self-effacing account.²⁵ Janine and these various male authors seem to have experienced the war from utterly different perspectives.

Partly because of its style, the reliability of *La Joconde* is hard to judge, and some of the key events that it describes cannot be corroborated by other sources. However, it is written in such a way that it appears to be entirely sincere, and the various interviews that Janine gave are credible and consistent with each other and with the memoir.²⁶ In addition, a transcript of one of these interviews was published in a 1994 magazine issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of the Lot. Inter alia this paid tribute to women Resisters in the department, and so her account has had a form of official blessing from the local

(Cahors, 1990); Gilbert Lacan, *Figeac en Quercy sous la terreur allemande* (Paris, 1945); Gilbert Verdier, *Ma Résistance* (Toulouse, 2003).

²⁵ Jean Marcenac, *Je n'ai pas perdu mon temps* (Paris, 1982).

²⁶ Interviews with Janine Andrieu conducted by *La Dépêche du Midi*, published 28 May 2015, and by Jean-Luc Couderc and Élodie Mazel of the MRDC, September 2019. (Both recordings consulted at the MRDC, Cahors, 5 April 2022.)

curators of Resistance history.²⁷ Moreover, the current head of the *Musée de la Résistance et Déportation* in Cahors (MRDC) has no doubt that *La Joconde* is a substantially truthful document.²⁸ René Andrieu's memoir also makes a fleeting mention of Janine's Resistance past (albeit without naming her).²⁹ It may be that, in recalling her wartime exploits some 60 years later, her imagination had come to give them a romantic and dramatic gloss that was absent at the time. Her description of the encounter with the German *maquisard* 'Plastic' may be suggestive of this. Nonetheless, the principal events, including her espionage in Figeac, should be taken as broadly true.

With **Françoise de Boissésou**, there is nothing in the relevant departmental archives about her or her activities in the Resistance. As the case study suggests, the lack of material in the official files has credible explanations. However, the private memoirs of her younger son, Jean-Vianney, *Souvenirs de ma jeunesse*, is a rich source. A substantial work of seventy closely spaced pages, the *Souvenirs* 'were written when the author was in late middle age and completed in 1999, thirteen years before his death and twenty-five after his mother's. According to his son Gilles de Boissésou, who allowed me to read them, they were written for the family, and not intended for other use. In that respect, they are distinct from the various memoirs discussed above in relation to Janine Andrieu, but also in that they are for the most part an account of another person's life, that of his mother. The *Souvenirs* contrast the honour of Françoise's Resistance past with the perceived dishonour of her private life, and the reader can sense that they are in part an exercise through which a son wrestles to construct a narrative of

²⁷ *50ème anniversaire de la Libération du Lot*, (Cahors, 1994), (ADL 96 J 29).

²⁸ Interview with Jean-Luc Couderc of the MRDC, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 5 April 2022.

²⁹ René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, p. 89.

his mother's life against certain standards of behaviour. This is nuanced by her own family having been for the most part Pétainist (though anti-German), and her mother in particular regarded her engagement in the Resistance with the same disapproval as she did her unconventional private life; whereas by others at the time, and by most after the war, her Resistance activities were seen as honourable and even heroic.

The *Souvenirs* are layered. They record Jean-Vianney's own direct memories, both of his mother and of events in which he observed her involvement at the time; but they also record his memories of what she had later told him about her life. So they are, in part, a record of memories of memories. But in addition, they include his own reflections on those layers of memory. We are ostensibly reading his record of her memories, but they may be infused with his own imaginings, derived from sources other than those of his mother. Thus, for example, in his portrayal of his mother's 'flapper' lifestyle in Marseilles, he might be drawing on subsequent social clichés more than on the reality of his mother's life.³⁰ Moreover, a strong element of the appeal of the *Souvenirs* is that it is well written, and presents a vivid portrait of the spirit of the age, and of the personalities of the principal protagonists. Gilles de Boissésou has also allowed access to correspondence and photographs from the period in the family archive at Lacquy. The correspondence mostly comprises letters written to Françoise, with those written by her apparently not having survived. The photographs are revealing, and a number are reproduced in the Chapter.

Several interviews were held with Gilles. These were useful in adding further detail and colour to the story, but more importantly in that he disagrees with some aspects of what his father wrote

³⁰ Mary-Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes, Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago, IL, 1994), pp. 19-62.

about Françoise. Gilles has stressed, correctly, that the *Souvenirs* are self-confessedly 'impressionistic', and he sees his father's judgements as having been coloured by the fact that Jean-Vianney did not, in Gilles' opinion, know his mother well as a boy and young man. Moreover, relations between mother and son became strained, mainly as a consequence of her relationship with her lover and co-Resister Gerard Naud and her running of the estate with him.

The main primary sources for the Chapter on **Aimé Noël** were the family archive kept by his widow Marguerite Noël (b. 1931) and interviews with her. These sources present some challenges. Aimé did not write a memoir and kept only a very occasional journal. The family archive, while extensive, is uneven: certain wartime episodes are recorded in considerable detail, but there is little on Aimé's childhood and youth, or on his clandestine life from 1942 to 1944. He did write a tale of his time as a POW and of his escape, in the form of a novel published under a pseudonym. This was written for a local postwar campaign to raise money for men who were still in POW camps. Although of interest, its fictionalised format brings obvious problems, and it tells us little of the interior life of its author.³¹ However, Marguerite Noël proved to be an excellent interviewee. She and Aimé were happily married for five decades, and she is an intelligent, perceptive, and helpful woman whose memory is strong despite her 91 years. It is unfortunate, for this account, that she did not meet Aimé until 1951, but he talked to her in detail about his life before then: she has a good grasp of it, and has carefully preserved and added to the family archive. While she has shown herself to be generally objective about her husband, much of what is written here about Aimé has come through the

³¹ 'Pierre Cantarnal', *Conquête de la Liberté* (Aurillac, undated but probably 1944 or 1945).

prism of Marguerite and so, to provide balance, her views have been cross-referenced against interviews conducted with other people from Figeac who knew her husband.³² The departmental (and Figeac municipal) archives were also consulted and were of some use. All in all, while the sources pose some difficulties and contain many lacunae, taken together they allow for a reasonably clear narrative of Aimé's life to emerge, and for an assessment to be made as to how his identity as a young man was shaped and how it evolved in response to his experiences of war.

Historiography

The history of mid-century France, and more especially the years of the German Occupation, has not lacked for historians over recent decades. Indeed, a veritable industry of historical research has developed, of which the works that are most relevant here include notably those by H.R. Kedward, Robert Gildea, and Pierre Laborie. However, in writing this thesis I have been repeatedly conscious of the ways in which it explores themes that have often fallen between the cracks in the dominant interpretations of the period. The experiences, emotions, and aspirations of provincial French citizens, especially those who were not touched directly by the larger events, remain marginal in much historical writing, a concern that is beginning to be addressed by some historians.³³ Therefore any discussion of the historiography must necessarily become an account of what has not been studied, or at least what has been studied more for what it contributes to other historical agendas.

³² Interviews conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon with Christophe Galinon, Figeac, 20 Sept. 2019, 6 Aug. 2022, and 22 Sept. 2022; with Denise Peyrière, Figeac, 22 Sept. 2022; and with Louis Roussilhes, Figeac, 29 Mar. 2019, 5 July 2019, 1 Oct. 2020, and 22 Sept. 2022.

³³ For example, Anette Schlimm, *Regieren in Dörfern. Ländlichkeit, Staat und Selbstverwaltung, 1850-1945* (Cologne, 2023).

Cultural Distance

This is particularly so of the elusive evolution of social and cultural norms in mid-twentieth-century France. Much of the historical writing about norms and behaviours is Paris-centric, and less work has been done on provincial mores. Quercy in particular has received little coverage by historians of the Second World War, despite the important dramas that were played out there in the summer of 1944. The Toulouse-based historian Pierre Laborie wrote a Chapter on 20th-century Quercy in the standard history of the region, and H.R. Kedward's various works on the *maquis* gave Quercy some attention. Studies of other areas of the south-west have included that of his pupil Hanna Diamond, who researched the lives of women in wartime Toulouse, and of Sandra Ott who described the social history of the Occupation in the western Pyrenees.³⁴ While Clermont-Ferrand is not in the south-west, John F. Sweets's investigation of that city during the war provides useful insights into the complexities at the individual level of dealing with the Occupation.³⁵ In studying the story of a Jewish girl in hiding in the Limousin, Shannon Fogg has cast useful light on people's 'daily-life preoccupations. Most important among these were access to food, how to cope with the large numbers of refugees, and avoiding talking about politics, or at least taking care if doing so.'³⁶ Such concerns were doubtless mirrored in Quercy. Daniel Lee has taken a close look at daily life in the Tarn department in the context of

³⁴ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XX^{ème} siècle', pp. 213-43; Kedward, *The French Resistance and its Legacy*; Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*; Rod Kedward and Nancy Wood (eds.), *The Liberation of France; Image and Event* (London 1995); Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France, 1939-1948, Choices and Constraints* (London, 1999); Sandra Ott, *Living with the Enemy, German Occupation, Collaboration and Justice in the Western Pyrenees, 1940-1948* (Cambridge, 2017).

³⁵ John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France, The French Under Nazi Occupation*, (New York and Oxford, 1986).

³⁶ Shannon Fogg, 'Refugees and Indifference: The Effects of Shortages on Attitudes Towards Jews in France's Limousin Region During World War II', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 1, (Spring 2007).

Vichy's policies and actions towards Jewish children, and in doing so has cast his gaze down to the level of local individuals. He has written of 'the complex ways in which groups and individuals interact at the local level are crucial for exposing the grey areas that are not always obvious from national studies', and this thesis has a similar aim as to Quercy.³⁷

However, other than by Kedward, and to a limited extent by Laborie, Quercy has not been examined. Other historians have tended largely to ignore it. One example of this is Philippe Bourdel's 655-page work on the *épuration*, which gives just half a page to Quercy.³⁸ This imbalance also has consequences for how we analyse the evolution of French society. Changes in social norms were more immediately apparent, and more widely diffused, in the major urban centres than they were in provincial society. The consequence of the urban tilt of much of the work (as well as its concomitant focus on the middle class, broadly defined) is to emphasise a gathering pace of social change across mid-20th-century France, which may have been much less apparent, or even absent, in certain provincial societies.³⁹ Care must therefore be taken not to exaggerate the degree to which a new permissiveness permeated down through society, especially when considering women in the remoter parts of the French provinces. Moreover, the Catholic church retained a powerful moral authority in the south-west, and the strength of natalist and anti-feminist movements as a force of opposition to moral change also needs to be borne in mind.⁴⁰

³⁷ Daniel Lee, *Pétain's Jewish children: French Jewish youth and the Vichy regime, 1940-1942*, (Oxford, 2014), p. 19.

³⁸ Philippe Bourdel, *L'épuration sauvage* (Paris, 2002).

³⁹ See Chapter 1.

⁴⁰ Christine Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française au 20ème siècle* (Paris, 2004), pp. 52-8.

The study of changes in cultural and social norms often requires going beyond the archival record. Newspapers are helpful, and letters to an extent. One example is the letters written by schoolteacher Yvonne Wagner to her boyfriend and future husband Louis. These date from around 1940 but in trying to describe her love for him Yvonne adopted a style that is suggestive of a pre-1914 world. In general, interviewees preferred to describe actions rather than emotions or opinions, and so the contribution they make to understanding the pace and nature of cultural change is limited. In the absence of clear archival markers, some judgements must depend on common sense, interpretation, and intuition, and often the qualifying 'to some extent' must be used to describe the ripples in the provinces that were felt from the impact of waves created in Paris or other capitals. One exception is the aristocrat Françoise de Boisséson. Notwithstanding the earlier reference to the 'flapper' cliché, this woman was extensively exposed to everything new, having spent her youth in the elite of vibrant post-1918 Marseilles and part of her adult life in an elite Parisian circle, but it is much more difficult to assess how far her experiences provide a template for those of others, even within elite circles.

Gender

It is often asserted that the history of women in the Second World War is a neglected topic. As to France, H.R. Kedward's 1993 book on rural resistance in the south drew attention to the essential role women had played in sustaining the Resistance, and in some cases in helping to create it. He noted that much more work was needed on their contribution, stating that 'the names can be found, but it needs a generation of researchers to put them back into history'.⁴¹

⁴¹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 89-94.

Three decades later, they are still not fully 'back into history', either as Resisters or as collaborators: there has been little work dealing with 'ordinary' individual women in depth and in context, and so what Kedward had in mind has remained an unfinished task. Laurent Douzou recognised this in 1995, and writing much more recently, Kedward has again stressed 'how gendered' the neglect of women in the Resistance had been.⁴²

Starting in the immediate postwar period, some of the best-known women Resisters published their war memoirs, notably Agnès Humbert (1946), Marie-Madeleine Fourcade (1968), Lucie Aubrac (1984), and Geneviève de Gaulle (1998).⁴³ More recently, biographies of Marie-Madeleine Fourcade and Lucie Aubrac have appeared.⁴⁴ All these gave sporadic visibility of women's experience to a public audience. However, the subject of women during the Occupation has only become addressed systematically by historians since the 1990s. Greater interest in it at that time reflected the 'cultural turn' and the establishment of women's history as a discipline. Several significant works were published then and in the early 2000s that either dealt directly with the history of women during the war or, in addressing everyday life, paid significant attention to them. The main relevant authors were Célia Bertin, Hanna Diamond, Sarah Fishman, Francine Muel-Dreyfus, Miranda Pollard, Dominique Veillon and Margaret Collins Weitz.⁴⁵ However,

⁴² Laurent Douzou, 'La Résistance, une affaire d'hommes?', *Les Cahiers de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent*, no. 31 (Oct. 1995), pp. 11-24; Kedward, *The French Resistance and its Legacy*, p. 116.

⁴³ Agnès Humbert, *Résistance, Memoirs of Occupied France* (London, 2008); Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, *L'Arche de Noé, réseau "Alliance"* (Paris, 1968); Lucie Aubrac, *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse* (Paris, 1984); Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, *La Traversée de la nuit* (Paris, 1998).

⁴⁴ Lynn Olson, *Madame Fourcade's Secret War* (New York, 2019); Laurent Douzou, *Lucie Aubrac* (Paris, 2009).

⁴⁵ Célia Bertin, *Femmes sous l'Occupation* (Paris, 1993); Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*; Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven, CT, 1991); Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin* (Paris, 1996); Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago, IL, 1998); Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France 1939-1947*

while these works do reference individual women, their focus is more collective and thematic, dealing with women as they confronted different aspects of the Occupation, often by looking at particular groups rather than wider social changes. All have been of use here, in particular Collins Weitz's *Sisters in the Resistance*, which analyses the oral testimony of about eighty women Resisters to derive conclusions about women's participation. Helpful too have been the essays collected under the aegis of *L'Union des Femmes Françaises* in 1977, by Margaret Randolph Higonnet and others in 1987, by Françoise Thébaud in 1995, and by Mechtild Gilzmer and others in 2003.⁴⁶ Taken together however, these works have still only partially filled the deficit to which Kedward had drawn attention. Moreover, many of them were published more than twenty years ago, and so the progress made in the 1990s has not been significantly built upon during the following two decades. This is especially the case as regards works by French historians, and it is notable that the pioneering publications of the 1990s were mostly from Anglo-Saxon authors. For example, the 800-page edited volume on Vichy by Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, published in 1992, has only some twenty pages specifically about women. More recently, while there has been useful coverage of women (and gender) by Philippe Bourdel and Fabrice Virgili in studies from the early 2000s on the *épuration*, Olivier Wieviorka's 500-page history of the Resistance, published in 2013, devoted only one seven-page sub-section to '*L'engagement féminin*'.⁴⁷ Halik

(Paris, 1995); Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance, How Women Fought to Free France 1940-1945* (Hoboken, NJ, 1995).

⁴⁶ *Les femmes dans la Résistance en France, Actes du Colloque tenu à l'initiative de l'Union des Femmes Françaises*, Paris - La Sorbonne, 22 et 23 novembre 1975 (Paris, 1977); Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (eds.), *Behind the Lines, Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT, 1987); Françoise Thébaud (ed.), *Résistances et Libérations France 1940-1945* (Paris, 1995); Gilzmer et al (eds.), *Les femmes dans la Résistance en France*.

⁴⁷ Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida (eds.), *Le Régime de Vichy et Les Français* (Paris, 1992); Bourdel, *L'Épuration sauvage*; Fabrice Virgili, *La France 'virile': des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris, 2000); Olivier Wieviorka, *Histoire de la Résistance 1940-1945* (Paris, 2013), pp. 429-36.

Kochanski's lengthy 2022 study of pan-European Resistance is similarly lacking in specific attention to women.⁴⁸

The historiography of female collaboration has grown to be quite extensive, but has been rather narrowly focussed on female collaborators who at the liberation were punished, formally or informally, for their actions during the Occupation. This preoccupation, although sometimes suggestive of prurience, has allowed only a generalised form of analysis because usually the victims, and in many cases their punishers, preferred to hide their shame in anonymity and silence. Thus, although we have some studies of the few notorious female collaborators such as Violette Moriss, we do not have a more nuanced understanding of female experience, and of how women may have been drawn into actions which, retrospectively, came to be judged as collaboration by a vengeful population in search of scapegoats.⁴⁹ In most of the historiography (and in the archives) these women are anonymous victims. They are present in the much-reproduced photographs, shown with heads being shaved or being marched around towns after their shavings, some crying, some expressionless. Who really were they, what had they done, and why? The story of Madeleine Tavernier in this thesis aims to answer these questions, at least with respect to one woman and her circle of female friends in a provincial town.

As the case of female collaborators demonstrates, there is a need to situate the wartime behaviour of women – perhaps especially in provincial France – in longer chronologies of social evolutions across the decades from the 1920s to the 1960s. This is a challenge which has been taken up by a number of historians of female

⁴⁸ Halik Kochanski, *Resistance, the Underground War in Europe, 1939-45* (London, 2022).

⁴⁹ Marie-Josèphe Bonnet, *Violette Moriss* (Paris, 2011).

experience in recent years. The volume on the 20th century in Duby and Pierrot's history of women in the West is helpful for the broad context as to social change.⁵⁰ But so more especially are Christine Bard's work on women in French society in the 20th century, and Sian Reynolds' examination of the interaction between gender and politics in the interwar period. Again however, none of these provide much material for approaching the mid-century lives of provincial French women.⁵¹ The work of Mary-Louise Roberts demonstrates the strengths of turning to fictional sources. She has analysed 'types' of women as they were represented in the literature of interwar France. In her analysis, there were three such types, which she terms 'The Modern Woman', 'The Mother' and 'The Single Woman'. These provide interesting templates for analysing the lives of all the women studied here, while raising inevitable questions of the danger of using cultural sources as a means of approaching social realities.⁵²

More recent historiography has brought some new perspectives to the place of women in wartime France. Having in the late 1980s linked women's participation in armed combat to the phenomenon of war as a propellant of change to gender relations, Paula Schwartz published an article in 2020 about a food riot in Paris in 1942 in which women played a particularly important part. Here she argued that the incident was important in alerting the authorities to the potential political importance of women.⁵³ Nimisha Barton has shown how immigrants, both men and women, were moulded into French citizens and specifically into ones that

⁵⁰ Georges Duby and Michelle Pierrot (eds.), *Histoire des femmes en occident, vol. V, le xx siècle* (Paris, 1992).

⁵¹ Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française au 20e siècle*, pp. 12-128; Sian Reynolds, *France Between the Wars; Gender and Politics* (London, 1996).

⁵² Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*.

⁵³ Paula Schwartz, 'Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 1, (Spring 1989), pp. 126-51; Paula Schwartz, *Today's Sardines Are Not For Sale*, (Oxford, 2020).

would uphold the institution of the family, and within that the role of women as bearers of children, by the use of social provision and protection from harm and danger, a pact that was created before Vichy but strengthened under it.⁵⁴ Laura Lee Downs has investigated the links between far-right groups and the encouragement of women to enter the world of social welfare. The Downs article has some relevance to Marie-Antoinette Orcival here, although there is no evidence that Marie-Antoinette or her family had links to far-right groups or had far-right views.⁵⁵ And in looking into French women who went to work in Nazi Germany, Camille Fauroux has concluded that, while the subject is nuanced, many of these woman demonstrated a capacity to act and to adapt and, in some cases, a spirit of adventure.⁵⁶

Globally, learning and public discourse were traditionally dominated by men. While men considered women to be a valid category to be analysed, they tended to take their own gender for granted, or simply to equate it with humanity, and with history. This was captured by Simone de Beauvoir's distinction between the Other and the One.⁵⁷ In consequence, historians, who were mainly men, took little trouble to study masculinity. Furthermore, in the final quarter of the 20th century, the development of women's history as a discipline was accompanied by historians of gender tending to focus on women more than on men.⁵⁸ In twentieth-century France men qua men have struggled to become an

⁵⁴ Nimisha Barton, *Reproductive Citizens. Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945*, (Ithaca, NY, 2020).

⁵⁵ Laura Lee Downs, 'And so we transform a people': Women's social action and the reconfiguration of politics on the right in France, 1934-1947', *Past & Present*, 2014-11, Vol.225 (225), p.187-225.

⁵⁶ Camille Fauroux, *Produire la guerre, produire le genre : des Françaises au travail dans l'Allemagne nationale-socialiste (1940-1945)*, (Paris, 2020))

⁵⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London, 1972; first published 1949), p. 15.

⁵⁸ Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History, Global Perspectives* (Hoboken, NJ, 2011), pp. 84-90.

identifiable topic. There are some studies, but they tend to focus on particular domains_(notably warfare) and on cultural archetypes of masculinity, rather than on the less visible evolutions in male norms and forms of self-image.⁵⁹ Analysis of the French male gender therefore seems to rely still on studies which do not have men as their principal focus, and certainly individual men are often absent from these works, and this applies to the 1940s. On the other hand, better visibility has arisen in some investigations into social change in rural society. Examples include Laurence Wyle's book on the Vaucluse which though now old (published in 1957) is worthy of emulation more widely and, more recently, Maggie Paxson's work on the Vivarnais-Lignon plateau.⁶⁰

The Vichy state encouraged citizens to spy and report on each other, and denunciations were frequent and ubiquitous. They are important in most of the case-studies here. Robert Gellately, Sheila Fitzpatrick and André Halimi have illustrated how the circumstances of war have frequently been leveraged to prosecute disputes that were purely local, and unconnected to those circumstances.⁶¹ In France, denunciations often acted as a trigger for the more savage form of *guerre franco-française* that came during the *épuration*. Although the scale and character of the *épuration* have now been recognised and described by most historians, it is important to remember that for many years after the war recognition of this was often stifled not only by fear and

⁵⁹ For example, Luc Capdevila, 'The Quest for Masculinity in a Defeated France', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Nov. 2001), pp. 423-45; Christopher E. Forth and Bernard Taithe (eds.), *French Masculinities, History, Culture and Politics* (London, 2007); Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Oxford, 1993); André Rauch, *L'identité masculine à l'ombre des femmes, De la Grande Guerre à la Gay Pride* (Paris, 2014); André Rauch, *Le Premier Sexe, Mutations et crise de l'identité masculine* (Paris, 2012); Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen, Morality & Masculinity in France 1870-1920* (Ithaca, NY, 2006).

⁶⁰ Laurence Wyle, *Village in the Vaucluse* (Cambridge, Ma, 1957); Maggie Paxson, *The Plateau* (New York, 2019).

⁶¹ Robert Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Accusatory Practices; Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989* (Chicago, 1999); and André Halimi, *La Délation sous l'Occupation* (Paris, 2003).

shame, but also by the 'resistencialist' myth that privileged the Resistance as a heroic and noble movement that could do no wrong.

Memory

French memories of the war years have become a major focus of historical endeavour in recent decades, compensating for the notion that French people somehow had failed to come to terms with the years of occupation. The works of Pierre Laborie and Henri Rousso have analysed France's attempts to deal with the problem of how the *années noires* could be satisfactorily remembered at the national and collective levels.⁶² So too have the sections on memory in Robert Gildea's works on Occupation and Resistance.⁶³ The studies by Pierre Nora on sites of memory, and the work on commemorative monuments by Serge Barcellini and Annette Wieviorka, are important as to the investing of memory into places and objects.⁶⁴ But the French fashion, exemplified by Nora, for studying memory through the lens of the inanimate has diverted attention from the type of people and family-oriented study that is offered here. Memory, it often seems, exists at a higher level than the more mundane forms of remembering, and of forgetting, which characterised the lives analysed here. Single studies of village communities that experienced German reprisal massacres provide more directly useful points of reference. Jean-Marie Borzeix on Bugeat, Sarah Farmer on Oradour-sur-Glane, Robert Gildea on Mont Mouchet, Caroline Moorehead on the Vivarais-Lignon plateau and Tzvetan Todorov on Saint-Amand have all been relevant and

⁶² By Pierre Laborie, especially *L'opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris, 1990); and *Les français des années troubles* (Bilbao, 2001); Henri Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome; History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Ma, 1991).

⁶³ Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains, In Search of the German Occupation of France 1940-45* (London, 2002); Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows, A New History of the French Resistance* (London, 2015).

⁶⁴ Serge Barcellini and Annette Wieviorka, *Passant, souviens-toi! Les lieux de souvenir de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en France* (Paris, 1995); Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1986).

instructive.⁶⁵ In none of these cases does a simple template of forgetting seem relevant. Instead, as anthropologists of rural communities have long demonstrated, the complex lines of memory within twentieth-century societies have often lacked a clear-cut character.⁶⁶ Particular streams of memory flow, sometimes above ground, and sometimes subterraneously, through local societies, which are rarely left uninfluenced by wider shifts in forms of national memory. Memory in that sense is both a local reality, and a way of belonging to the national community.⁶⁷

Presentism

A broader danger in the historiography of twentieth-century France is that of judging past societies by the norms of the present day. This can apply to gender norms, but also to other aspects of social and cultural history, including attitudes towards race and to authority. There has been some tendency to belittle incremental improvements in the rights of French women in the 20th century, by implicitly judging such changes against an imagined or desired present-day state of full equality.⁶⁸ This is perhaps particularly so when considering the slow tempo of change in provincial France across the mid-century decades. France in the 1950s is a particular example here. That decade has been characterised by some historians as one when conservative norms were reimposed. In 1988, the historian Claire Duchén interviewed French women about their lives, and reported that they remembered the 1950s, and the

⁶⁵ Jean-Marie Borzeix, *One Day in France; Tragedy and Betrayal in an Occupied Village* (London, 2016); Farmer, *Martyred Village*; Robert Gildea, 'Resistance, Reprisals and Community in Occupied France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 13 (2003), pp. 163-85; Caroline Moorehead, *Village of Secrets; Defying the Nazis in Vichy France* (London, 2014); and Tzvetan Todorov, *A French Tragedy; Scenes of Civil War, Summer 1944* (Dartmouth, NH, 1996).

⁶⁶ For example, Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago, IL, 1997).

⁶⁷ For example, Martin Conway, 'The End(s) of Memory; Memories of the Second World War in Belgium', *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*, Vol. XLII 2-3 (2012), pp. 170-87.

⁶⁸ For example, Christine Bard, *Les filles de Marianne* (Paris, 1995), pp. 383-436, 451-8.

1960s too, as being 'traditional', that 'nothing happened', and that 'there was no feminism'. In terms of a larger progress towards gender equality and the socio-cultural rights of women, this was largely so. But during the post-1944 decades much was changing in less dramatic ways. To see the 1950s only in terms of a rigid reimposition of a prewar status quo seems mistaken. In the 1950s, many people at the time in fact regarded themselves as part of a postwar reconstruction that was avowedly 'modern' in outlook and aspiration. Sarah Fishman's work on the social history of France during 1940-68 is a suggestive corrective to the tendency to treat the 1950s as a decade in which time stopped.⁶⁹ Moreover, it is worth noting that Claire Duchen's analysis was based on interviews with women who were mainly well-educated Parisian feminists of the 'second wave', a group that did not ascribe much value either to earlier feminists or to previous advances in women's rights.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this thesis is novel in that it is a microhistorical study of gendered change in individual lives in provincial France, that is based whenever possible on oral history interviews, and that deals with both women and men. At the centre of each case study is one individual, whose actions are analysed in the context of their families and communities, and of the wider provincial society of which they formed part. The studies are of 'ordinary' people, most of whom are absent from the historiography. The exceptions to this are Jacques Chapou and René Andrieu, but even they are secondary characters in the historiography: for example, neither is mentioned in Wieviorka's recent history of the Resistance. All the individuals analysed in the thesis were involved in events over short periods of time that for

⁶⁹ Sarah Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution, Gender and Family Life in Postwar France* (Oxford, 2017), p. 37.

them were life-changing, but that today are either forgotten, or half-remembered, or remembered in different ways.

Following the microhistorical tradition, people and the events have been studied from as close a distance as the material allows. Proximity can improve understanding of why and how individuals push against institutions, conventions or accepted behavioural norms. From these 'views from below', lines can be drawn 'upwards' towards wider historical issues. However, it can be difficult to find bridges between the particular and the general, and evidence can be stretched too far.⁷⁰ Often this is especially so when the particular is hitherto undiscovered or obscure. This thesis has not been free from that challenge. Notably, early death has constrained the analysis. Five of the ten individuals did not survive into the 1950s, and enjoyed only momentary periods of freedom around 1944-5. It is tempting to imagine whether they might have sustained their altered lives had they lived longer, but such imagination risks going beyond the historical record.

In 2008, Robert Gildea stated that oral history has come a long way since Oxford historian A.J.P. Taylor described it as "old men drooling about their youth".⁷¹ The title of Gildea's talk referenced the 'long march' that oral history had been obliged to make before gaining some measure of acceptance among British and American academics. In France, it has never taken firm root; there, written evidence and above all state papers continue to be privileged well above other categories, a preference that has been reinforced in part by a French tradition which downplayed the significance of individual (as opposed to collective) memory, and in part by a

⁷⁰ John Brewer, 'Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 7.1 (2010), p. 104; and Robert Finlay, 'The Refashioning of Martin Guerre', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 93 (3) (1988), pp. 553-71.

⁷¹ Robert Gildea, 'The Long March of Oral History', *Oral History*, vol. 38, no. 1, (Spring 2010), pp. 68-80.

weariness with the volume of 'resistencialist' memoirs published by non-historian Resisters in the decades following the war.⁷²

In this thesis, oral history has been used whenever possible, because it appeared entirely obvious to do so. In the early stages of study, when I had decided to find out what had happened in a certain village seventy years ago when German soldiers had first arrived, it seemed sensible to ask the people who had actually been there at the time and had seen what had happened. Of course, I recognise that oral history evidence may be unreliable, and that the researcher is hearing about a day in 1944 through what may be several layers of later thoughts, impressions, dreams and the subconscious, the memories or opinions of other people, new reports, etc., that have accumulated in the mind of the interviewee and that are present when she recounts her memory of it. Provided that the researcher is alert to this, the testimony will not be less valuable. And written documents are of course not free of misrememberings, manipulations, and lies. In any case, in this thesis has used both oral testimony and archival matter.⁷³

The section on Sources above has already provided some detail on the oral testimony used here. Six of the seven case studies have used interviews with descendants, witnesses, and people who knew the protagonists, while with one (Janine Andrieu) there were no descendants or known witnesses. A total of fifty-five interviews were conducted with twenty-two interviewees, over a period of

⁷² The French privileging of collective memory owes much to Maurice Halbwachs, as in *La Mémoire collective*, (Paris, 1950); on French attitudes to oral history, see 'Questions à l'histoire orale' in *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP*, Cahier no. 4, June 1987, (Paris, 1987) and 'La bouche de la vérité? La recherche historique et les sources orales' in *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP*, Cahier No. 21, November 1992, (Paris, 1992).

⁷³ On the methodology of oral history, in addition to Gildea's 'Long March' speech and article cited above, see inter alia Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, (Oxford, 2000); Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories, form and meaning in oral history*, (New York, 1991); and Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, (Abingdon, 2016).

nearly six years. These ranged from short conversations in order to verify points of detail to multi-hour, 'life-story' conversations. Notable in the latter category were the several interviews with José-Marie Orcival about his aunt Marie-Antoinette, with Philippe Wagner about his grandmother Yvonne, with Gilles de Boisséson about his grandmother Françoise, and with Marguerite Noël about her late husband Aimé. The results of these interviews were supplemented and compared with what is contained in the respective family archives, and other sources. Care was taken in the use of what interviewees said, in particular with regard to the fallibility of memory and with objectivity. However, as a rule, most interviewees were themselves alive to these problems; thus, they themselves tended to flag points on which they felt their memories were failing, and they could also be observed striving to give objective accounts. In particular, with Marie-Antoinette Orcival, Jacques Chapou, and Aimé Noël, the interviewees, all family members of the subjects, were quite aware of the potential hagiographic gloss that could be put on the lives of the subjects (and indeed has been, in other writings) and plainly were keen to relay what they saw as the failings of the latter, as well as their virtues.

One problem arising from the methodology of oral history is that the researcher may be cast by the interviewee in the role of judge, as the person who has assembled all the relevant data on a 'problem' from the past and is therefore able to opine on 'what really happened'. As mentioned in the section on Sources earlier, this difficulty has been present in the case of Yvonne Wagner, with her grandsons seeming to look to me for a judgment as to the 'real truth', and one that would, I assumed, exonerate their grandmother from the charges of treason and betrayal. (In the event, when I told

them that in my opinion this remained an 'open verdict', they accepted that with understanding, and gratitude for the effort made.) A different but related discomfort was described by Laurent Douzou and others in connection with the case of Lucie Aubrac in 1997, when Douzou found himself among a group of historians who were interviewing Aubrac and the interview seemed to evolve into a form of court proceeding in which Aubrac's honesty was on trial and the historians were judge and jury.⁷⁴

In following a microhistorical approach, particular attention has been paid to the works of Alain Corbin, Alessandro Portelli, and Carlo Ginzburg.⁷⁵ In this genre of study, the historian strives to enter into the minds of the subjects, while shuttling back and forth between what can be observed of their minds and of the events and circumstances that surrounded them. The case-studies may be compared with the other works of microhistory that use events, experiences, and stories in small villages in wartime France, as well as the voices that describe them, as material from which wider and deeper questions of causality, morality and memory may be addressed from a fresh perspective.⁷⁶

The themes of honour and dishonour, and of praise and blame, run through all the case-studies, and the thesis pays attention to ways in which these attributes were represented, and judgements on them couched. Contemporaries cast the protagonists in various roles, some conventionally seen as good and admirable, others as the opposite. In the context of wartime France, such

⁷⁴ Claire Andrieu, Christian Bougeard, Laurent Douzou, Robert Frank, Jean-Marie Guillon, Pierre Laborie, François Marcot, Robert Mencherini, Denis Peschanski, Jacqueline Sainclivier, Serge Wolikow, « La réaction d'un collectif d'historiens au supplément publié le 9 juillet dans *Libération* : "Les Aubrac et les historiens : le débat". Déplorable leçon d'histoire », *Libération*, 25 July 1997.

⁷⁵ Alain Corbin, *Village of Cannibals; Rage and Murder in France, 1870* (Cambridge, Ma, 1992); Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*; Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, MD, 1989), pp. 87-113.

⁷⁶ See footnote 47.

representations could be ambiguous, in two ways. First, which role was applied to each person could depend on whose opinion we are considering, and when. During the war, France was riven by political division, and as events evolved and fortunes shifted, so opinions and loyalties changed. A woman or a man could be regarded by their community as an honourable citizen in 1941 but labelled a collaborator in 1944, had they failed to adapt their views and behaviour to the new norms. Another could be regarded by the majority as a terrorist in 1941 but as a Resistance hero in 1944. During the Occupation, what was considered honourable and what dishonourable was thus, as Talleyrand is reputed to have said of treason and betrayal, often ‘a matter of dates.’⁷⁷ Secondly, during the war many French men and women were forced to play roles in a literal sense, to avoid their real identities being discovered. This could be pretending to be an aristocrat in need of a husband, like Lucie Aubrac, or feigning madness, like Berty Albrecht.⁷⁸ With Françoise de Boissésou, it was the role of a witty, nonchalant *châtelaine* – which she actually was, for much of the time. Like many, she also assumed a formal false identity, with forged papers, and so the role she played as a consequence of her Resistance engagement was supplemented with an ‘official’, fabricated identity, one which involved acting another part, in her case that of a schoolmistress from central France. For Aimé Noël, it was as a driver for the German post office.

The methods used in the thesis have included some elements of an anthropological approach, and have involved consideration of subjectivities, both the interviewees’ and my own. Montpezat-de-Quercy is my local town, and I am a part of its community. I have become friends with several of the people interviewed for this

⁷⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford, 2014), p. 762.

⁷⁸ Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, pp. 246, 249, 260.

work, and am thus part of the world whose history I am studying. I believe that I am seen by local French people as being both an 'insider' (I live here, I am part of their world, I speak their language), and an 'outsider' (I am foreign, my roots lie elsewhere). They know that I am observing and writing about them, or about the recent pasts of their families or villages. With oral history the researcher is inevitably a protagonist in the research process in ways that differ from what takes place in the archive. All sorts of emotions, mores, and conventions of behaviour and of speech are present when two people meet, and this is quite distinct from the solitary reading of a dossier. In this sense specific comparison can be made between this thesis and Laurence Wylie's work on the Vaucluse in the 1950s, as referenced above.⁷⁹ Proximity links to subjectivity, but the status of being neither fully 'in' nor fully 'out' is helpful, a form of Anglo-French duality that was perceptively described by Richard Cobb.⁸⁰ In this connection, several interviewees expressed relief and pleasure that I am not French and also, in two cases, that I am British; these individuals felt that French historians and commentators on France's war years are still to prone to be partisan, and some felt that a more objective viewpoint is offered from the far side of the Channel. While the inevitable influence of my own subjectivity is recognised, I have striven to maintain the 'outsider' half of my status and aimed at objectivity. In addition, this work deals with the memories of today, when I am present. However, I was not present in the 1940s, and so the subjectivity inherent in this thesis is less overt than in, say, Luisa Passerini's *Autobiography of a Generation*, in which she writes as a participant in the relevant events, as well as an historian.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Wylie, *Village in the Vaucluse*.

⁸⁰ For a description of this duality, see Cobb, *A Second Identity*, pp. 1-50.

⁸¹ Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation; Italy, 1968* (Middletown, CT, 1996).

Gendered identity is analysed per se but is also used as a tool for interrogating other histories, including broader processes of social change. The thesis starts from the premise that gender is rarely a standalone category. The title of Joan Scott's seminal article of 1986, which referred to gender as 'a useful category of analysis' (emphasis added here) is relevant to this point.⁸² Individual identities – perhaps especially those of French people in the middle of the twentieth century – are composed of many elements in addition to gender. These include age, race, class, economic status, employment, nationality, location, belief system, and political affiliation. In practice, these are fluid and interactive. They do not function as compartmentalised phenomena, and it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to ascribe the thoughts, motivations, or actions of an individual to any one of them in isolation from the others. Moreover, gender, like other components of identity, has varied over time and from one society to another; and was expressed, developed, and altered by behaviours that can be described as performative acts.

However, while gender is central to the thesis, so too is agency. Detailed examination of the emotions, thoughts, behaviour, and actions of individuals inevitably draws attention to the importance of choice and will. The war, and more especially the Occupation, was a confusing time. Nobody knew how the conflict would end, what postwar political settlement would arise, or indeed who the victors would prove to be. But individuals made choices on the basis of what little they knew, rumours they heard, and the beliefs they held. War is not conceived here as an impersonal abstraction, akin to a natural disaster, to which people only react. They do

⁸² Joan Scott, Gender: 'A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5, (Dec. 1986), pp. 1053-75.

react, but they also help to shape events such as war, and the case studies provide evidence of that.

Chapter 3

A Longer View: circa 1930 to circa 1958.

Introduction

Periodisation

This thesis focuses primarily on the years of the Second World War and the consequent German Occupation of France, but its foundational premise is that the changes that flowed from these events formed part of a longer-term and more gradual process of social evolution. It argues that the war made a particularly important contribution to that evolution, but that its effects must be placed in the context of this longer process. This Chapter provides the wider framework within which the case studies that follow must be placed.

The choice of 1930 and 1958 does not imply that those two years were especially important. The objective is rather to examine the periods of roughly ten years before and after the war, as well as the war itself. An even longer period could have been covered, most obviously the fifty years starting with the Armistice of 1918 and ending with the events of 1968 and the major changes in cultural norms that occurred around that time. It could thereby have investigated links between the changes wrought by the war and the values of the next generation who came of age around 1968. However, such a lengthy period would have extended the thesis across too large a process of change. The rather shorter timespan adopted here enables the focus to be placed on the middle decades of the twentieth century, of which the war years formed the central element. This allows the postwar period up to c. 1958 to be considered in some depth. It will be argued in particular that gender-related change in the decade beginning around 1947 was more significant than some historians have admitted, and that the

developments of the 1950s should be seen as part of a teleology – albeit a jagged and complex one – that had begun after the first war and then had been accelerated by the second.

Place, Class, Time, and Generations

Social and cultural changes in experiences of gender proceeded unevenly depending on location, social status, and time. Location and status present a particular challenge in that both contemporaneous records and the historiography are derived mainly from Paris, and focus principally on the bourgeoisie and the upper classes. Innovative thinking and actions largely flowed from the educated Parisian elite, but the preoccupations and self-representations of this world were only partially absorbed by a distant, provincial bourgeoisie based in small towns and often with roots and relationships in the countryside.

In large part the middle classes of small-town France adapted their own beliefs and behaviours to what was novel only gradually and in a limited way, while a minority mirrored the *paysan* reaction in rejecting the new or simply ignoring it. In uneventful times, continuity outweighed change in provincial society; and this in turn suggests that the social consequences of war may have been more profound in provincial societies such as Quercy relative to the larger cities. Their much slower pace of adaptation to change from c. 1870 to c. 1940 would suggest that the impact of war, with (in the 20th century) its all-encompassing and intrusive ‘upending’ characteristics, was in effect amplified in provincial France. Time does not of course proceed at a uniform pace. Change accelerated after the war, as provincial France found itself thrust forward into new worlds by the impact of new media: magazines and radio from the late 1940s, and television later. For example, the sexualised

version of female identity projected by Brigitte Bardot in the postwar years would have been much more rapidly understood (if not accepted) in Quercy in the late 1950s than the changes in gendered identities that took place in Paris in the 1920s.

The disruptive impact of these changes also created new divisions. While the bourgeois young in provincial France may have seized with enthusiasm on new models of gendered identity, this opened up divisions both with their parents, and with those from other social classes; most notably in Quercy, with the younger peasantry who did not share the enthusiasm of their bourgeois contemporaries. The consequence was a society of change, but where the nature of those changes widened the fractures between different generations, and social classes.

1930 to 1939

Conceptions and Concerns

Pre-established and mostly binary conceptions of what it meant to be a woman or a man, inherited from the 19th century or earlier, remained dominant in interwar provincial France. These included that women were subservient, pious, fertile and close to nature, peaceful, pure, modest, and dependant; but prone to disobedience, sensuality, and inaction. Men were dominant, virile and physically strong, courageous, rational, and disposed to action; but liable to anger and violence, including gendered and sexual violence.⁸³ There remained a sense that women were the 'other' and a single category unto themselves, whereas men stood for all humanity and were multi-faceted. As Simone de Beauvoir later wrote, 'a man would never set out to write a book on the peculiar situation of the human male.'⁸⁴ 'Otherness' was reinforced both by the grammar of

⁸³ Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, pp. 89-90.

⁸⁴ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 15.

gender in the French language, and by women not being accorded full rights of citizenship. The separation of the two genders was sharp and clear, and was carried into the surrounding space: the home for the woman, the world beyond for the man. Women were expected to be, and mostly were, wives, mothers and daughters who ran the *foyer*. Their duties were to nurture with care and food, to keep the house clean and ordered, and to support the work of their men, which in the countryside entailed work in the fields as directed by the man. Being deemed unable to act independently (and being barred from doing so in certain areas of life by law), women were denied the vote. Men by contrast were full citizens, who worked outside the home, but ruled inside it.⁸⁵

In 1930, the 'moderate Radical' Quercynois newspaper *Le Journal du Lot* began a regular column entitled 'Ways of Seeing and Thinking', which commented on current norms, and was reflective of provincial opinion. In one column, headed 'Rights and Duties', the analogy of Eve and the apple was applied to giving women the vote. Adam was indifferent to the apple but Eve 'wanted to eat it, not because she thought it was a good apple, but because to eat it was forbidden.' A right of such gravity as the right to vote should not be given merely to satisfy feminine 'caprice'. Women who 'had the moral and physical qualities' to be electors were rare. (By 'physical' he was referring to 'the regrettable nerves' of women, which often prevented the exercise of 'sane reason'.) In any case, women already had the power to influence the voting intentions of their men, and a canny politician knew this well. The article

⁸⁵ See for example: Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et Femmes*, p. 14; Duby and Pierrot (eds.), *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, pp. 145-95, 287-324; Forth and Taithe (eds.), *French Masculinities*, pp. 2-9, 123-36; Annelise Mauge, *L'Identité Masculine en Crise au Tournant du Siècle* (Paris, 1987), pp. 11-14, 176-83; Nye, *Masculinity and the Male Code of Honor*, pp. 4-14, 172-95; Lorenzo Benadusi, "'Women don't want us anymore': Militarism and Masculinity in the Italian War', in Corinna Peniston-Bird and Emma Vickers (eds.), *Gender and the Second World War* (London, 2017), p. 27; Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*; Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*, pp. 2-3.

concluded that 'the mother', who by 'glorifying and sanctifying her many duties', by her 'devotion, sacrifice, her self-denial', and by 'her bending the knee before man...man who incarnates the highest virtues of heroic humanity', sends packing 'the spectre of the scruffy suffragette.' In short, women were to be trusted and venerated in respect of their 'natural virtues', but their 'natural' fallibilities made them unfit for citizenship.⁸⁶

Men were expected to work, and work frequently meant military service. The notion of the citizen-soldier was a significant component of assumed French male identity. Derived from the longstanding code of honour of the nobility, it had been adapted for more general use in the Revolutionary period, and was rekindled during the 19th century by the periodic waves of general conscription. Military feats conferred honour and, away from the battlefield, could be also imitated and tested in hunting, sport, or (for those who possessed the necessary means) travel and mountaineering.⁸⁷ It was also fed by colonial expansion. The colonies formed a prominent element of the French interwar mental map. They were almost entirely a 'man's world', and were looked to as a training ground in which French manliness could be regenerated. Political rights were still in part seen as granted in exchange not only for active citizenship but also for service to the state, including military service, and these links underlined the idea that the nation was masculine.⁸⁸

Marriage and the family were central elements of the Republican conception of citizenship. In interwar France, marriage was generally conceived as a natural union upon which the family was

⁸⁶ *Le Journal du Lot*, (9 June 1930), p. 1.

⁸⁷ Joan Tumblety, *Remaking the Male Body: Masculinity and the Uses of Physical Culture in Interwar and Vichy France* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 116-24.

⁸⁸ See footnote 3, and especially Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*, pp. 12-14.

based. The family in turn was lauded as the most important social unit of the Republic. While faithfulness was valued, male adultery was generally forgiven as an inevitable consequence of the nature of men, while female adultery was unacceptable.⁸⁹ Marriage was inseparable from procreation and parenthood. From the early 1920s until the late 1940s, the emphasis on the duty of families to produce children was reinforced by fears that French population growth was falling behind that of its neighbours, Germany especially. This had dated to the defeat of 1870-1, and was intensified by the loss of 1.5 million lives in the First World War. The mounting concerns coalesced into a powerful 'natalist' movement in the 1920s, which led to legislation against contraception and abortion. The concern about the birth rate was manifested in Daladier's *Code de la Famille* of 1939 with its pro-family measures, and then more forcibly addressed by the Vichy state, which pointed to 'too few children' as an important contributing factor to France's defeat in 1940.⁹⁰ This was evident in Quercy, where natalism was strong, and local politicians made efforts to raise the birth rate. Despite this, the population of the Lot fell by a quarter between 1911 and 1946.⁹¹

These concerns also acquired a particular focus in social anxieties about the so-called new woman. Though these dated back to the late 19th century, it was in the interwar years that new forms of femininity became a wider topic of discussion and, in some circles, of denunciation. The popular media of the 1920s gave much attention to new forms of female behaviour and appearance, the

⁸⁹ Pollard, *The Reign of Virtue*, pp. 38-41; Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*, pp. 3-7, 12-13, 243; Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, I, Women, floods, bodies, history* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 327-8.

⁹⁰ Bard, *Les filles de Marianne*, pp. 209-14; Sian Reynolds, *France Between the Wars, Gender and Politics* (London, 1994), pp. 18-28. The quotation about children is from Pétain's speech to the nation of 20 June 1940; see Pollard, *The Reign of Virtue*, p. 9.

⁹¹ Issolan, 'La condition des femmes', pp. 107-15.

leit-motifs of which included dancing, jazz, skirts above the knee, low necklines, fast cars, and champagne; but also, and thereby blurring gender distinctions, smoking (again), waistless dresses, flat chests and ‘bob’ hairdos with shaved necks. As we will see in Chapter 9, this was the world that Françoise de Boisséson was imagined to have belonged to in early 1920s Marseilles. This ‘flapper’ image suggested vitality, independence, mobility, speed, and a carefree spirit. According to the novelist Louis Narquet, writing in 1918, the woman who conformed to it wanted ‘to live her own life’, a life that would be filled ‘with all possible pleasures’, preferred ‘jewels, clothes or refined hands to noble, familial tasks’, and enjoyed a ‘kind of vertigo’.⁹² It is a moot question as to how far this identity was ever more than a cliché generated by popular journalists; but the considerable echo which developed around it suggests that it reflected, albeit in only a distorted manner, wider changes taking place in female identities, and self-identities. This was especially so in terms of the way the new woman was seized upon as a focus of ire for more conservative and generally male commentators. In a publication of 1920, entitled ‘All Honour to the Fertile Woman’, the natalist leader Paul Bureau drew admiring attention to the flapper’s perceived opposite, the ‘traditional’ woman who by her ‘special devotion’ and ‘particular self-abnegation’ had ‘saved honour, the honour of their foyer, and that of the country, the honour of their husband and that of their love.’⁹³ This was reinforced by the controversy provoked by the androgynous, bisexual character of young Monique, the protagonist of Victor Margueritte’s novel of 1922, *La Garçonne*.⁹⁴ This book was both scandalous and best-selling: it is estimated to have been read

⁹² Louis Narquet, ‘La Française de demain d’après sa psychologie de guerre’, in *Revue Bleue* 19-26, (Oct. 1918), p. 629.

⁹³ Paul Bureau, ‘Honneur aux mères fécondes’, *Pour La Vie*, (May 1920).

⁹⁴ Victor Margueritte, *La Garçonne*, (Paris, 2016, first published 1922).

by about 12 per cent. of the population, and it provoked a noisy public debate. The outrage caused by Monique was not merely that she was single and sexually promiscuous with both men and women but that she belonged to a respectable bourgeois family, which she had defied and rejected. Both gender and class norms were thus called into question.⁹⁵ The furore over these new forms of the feminine had abated by the 1930s, but their representations had nonetheless become established in the French consciousness.

How far such controversies found an echo in a province such as Quercy is difficult to assess. An example of the defence of the orthodox norms was provided by a speech given by a visiting minister, Henry Paté, to a reunion of war victims and their families in the Quercy town of Gourdon in 1930. He interwove praise of the heroism of the former soldiers with sentimental portraits of idealised womanhood. Addressing the war-widows facing him, Paté stated:

‘You, you were the wife, faithfully supported on the sturdy arm of your chosen companion. You wanted to perpetuate your family, and so prevent the living flame of your *foyer* from going out. It was you who, laughing as you packed his bags in preparation for his departure, responded with joy and with your smile to his last kiss and then, when he reached the end of the path, you sobbed, you sobbed frantically. And what next? A widow.’⁹⁶

However, things were changing, especially among a younger generation who felt little affinity with the rehearsal of the gendered norms of the past. All five of the female figures considered in the subsequent Chapters possessed a sense of personal identity and

⁹⁵ Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne*, pp. 197-8; Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, pp. 46-57; Duby and Pierrot, *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, pp. 166-7.

⁹⁶ *La Défense (La Croix du Lot)* (9 June 1930), p. 1.

independence which should guard against the assumption that provincial societies were immune to these changes.

Just as statements such as Paté's above cannot be regarded as the reality of female experience, so one must question how far the confinement of male identity within the model of the conscript soldier serving his country with grim determination can be regarded by the 1930s as an accurate representation of male identities. Historians have discussed the real and terrifying crisis of masculinity that occurred in the trenches of the First World War, and exhibited throughout France thereafter by the ubiquity of the maimed and mentally damaged, and have argued that this phenomenon was critical in weakening the link between masculinity and martial courage.⁹⁷ The First World War experience also led to the development of an important pacifist movement in the interwar period, and this had a significant bearing on identities. Like natalism, pacifism had gendered implications because it was a cause around which women pacifist activists were able to organise themselves. But pacifism was also important for the reshaping of male identities. In the 1920s, supporters of the peace movement included 3 million war veterans. Thanks to the very large loss of life in the First World War, the attachment to peace and the determined resolve that '*plus jamais ça*', were deeply held beliefs in interwar France. To many the dead seemed ever-present, while the memorials to them in every community, and the many widows in black, served as reminders of the recent carnage.⁹⁸ Again, as with natalism, pacifism was a concern over which Quercy marched in step with the national mood, and the desire to avoid another war at all costs was strongly held in the region.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Elaine Showalter, 'Rivers and Sassoon; the Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties', in Higonnet et al (eds.), *Behind the Lines*, pp. 61-9.

⁹⁸ Pierre Laborie, *L'opinion publique sous Vichy* (Paris, 1990), pp. 100-1.

⁹⁹ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', pp. 216, 226-8.

In the same speech at Gourdon in 1930, Paté described war as ‘a torment of physical mutilation and mental murder’, ‘that breath of madness’ which ‘mutilates not only you but mutilates an entire epoch’.¹⁰⁰ Despite the increasing likelihood of war during the later 1930s, many continued to believe in ‘peace at any price’. Veterans of course represented valour, but pacifism worked with other phenomena to decouple the male from the ideal of the warrior-citizen. The notion of the war-wound as a mark of courage was belied by the reality of so many badly mutilated veterans. However, peace continued to be associated primarily with the maternal, and male adherents to the anti-war movement were sometimes painted as unmanly. Pacifists were mocked as ‘*bélant*’, meaning bleating like a (female) sheep.¹⁰¹

What new forms of masculinity emerged as alternatives to the waning conception of man-as-warrior? This question reminds us of the heterogeneity and complexity of identities, and it must always be borne in mind that all ‘models’ of male behaviour were for most people, most of the time, only hazily formed conceptions against which beliefs, thoughts, and choices were referenced. Male identities in interwar France were no exception, and in this period there was considerable confusion, uncertainty, and debate as to ‘what men should be’. That caveat recognised, one strong new representation did become diffused, namely that of the man whose cultivation of his body was prized as a fount of both physical and moral strength. As Joan Tumblety has shown, this cult of physical prowess was in part a reaction to earlier anxieties about declining French manliness. These interwove concerns about decadence, the

¹⁰⁰ *Le Journal du Lot* (9 June 1930), p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne*, pp. 110-11; Capdevila, ‘The Quest for Masculinity’, p. 424; Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, pp. 181-204; and Showalter, ‘Rivers and Sassoon’, p. 66.

dissipating effects of prosperity, eugenics, population decline, and the threat of German militarism. In the interwar period, further attention was drawn to French male frailty by the ubiquity in the media of the contrast between the damaged *poilu* and the imposing German and Italian military figures. Physical exercise, and thereby the development of muscled male bodies, was linked to national reinvigoration. This was manifested by increased interest in sports, notably cycling, boxing, swimming, and tennis, and by the popularity of open-air mass exercise (for both men and women), as for example in the *jociste* movement as well as the expanding nationalist and fascist leagues.¹⁰²

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the five men examined in this thesis were aficionados of bodybuilding. Photographs of Louis Wagner suggest that he was physically slight, and he was certainly frail mentally. This, together with his possible enlistment in the Vichy police, make it tempting to imagine him keen to become muscled, but the letters to him from Yvonne Wagner make no such allusions. Aimé Noël would almost certainly have participated in the physical training sessions that were a feature of *jociste* life, but it is clear that the spiritual counted for much more to him. Jacques Chapou was an avid and accomplished rugby player, but that constituted a different definition of male physicality. In the rural provinces, where hard physical exercise was part of daily life for the majority of men, the enthusiasm for bodybuilding was largely absent.

Female Engagement

The interwar period saw women gaining increased visibility in the professions and in public life, leading to a significant alteration in

¹⁰² Tumblety, *Remaking the Male Body*.

the perception of what it meant to be a woman. The women in question were a small minority, and the openings available to them were few and narrow, but their small numbers belie their impact. They were visible and noticed, and all four of the principal women in the case studies fall into this category. Aside from *paysannes* assisting their men with farming, the major spheres in which women worked in pre-war provincial France were education; healthcare and related fields; as well as to a limited extent in other professions such as journalism and factory work; campaign groups, notably for peace, and for women's rights; and in the myriad world of associations, including those based on religion, youth, and sports and other pastimes. National politics remained overwhelmingly male, although the appointment by Léon Blum of three women to his government in 1936 was highly publicised.¹⁰³ In Quercy progress was very limited and even in the 1950s female under-representation in politics was, in Pierre Laborie's view, 'extreme'.¹⁰⁴ However, in 1930s Quercy, women forged new inroads into social work, healthcare, and education. These sectors are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, as Marie-Antoinette Orcival was a nurse and Yvonne Wagner a teacher. Some feminist historians treat social work and healthcare as having little 'liberational' value, as they form part of the 'nurturing' stereotype, and the left has tended to portray women in these jobs as unwitting weapons of the state, sent into the *foyer* to spy and to control. Even if, in all lines of work, women were usually subordinate to men, unlikely to be promoted, and underpaid, in these professions they were respected, and conspicuous (social and healthcare workers were usually itinerant). Moreover, nursing, caring, and teaching demanded qualifications, salaries were paid, and jobs in these professions could lead into

¹⁰³ Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁴ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle', p. 233.

other public roles.¹⁰⁵ In Quercy, one teacher, Mlle Salive, used her job as a springboard for entry into politics and anticlerical activity, sitting on the Lot departmental council for primary education in the 1930s, and becoming vice-president of the Souillac branch of the *Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l'Homme et du citoyen* (Human Rights League). Mlle Salive was an isolated case, and the positions were modest, but nonetheless she was a novelty in the region.¹⁰⁶

One other indication of how attitudes were changing in the first half of the century was in attitudes towards women and war work. The society of 1914 had barely conceived of this phenomenon, but by 1939 it was accepted that women should work in munitions factories, home defence and even in the armed forces. No longer was it deemed essential that they stick to the *foyer*.¹⁰⁷ During the 1930s, women were also active in a wide range of social and religious associations throughout the provinces, including in Quercy. Within them, women found spaces in which the monotony of daily duties could be alleviated and in which they could exchange ideas; these associations also acted as a window onto world events and different ways of thinking. Sports clubs (mainly for tennis, basketball, and gymnastics) could play a similar role, as illustrated in Chapter 4 with the case of Marie-Antoinette Orcival.¹⁰⁸ Women were also prominent, including as leaders, in the various interwar campaigns for peace. These provided forums in which women could both act together in women-only associations, and agitate alongside (or more often below) men. Although numbers were small, and recruits came mostly from the Parisian haute bourgeoisie, the campaigns gave women exposure in both domestic and

¹⁰⁵ Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, pp. 13-19 and 83-108.

¹⁰⁶ Issolan, 'La condition des femmes', pp. 89-91.

¹⁰⁷ Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et Femmes*, pp. 57-8.

¹⁰⁸ Issolan, 'La condition des femmes', pp. 147-52, 158-9.

international arenas.¹⁰⁹ Women's rights were another important cause through which women could organise, and could establish themselves in the public mind as significant activists. The female right to vote was the most debated topic of political rights in France during the 1920s and 1930s. As the historian Sian Reynolds has argued, 'the interwar years can be seen as the time of collapsing male monopoly: the antechamber to democracy.'¹¹⁰ The reform was repeatedly voted down by the Senate, whose opposition was attributed to the fear that women, being more devout than men, would not vote for the anticlerical majority. Although the continual and noisy campaigning in the interwar years did not succeed, it prepared the ground for the granting of votes to women in 1944, and helps to explain why that measure was passed and implemented without much explicit objection.¹¹¹ However, the Senators' fears were apparently well-founded: the right to vote was eventually agreed under the leadership of de Gaulle, a conservative and a Catholic, and women did subsequently vote away from the left, and in particular for de Gaulle.¹¹²

1939 to 1947

Mobilisation, Defeat, and Vichy, 1939-43

On 17 June 1940, the writer Jean Gu  henno recorded in his diary:

'There, it's over. At half past noon an old man who doesn't even have the voice of a man, but talks like an old woman, informed us that last night he had asked for peace.'¹¹³

This period saw several events that taken together amounted to the greatest catastrophe in modern French history, worse even than

¹⁰⁹ Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne*, p. 135.

¹¹⁰ Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, p. 206.

¹¹² For example, Gildea, *France Since 1945*, pp. 143-4; Richard Vinen, *Bourgeois Politics in France 1945-1951* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 46-55.

¹¹³ Jean Gu  henno, *Diary of the Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2014), p. 1.

1815 or 1870. The succession of calamities – sudden and dishonourable military collapse was followed by civilian flight, occupation by a foreign power, economic deprivation, and eventually forced labour conscription – was highly likely to humiliate and undermine the self-esteem of French people of both genders, but of men in particular. The consequence of mobilisation (2.7 million Frenchmen), imprisonment in Germany (1.6 million POWs), the *exode* (6-8 million refugees), and then labour conscription (660,000 French workers in Germany by 1944) was that a large part of the population was uprooted from homes and separated from their loved ones. Moreover, in this war, unlike the previous one, civilian lives formed part of the conflict. The front line moved quickly through civilian populations, in 1940, and again in 1944. Resistance groups challenged German rule throughout France; and from 1941 the onset of Allied bombing caused considerable numbers of civilian casualties, by 1945 reaching figures far surpassing those in 1914-18. (Deaths have been estimated at 170,000 military and 150,000 civilians. A further 280,000 were listed as ‘displaced’, but this figure included those who died in the camps.¹¹⁴) Lives were dramatically altered, mostly for the worse, and in a short space of time.¹¹⁵ The psychological damage to French pride was severe; Jean-Paul Sartre observed in 1945 that, ‘in the space of five years we have acquired a formidable inferiority complex.’¹¹⁶

War is a theatre in which men are foregrounded, and courage and glory may be reaffirmed. However, the French war of 1939-40

¹¹⁴ Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave, Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford, CA, 2007), p. 25, note 26 on p. 289.

¹¹⁵ Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et Femmes*, pp. 186-91; Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, p. 2; Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, p. 26. On STO numbers, see Rafaël Spina, ‘La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire (1940-1945)’ (Doctoral thesis, École normale supérieure, Cachan, 2012), p. 21.

¹¹⁶ Cited in Tony Judt, *Postwar, a History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2010), p. 100.

brought no glory to the nation's military. For most soldiers, the *drôle de guerre* was spent largely in the boredom of waiting for a German invasion. It was not an uplifting experience for French combatants, as shown by the experience of Aimé Noël, recorded here in Chapter 10. The ensuing rout of the French army effectively broke the Republic's unwritten contract to defend its people, and the failure of its agent, the male citizen-soldier, was there for all to see. If the male politicians of the Third Republic were blamed for paving the way to a disastrous defeat, the defeat itself was the responsibility of the millions of men in the French armed forces. During interrogation after her arrest in 1942 and in reply to the question of why she had taken up arms in the Resistance, Marguerite Gonnet cuttingly said, 'Quite simply, Colonel, because the men dropped them.'¹¹⁷ The shame of the French military's defeat also had a generational aspect, as the combatants of 1940 were compared unfavourably with those of 1914-18. After the Liberation, Annie Ernaux remembered people contrasting:

'...the soldiers in the mud of the trenches with the prisoners of war of 40, who had had warmth and shelter for five years, who hadn't had a single artillery shell over their heads...'¹¹⁸

In July 1940, to add to France's military humiliation, its fleet anchored at Mers el Kébir on the Algerian coast was sunk by the British, for a loss of some 1,300 lives.¹¹⁹ Defeat on land was immediately followed by the *exode*, mostly a spectacle of French families rushing in 'a sort of frenzy of flight' south, either led by their men or with their men absent in a defeated army, the crowds

¹¹⁷ Capdevila, 'The Quest for Masculinity', pp. 428-32, 435, 443-5; Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et Femmes*, pp. 83-4, 252-66; Michael Kelly, 'The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation', in Rod Kedward and Nancy Wood (eds.), *The Liberation of France, Image and Event* (Oxford, 1995), p. 119. Marguerite Gonnet's reply is quoted in Laurent Douzou, 'La Résistance, une affaire d'hommes?', *Cahiers de l'IHTP*, no. 31 (Oct. 1995), pp. 19-20.

¹¹⁸ Annie Ernaux, *Les années* (Paris, 2009), p. 25.

¹¹⁹ Julian Jackson, *France, The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 128-9.

with their backs to the conflict and to the enemy.¹²⁰ The German soldier was typified as a tall, blond, and suntanned young man who was taking control of their country. With many among the defeated troops joining the ranks of fleeing civilians, the distinction between soldier and non-combatants was eroded. Gender distinctions were later blurred further, both by the Allied bombs that killed women and men alike, and by the significant numbers of women working for Germany, or deported to the camps in the east. POWs and men working far from home were also burdened with the fear that their women might be unfaithful to them.¹²¹ In the case studies, Louis Wagner is an example of a soldier who joined the *exode*, and Frayssinet-le-Gélat of a village on which a large influx of refugees had an important impact.

Historians are agreed that the years of occupation dealt a grave blow to French male pride, but tend not to have supported the conclusion with much evidence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was little contemporaneous writing by French men on the subject; men are not inclined to dwell on damaged virility. However, the evangelists who before the war had sought to promote the cult of the male body certainly saw the defeat as a sad confirmation of France's failure to improve the physical and mental states of its men. That the mythical version of Resistance heroism was backdated to 1940 is another testament to the severity of the blow to French manhood. So too is the version of masculinity proffered by Vichyite propaganda. For the most part, this downplayed the connection between man and combat. Instead, and consistent with the regime's efforts to sanctify marriage and the stable Catholic

¹²⁰ Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat; a Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* (New York, 1968), p. 132.

¹²¹ Susan Gubar, 'This is My Rifle, This is My Gun', in Higonnet et al (eds.), *Between the Lines*, pp. 227-53; Kelly, 'The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation', p. 119; François Rouquet and Fabrice Virgili, *Les Françaises, le Français, et l'Épuration, 1940 à nos jours* (Paris, 2018), p. 118; as to unfaithfulness, p. 31.

family, fatherhood was put forward as the prime male attribute, embodied at the apex by the 'fatherly' figure of Pétain-as-protector, and seconded by the sturdy industrial worker or farmer toiling for his family and to build a better France. In any event, by 1944 the warrior paradigm had largely been hijacked by the Resistance and its own heroes. The First World War and the interwar period had already undermined the association of the French male with military service, but the effects of the Second were much more profound: unlike in the First, French men had lost the battle, and badly; they had surrendered, and later many lost control to a foreign master in the workplace.¹²²

During 1942, the authority of Vichy began to buckle. The occupation of the south exposed the lie that Pétain stood as bulwark between France and the Nazis, and the *État Français* of Vichy lost its *raison d'être*. France was later described by the prominent collaborator Robert Brasillach in sexualised terms as a woman who had slept with the Nazis and enjoyed it.¹²³ If the defeat had led French men to doubt their collective ability to protect their homes, wives, and children from the enemy, the occupation of the south and the emasculation of Vichy rammed the point home. By late 1942, the key attributes of the 'real' man, namely his ability to look after his family and his homeland, had been comprehensively undermined. Men in newly occupied Quercy were now brought face to face with the war. To reassert male pride, the obvious options were to join either the Resistance or a Vichy police or paramilitary unit. In the case studies here, that was the response of four out of the five men: Étienne Verlhac, Jacques Chapou, René Andrieu, all of whom joined the Resistance, and Louis Wagner, who may have

¹²² Tumblety, *Remaking the Male Body*, pp. 206-12.

¹²³ 'Introduction: Mapping the Terrain', in Melanie Hawthorne and Richard J. Goslan (eds.), *Gender and Fascism in Modern France* (Hanover, NH, 1997), p. 8.

joined the Vichy paramilitary police formation, the *Gardes Mobiles de Réserve* (GMR); only Aimé Noël stood aside.

The war caused a small minority of women to resolve that they too must join in the struggle, and many more to support Resisters by providing food, shelter, and care. On a much larger, national scale, it also obliged many to assume the everyday responsibilities of their men, and so many women had to act in new and different ways. At one time or another, in the absence of husbands or sons who were either imprisoned, or working far away, or living clandestinely, at least 2 million women had to run both the home and the business or farm. Many took on work in factories to replace male vacancies, and so the war continued the 'professionalisation' of women that had developed before it.¹²⁴ These increased duties were required at a time of economic hardship and social tension. The war had entered the home, and physical survival was at stake.¹²⁵ Some linked the daily challenge of survival to resistance. Speaking on the BBC in 1944 after her evacuation from France, Lucie Aubrac said:

'With our *foyers* broken up, our children badly shod, badly dressed, and badly nourished, our lives since 1940 have been a daily battle against the Germans. A battle for ourselves, certainly, but also a battle of solidarity for all those whose lives have been touched by the Nazi occupation.'¹²⁶

Vichy's propaganda demanded that women should correspond to the conservative model of a faithful wife and caring mother. It idealised such women and praised their duty, devotion, sacrifice, and their supervision of a calm and ordered home. However, the severe disruption of war broke up families rather than uniting

¹²⁴ Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et Femmes*, pp. 215-33.

¹²⁵ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, pp. 49-70; Veillon, *Vivre et Survivre en France*, pp. 216-23.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Douzou, 'La Résistance, une affaire d'hommes?', p. 17.

them, and Vichy's sanctification of this type of woman was undermined by the failures and contradictions of its own actions. Examples included its muddled labour policy, which both encouraged women to work in order to meet German demands for labour, but also (in accordance with its traditionalist credo) penalised women for working; its failure to pay adequate allowances to the wives of POWs, forcing many onto the labour market; and its allowing women to sit on town councils (which had never been permitted under the Third Republic).¹²⁷ Above all, both Vichy's policies in respect of women, and the attitude of women towards Vichy, were undermined by the government's various schemes to provide labour in support of the German war effort, policies that culminated in the compulsory labour scheme known as the *Service de Travail Obligatoire* (STO). This scheme removed husbands and sons from the home and sent them to Germany, and in addition Vichy failed to deliver on the promised *quid pro quo* of STO, namely the return of significant numbers of POWs). STO destroyed many women's belief in Pétain and his state.¹²⁸ By 1943 Vichy's weaknesses and contradictions had come more to undermine the image of the traditionalist woman in its propaganda than to strengthen it.

A minority of women enjoyed their altered lives and the *terra incognita* which they discovered or were taken into thanks to the war. In the studies here, Janine Andrieu and Françoise de Boissésou typify this sense of euphoric adventure. Such women experienced accomplishment and happiness despite the hard and sometimes perilous conditions in which they had to operate.

¹²⁷ Vinen, *The Unfree French*, p. 94; Duchon, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France*, pp. 23-4; Fishman, *We Will Wait*, pp. 57-8; Pollard, *The Reign of Virtue*, pp. 152-6.

¹²⁸ H.R. Kedward, 'The Maquis and the Culture of the Outlaw', in H.R. Kedward and Roger Austin (eds.), *Vichy France and the Resistance. Culture & Ideology* (London, 1985), pp. 232-49; and Vinen, *Unfree French*, p. 277.

Violette Leduc is another example of an 'outsider' into whom the war breathed fresh hope and energy. She earned her living partly from dealing in the black market, and in 1944 she realised that the war had indeed set her free: 'I was existing at last. I was succeeding...', she wrote in her autobiographical work of 1964, 'La Bâtarde'. Its preface was written by her mentor Simone de Beauvoir, who argued that Leduc's life story 'demonstrates with exceptional clarity that a life is reworking of a destiny by a freedom'.¹²⁹ 'Reworking destiny by freedom' precisely describes how the circumstances of war enabled some women, including those in these case studies, to redefine their identities.

Resistance, Liberation, and Épuration, 1943-7

The numbers of active Resisters were tiny, at least until early 1944: in Quercy they were estimated at only 150 in August 1943, rising to 2,500 by the following June.¹³⁰ To this must be added the much greater numbers who helped the fighters logistically and morally, who assisted young men in evading STO, and who protested in the streets against Vichy and German policies. Women were significant actors in all these areas.¹³¹ Among those who helped in rural France is the type of woman filmed in Marcel Ophüls' 1969 film, 'Le Chagrin et la Pitié'. She stands in a doorway, half in and half out of the room, attentively but discreetly listening to the discourse of the male Resisters seated at a table. She is there to serve them, but occasionally she will interrupt to voice a correction or an addition. The woman in the film was from the Auvergne. But she was common in Quercy, and still is: this behaviour continues in interviews with men about their wartime experiences, their wives choosing to be both in the interview and not in it. They may sit

¹²⁹ Violette Leduc, *La Bâtarde* (Paris, 1964), pp. 489 and 10.

¹³⁰ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, p. 119.

¹³¹ Vinen, *Unfree French*, pp. 244, 277.

apart or, as in the author's interview of Resister Georges Issiot of Figeac on 27 June 2020, with their backs to the conversation. They wait for errors or omissions from their interviewee husbands, and then it is their turn to interject.¹³²

Although until the eve of liberation, active Resisters were a small minority in Quercy and nationwide, they were vocal and conspicuous, and the social and cultural impacts of the Resistance movement, and then of the Liberation, on local and national identities were highly significant. At the individual level, both men and women in the Resistance sought a field of action in which they could profoundly change their lives and identities.¹³³ More broadly, the Resistance fomented the hope for a new and united postwar France, which the Liberation crystallised. Aspirations were high. The case studies here show that actively opposing Vichy and the Germans enabled some men, Étienne Verlhac and Jacques Chapou among them, to discover a great sense of purpose, breaking with prewar lives that had become less than fulfilling. By taking action, by running risks and engaging in unfamiliar tasks, they could be part of a national effort to expel the enemy and to give birth to a French renaissance. For Janine Andrieu and Françoise de Boissésou, Resistance work demanded adaptability, ingenuity, deception, courage and, with de Boissésou, the ability to command male fighters. Even though women rarely bore arms, and their Resistance roles mainly conformed to the tradition of supporting men, the experience was frequently transformative.¹³⁴ Resister

¹³² Interview with Georges Issiot, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 27 June 2020.

¹³³ See for example, Laurent Douzou, 'L'entrée en Résistance', in Antoine Prost (ed.), *La Résistance, une histoire sociale* (Ivry-sur-Seine, 1997), pp. 9-20.

¹³⁴ Karen Adler, 'No Words to Say it? Women and the Expectation of Liberation', in Kedward and Wood (eds.), *The Liberation of France*, pp. 77-89.

Annie Guéhenno later wrote of 'being able to free ourselves from the weight of tradition, in leading "a man's life."' ¹³⁵

While for women engagement in the Resistance allowed identities to be refashioned in ways that broke with tradition, for the male combatant its consequence, naturally enough, was often to reaffirm the ancient bonding of man with warrior, as exemplified by the cases of Verlhac and Chapou. They show how powerful was the impetus to recover male pride and accomplishment by taking up arms, even relatively late in life (Verlhac was 55 when he 'took the *maquis*' and Chapou 34; to 'take the *maquis*' meant to join a rural *maquis* group, and carried some sense of becoming an outlaw.) This was echoed in the messaging of the Gaullists from London, which linked a 'prostrated' Vichy with age, impotence, and (feminine) submission, and opposition to it with youth, movement, and virility ('standing erect'). ¹³⁶ In the immediate postwar years, the paradigm of the male Resistance warrior-hero was generally revered in France. His bravery had allowed the mother-country to regain her honour, and his noble deeds were repeated in the stream of postwar memoirs from the protagonists and in the emphatically masculine resistencialist discourse, from which women were largely excluded. However, more importantly, glorification was short-lived. The Resistance narratives did not lead to an enduring revival of the warrior element in male identity. One historian has described the Liberation as 'a key moment in the "reconstruction of masculinity", a moment that reactivated the "myth of the warrior" and the "eternal masculine."' ¹³⁷ Arguably, the key word here is 'moment', as the reconstruction was ephemeral. Too small a

¹³⁵ Annie Guéhenno, *L'Épreuve* (Paris, 1968), p. 93.

¹³⁶ Capdevila, 'The Quest for Masculinity', p. 432 (the quotations are from this article); Capdevila et al (eds.), *Hommes et Femmes*, pp. 85-9; Miranda Pollard, 'Male Masculinities in Vichy France', in Forth and Taithe (eds.), *French Masculinities*, pp. 142-6.

¹³⁷ Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française*, p. 152.

proportion of the population had been active Resisters (probably less than 0.5 per cent.), and the potency of the connection was reduced by several factors: the association of Resisters with male behaviour during the *épuration* (as we will see, soon considered shameful and best forgotten), the presence, at least in Paris and the north, of Allied troops at and after the Liberation, the connection between Resistance and Communism which, after the onset of the Cold War in 1947, for many reduced the appeal of the former, and from 1950 by internecine rows among ex-Resisters.¹³⁸ But above all, since the early 1940s people had yearned to get back to a 'normal' life, to look to the future, and to put the war behind them. There was an *ennui* with the recent past, including with the Resistance, and a desire to 'move on'.¹³⁹ This was a key element in the life of Aimé Noël.

The longer-term consequences of the Resistance history were quite different for each sex. For women the experience formed part of a longer process through the whole century whereby women's access to politics, their economic independence, and their social status all gradually saw some progress, challenging the idea that the public worlds of politics, work, and culture were exclusively male domains. For men any resurrection of the dashing and brave warrior went *against* the parallel progression of male identity. The liberating experiences themselves were short-lived for both sexes – perhaps six to eighteen months in most cases – but it was the women's that was the more significant in the longer run. This holds good despite women's disappointments in the immediate postwar period, and despite the fact that they were not given due recognition for their wartime contributions; the latter being

¹³⁸ Kedward, *The French Resistance and its Legacy*, pp. 4-5.

¹³⁹ Vinen, *Unfree French*, p. 335; Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, p. xv, As to Allied soldiers' attitudes, Vinen, *France, 1934-1970*, p. 82; Robert Gildea, *France Since 1945* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 86-8; Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*, pp. 18-20.

attributable to the failure of national memory and of the historiography (at least until the 1990s), and to some extent also to the self-effacement of the women themselves, who were in many cases reluctant to render a proper account of their contributions.

The Liberation was an intense and exhilarating experience during which, in every French town and village, crowds could celebrate the recovery of a confident and optimistic national (and local) identity.¹⁴⁰ But its consequences for gendered identities were less important than those of the largely concurrent phenomenon of *épuration*. This was composed first of a mostly spontaneous outbreak of extrajudicial or quasi-judicial punishment of alleged collaborators, and secondly of a judicial process with the same purpose. The first had begun in 1943, before the departure of the Germans, and lasted until 1946. The second partly overlapped with but largely followed the first, lasting from late 1944 until 1953. The extrajudicial process included the summary executions of an estimated 10,000 suspected collaborators, mostly men such as Louis Wagner but, as with his wife Yvonne Wagner, some women too; and then head-shavings and other physical degradations. The latter were inflicted almost entirely on women. The victims have been estimated at 20,000. These rituals were nationwide, carried out in one out of every three communes.¹⁴¹ Within the *épuration*, it was above all this punishment of women that is most relevant to gender.

Women's heads were shaved for a variety of alleged crimes and misdemeanours, but the most common was having relationships

¹⁴⁰ Megan Koreman, *The Expectation of Justice, France 1944-1946* (Durham, NC, 1999), pp. 8-47; Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Moment of Liberation in Western Europe, Power Struggles and Rebellions, 1943-1948* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 18-68.

¹⁴¹ Rouquet and Virgili, *Les Françaises, les Français, et l'Épuration*, pp. 116, 136-7; Corran Laurens, 'La Femme au Turban' in Kedward and Wood (eds.), *The Liberation of France*, pp. 155-79.

with German soldiers. Given that so many French men were absent, what was described as *collaboration horizontale* had indeed been widespread.¹⁴² By the time of the Liberation, such women were seen as having sullied the honour of France, and were tangible reminders that the nation as a whole had succumbed and collaborated: they were ready-made scapegoats, and a collective guilt over collaboration could conveniently be displaced onto this obvious and largely defenceless group. The preceding chapter noted that some French historians have concluded that the *épuration* was 'an indispensable preamble' to the judicial process, a form of theatrical catharsis required to cleanse guilt and apportion blame before national reconstruction could commence. They have argued that it was not 'savage' and, at least by implication, could be described as 'natural'.¹⁴³ However, as is shown in the studies of Étienne Verlhac, Madeleine Tavernier, and Aimé Noël, these *charivari* or ritual shamings did indeed seem unnatural and savage both to the victims and to many observers, and these opinions were expressed at the time, not as part of later reformulations.

The detail of the gendered nature of this aspect of the events is covered in the case studies. It suffices here to note two points. Notwithstanding the presence and in some cases the participation of women in these punishments, they must be taken as a theatrical male reassertion of control over, and ability to command and, if so desired (by men), to denigrate women and their bodies. They were also a device to feminise, and thereby to demean the defeated enemy, as played out in the painting of swastikas onto the heads and faces of some of the shaved women. However, of even greater importance to the evolution of gendered identity, the episode became effaced in the collective memory by amnesia (as pointed

¹⁴² Vinen, *Unfree French*, pp. 157, 160.

¹⁴³ Rouquet and Virgili, *Les Françaises, les Français, et 'Épuration*, p. 599.

out, among others, by the same historians who have argued for it not to be categorised as 'savage'). For both victim and perpetrator, the shavings and the associated degrading actions were in hindsight so shameful that they were best consigned to a locked box at the far recesses of the mind.¹⁴⁴ Because the episode was, more or less, deemed in the memory not to have happened, its effects in terms of gender-reassertion (male power, female submission) were not lasting. It should be seen as a temporary, extraordinary, and staged phenomenon, and thus quite unlike French women's five-year experience of the war itself.

1947 to 1958

Growth and the 'Modern'

It has already been noted that the later 1940s have been seen as a time when gender relations were 'normalised', meaning that there was a return to more conservative expectations as to how women and men should behave and how they should be conceived.¹⁴⁵ At the time some women believed this to be the case, and it formed part of a wider pessimism that the Liberation had not delivered the utopia of which many had dreamed. Rather, in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, the war had 'remained on our hands like a great, unwanted corpse.'¹⁴⁶ Some historians have applied this negative view to the condition of French women generally during the whole period from 1945 through at least to the 1960s.¹⁴⁷ It is true that, despite gaining the vote in 1944, women's rights remained curtailed in several other important respects until 1965 and later.¹⁴⁸ In addition, after the war people did mostly want life to 'return to normal', and the 'normal' was associated with the past. Men and

¹⁴⁴ Rouquet and Virgili, *Les Françaises, les Français, et 'Épuration*, p. 599.

¹⁴⁵ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, pp. 204-7.

¹⁴⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance, Vol. 1, After the War, 1944-1952* (New York, 1977, first published 1965), p. 30.

¹⁴⁷ For example, Duchén, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives*, pp. 1-189.

¹⁴⁸ Gildea, *France Since 1945*, pp. 147-54.

women mostly wanted to rebuild jobs, homes, and family life. Women also wanted to be able to show their femininity once again after years of suppression, a 'refeminisation' that was evidenced by the popularity of Christian Dior's 'New Look' of February 1947.¹⁴⁹ But postwar French social and cultural history did not comprise a 20-year pause during which little altered, interposed between two shorter periods of great disruption and change (the war and '68'). The stereotypes of the 1950s man who was as dedicated to his work as his wife was to him and to housekeeping is no less of a cliché than the 'flapper'. It is important, because it was represented in popular culture (and was later much mocked by the generation of '68), but like the 'flapper' it should not be taken as evidence of a generalised stasis. In the period c. 1945 to c. 1955 there was some return to more conservative ways of life, but social behaviours were not frozen, and the sharp separation of gender roles that had been eroded over the previous three decades was not reimposed. The reality was more varied and complicated and, from c. 1956, social change accelerated once more.

All of the women studied here had been obliged or allowed by the war to choose, to adapt, to manage, and to survive without men. It was impossible to pretend that this had not happened, and for the type of individuals studied here, the experiences of war were too profound to be buried. Not all women agreed with Célia Bertin's downbeat view of the outlook for women after the war that 'nothing had changed.'¹⁵⁰ The Resister Matilde Péri, who went into Communist politics at the war's end and was one of the few women delegates to the Constitutional Assembly, declared in 1945 'out of this chaos a new woman has arisen'.¹⁵¹ Importantly, the Liberation

¹⁴⁹ Gildea, *France Since 1945*, pp. 144-7.

¹⁵⁰ Bertin, *Femmes sous l'Occupation*, pp. 217-18.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Issolan, 'La condition des femmes', p. 193.

was also accompanied by a majority rejection of everything that Vichy was believed to have stood for, including the archaic gender models pushed by its propaganda. Fascism's defeat, and the revelation of the horrors of the death camps, also served to silence the far right, together with its strident Malthusian and anti-feminist rhetoric. Added to which, 1943 had seen the start of a 'baby boom', which undermined the prophecies of conservative natalists; by the early 1950s, the birth rate was over 40 per cent. higher than in the late 1930s.¹⁵² Thus, while there was a welcomed return to 'normality' in the late 1940s, postwar conditions allowed for change to continue.

Economic change was critical to the further evolution of identities following the war. 1945 marked the beginning of three decades of consistent economic growth, labelled since '*les trente glorieuses*'. During the period from 1949 to 1959, French GDP rose by an annual average of 4.5 per cent., compared with 3.3 per cent. in the United States and 2.4 per cent. in the UK.¹⁵³ With growth came higher productivity, rising living standards, and structural socio-economic change including further urbanisation and an especially fast growth in the tertiary sector. These conditions, underpinned by politics that were less fraught and socially divisive than in the 1930s and 1940s, created a context in which social change, including greater social mobility, reduced inequality, and evolving identities, could continue.¹⁵⁴ Robert Gildea has written of the *trente glorieuses* that 'the economic and social structure of France changed beyond all recognition.'¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française*, p. 184.

¹⁵³ Gildea, *France Since 1945*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945-1968* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), pp. 284-6; Gildea, *France Since 1945*, pp. 93-110. On reduced inequality, Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses*, p. 146.

¹⁵⁵ Gildea, *France Since 1945*, p. 102.

In the 1950s, 'modernity' was much discussed, and people tended to think of themselves as 'modern' or at least as desiring to live in a 'modern world'.¹⁵⁶ This was reflected throughout culture, from the interest in outer space to styles in architecture, painting, and product design. This view of society and of the self as 'modern' sprang in part from the sense that, with the war over, the new was possible. The wish to be part of a modernising world helped to build on the social changes that the interwar period had begun and that the war, for women at least, had accelerated.¹⁵⁷ Optimism about what the future might bring is a feature of the case study on Aimé Noël. It is also reflected in the Communist hopes of Étienne Verlhac and Janine and René Andrieu, as well as in Jacques Chapou's aspiration for a return to a sort of revolutionary Republicanism. Such optimism was clouded, but not occluded, by the onset of the Cold War and fears of nuclear weapons, and it contrasts with the generalised anxiety over the future that had marked the late 1930s. Optimism was shared by women, and among them there was a self-conscious feeling of 'moving forward' even if this brought with it some new uncertainties, including how work could be balanced with care of the family and the *foyer*.¹⁵⁸

Economic growth and innovation ensured that the reality of the new was confirmed by visible signs of material progress. Infrastructure, mobility and communications all improved, and new services and goods were becoming increasingly available. American products were among the new on offer, and the ethos of American capitalism was more pervasive and visible than it had been before the war. Although that ethos was much contested, particularly in intellectual and left-wing circles, its features – managerial

¹⁵⁶ Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 29-54.

¹⁵⁷ Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses*, pp. I-VIII, 35-6, 131, 146, 165; Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 29-54.

¹⁵⁸ Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 83-4.

efficiency, self-improvement, material consumption, and aspirational advertising – were absorbed to a significant extent into French life.¹⁵⁹ And the arrival of ‘consumerism’ directed more attention onto women, the principal buyers. While during the 1950s, women’s contribution to economic production marked time or even declined, their power as consumers increased substantially.¹⁶⁰

In Quercy however, the economic aspect of the *trente glorieuses* arrived roughly ten years late; growth only began to take effect from the end of the 1950s, and economic conditions in the region from the end of the war through the 1950s remained largely unchanged. So mostly did social structures and patterns of life. In politics, 1951 saw a return to the *status quo ante* of stable, conservative, clientelist politics.¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, the perpetuation into the 1950s of pre-existing economic and political practices did not mean that cultural change at the national level passed unnoticed in the region. Certainly, the Quercynoise bourgeoisie participated in the remodelling and modernisation of the home that was a feature of 1950s life nationally.¹⁶² Quercy was also exposed to national trends in terms of new thinking and new ways of behaving, though it is hard to determine to what extent.

Work and the Wider World

Writing her highly influential ‘The Second Sex’ in the late 1940s, Simone de Beauvoir asserted that ‘women are still, for the most part, in a state of subjection’, and that ‘men and women,

¹⁵⁹ Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies, Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Ma, 1995), pp. 7, 9-10, 65-70, 170-1.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Vinen, *France, 1934-1970* (London, 1996), p. 122.

¹⁶¹ ‘Une révolution silencieuse, the XXème siècle’, pp. 232-7.

¹⁶² Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 13 June 2023.

economically speaking, constitute two castes.’¹⁶³ While admitting that more women had entered the workplace than hitherto, de Beauvoir heavily qualified this recent progress: women had found jobs in part because they could be employed more cheaply than men, they usually had to take the most menial and lowest paid work, they found it much harder than men to achieve promotion, they were held back by self-effacement, and neither men nor women themselves liked to take orders from women. The case studies show that, while de Beauvoir’s analysis was correct at the general level, it did not allow for the nuances and divergent features of gender development that had in reality been fomenting up to 1945, and especially during the war: there was an important undercurrent, formed by a small but highly visible group of men and women, to which she did not draw attention. In any event, she did admit that ‘the free woman is just being born’, and the conclusion of the book was optimistic: there was no ‘original curse’ nor ‘physiological destiny’ that imposed a state of subordination, and ‘liberty can break the circle’.¹⁶⁴

Much of what de Beauvoir wrote about women in the labour market in 1949 remained as she had described it through to the 1970s (and some would argue that it is still largely so). The data on women’s employment are complicated by statistical anomalies and by changes to the methods of computation between 1946 and 1954. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the effects on gendered identities of the evolution of women’s work in France over the whole period from 1945 to the 1960s is a lacuna in the historiography, with statistical comparisons tending to leap from the war’s end to the 1970s. However, it is clear that from 1947 to the end of the 1950s, both men and women continued to leave the

¹⁶³ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 167.

¹⁶⁴ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, pp. 690-738.

land, but women more so than men, partly reflecting inheritance customs. The number of salaried women rose very sharply (up 40 per cent.). In industry, the overall level of employment of women also rose (though less so than for men). Most notably, progress was made in the tertiary sector. In the Lot department, the numbers of women teachers, doctors, nurses, and pharmacists all continued to increase steadily through the 1950s.¹⁶⁵ At the national level, the concept of women working outside the home continued to seem less abnormal and 'unnatural' than it had been and, in the towns at least, by the 1960s some women who did not go out to work began to feel 'devalued'.¹⁶⁶

Because women had been granted the vote in 1944, politicians took greater account of their interests when formulating policy.¹⁶⁷ Like consumerism, this helped to increase further the presence of women in the national consciousness. At the Liberation, some women had sat on the CLLs and CDLs. In the Lot during the era 1944-8, 30 per cent. of CDL members were women. Mostly they were either the wives or widows of noted (Communist) resisters such as Simone Selvès, the wife of Jean Lurçat, or Jacques Chapou's wife Yvonne.¹⁶⁸ However, with the return to clientelist politics after 1951, women made little progress through the remainder of the decade, and by 1959 their representation was minimal.¹⁶⁹ At the national level the imbalance was largely the same. As politicians and as citizens, women also continued to be hamstrung by being treated by their colleagues as a sort of special interest group for issues peculiar to their gender.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ ADL 1 W 96, Médecins. Pharmaciens.

¹⁶⁶ Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives*, p. 92.

¹⁶⁷ Vinen, *Bourgeois Politics*, pp. 46-55.

¹⁶⁸ ADL 1 W 73, Comité départementale de libération; procès-verbaux des réunions 1944-1948.

¹⁶⁹ Laborie, 'Une révolution élencieuse, the XXème siècle', p. 236.

¹⁷⁰ Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives*, pp. 40-59.

The immediate postwar period saw the rise to prominence in public life, and especially in and around the MRP and the philosophy of Christian democracy, of a different type of male political leader. Many of these men had been formed in the 1930s in religious and social associations. The life of Aimé Noël tells this story. Such men were typically supportive of women assuming more active roles in business and public affairs. Outside the world of politics, the social character of men's work changed in several ways. A significant new phenomenon was the '*jeune cadre*', or young middle-manager, a figure who, like the Christian democrats, was important in how perceptions of male identities evolved postwar. One of the structural changes flowing from economic growth was a decline in the number of owner-managed businesses, since expansion generally required both external finance and more salaried managers. In the 1950s, middle-managers grew in numbers at a time when American techniques of management were being emulated in Europe. The *jeune cadre* was neither part of the old paternalistic *patronat*, nor working class. Rather, he was a well-educated, dedicated, energetic, technically proficient instrument of economic efficiency. He came to represent the agent of a state-sponsored regeneration of France, which presented itself as self-confident and coolly technocratic, and favoured a hybrid economics that mixed state planning with free market activity.¹⁷¹ The cultural historian Kristin Ross has analysed the persona of the *jeune cadre* as portrayed in culture, notably in films, and has concluded that it 'amounted to a distinct loss of virility'.¹⁷² This is certainly correct when the persona is compared to the idealised man as inherited from the nineteenth century, and then briefly reincarnated in the Resistance. The weapons of the *jeune cadre* were the business plan

¹⁷¹ Vinen. *France, 1934-1970*, pp. 116-20.

¹⁷² Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, p. 175.

and the calculator. He had nothing of the romantic hero, and was rather soulless and lacking in emotion. Thus, France's embrace of modernisation, and of a modified form of American capitalism, encouraged a further evolution away from historical models of masculinity.¹⁷³ Again however, care must be taken not to apply this 'model' too far. The phenomenon was specific to particular urban centres, and social classes; and of the men in this study Aimé Noël and René Andrieu were too old and too senior in their professions to be counted as *jeunes cadres*, although both were enthusiasts for efficiency.

At the same time, older ideals came under a more dramatic and visible form of pressure from France's troubled colonial experiences, particularly in Algeria. These experiences essentially reinforced those of the Second World War, and so further dissipated the residual link between French manhood and virile military success. The North African military engagement itself deepened in the same year, 1954, as the country had suffered an ignominious defeat in Indochina, at Dien Bien Phu. It increased in scale across the remainder of the 1950s, before the Gaullist Fifth Republic eventually negotiated through the Evian Accords in 1962 a withdrawal from Algeria and the independence of the country. Some 2 million French troops fought in North Africa, most of them young conscripts; and so, as with the Second World War, this conflict 'entered into homes', and local communities. In Quercy the impact was significant. 87-year-old veteran Germain Girma, from the small village of St. Paul de Loubressac, says that almost all of the young men from his class in the village school, and of the years immediately before and after it, were conscripted to fight in Algeria. According to him, for all of them the experience was deeply

¹⁷³ Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*, pp. 273-6; Gildea, *France Since 1945*, pp. 108-10; Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, pp. 148-9, 165-78.

negative.¹⁷⁴ This undeclared war was a ‘dirty’ one, comprising the employment of guerilla and terror tactics on both sides and, by the French, widespread torture of both combatants and civilians. This was a conflict from which the French military could therefore claim neither glory in victory nor honour in defeat. Many soldiers felt that they were fighting not to defend Republican values, but to oppress another people. Some drew comparison with the 1940s, the Occupation, and the Resistance. The Nazi crimes at Oradour and Mont Mouchet were recalled, and some soldiers came to see themselves as complicit in a shameful moral role-reversal.¹⁷⁵

France’s eventual withdrawal from Algeria in 1962 was accompanied by the enforced repatriation of about 1 million French citizens, most of whom had lost everything. The Algerian tragedy was also imported into France: it precipitated the collapse of the Fourth Republic in 1958 and the recall of de Gaulle, whose abandonment of French rule in Algeria then triggered an armed assault on the state and on him personally by mutinous elements among the military and the political right. Other Algerian aftershocks included the subsequent widespread incidence of post-traumatic disorders among returning French troops.¹⁷⁶ For all these reasons, the French soldier, and the institution of the army, emerged from the war not only defeated, but morally and mentally tarnished as well.

Home, the Family, the Self, and Youth

¹⁷⁴ Interview of Germain Girma, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, St. Paul de Loubressac, 17 Aug. 2023.

¹⁷⁵ Raphaëlle Branche, *‘Papa, qu’as tu fait en Algérie?’ Enquête sur un silence familial* (Paris, 2020), p. 199.

¹⁷⁶ Gildea, *France Since 1945*, pp. 22-4; Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace, Algeria 1954-1962* (New York, 2006), particularly pp. 232-4; Andrew Hussey, *The French Intifada, The Long War Between France and its Arabs* (Cambridge, 2014), particularly pp. 174-5, 187-91; and Natalya Vince, *The Algerian War, the Algerian Revolution* (London, 2020), pp. 94-5, 183-5.

During the 1950s, private lives were a more important locus of gendered change than the public sphere.¹⁷⁷ Among the preestablished conceptions to be challenged were the family and marriage. From 1945 many of the duties of care that members of the family themselves, or the immediate community to which they belonged, had hitherto undertaken, were transferred from the family to the state, thereby eroding the latter's binding power.¹⁷⁸ The hypocritical convention as to adultery began to be questioned and then fiercely attacked, including, in 1957, in the widely read women's magazine 'Marie-Claire'. In addition, the *jeune cadre* was typically represented as a faithful married man, and he and his wife were portrayed as an emblematic 'modern couple', which differed from established conceptions of marriage. They had a 'lifestyle' whose emphasis was on the fully equipped home, functional, convenient, and comfortable. Free time was spent on acquiring goods for the home, and caring jointly for the children. Though largely faithful, the marriage was also represented as rather bloodless.¹⁷⁹

What it meant to be a father was also changing. From the late 1940s, childbirth began to be seen as an experience relevant to both parents, and fatherhood as a position that extended beyond the imposition of discipline. In 1950, the popular novelist and historian Jean-Alexis Néret published a guide for fathers which stressed that they should be 'open', 'just', 'patient', 'understanding', and 'confident in the child', qualities that in the past had been more associated with women than with men. And by the decade's end, it was generally understood that while the father

¹⁷⁷ Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française*, pp. 184-214.

¹⁷⁸ Antoine Prost, 'Frontières et espaces du privé' in Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (eds.), *Histoire de la vie privée; 5, De la Première Guerre à nos jours* (Paris, 1999), p. 53.

¹⁷⁹ Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, pp. 165-78, 194-5.

remained the head of the family, he should not be a distant disciplinarian; and that, while the responsibilities of child-rearing fell mainly to the mother, he too had a daily role to play. Aimé Noël's widow Marguerite attests that he came to adopt some of the new aspects of fatherhood, despite his relatively advanced age.¹⁸⁰

From 1944 newspapers in Quercy began to pay increasing attention to women. This is discussed in Chapter 10 here with respect to Aimé Noël, who founded and edited a new Christian-Democrat regional paper, *La Vie Quercynoise*. This gave significant coverage to women and their changing place in society. Other regional papers followed a similar, if less committed, policy. The socialist *Le Travail*, the prewar content of which had been almost entirely confined to long accounts of the minutiae of local and national politics, changed its style after the war and by 1947 devoted almost a quarter of its content to topics deemed mainly of interest to women. These were hardly 'progressive': for example, an edition of July contained articles on the hairstyle of the American film-star Veronica Lake ('the vamp of 1947'), and on 'thinking about your man's ties'. But, while repeating pre-established gender values, the coverage was at least in some respects 'modern'.¹⁸¹ Things had moved forward by 1949, when in January *Le Travail* ran an in-depth item about the lives of airhostesses. This emphasised that these young women were intelligent and educated, had to speak English, and that when interviewed those with an overtly 'sexy' appearance would be turned down. So here a different feminine role model was extolled. Also in 1949, a regular column was introduced, written by a woman, with the strapline, 'A Woman Talks to Women'. Again, this stressed the new, for example reporting approvingly that now

¹⁸⁰ Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 6-7, 12-18, 50, 61-2, 71-84, 115, 195; and interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 13 June 2023.

¹⁸¹ *Le Travail* (6 July 1947).

paysannes were increasingly acting as co-managers of the farm rather than as subordinates to their husbands.¹⁸²

In terms of conceptions of the self, this period saw an extension of the interwar trend of a gradual change in the balance between self-sacrifice and duty to others on the one hand, and care of self. This applied to both genders, and now extended to young people and children too. The diffusion in the 1950s of the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, Benjamin Stock, and Alfred Kinsey, and of the attitudes described in the novels of Françoise Sagan, was significant in this heightened emphasis on the self, at least for the intelligentsia and the educated bourgeoisie.¹⁸³ This in turn was encouraged by a partial democratisation of private lives. While noble and bourgeois homes had always had space for privacy, for the lower middle and working classes this only came with the boom in house construction of the 1950s. This afforded the possibility of private space, and the opportunity to develop interior lives, to many more people. However, this change rarely applied in *paysan* households; another example of how changes to identity were often selective and not generalised.¹⁸⁴

Values as to gendered and sexual behaviour changed too during the 1950s. In the public mind, this subject was particularly associated with the behaviour and values of the young. In dealing with cases of teenage premarital sex, social workers began to treat gender sexuality as components of a young person's identity, which was novel; and premarital sex was a common topic in press 'agony aunt' columns.¹⁸⁵ The protagonist of Sagan's much discussed 1954 novel, *Bonjour tristesse*, was a hedonistic 17-year-old who openly

¹⁸² *Le Travail* (8 Jan. 1949 and 1 Oct. 1949).

¹⁸³ Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 29-54.

¹⁸⁴ Antoine Prost, 'Frontières et espaces du privé', pp. 67-94.

¹⁸⁵ Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 99-103.

expressed her sexuality (and manipulated her father). By the 1950s cinema had become more important than literature as a vector of popular culture, and sex was one of its main preoccupations. An important example of this was the film *Le Blé en herbe* (Ripening Seed), also released in 1954. This met with scandalous protests as it showed a 15-year-old girl who was having sex for pleasure and experimentation. It also suggested that young women could employ sexuality to assert their own autonomy, rather than having to present themselves as desirable sex objects in order to secure a husband. Sex and sexuality were thus being employed to reshape gendered norms.¹⁸⁶

Youth represented the future, and the interest in teenagers formed part of the postwar attachment to the 'modern'. Adults began to treat the young as distinct, a new genus to be studied.¹⁸⁷ Teenagers are central characters in both Sagan's novel and *Le Blé en herbe*, but towards the end of the decade the category became more sharply defined. In 1957, the French teenager was christened as *la nouvelle vague* (the 'new wave') by *L'Express*. This term soon also came to mean the 'new' generally, and then was specifically applied to the nascent genre of French cinema that developed in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. Much of the content of *nouvelle vague* films was about and was aimed at young people, sometimes featuring casual sex and petty crime in neutral colours. This was not likely to reassure the older generation that France's future would be safe in their children's hands. In 1958, the popular film *Les Tricheurs* (The Cheats) featured a group of Parisian middle-class teenagers living in an existentialist left-bank milieu.¹⁸⁸ They engaged in petty crime and professed to regard sex as a pleasure to

¹⁸⁶ Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, pp. 185-9.

¹⁸⁷ Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, pp. 1-15.

¹⁸⁸ *Les tricheurs*, dir. Marcel Carné (Film, 1958).

be taken as and when it suited, scorning love as a bourgeois invention. Admittedly, 'true love' intervenes towards the end of the story, but the film's main impact was in its portrayal of amoral young people who engaged in apparently guilt-free and transactional premarital sex.¹⁸⁹

The teenagers in *Les tricheurs* were quite different to the typical Quercynois teenager, and the resonance of much *nouvelle vague* content with the lives of the provincial young was probably limited. This did not however apply with the actress Brigitte Bardot who, in the period circa 1955-65, had the greatest impact on how new gendered and sexual behaviour was expressed in popular culture and whose persona was definitely noticed in Quercy, as throughout France. Both onscreen and in her life, Bardot projected an emphatic transgression of gender mores: she was a cynical sexual predator *par excellence*, one who did as she pleased, especially as regards choosing when and with whom she has sex. Like Nabokov's *Lolita*, she also uncomfortably blurred the line between child and woman. She differed from earlier *femme fatale* types in not being dependent, economically or otherwise, on men, and thereby stood for outright sexual autonomy. This daring and provocative message tended to unsettle both women and men. Of course, a gulf separated this vision from the reality of the lives of the overwhelming majority of French women, the older among whom in many cases disapproved of and were sometimes outraged by Bardot.¹⁹⁰

However, that such a figure could command enormous public attention is testament to how much had changed in the representation of women since the end of the war. Bardot's first

¹⁸⁹ Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁰ For a full analysis of the persona projected by Bardot, see Simone de Beauvoir, *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome*, (London, 1960).

major film, *Et Dieu créa la femme* (1956), caused a scandal but was highly successful at the box office. By 1958, it was calculated that her photograph had been published in the press nearly thirty thousand times.¹⁹¹ In Quercy, notice was taken both of her and of the new concept of the teenager. Although few people there had televisions, young people were avid cinemagoers and consumers of popular magazines, and in both media Bardot was ubiquitous. Even small towns such as Montpezat-de-Quercy had a cinema, which showed two or three different films each week. Olga Théron, aged 17 in 1958, remembers seeing *Et Dieu créa la femme* and several other Bardot films in that village, as well as continually reading about her in magazines. She and her husband Jacques are quite aware of what she represented in the late 1950s: 'She was new, and she was liberated', they have said.¹⁹²

Conclusion

Over the whole three decades therefore, gendered identities evolved considerably. The periods preceding and following the war saw gradual evolution, while the war itself brought sharper and more abrupt change. Two types of change ran through all three decades. Women came increasingly to engage in areas hitherto reserved for men, and what had been the strong connection between womanhood and domesticity was diluted. Conversely, men began to share responsibility for parenting, and the conceptions of man-as-warrior and of the citizen-soldier, and of the authoritarian husband and father, had become of much diminished force and relevance.

How far was this pattern of a medium-term change at the national level replicated at the local level? This thesis raises the question of

¹⁹¹ Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, pp. 196-206.

¹⁹² Interview with Olga and Jacques Théron, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 6 Dec. 2023.

whether the effects of the wartime changes went deeper in French provincial society than in the major cities. The previously rather rigid norms of provincial society may have made the process of change more disruptive in a provincial culture such as Quercy (especially when it was hastened by the wider societal upheavals of 1944-45). But it may have been less uniform in the provinces. Some groups within the local society changed quite rapidly (for example, teenagers continuing on into higher education), while others (for example, older and poorer people, and isolated rural communities) changed hardly at all. This contributed to a sense by the 1960s that the local society had become more fragmented, and lacking a unitary structure of gender identities. This was reinforced by mobility: more local people leaving the region to carry out their military service, to pursue careers in urban centres, or to go to university and other institutions of higher education. Thus, although the general direction of travel in the Quercy may not have diverged markedly from national trends, the content of this thesis also serves to emphasise that provincial gendered identities rarely simply replicated those of the metropolitan centres.

Chapter 4

A Woman Who Talked Too Much:

Marie-Antoinette Orcival and Montpezat-de-Quercy

Reprisal

On the morning of 2 May 1944, Marie-Antoinette Orcival, an unmarried nurse aged 34, was arrested by troops from the *SS Das Reich* division of the *Waffen-SS*. She had been standing outside her family home on the main square of the small town of Montpezat-de-Quercy, some 25km. south of Cahors. After interrogation in a café, she was taken away by lorry, together with about a dozen other prisoners, all men. A series of long and exhausting train journeys in cattle-wagons followed, punctuated by imprisonments and more interrogations in the St. Michel prison in Toulouse, where she was categorised as a 'political detainee', and at Fort Romainville outside Paris. She eventually arrived at the women's camp of Ravensbrück in Germany later that summer. Subsequently she was moved to Beendorf camp and put to work in an underground salt mine. (The mine had been repurposed for military manufacture in order to evade Allied bombing.) Conditions in both camps were appalling. She died a year later, in hospital in Hamburg, unable – despite her once-robust health – to recover from the physical damage that a year of hard labour, malnourishment and cold had inflicted upon her.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ The principal written sources referenced here for the life of Marie-Antoinette and the raid on Montpezat-de-Quercy are: ADTG 1188 W 65: *Événements de Montpezat-de-Quercy*, 1944; Louis Olivet and André Aribaud, *La Mémoire: Heurs et malheurs; Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (Montauban, 2008), pp.165-99; H.-F. Cayrou, *Journées Sanglantes de Montpezat-de-Quercy* (Montauban, undated ; probably late 1940s); copies of papers from the Orcival Family Archive given to Richard Lesmoir-Gordon by José-Marie Orcival (b. 1943); and interviews with José-Marie Orcival and with residents of Montpezat-de-Quercy, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon in various locations and on various dates, as detailed hereafter.

The events that preceded Marie-Antoinette's arrest formed part of an emerging pattern of events in Quercy during the final months of the Occupation. *Maquis* groups were growing rapidly in numbers and in confidence, mounting attacks on German troops and infrastructure, while the Germans were responding with raids into nearby communities, searching for *maquisards* or their supporters, and spreading terror by burning and looting, executing some suspects and taking others prisoner or hostage. In theory, punishment of civilian communities was governed by a German order which set down that for each German soldier killed by the Resistance, 50-100 civilians should be shot. In the collective memory, this process climaxed on 10 June with the destruction of Oradour-sur-Glane in the Limousin, during which the same *SS Das Reich* division murdered almost all of that village's 650 inhabitants, the majority burnt alive in the church.¹⁹⁴ Other significant civilian massacres were carried out at Tulle, Maillé, Mont Mouchet, and Frayssinet-le-Gélat (see Chapter 5).¹⁹⁵ Such reprisals were less numerous in France than in Eastern Europe and Russia, and the 'tariff' of civilians executed for each German soldier killed was higher in the East than in France. But there were numerous reprisals in Quercy in 1944, and they were mostly savage. The one in Montpezat-de-Quercy was not atypical, but was one of the first.

In the case of Montpezat-de-Quercy, two nights before Marie-Antoinette's arrest, *maquisards* had blown up the Toulouse-Paris railway, which runs near the town. In the early hours of the morning of 2 May, a German night-patrol was on the march across farmland outside the town, apparently searching for those

¹⁹⁴ Farmer, *Martyred Village*, pp. 1-58; Hastings, *Das Reich*, pp. 1-20.

¹⁹⁵ On Tulle and Maillé, see Farmer, *Martyred Village*, pp. 49, and 53-4 respectively. On Mont Mouchet, see Robert Gildea, 'Reprisals and Community in Occupied France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 13 (2003), pp. 163-85.

responsible for this sabotage. It is also thought that the Germans had decided to raid the town and its environs following a denunciation of named inhabitants, including Marie-Antoinette, as *maquisards* or Resistance supporters. Guy Pierlot, a *maquisard* stationed in a farm close to the advancing patrol, opened fire on them, killing and wounding several. The Germans retaliated immediately, burning several farms, and mowing down by machine-gun fire a farmer's wife as she tried to flee through a cornfield. By sunrise, they had taken over the town. Three men who were alleged to have provisioned the *maquis* were tortured during interrogation, including by what is known today as 'waterboarding'; one came away with a severely cut neck and the other with his toes broken. Several houses were torched, in one of which a man and his two-year-old granddaughter were burnt alive. Prior to that day, no German soldier had ever been seen in the town. These troops included many with Asiatic features, whom the locals described as 'mongols', their alien appearance adding to the sense of terror and bewilderment. (The SS Das Reich division included a battalion composed of conscripts and/or volunteers from Turkmenistan who, during the final German retreat from the region in mid-August, mutinied at Caussade.)¹⁹⁶ Some weeks later, the Germans carried out a similar raid on the nearby hamlet of Perches, again burning farms and killing civilians. The total death-count from the reprisals in and around the town was twelve people, most burnt alive. One townsman later hanged himself, reportedly in fear and despair, taking the toll to thirteen. A further sixteen were sent to camps in Germany, including the sole woman, Marie-Antoinette.

According to the testimony of her sister-in-law Marguerite Orcival, Marie-Antoinette was apprehended after an SS soldier had shouted

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Jacques Théron, (b. 1934), a resident of Montpezat-de-Quercy, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 11 Apr. 2018.

‘Arrest that girl wearing the Scottish skirt!’ [i.e. kilt]. Marguerite added that Marie-Antoinette – vigorously protesting, according to another account– was taken for questioning at a nearby café and that she, Marguerite, was ordered to bring Marie-Antoinette’s identity card ‘as they said she was Jewish, because of her olive skin, dark brown hair and hooked nose.’¹⁹⁷ (She was not.) There is no record of how the interrogation progressed. Her nephew José-Marie Orcival (b. 1943) remembers it being said in the family that in the café, when accused of being Jewish, she had answered along the lines, ‘Sure, I’m Jewish. What’s it to you?’¹⁹⁸ It is believed that she was then slapped about or beaten and that this treatment, as well as her being taken prisoner, was caused by her having answered disrespectfully and even aggressively to her interrogators. Or merely because, in the words of a family friend, she was a woman who ‘talked too much.’¹⁹⁹

Marie-Antoinette

Marie-Antoinette was born in 1910, in the same house outside of which she was arrested in 1944. She came from a well-known and fairly wealthy local family whose income derived mainly from tenanted farms that it owned around Montpezat-de-Quercy. The Orcivals were considered ‘well-to-do’ by their neighbours.²⁰⁰ Little is known or remembered of Marie-Antoinette’s mother, Elisa Marie-Antoinette (b. circa 1881). Several among the family’s men had been career officers in the French army, including Marie-

¹⁹⁷ Olivet and Aribaud, *La Mémoire*, p. 166. This testimony was taken in 1993 or 1994.; Cayrou, *Journées Sanglantes*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁸ Interviews with José-Marie Orcival conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy and Toulouse, 28 Aug. 2018, 2 Sept. 2018, 28 Sept. 2018, and 20 Nov. 2020. These quotations are from the interview at Montpezat-de-Quercy on 28 Aug. 2018.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Jean-Hugues de Font-Reaulx, (b. 1930), family friend and neighbour of the Orcivals, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 22 May 2019.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Marie-Madeleine Moureau, (b. circa 1945), a resident of Montpezat-de-Quercy, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, St. Paul de Loubressac, 29 Mar. 2022.

Antoinette's father Adrien (1872-1945) and her nephew José-Marie Orcival (b. 1943), both generals. José-Marie has said that the family had a longstanding history in Montpezat-de-Quercy, that they were substantial landowners and, while not nobles, were important citizens. In the words of another interviewee, locally they represented 'a sort of nobility'.²⁰¹ The family was Catholic, and Marie-Antoinette was devout. There was also some tradition of royalism (as Marie-Antoinette's name suggests), though of a nostalgic and inactive variety. José-Marie recalls that one 19th-century female forbear was nicknamed 'Orcival La Pissotte' ('Orcival the Pisser') because, in a gesture of royalist disdain, she had ostentatiously urinated on a tree in the town square, a 'Liberty Tree' planted by the then mayor in the name of Republican Liberty.²⁰²

José-Marie also remembers that, after the defeat of 1940, his grandfather and father had welcomed Pétain as leader, recognising him as the hero of 1914-18, but had turned against him after the rapprochement with Hitler at Montoire in October 1940, and the consequent realisation that Vichy was intent on full-scale collaboration. He believes that by 1941 the family had come to support de Gaulle. Following the occupation of the south in November 1942, his father Raymond, then stationed in Marseilles, absconded from the army and thereafter worked in *maquis* groups in the Quercy and Centre regions. José-Marie also recalls that his grandfather was on good terms with the local Communist *maquis*

²⁰¹ Interviews with Raymond Massip, (b. 19.6.36), mayor of Montpezat-de-Quercy for 37 years (1977-2014), conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 12 Aug. 2020, 19 Aug. 2020, and 10 Dec. 2020. The quote here is from the interview on 12 Aug. 2020.

²⁰² Interviews with José-Marie Orcival, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 23 Sept. 2018, and with Marie-Madeleine Moureau, (b. 1940), resident of Montpezat-de-Quercy, at St. Paul de Loubressac, 29 Mar. 2022, both conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon.

leader, Henri Delon. Thus, the family's adherence to traditional right-wing thinking was altered by the war.²⁰³

Marie-Antoinette attended the Lycée Jules Michelet in the departmental *chef lieu*, Montauban, and was known as a good pupil. After passing her *baccalauréat*, she joined the Red Cross as a volunteer, and by 1939 had been assigned to a hospital in Montauban. After that hospital was closed, she worked in a *crèche*, taking care of refugee children. By 1944, she had become the Cantonal Delegate of the Red Cross, responsible for refugees. She was by then living in the main family house in Montpezat-de-Quercy, in order to look after her ailing father. She had applied to join the motorised unit of the Red Cross but was prevented from doing so, because she had to remain based at home.²⁰⁴ José-Marie believes that Marie-Antoinette was involved in some capacity with the Resistance, but does not know exactly what she did. However, another interviewee, Mme. Marie-Madeleine Moureau, has provided more detail. Mme. Moureau, now in her 70s, was too young to have known Marie-Antoinette, but her mother Josanne Rouyer (born in 1912 and thus two years younger than Marie-Antoinette), did know her well and talked often about her to Mme. Moureau. The latter also knew the sister-in-law, Marguerite. Mme. Moureau was told by her mother that Marie-Antoinette had been a courier for the local *maquis*, taking messages to and from a drop-box located below a railway bridge outside the town, such that *maquisards* in the countryside could communicate with their comrades in the town.²⁰⁵ A fellow prisoner at Ravensbrück, Suzanne Guiral, later wrote that Marie-Antoinette had also acted as a nurse

²⁰³ Interview with José-Marie Orcival, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Toulouse, 20 Nov. 2020.

²⁰⁴ ADTG 1188 W 65: Événements de Montpezat-de-Quercy, 1944; Olivet and Aribaud, *La Mémoire*, p. 169.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Marie-Madeleine Moureau, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, St. Paul de Loubressac, 29 Mar. 2022.

to the *maquis*.²⁰⁶ Moreover, after the war the Resistance praised the work she had done for it, as well as her silence under interrogation.

Marie-Antoinette was therefore brought up in a well-to-do, conservative, military and Catholic family that had some tradition of royalism. She had also had a good education and had developed a professional career. However, the family's sympathy for Pétain and Vichy was short-lived, and it had come to support the Resistance. In Marie-Antoinette's case, according to family memory, this sympathy turned into active support, which by 1943-4 brought with it significant dangers. Earlier, she had received a good education and then developed a professional career. José-Marie says that she was open, direct, full of life, forthright, strong-willed, an organiser, keen to help others, with a love of open spaces and an adventurous spirit. She 'never kept a low profile...was outspoken and often overstepped the mark.' She never married, but her nephew José-Marie has said that she 'had quite a few relationships with boys' one of whom she nearly married.²⁰⁷ This description of her is supported by other interviews and by family and Resistance papers. The photograph below reveals something of this side of her life.



²⁰⁶ Suzanne Guiral, *44.694. F., de Saint-Michel à Ravensbrück* (Fleurey-sur-Ouche, 1946), p. 120.

²⁰⁷ Interview with José-Marie Orcival conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Toulouse, 20 Nov. 2020.

Figure 5: Marie-Antoinette Orcival. Date and place unknown. Probably 1930s, Quercy, (Orcival Family archive).

On the other hand, José-Marie remembers that she had a particularly close relationship with her brother and describes her as something of 'tomboy'.²⁰⁸ Victor Margueritte's best-selling novel '*La Garçonne*', published in 1922 and at the height of its popularity and notoriety when Marie-Antoinette was a teenager, deals with the ambiguous sexuality of its heroine Monique. The novel had introduced the concept of androgyny to its readership. There is no record as to whether Marie-Antoinette had read it but, given its fame in the 1920s, it is possible that she would at least have been aware of its blurring of gender roles.²⁰⁹ What is certain is that her

²⁰⁸ Interview with José-Marie Orcival, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Toulouse, 20 Nov. 2020.

²⁰⁹ Margueritte, *La Garçonne*.

'tomboy' image would have been reinforced by her being known as an avid sportswoman, founding the tennis club in Montpezat-de-Quercy, and hunting game - as the next photograph shows:



Figure 6: Marie-Antonette Orcival, 1934, probably in Quercy, (Orcival family archive).

Both these photographs have gender-coded and performative elements. In the first, she is perched on the luggage-case of a sports-car, smiling, legs crossed and dressed for what was presumably a 'date' in the form of a drive out into the countryside. Her low-cut dress and bare legs could indicate a certain coquetry, and her femininity may be seen as contrasting with the sleek and powerful masculinity of the sports-car. The car's 'GB' plate suggests that one of her boyfriends had been British, adding an

exotic touch in the context of Quercy at that time. The image is not that of a conservatively brought up provincial young lady of the era, and might then have been deemed rather 'fast'. In both images she is represented in ways that would have been highly unlikely, if not impossible, in her mother's generation.

The second photograph has quite a different coding. Here the performative element is of a strong woman who has confidently entered a male world by engaging in a male-only activity and by appropriating masculine symbols – the gun, the exposed arms, the stern look. Marie-Antoinette strikes an Amazonian pose, staring confidently down into the camera. She is wearing a tight skirt and top, the top being sleeveless and white. A white scarf is jauntily tied around her head. These elements are not in keeping with the loose and sombre clothing that would normally have been worn for hunting. Combined with her stare, and with the gun slung over her shoulder – cocked and ready to be fired – the ensemble is hard-edged, provocative, and challenging; although it is not sexless. Although pre-dating the Spanish civil war by two years, it recalls photographs of Republican heroines from that country and time, and is in sharp contrast with traditional images of female delicacy and submissiveness.

The subject matter of the second photograph is also mould breaking. Women hunters were highly unusual in Quercy at the time, and still are. Bernard Longuet (b. 1949), president of a hunt neighbouring Montpezat-de-Quercy, states that his hunt and others in the region have traditionally had no women members. Today his remains '95%' male and the few women who do attend do not shoot and only manage dogs.²¹⁰ By hunting in the 1930s in Quercy, and posed as she is in this photograph, Marie-Antoinette can clearly be

²¹⁰ Interview with Bernard Longuet, (b. 1949), a resident of a hamlet near Montpezat-de-Quercy, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, St. Paul de Loubressac, 5 Dec. 2020.

seen as 'stepping outside' the identity that would have been conventionally expected of her.

These inferences as to Marie-Antoinette's personality are supported by the interviews with José-Marie and Marie-Madeleine Moureau. José-Marie has said that Marguerite was contained and perhaps timid while Marie-Antoinette was stronger and more confident. According to Mme Moureau, Marguerite was conservative, well-behaved, and demure, and Marie-Antoinette indiscreet, rebellious, rather frivolous and something of a show-off. The next photograph reflects these differences:



Figure 7: Adrien Orcival with Marie-Antoinette and Marguerite, 1940, (Orcival Family Archive).

Mme Moureau also endorses José-Marie's view that Marie-Antoinette had a 'tomboy' side: 'she wanted to do the things that

the boys did'. Mme Moureau was told by her mother that Marie-Antoinette was seen in the community as a 'free spirit', who 'boasted about what she did' and who wished to be more 'liberated' (Mme Moureau's word) than was acceptable in that time and place. People were also struck by her unusual dress sense, as suggested by the kilt she was wearing when arrested and the dresses she wore when sitting next to her father and on the sports-car. Her distinctiveness and her disregard for convention were admired by other girls in the town, such as Mme Moureau's mother Josanne, but they lacked the courage to copy it. From the account of her behaviour on 2 May, it seems fair to assume that these aspects of her character were in part responsible for her arrest, mistreatment, and deportation that day.²¹¹ Furthermore, she had apparently talked more freely than she should have about this clandestine work, and this is believed to have led to her denunciation.²¹²

She was also both resourceful and caring of others. On 19 May 1944, she wrote a note to her family from prison in Toulouse. By a circuitous route the note eventually reached her parents. One side of the single sheet of paper reads:

'Whoever finds this is kindly requested to deliver it to the Orcival family, Montpezat-de-Quercy, Tarn-et-Garonne. Political detainee, St. Michel Prison.'

and the other:

'Tomorrow we leave Toulouse for Romainville, Paris. I will write as soon as possible. Excellent spirits. I will stay strong. [Je tiendrai.] I ask that you keep calm, even happy if possible. Above all I think about Papa, and I beg you to keep a careful eye on him, both as to his mind and his health, so that he can resume his activities. Courage! Love, kisses, greetings to all and to Papy, MAO.'²¹³

²¹¹ Interview with Marie-Madeleine Moureau, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, St. Paul de Loubressac, 29 Mar. 2022.

²¹² Various interviews with Jose-Marie Orcival; and with Marie-Marguerite Moureau, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon.

²¹³ Orcival Family Archive. (Emphases as in original.)

Nothing more was heard of Marie-Antoinette until over a year later, when the family received an eight-page letter from her. This was dated 13 June 1945, when she was gravely ill and had only six days to live. She wrote it from the US military hospital in Hamburg to which she had been taken after liberation, and where she died on 19 June. The letter describes her ordeals after leaving Romainville the previous summer and covers her time at the Ravensbrück satellite camp Beendorf. The 2,500 women there had to work in the converted salt mine at depths of about 450 meters. They were lowered down in small cages and were then put to work on machines for cutting metal, used as parts for the manufacture of aircraft and of V1 and V2 rockets.²¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, the style of this second letter is fragmented and episodic. It is far from the crisp note that she had written a year earlier. Her sufferings are shown in the following extracts:

‘From Romainville 50 of us left by the Gare de l’Est.....arrival at Saarbruck: first martyr.....Seventeen days without air, water, food. Hatred.....Transports to Ravensbrück: horror-camp.....The Baltic, the lakes, the sands. Here[is] the city of the dead. Clothes lost. Impossible work-tasks. 1,000 shut up. Forty days without air.....employed as a dishwasher with icy water. One finger acutely inflamed.....

‘....transported to the mines of Eisfeeben Beendorf....working 450 [meters] underground; wet lifts. Death. Ventilated air.....I machine-cut copper rods. Standing up 12 hours without water.....It was terror at the lake. Body-searches. Beatings.

‘From 5 December I was on my back with [a temperature of] 40 degrees. I had growths on my legs like melons.....no right to a doctor. No medicines. My legs became hard, black and huge. I had to go down the mines with a fever of 39. Snow. Woken at 6am. No footwear. Pleurisy in the left lung. A female Jewish doctor came in a convoy. She was good to me.....’

Then, in April 1945, on the 10-day journey back west and under Allied attack from the air:

²¹⁴ <https://www.gedenkstaetten-hamburg.de/en/>

‘17 days without food, water.....covered lorry, the women went mad, especially the Hungarians. They were attacked, drugged, beaten. There were 2 deaths per lorry. Swollen skeletons, the women knifed each other to death. I spent the night on a corpse.’

And by May, after she had been examined by American doctors ‘You can’t imagine what I have suffered. It is inhuman.’

The letter also shows that, despite these experiences, Marie-Antoinette’s fortitude and religious faith had not been extinguished:

‘My right lung is infected and they’ve diagnosed tuberculosis. That was a great sadness for me. But I have to resign myself to it. I put my faith in Our Lady of Lourdes; she has saved me and in a few months she’ll put me back on my feet.....I’m due to return by plane in 2 weeks. I’m booked. If I’m strong enough, Paris.

‘I’ve made a huge effort. I’ll close now, I embrace you all with all of my heart. To Paris, soon.’²¹⁵

A number of Ravensbrück prisoners have since written their memoirs of the experience of that camp, including the well-known Resistance figures Germaine Tillon and Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonieze; and in 2015 a detailed history of it was written by the British journalist Sarah Helms. More directly relevant to Marie-Antoinette is the memoir of Suzanne Guiral, who knew her in the camp and referred to her in the memoir. Marie-Antoinette’s own staccato comments of her time there can be supplemented by a distillation of these wider accounts. They confirm that the life of women at Ravensbrück was quite as horrific as she described it. At its height, about 45,000 women were imprisoned at the main camp and its satellites, and a total of 130,000 passed through. 30,000 to 40,000 are estimated to have died there – executed, gassed, poisoned or, like Marie-Antoinette, allowed to die from maltreatment. Of the 130,000, some 6,000-7,000 were

²¹⁵ Orcival Family Archive. (Emphasis as in original.)

Frenchwomen.²¹⁶ Generally, the French fared worst among the national groups; the Slavs, hardened by life on the Eastern Front, managed better. Many of the French quickly succumbed to diarrhoea, boils, tuberculosis, and the early onset of menopause. They lost both their physical and their mental strength and, in some cases, their sanity.²¹⁷

After nine months' incarceration, Resister Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz had lost half her bodyweight.²¹⁸ Another, Hélène Renal said 'When I returned from Ravensbrück, I spent fifteen years without talking about that experience.'²¹⁹ Germaine Tillon felt that she had been transported to:

'Another world....a world of horror that seemed to us also an incoherent world, more terrifying than the visions of Dante'; and that she was in 'a universe of uncertainty and shadows, as fantastically atrocious as a nightmare....'²²⁰

In practice it was both a 'slave camp' and a 'death camp', and life there was 'slow extermination, in the words of Germaine Tillon.'²²¹ Upon arrival, the women were stripped naked, and their heads shaved. The shavings, like those of the *femmes tondues* at the Liberation, had the effect of removing the women's femininity. The better looking were spared having their heads shaved, but instead sent to become enslaved prostitutes at nearby male camps. The very weakest were immediately killed. Frenchwoman Denise Dufournier recalled 'We had the sense of entering an abattoir.'²²² Some prisoners were subjected to surgical experiments, including the removal of bones, sterilisations, forced abortions, and injections

²¹⁶ Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 145.

²¹⁷ Germaine Tillon, *Ravensbrück* (Paris, 1988); Geneviève de Gaulle, *La Traversée de la nuit* (Paris, 1998); Sarah Helm, *Ravensbrück, Life and Death in Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (New York, 2015); Guiral, 44.694. F.

²¹⁸ Helm, *Ravensbrück*, pp. xviii, 314, 363-4, 370, 438, 441.

²¹⁹ Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 206.

²²⁰ Tillon, *Ravensbrück*, pp. 303-4.

²²¹ Helm, *Ravensbrück*, p. xxii.

²²² Helm, *Ravensbrück*, p. 349.

with syphilis. By the time of Marie-Antoinette's arrival in early summer 1944, with news of Russian forces closing in from the east, lawlessness broke out. Overcrowding became acute and food was no longer getting through to the satellite camps, including to Beendorf where Marie-Antoinette was. In the autumn, disorder intensified with the arrival of a large contingent of Polish women. By January 1945, the temperature had dropped to minus 30c., and by April the women at Beendorf had only rotting vegetables to eat. Finally, at that month's end, the Russians entered the main camp, but this 'liberation' was marked by a mass-rape carried out by drunk Russian troops, their victims including not only Russian women but also the sick and dying.²²³

Traditional and 'New' Women

As described in Chapter 3, the overwhelming majority of Quercynoise women in the interwar years led lives in conformity with the established model of a wife and mother, with their priorities being to care for and support their husbands and children. Although Marie-Antoinette did devote part of her time to looking after her father, in all other respects she had nothing in common with that wife-and-mother model. Her persona was even further removed from the Vichyite idealisation of 'womanhood', which officially and loudly exalted the inward-looking *femme au foyer*, dedicated to marriage and childbearing.²²⁴ Nor did she resemble the rural women who supported their *maquisard* men while hovering unobtrusively in the background, watchful but silent, like Madame Grave in the film '*Le Chagrin et la pitié*'.²²⁵ Single, with no children, and helped by her comfortable family

²²³ Helm, *Ravensbrück*, pp. xxiii, 93, 349, 353, 372-7, 380, 389-90, 392, 405-6, 489, 582, 624-6.

²²⁴ See Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilising Gender in Vichy France*.

²²⁵ *Le Chagrin et la pitié*, dir. Marcel Ophuls (Film, 1969).

background, she had developed her own career and distinctive lifestyle.

According to her Red Cross superiors, she was hard-working and indefatigable, but she was much else besides.²²⁶ She was representative of the newer female 'types' that had evolved in French society in the interwar period. While in Marie-Antoinette's 'tomboy' side there may lie some resemblance with the '*garçonnes*' of literature, what we know of her character bears closer comparison with another new type of interwar woman who did not 'just stay at home'. Writing in the early 1990s, Hélène Eck described how there was growing acceptance among the bourgeoisie that young women could, or in some cases should, work (partly given the lack of men due to the casualties of the First World War). Eck has written of semi-independent women who were encouraged to take exercise, explore the countryside, attend dances and visit the cinema. These were neither '*garçonnes*' nor the French equivalent of the English 'hockey-playing hoydens' described by Vera Brittain.²²⁷ Rather, Eck describes women who were 'neither ignorant nor timid' who did not admire mannered beauty, but instead aspired to:

'An ideal of femininity [comprising] a healthy body, one that was both robust and slender, with a natural and open countenance, truly reflecting an honourable soul and a courageous character.'²²⁸

Eck's description echoes what was said about Marie-Antoinette at her 1949 funeral: 'her lively and slender form, her sporty and sometimes dynamic appearance...her quick and frank reactions.'²²⁹ (In 1944, Marie-Antoinette's body was buried in Hamburg (and a

²²⁶ ADTG 1188 W 65: Événements de Montpezat-de-Quercy, 1944.

²²⁷ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London, 1934), p. 37.

²²⁸ Hélène Eck, 'Les Françaises sous Vichy', in Duby and Pierrot (eds.), *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, p. 297.

²²⁹ Olivet and Aribaud, *La Mémoire*, pp. 191-4.

mass for her soul was held in Quercy). The family then requested the return of her body to Quercy, but this took time. It was finally returned in April 1949. A funeral was then held in Montpezat-de-Quercy, after which her body was re-buried in the local cemetery.)²³⁰

It was made clear in Chapter 3 that even in an area such as Quercy that was conservative and distant from Paris and other major cities, between the wars a few avenues did open up for women to assume positions outside the home (or the farm). These seams of opportunity – notably in education, healthcare and in the world of associations and pressure groups – were few in number and access to them was largely limited to women from the middle-class, but they were there to be mined by those who had the background, initiative, and strength of character to seize them. Such women were afforded both responsibility and authority in their jobs and, in some cases, the prospect of some professional advancement. Generally, positions of this type also earned respect in their communities.²³¹ (In Romainville prison, Marie-Antoinette had sewed Red Cross nametags onto her clothes, in the belief that the respect accorded to Red Cross nurses might improve her chances of being freed.)²³²

In this wider context, therefore, Marie-Antoinette's job as a Red Cross nurse is significant. While nursing had long been a female role, and conformed to the traditional notion of womanhood as caring, by the early 1920s the job descriptions of both nurses in the Red Cross and of the newly created position of health visitor (*une visiteuse d'hygiène*) had become more formalised and demanding.

²³⁰ Interview with José-Marie Orcival, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Toulouse, 20 Nov. 2020.

²³¹ ADTG 1188 W 65: Événements de Montpezat-de-Quercy.

²³² Interview with José-Marie Orcival, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Toulouse, 20 Nov. 2020.

Driven in part by the urgent need to combat tuberculosis, this policy was taken up in Quercy soon after the end of the First World War. Detailed presentations were made to the Lot departmental council in the autumn of 1920 that set out the duties of health visitors, who were expected to work alongside Red Cross nurses. While the women were to remain under the orders of the relevant doctor (who up to 1940 in this region was always a man), they were not expected to operate 'in the shadow of the doctor' but 'at his side' and 'to go into the family of the patient' and to take charge of monitoring treatment, recovery, and proper hygiene. Thus, these were jobs that required a degree of initiative, specialised medical knowledge, and the capacity to gain the confidence and respect of the family, including of its male head.²³³ (There were no women doctors in the Lot before 1940; by 1945, there were two, out of ninety-six.²³⁴)

We do not know why or how Marie-Antoinette secured a position as a Red Cross nurse but, from what we do know of her family and of her society, it is unlikely that she would have been encouraged down that path by her parents. In the period when she was of marriageable age, during her 20s and early 30s, the overriding desire of a conventional family such as the Orcivals would have been to see her suitably married into the provincial bourgeoisie. Only when and if marriage became an unlikely prospect would she perhaps have been nudged to turn to charitable work or other suitable occupations. She joined the Red Cross when she was in her early 20s, suggesting that the decision may have been pushed for by Marie-Antoinette herself, although it would have required her father's consent.

²³³ As to conformity with the nurturing tradition, see Bard, *Les femmes dans la société française au 20^e siècle*, pp. 79-80. The job descriptions are in ADL 5 M 10: recommendations of Dr. Benech to the Departmental Council, Sept. 1920.

²³⁴ Issolan, *La Condition des Femmes*, p. 38.



Figure 8: Marie-Antoinette and her brother Raymond (left) and in her Red Cross uniform, (Dates unknown; Olivet and Aribaud, *La Mémoire*, p.169).

By virtue of her job, her sporting and hunting activities and then, later, by her participation in the Resistance, Marie-Antoinette therefore penetrated what were largely male domains. Her work entailed travel around the communes of Montpezat-de-Quercy. Her personality and her activities made her a visible presence in the area. So too did her unusual dress sense. In certain ways her public persona bears comparison with Madeleine Tavernier, the young woman from Cahors who we will consider in Chapter 6. Simone de Beauvoir argued that a woman who 'fails to adhere to an accepted code becomes insurgent', and that 'one who dresses in an outlandish manner...affirms that she dresses to suit herself, nothing more. She knows perfectly well that to suit herself is to be outlandish.' These observations can be applied to both Marie-Antoinette and Madeleine.²³⁵ While the two women projected different identities, Madeleine's being that of a carefree, pleasure seeking, and mostly unemployed urban woman in her early 20s, and

²³⁵ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 692.

Marie-Antoinette's that of a competent but rather flamboyant older professional woman working mainly in a rural context, both were 'out and about' in the public arena, well-known and much noticed.

By contrast, the 'interior' existence of most women, in the *foyer* or the farm, was normally only interrupted by visits to church, to the local washing-place, and to market. Such outings offered the chance to catch up with gossip and to gain glimpses of the public world of men. Bourgeois women too would visit church and market, and in addition would make social calls on other families of their class, but their lives were likewise predominantly 'interior' and directed mainly at attending to family needs. The social impact that the few women who carved out much more outward-facing lives had on the societies in which they lived cannot be quantified, but in Marie-Antoinette's case the interviews conducted for this Chapter suggest that at the time it was considerable. In this sense, she is an example of the women who, between the wars, helped to populate what Siân Reynolds has described - with reference to the extension of the suffrage to women in 1944 - as the 'antechamber to democracy'.²³⁶

Evolving Memories

In 1946, Suzanne Guiral, the fellow-prisoner at Ravensbrück, wrote of Marie-Antoinette's

'...smiling courage, which earned her the respect and admiration of her comrades.....She was exactly that type of Frenchwoman who knows how to put her feminine sweetness aside in order to accept the discipline of the combatant.....her direct gaze, in which one could see loyalty and sincerity....her positive spirit...which was put at the service of the ideal of a pure patriotism with which her heart vibrated....; [she had] an ardent faith in Allied victory.....'²³⁷

²³⁶ Issolan, *La Condition des Femmes*, pp. 20-57; Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, pp. 204-21.

²³⁷ Guiral, 44.694. F., pp. 120-2.

In 1949, after Marie-Antoinette's body had finally been returned to Montpezat-de-Quercy, Guiral's assessment was put in more florid terms in the speech given at her funeral by Marthe Clavel-Fagedet of the Red Cross. Mme Clavel-Fagedet heaped praise on Marie-Antoinette and said that her name 'would be inscribed in the long list of French martyrs, those honoured in glory and history, that long line of heroes....' 'She died like a saint.' Mme Clavel-Fagedet also contrasted the rural idyll of the town's cemetery, then surrounded by the flowers of spring, full of light and imbued with the promise of summer, with:

'...that foreign and hostile land, not far from the Baltic...those northern shores, that land of exile, that place of her martyrdom...in the darkness of the dreadful nightmare that she was so terribly put through.'²³⁸

The substance of what was written and said by Mme Guiral and Mme Clavel-Fagedet in the late 1940s corresponds with what is said about her now by her family and those who remember her; and of course, their words will have informed the familial memories. Marie-Antoinette's story matters greatly to her nephew José-Marie. It adds honour, drama, and detail to the family's history, and for him her arrest and subsequent fortitude mitigate those aspects of her character that, even today, are dissonant with notions of bourgeois femininity. Others who knew of her speak of her strength of character and her individuality, and of their sadness at her death.²³⁹ Mme Clavel-Fagedet's reference to martyrdom, and other writings about Marie-Antoinette from the late 1940s, may allude to the mythical feminine icon of Jeanne d'Arc, in that she was praised as a devout, forthright, and determined woman, who was prepared to confront authority and who was in consequence martyred by a

²³⁸ ADTG 1188 W 65 : Événements de Montpezat-de-Quercy, 1944.

²³⁹ Interview with Jean-Hugues de Font-Reaulx, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 22 May 2019.

foreign foe. Other aspects of her image – being seen as a ‘tomboy’ and having something of a ‘martial’ side – also echo the myth of Jeanne.

Marie-Antoinette was posthumously awarded the Resistance medal, as well as the Resistant-Deportee medal and Combatant medal. Formal written declarations by two local Resistance leaders, made in 1946 and 1949, state that at the time of her arrest she had shown great courage; and that despite being ‘tortured by the Gestapo’ she had ‘remained completely silent’ and thereby saved ‘numerous Resisters’ from death or deportation.²⁴⁰ (It may be hypothesised that Resistance leaders were keen to find a ‘local heroine’ whom they could falsely ‘canonise’, but there has been no suggestion, from the interviews conducted or from the archives, that the declarations of 1946 and 1949 were not genuine.) She was also commemorated by a plaque on her house that was erected by the village in 1947, as shown in the photograph overleaf, and by a street named after her in the 1990s, when the family sold land to the commune for a new housing development.²⁴¹ Her story is also recorded in a modest and obscurely located war museum in Montpezat-de-Quercy. Absent from the small and simply worded plaque are the references to martyrdom and Nazi barbarism that were characteristic of the immediate postwar years. The plaque, high on the wall, may easily be missed, and the street named after her is in a little-visited part of town.

At the lycée in Montauban where she studied, another plaque was erected in 2006 in memory of her and of a younger, Jewish pupil, Adèle Kurzweil, who was gassed at Auschwitz. At the same time, the sculpture of a pair of shackled hands (shown in the photograph

²⁴⁰ Olivet and Aribaud, *La Mémoire*, p. 188.

²⁴¹ Interview with Raymond Massip, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 10 Dec. 2020.

on the following page) was erected at the entrance to Montpezat-de-Quercy in memory of the town's deportees.



Figure 9: Orcival plaque, Place de la Mairie, Montpezat-de-Quercy, (Author's photograph, 2019).

Raymond Massip (b. 1935), whose family farm had been one of those burnt down by the Germans in May 1944 and who was mayor of Montpezat-de-Quercy from 1977 to 2014, recalls that in the immediate postwar years the traumatised town was full of hatred for Germans, and that almost the entire population attended the annual ceremonies of remembrance. Such hatred was understandably fierce among individuals and communities that had directly suffered from German reprisal action. The Resister and deportee Lise Lesèvre said in 1983: 'they taught us to hate...I

vowed never to return to the land of the Barbarians. I was obsessed with making those monsters pay.’²⁴²



Figure 10: Monument to those Deported, Interned or Made Hostage, Montpezat-de-Quercy, (Author's photograph, 2021).

However, Raymond Massip went on to say that, during his own term of office, despite reminding his audiences of ‘...all the horrors

²⁴² Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 107.

that the Montpezatais were forced to suffer....little by little people showed less attachment to the events that the commune experienced and which so terribly marked it'.²⁴³ The photograph below shows veteran (and interviewee) Jacques Théron at the 8 May celebration in 2021, at which only about 20 people attended, out of a population of 1,500. Massip guesses that in another ten years or so, with more new inhabitants coming into the town, memories of the trauma of 1944 will further recede.



Figure 11: M. Jacques Théron (interviewee and veteran of the Indochina and Algerian wars) at the 8 May VE Day in Europe Ceremony, Montpezat-de-Quercy 2021, (Author's photograph).

Massip's mayoral addresses at the annual 8 May ceremonies reflected how the village's story of what happened to it in 1944 has evolved in other respects. In 1980, his references to deportation and massacre were book-ended with homages to de Gaulle and to a resistancialist account of the war which stressed that Resistance

²⁴³ Interview with Raymond Massip, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 20 Aug. 2020.

had begun in 1940, steadily progressed, and eventually triumphed over Nazi barbarity. There was no mention of the Holocaust. By 2012, his address spoke in the same breath of those Montpezetais who had died in the camps and of the Jews who had perished alongside them. There were no references to the Resistance, de Gaulle, or Nazism. So, over time, and as elsewhere in France, the story has mutated from one of a noble and triumphant battle against barbarism to one of shared victimhood, in which the aggressor has become the impersonal force of war rather than a group of identifiable individuals.²⁴⁴ In this sense, the postwar discourse in Quercy, at least in recent decades, has not been marked by the ‘competition’ among different groups of victims to which the philosopher and sociologist Jean-Michel Chaumont has drawn attention.²⁴⁵

While today only a thin crowd attends the official wartime commemorations, another quite different celebration at Montpezat-de-Quercy is a sell-out. Each year in August, a *son-et-lumière* spectacle called ‘*Marie des Brebis*’ has been mounted in the hamlet of Gandoules, just outside the town. It is instructive to compare this spectacle, and its popularity, with how Marie-Antoinette is now remembered, as the spectacle is suggestive of how Montpezetais now wish, in some ways, to imagine the story of the lives of their mothers and grandmothers.

²⁴⁴ Texts of speeches by Raymond Massip provided by him to Richard Lesmoir-Gordon.

²⁴⁵ Jean-Michel Chaumont, *La concurrence des victimes; genocide, identité, reconnaissance* (Paris, 1997).



Figure 12: the 2017 performance of “Marie des Brebis”, Village Fête, (www.gandoules.fr).

The buildings of the hamlet are used as the set, and the parts are played by Montpezatais. The story, which is based on a popular novel of the 1980s, is that of Marie, a foundling from the *causses*.²⁴⁶ The spectacle tells of her life as it evolved though the 20th century. For Marie, fortitude in the face of adversity is rewarded in the end. Life in Quercy is portrayed as hard, but fundamentally happy and gratifying, and the Quercynois as prizing the values of family, comradeship, patriotic sacrifice, and religious faith. Marie herself is a dutiful adopted child, a loving wife, a good mother, a stoic widow, and finally a contented grandmother. She is a ‘stock’ *paysanne* of 20th-century south-west France.

²⁴⁶ Christian Signol, *Marie des Brebis* (Paris, 1989).



Figure 13: the 2017 performance of “Marie des Brebis”, German Reprisal.
(www.gandoules.fr.)

The show is immensely popular and the villagers’ participation in the performances suggests that this is how, at least in a part of their imagination, today’s Montpezatais wish to see their 20th-century selves portrayed, including their women. The show is neither realistic nor fantastical, but rather a simplified and sentimentalised ‘history’. It would not be feasible to write the more nuanced and more ‘modern’ character of Marie-Antoinette Orcival into the script. The ‘newer’ women of the 20th century are entirely absent.

Conclusion: Against the Grain

The familial memory therefore preserves a Marie-Antoinette who is as she was portrayed in the late 1940s, a woman who assisted the Resistance and was a victim of Nazi barbarity, but who was also a distinctive character, a ‘new woman’ prepared to step out-of-line and to stand up to a bullying foe. By contrast, in the collective

memory she is today seen predominantly as a woman who was a victim of war, and so altered postwar perceptions have eroded her once-singular identity. Women's place in society has since developed in ways that have made that singularity seem less remarkable today. In the cultural memory Marie-Antoinette has been largely effaced: she is now less well-known in Montpezat-de-Quercy than is Marie des Brebis, and the traditional 'model' of woman, as wife-and-mother attending to the home, retains a powerful hold, at least on the sentimental component of cultural imagination in the region.

Before Marie-Antoinette adhered to the Resistance, she had developed a career, probably on her own initiative, and in this respect she can be counted as one of the cadre of women who in the interwar period managed to insert themselves into public life, through the professions and to a more limited extent in politics. Its progress meant that by 1939 the presence of women in the public arena was accepted to a much greater degree than it had been in 1918. In turn, this helps to explain why the extension of suffrage to women in 1944 was passed into law speedily and unopposed.²⁴⁷ While there are aspects of Marie-Antoinette's life-story that are unremarkable in the context of other histories, it is the ensemble of her life that is striking in the context of mid-20th century Quercy: a forthright unmarried woman who had a professional career, hunted game, helped the Resistance and thereby courted danger, and bravely answered back to authority. Her forceful personality led her to stand up against a powerful enemy, an act that for her ended in the effacement of her femininity at Ravensbrück, and then to her death.

²⁴⁷ Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, pp. 204-21.

How far the war 'reconfigured' her gendered identity is harder to tell. It is reasonable to suppose that her decision to work with the Resistance was an expression of her independence of mind and strength of character, as well as her patriotism, and that her engagement with it may have reinforced those traits. It is very likely that her anger at the Occupation and explicitly at the sight of German troops invading her town led her to behave in the aggressive and incautious way that she did on 2 May. José-Marie Orcival has said that Marie-Antoinette was 'her own boss'.²⁴⁸ The supposed retort to the SS, 'Sure I'm Jewish. What's it to you?' as well as the underlined phrases in her letters of 1944 and 1945, 'I will stay strong' and 'I've made a huge effort' suggest a woman who felt that she owned herself and measured her actions (under extreme duress) against standards of behaviour that she had set for herself. Her story is an illustration of how, during the 1930s and 1940s, some young French women, even those most distanced from the social and intellectual sophistication of Paris, could act against the grain. They did so because of force of circumstance, but also because they wanted to be in charge of their own lives, in ways that had been less possible for their mothers and grandmothers. Women such as Marie-Antoinette were not only examples of change, but also its agents.

²⁴⁸ Interview with José-Marie Orcival, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Montpezat-de-Quercy, 28 Aug. 2018.

Chapter 5

Tales of Revenge and Village Feuds:

**Yvonne Wagner, her husband Louis, and the massacre at
Frayssinet-le-Gélat**

Redacted

Chapter 6

Temporary Powers:

Etienne Verlhac and Madeleine Tavernier

'I accept that I have behaved childishly, unaware of the gravity of the acts with which I am reproached. I bitterly regret those acts. I swear on my honour that I have done nothing, nor said anything, against anyone, nor against France.' Madeleine Tavernier, August 1944.²⁴⁹

'For blood spilt, the only retribution will be in the blood of the assassins and their supporters.' Étienne Verlhac, December 1944.²⁵⁰

The Photograph

One Sunday in June 1943, 23-year-old Madeleine Tavernier was photographed dressed in the uniform of an officer in the German army.²⁵¹ The photograph, reproduced overleaf, shows her standing in woodland near her home in Cahors. It was taken during a swimming party, probably by one of Madeleine's friends, Simone Salhien or Jacqueline Périé. The German officer to whom the uniform belonged was swimming, apparently unaware of the prank. The picture shows Madeleine smiling confidently at the camera, with the peaked military cap set jauntily towards the back of her head. Her pose is masculine, hands in pockets and legs apart. She was a tall, good-looking young woman, known locally as '*la belle Madeleine*' and described as 'a girl...who has turned heads all over Cahors for several years'.²⁵² Her looks and self-confidence can both be seen in the photograph, despite its grainy quality. There was a second photograph of Madeleine taken at this time, in which she was allegedly shown lying half-naked in the arms of a German

²⁴⁹ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne: statement to the military authorities by Madeleine Tavernier, 26 Aug. 1944.

²⁵⁰ ADL 1 W 976, Épuration Civile et Administrative: Étienne Verlhac, reports on the civilian and administrative *épuration*, 8 Dec. 1944.

²⁵¹ *Le Lot Résistant*, No. 3 (Jan. 1944).

²⁵² Cécile Vaissié, *Cahors et le Lot sous l'occupation* (Orthez, 2016), p. 227.

soldier, but this has disappeared. (The allegation that she was half-naked was exaggerated; apparently, she was wearing a swimsuit.)²⁵³

²⁵³ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne: testimony of Simone Salhien, 30 Aug. 1944; Vaissié, *Cahors*, p. 229.



Figure 20: Madeleine Tavernier, Summer 1943, (ADL 1 PER 67/1:
Le Lot Résistant, No. 3, January 1944).

Although she had a French boyfriend, Madeleine formed part of a group of young women who were on familiar terms with German soldiers and French *miliciens* in Cahors, often meeting them at the Café Tivoli, a fashionable bar prominently located on the town's main boulevard. (*Miliciens* were members of the various paramilitary groups established by Vichy to support German troops; notable among them was the *Légion des Volontaires Français contre le bolchevisme* (LVF), a fascist group operating as a Vichite secret police, and collectively they were often referred to as the 'milice'.)²⁵⁴ Her friendships with Germans were first brought to wide attention in January 1944 when the Resistance tract *Le Lot Résistant* published the photograph of her in the German uniform. In the same edition, it also printed a list of alleged collaborators. Among them was Madeleine, whom it claimed was 'full of sympathy for the New Order'.²⁵⁵ So began a period of almost three years during which Madeleine was pursued by the Resistance and its supporters. She was made to pay not only for consorting with Germans and *miliciens*, but also for her carefree and provocative lifestyle, combined with her good looks; and it was the photograph, reproduced in the *après-libération* press with scandalised comments, that most inflamed opinion against her.

The articles from *Le Lot Résistant* cited here and from *Liberté* later, are unsigned. That they were written by Étienne Verlhac is suggested by their prose, which closely resembles his subsequent signed journalism, and by the fact that he was the leading Resistance journalist in the Lot department. In addition, in the case of *Liberté*, he was its Cahors correspondent. Local historian Cécile Vaissié also believes the *Liberté* articles to be his work. If however these unsigned pieces were not his, there can be little doubt, from

²⁵⁴ Berlière, *Polices des Temps Noirs*, pp. 600-42.

²⁵⁵ Vaissié, *Cahors*, pp. 110, 111, 139, 142, 227.

his later signed work, that he would have approved of their content and form.²⁵⁶

More press coverage of Madeleine followed two months later. In the wake of the dramatic occupation of the town of Cajarc by the *maquis* on 10th April, one of the Resisters wounded in the action was taken to hospital in Cahors by Madeleine's father Léo, a taxi-driver turned ambulance-man. They were followed by a local mayor, whom Léo later invited home. There the mayor met Madeleine and subsequently stated that he thought his hosts were 'two good French people'²⁵⁷. Moreover, the wounded Resister later wrote approvingly that Léo and Madeleine had not reported him to the authorities.²⁵⁸ *Le Lot Résistant*, however, painted father and daughter in starkly different terms. Its April edition, covering the Resistance *coup de théâtre* at Cajarc, returned its attention to Madeleine. It described her as:

'A strumpet. People in Cahors who know her would like to see her marked down for the pillory, and they won't have to wait long for it. We are speaking here about Mademoiselle Léo [meaning Madeleine], the young courtesan who goes on pleasure trips with Nazi officers to our very own Côte d'Azur. And who never misses a chance to denounce our Patriots to her masters and lovers. The settling of accounts will come soon enough, Monsieur and Mademoiselle Léo, and it will be pitiless.'²⁵⁹

Madeleine was not a strumpet, nor had she denounced anyone, but nonetheless this threat was duly carried out soon after Cahors was liberated on 17 August 1944. It was rumoured that Madeleine was among the women whose heads were shaved and who were then driven around the town in a carriage to be jeered at by the crowds,

²⁵⁶ *Le Lot résistant*, No. 3 (Jan. 1944); Vaissié, *Cahors*, p. 229.

²⁵⁷ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne; and quoted in Vaissié, *Cahors*, p. 142.

²⁵⁸ <http://manusagoma77.free.fr/Robert-Decosse/page15.htm>

²⁵⁹ *Le Lot Résistant*, No. 5 (Apr. 1944), pp. 3-4.

but this is unconfirmed.²⁶⁰ It is however certain that she was arrested within days of the liberation and brought before a 'Sorting Committee' (*Commission de peignage*) on 23 August. This decided that she and nine others, including four women, some from the Café Tivoli group, should be handed over to 'military authority'.²⁶¹ One month later, on 16 September, she was tried by a 'Permanent Military Tribunal', meeting as a Court Martial. This found her guilty of conspiring with the enemy (*'intelligence avec l'ennemi'*) and sentenced her to 10 years' hard labour and confiscation of all her assets.²⁶² If this was a severe sentence, it was not as bad as those given to two of the other female defendants, in a judicial process that was weak as to its understanding of law and procedure, and inconsistent in its decision-making and sentencing policy. Yvonne Ouradour, a 39-year-old dressmaker, half-hearted *milicienne* and long-standing mistress of a Frenchman who ended up in the *Wehrmacht*, was sentenced to death and shot by firing squad on 17 September; while Lucie Clément-Grandcour, a 22-year-old secretary at the Cahors office of the LVF, was sentenced to 20 years' hard labour.²⁶³

After this act of improvised justice, from late 1944 pressure mounted for Madeleine's case to be reviewed, but progress was slowed by the contested structure of unofficial and official authorities and the administrative disorder which characterised parts of France in the aftermath of Liberation.²⁶⁴ In the Lot, the Departmental Liberation Committee (CDL), continued to sit well into 1948, acting as a vociferous pro-Resistance and anti-

²⁶⁰ Vaissié, *Cahors*, p. 193.

²⁶¹ ADL 1 W 171, Épuration civile: procès-verbaux; ADL 1180 W 9, Épuration, activités, arrestations, exécutions: listes, rapports, correspondance (1944-1946).

²⁶² ADL 1 W 976, Épuration Civile et Administrative.

²⁶³ ADL 1 W 87, Situation dans le département après la Libération, 1944-1949; ADL 1 W 976, Épuration Civile et Administrative.

²⁶⁴ Koreman, *Expectation of Justice*, pp. 96-7.

collaborationist pressure group. Madeleine was eventually released in June 1946 and in November of that year given a much-reduced sentence of 5 years' national indignity. She had spent almost two years in custody. Notwithstanding this, the CDL continued to rail against her, at least up to early 1947.²⁶⁵

Returning to the photograph of Madeleine reproduced above, the act of a woman putting on a man's uniform was gender-transgressive, but in this case was more than that. Seen in isolation the image could be read as one in which Madeleine was in reality mocking the uniform, and by extension mocking Germany and the Occupation. It might then further be argued as constituting a modest act of resistance. Certainly, it could hardly be interpreted as an expression of respect for the uniform. As we will see however, this line was never adopted in Madeleine's defense, which painted her act as one of foolish childishness. Given the vengeful mood in Cahors during the *épuration*, irony was unlikely to have been a fruitful line of defense, and in any case would have been hard to square with Madeleine's friendships with German soldiers. Nonetheless, the photograph tells us that those foreign soldiers, while being friends with Madeleine and other women in their 20s like her, were still 'others' to those women, a people apart who were fair game for mockery. In this sense, the photograph is testimony to the complexity of the relationship between collaborators and the superior power.

Tribune of the People

'Lenience is a sign of weakness and weakness is synonymous with treason.'²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne; ADLG 1741 W 42, Dossiers des Cours Martiales; ADL 1 W 73, Comité départemental de libération; procès-verbaux des réunions, 1944-1948.

²⁶⁶ *Notre Quercy* (20 May 1945); Saint-Just, quoted approvingly by Étienne Verlhac.

During this time, Madeleine's chief nemesis was the Communist Resister Étienne Verlhac, who has already featured prominently in the account of Yvonne Wagner and the village of Frayssinet-le-Gélat, described in the preceding chapter. It will be recalled that Étienne's 23-year-old son, Georges Verlhac, had been one of the men identified as Resisters to the Germans, allegedly by the schoolteacher Yvonne Wagner. Georges was executed by them and shortly thereafter Yvonne was killed by the Resistance in reprisal.

The actions of Étienne Verlhac – and in particular the role he played in the case of Madeleine – cast light on the broader question of how political power was acquired and exercised in the chaotic days immediately following the Liberation. Later chapters also touch on this question. While not directly related to the subject of this thesis, it is important, and some reference will be made to it. The stories of Étienne and Madeleine also illustrate the different phases of the *épuration* from the summer of 1944 to the spring of 1945, and more especially the tensions between local and national authorities. And their stories illuminate the principal concern of this thesis, namely how genders were employed in and refashioned by the war and its aftermath.

Étienne Verlhac was born in 1888 in Soulliac, a town at the northern limit of the Lot department, 70 km. from Cahors. He was the younger of two brothers, and his father was a hatter. In 1907, aged 19, he enlisted as a professional soldier in the infantry, rising to the rank of sergeant two years later. He was mobilised in 1914 and in September was wounded and taken prisoner. He remained a POW for two years before being repatriated to Paris, most likely because of his health but possibly as part of an exchange of prisoners. He was well thought of as a fighting soldier, mentioned in dispatches as ‘...having a fine (*belle*) composure under fire. He

distinguished himself by his courage in the engagement at Ville-au-Bois on 14 September 1914 (when he was wounded and captured).²⁶⁷ A photograph of him at that time is reproduced overleaf.

He remained in the army until 1927, rising to the rank of Adjutant. During the eleven years between his repatriation in 1916 and his resignation in 1927, he served in the medical corps, mainly in France but also for three years in Morocco. He was a reluctant member of this corps and applied for transfer back to front-line duty, but the army insisted that his war wound precluded him from resuming infantry soldiering. From 1927 until the 1940s he worked as an accountant and as treasurer of a local savings bank in Souillac.

During the interwar years Étienne developed interests outside work and family, in political, social, and cultural pursuits. He became an active member of the Socialist Party (SFIO), campaigning in all elections between 1928 and 1939. By 1940, he had risen to become Secretary of the departmental federation of the SFIO in the Lot, a significant position locally. He was also a Freemason and an active member of the *Fédération des Oeuvres Laïques du Lot* (The Lot Lay Federation) and of the *Société de Libre Pensée du Lot* (The Lot Humanist Society).²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ ADL 96 J 11, Fonds Verlhac, Service militaire, 1916-1927.

²⁶⁸ ADL 96 J 30, Fonds Verlhac, Cartes des adhérents; ADL 96 J 31, Fonds Verlhac, Cahiers des statuts, 1904-1925.



Figure 21: Étienne Verlhac, on campaign, circa 1914, (ADL 96 J 9).

His political sympathies were therefore on the left, and he was a committed anticlerical. These interests and beliefs were sharpened by the 1939-45 war, and by taking up journalism during it he was able to give vent to them. He was an intelligent man, and his later life showed that he possessed energy and ambition as well. Although during the 1930s his political and other interests doubtless gave him some sense of purpose, his professional life had probably been unfulfilling, in comprising a military role for which he had no appetite followed by work in a small-town savings bank. Given his evident talents, it is likely that, had he looked back at his life at the time of the fall of France, when he was over 50, his overriding feelings would have been of frustration and disappointment.

In addition, his private life had been highly tragic. Following his return from Germany in 1916, he had married Lucienne Vialle, with whom he had the one child, Georges, born in 1920 in Casablanca. According to family memory, Étienne was deeply in love with Lucienne; but some time after Georges' birth (the descendants interviewed are unclear on exact dates) she eloped with a lover to Paris, leaving her husband and young son in Morocco. Étienne, still in love with Lucienne, pleaded with her to return to him. To his joy, this she eventually agreed to do, only then to be murdered by her jealous lover. Unsurprisingly, Étienne was left doubly traumatised – first by Lucienne's infidelity and then by her murder.²⁶⁹ Later, he married Marguerite Baudel, and they had one daughter, Colette, born in 1928.²⁷⁰ This second marriage was, again according to family memory, not a love match but one of 'convenience' (*mariage de raison*). Étienne had been pressurised by his family into marrying Marguerite, and for the rest of his life his affections continued to be vested in his murdered first wife. (A search of the popular Paris press during the relevant period has revealed no references to the murder of Lucienne. As to the second marriage, Jacques Verlhac has stated that the family pressure did not derive from financial considerations, but from the conventional belief that a man with a child should be married, so the child could be suitably raised.)²⁷¹

The national collapse of 1940, France's consequent subjugation and then its liberation presented Étienne with opportunities to carve out a more purposeful and fulfilling life; a second chance, in his 50s, to redeem the professional disappointments and personal

²⁶⁹ Interviews by the author of Georgette Peyridieu, (b. 18 Dec. 1920), great-niece of Étienne Verlhac, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, by telephone, 23 Dec. 2021; and of Jacques Verlhac, (b. 1943), son of Georges and grandson of Étienne, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Frayssinet-le-Gélat, 4 Feb. 2022.

²⁷⁰ ADL Fonds Verlhac: archivist's preamble.

²⁷¹ Interviews with Georgette Peyridieu and Jacques Verlhac, as detailed above.

tragedies of his life hitherto. Rather than escaping from the tedium of his clerical duties at the bank by busying himself in the minor dramas of local party politics, he could now channel his political energies and beliefs towards a goal that was of immediate urgency and surpassing importance: the salvation, and thereafter the reconstruction of France. His commitment to socialism and anti-fascism made him a natural opponent of both Germany and Vichy; his journalism suggests that he may also have been one of those *poilus* who, long before Vichy, had regarded Pétain as a heartless waster of his own men's lives rather than as the hero of Verdun.²⁷² Whatever the mix of his motivations, he became one of the first Resisters in the Lot, evidence of an urge to action. He was one of the four attendees at a meeting in Toulouse in November 1940 at which regional resistance was first planned, and networks sketched out. This was followed by a second gathering in Cahors in February 1941 at which, under the leadership of the charismatic Jacques Chapou (the subject of the next chapter), seven men including Étienne founded the Cahors Resistance Committee. A majority of those attending these meetings were Socialists, trade unionists, and/or Freemasons.²⁷³

Étienne occupied a senior position in the Lot Resistance, as a staff officer dealing with strategy, organisation, and propaganda. In Resistance terminology, he was thus a '*sédentaire*' or non-combatant, as befitting a man in his 50s. From early 1942, he was involved in a wide variety of tasks and held several positions: the production and distribution of Resistance tracts under the aegis of the SFIO in Cahors; the creation of networks of Resistance sympathisers among employees of the post office and the railway

²⁷² See for example the memoirs of Verlhac's fellow Resister, Gilbert Verdier, *Ma Résistance*, p. 9.

²⁷³ ADL 4 M 133, Fonds Mirouse; ADL J 2539, Fonds Mirouse; Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, pp. 51-4, 363-4.

network; and liaison with SOE agents. He was a member of the *Brutus* intelligence network, and of the *Groupes Vény* Resistance unit, acting as political advisor and deputy to its leader, Colonel Jean Vincent. (The *Groupes Vény* was a Resistance group based in Quercy that attacked German forces and infrastructure, often in partnership with the British SOE.) In September 1943 he was appointed to the departmental headquarters of the newly-formed *Armée Secrète*, and in the spring of 1944 he joined the Communist FTP.²⁷⁴ His activities made a substantial contribution to the development of the Resistance in the Quercy region. This was later recognised: Étienne was awarded the *Médaille de la Résistance*; as well as a Commendation for Brave Conduct and a decoration from King George VI, and Maurice Buckmaster of SOE wrote him a letter of thanks.²⁷⁵ His nephew Jean Verlhac also played an important part in organising and receiving parachute drops in the northern Lot, alongside the SOE officers George Hiller and Cyril Watney, with whom Étienne was in contact.²⁷⁶

At some point during 1940-3, Etienne and his family moved from Souillac to Cahors. It seems that at this time he also left his job at the bank, concentrating thereafter on his Resistance work, political activities, and journalism, the latter supplying him with the bulk of his earnings by 1945.²⁷⁷ In July 1943, following harassment by Vichy police and raids on his house, he decided to '*prendre le maquis*'. This was a bold step for a 55-year-old man who had been wounded in action, and one that almost certainly contributed to his early death in May 1948: while hiding in a barn outside a village near Cahors during the bitterly cold winter of 1943-1944, he developed a

²⁷⁴ ADL 96 J 11, Fonds Verlhac, Service militaire, 1916-1927; ADL 96 J 13, Fonds Verlhac, Reconnaissances de participation à la Résistance pour le couple, 1944-1953; Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, pp. 51-7, 67, 77, 128, 134.

²⁷⁵ ADL 1 W 249, Médailles; ADL 96 J 13, Fonds Verlhac, Reconnaissances de participation à la Résistance pour le couple, 1944-1953.

²⁷⁶ MRDC COM2 004, Étienne Verlhac; Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, pp. 93-4.

²⁷⁷ ADL 96 J 8, Fonds Verlhac, Papier personnels, 1887-1951.

fever and spat blood, probably the first signs of the tuberculosis of which he was to die. (He was known to suffer from the cold, but persisted in wearing a thin and worn plastic raincoat.²⁷⁸) There is no record of how long he was on the run in the countryside, but he was back in Cahors by the time it was liberated in August 1944.²⁷⁹

Like many Resisters in the Lot, including the *maquis* leader Jacques Chapou, Étienne switched his political allegiance from the Socialists to the Communists in the spring of 1944. As described in the next Chapter, for Chapou and many rank-and-file Resisters, this decision was taken more as a matter of military expediency than of ideological conversion. In Étienne's case, it seems rather to have been for a mixture of personal and ideological reasons. A note left by him suggests that the trigger for his rallying to the Communist cause, with its policy of immediate and uncompromising action, was the fate of his close friend and fellow Resister Pierre Bourthoumieux, who was arrested in Lyon in 1944 and tortured there by Klaus Barbie; Bourthoumieux died in 1945 in a concentration camp in Germany.²⁸⁰ In addition however, Étienne's speeches and journalism strongly suggest that, at least by the autumn of 1944, his adherence to Communism was more than merely tactical but rather a wholehearted ideological commitment, in contrast with Chapou and many others. After the war, he voiced his disillusionment with the SFIO, and was quoted as blaming Léon Blum for playing a 20-year-long trick on him.²⁸¹ And, at a meeting in early August to discuss the incorporation of the *Groupes Vény* into the Communist FTP, it was the 'weight' of Étienne's rhetoric in

²⁷⁸ Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, p. 438.

²⁷⁹ ADL 96 J 14, Fonds Verlhac, Correspondance de la famille, 1915-1950; ADL 96 J 22, Fonds Verlhac, Fonctions et élections politiques, 1946-1948.

²⁸⁰ ADL 96 J 24, Fonds Verlhac, Discours et notes politiques, 1946-1948.

²⁸¹ ADL 96 J 15, Fonds Verlhac, Obsèques, 1936-1953.

support of the motion that led to its adoption, despite some fervent opposition. (He was immediately expelled from the SFIO.) ²⁸²

We may fairly imagine that, by the spring of 1944 and with the war turning daily against Germany and Vichy, Étienne would have felt both a sense of achievement, for what he and his Resistance colleagues had achieved during the years of clandestine struggle, and of hope for a better future. But then another personal tragedy struck, when Georges, his only son and the only child of his marriage to Lucienne, was also murdered – by the Germans, but in Étienne’s judgment at the hands of the village schoolmistress and Georges’ replacement, Yvonne Wagner. (A photograph of Georges and his wife Solange née Cradadou is reproduced overleaf.) According to his niece Georgette Peyridieu, Étienne, on hearing of Georges’ death, ‘screamed with sadness’, and yet it is striking that in all the papers in the Fonds Verlhac and in all Étienne’s journalism, there are no references of a personal nature to Georges’ murder, no words of grief or anger at the loss of his son. In the father’s newspaper columns, the son is merely mentioned, in unadorned lists, as one of the many victims of the massacre. This display of severe *sang froid* may reflect several elements, including a male ethic of toughness, which the experience of war would have hardened, his background as a wounded *poilu*, and the tragedy of his first wife’s adultery and murder. Étienne’s descendants are adamant that he loved his son dearly and was devastated by his death.²⁸³ We may speculate that he felt himself (and the Resistance) partly to blame for Georges’ death, although the descendants do not attest to that, and there is no evidence for it. But there is another twist here: Étienne’s grandson, Jacques Verlhac, speaks of a family rumour that Georges may not have been the son of Étienne

²⁸² Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, pp. 233-4.

²⁸³ Interviews with Georgette Peyridieu, and Jacques Verlhac, as detailed above.

but rather of Lucienne's lover. In talking of this rumour, Jacques alludes to the physical dissimilarity between Étienne and Georges, the father small in stature and slight in build, the son the opposite. We do not know if this was known to or suspected by Étienne.²⁸⁴

In any event, the content and style of his journalism strongly suggest that Étienne also came to cloak himself in the persona of a hardline Communist, and of a cold, unemotional persecutor of fascists, collaborators, and those like Madeleine who seemed to have profited or derived pleasure from riding on their coat-tails. This is shown both by what he wrote about Madeleine herself, as quoted earlier, and by his later writings. It may reasonably be concluded that Georges' murder led to a redoubling of Étienne's commitment to the radical politics and armed resistance that had given purpose to his existence, but also to a sharper appetite for revenge and the pursuit of an unforgiving justice.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Jacques Verlhac, as detailed above.



Figure 22: Georges Verlhac and his wife Solange, 1943 or 1944, (ADL 96 J 9).

Étienne therefore returned from the *maquis* to Cahors in the summer of 1944 to apply himself to the task of political reconstruction, but also to settle scores. Georges had been shot on 21 May and Cahors was liberated three months later, on 17 August. Étienne was well placed to become part of the departmental power structure that was improvised in Cahors immediately following the town's liberation. His Resistance credentials were emphatic: he could point to his unusually early adherence to the cause, and to his close association with Chapou who, having been killed in July 1944, had become a famous hero. Accordingly, in late August 1944 Étienne was appointed as a member of the Lot Departmental Liberation Committee (CDL), as President of the Lot Departmental

Purge Commission (Administrative) (Cd'EA), and as Vice-President of the Cahors Liberation Committee (CLC). The Cd'EA was responsible for putting forward to the Military Tribunal not only the names of suspected collaborators but also their recommended sentences.²⁸⁵ By virtue of his memberships of these bodies, Étienne came to enjoy a broad if rather undefined authority in Cahors, at least in the early months of the *après-libération*, and the minutes of the meetings of these bodies attest to his vocal and forceful presence on them. He also had allies: there was significant Communist and Freemason representation on these committees.²⁸⁶

He was able to supplement this committee-based power with his journalism, which he used to exhort the committees, and the authorities in general, to support his hard-line stance in pursuit of collaborators. By 1945, he had an impressive clutch of positions in the Communist or fellow-travelling press: editor and publisher of the local weekly *Notre Quercy*; departmental editor for two regional papers, *La Voix du Midi* and *Le Patriote*; and correspondent for the national *L'Humanité* and the local *Liberté*.²⁸⁷ His journalism was that of a campaigning activist: target-oriented and using the press to force through change, to promote and demote people and policies. In both the committees and in his journalism, he spoke with a trenchant voice that was most characteristically expressed in his own regular column in *Notre Quercy*. This was variously titled 'Shouldn't We Know?' or 'We Ought To Be Told' or similar. It featured attacks on former Vichy administrators, *miliciens* and other allegedly dubious individuals who were seeking office in the new administration; and of 'outings'

²⁸⁵ ADL 96 J 18, Fonds Verlhac, Gestion, 1944-1947.

²⁸⁶ Vaissié, *Cahors*, pp. 210-11.

²⁸⁷ ADL 96 J 10, Fonds Verlhac, Cartes individuelles, 1944-1949; ADL 96 J 15, Fonds Verlhac, Obsèques, 1936-1953; ADL 96 J 27, Fonds Verlhac, Correspondance, 1944-1949.

of black marketeers who were still in business, or of girls like Madeleine who were suspected of having dated German soldiers. The columns gave full voice not only to Étienne's hatred of Vichy but also his devotion to the Resistance and Communist causes, and to his fierce anticlericalism and anticapitalism. As in his 1944 article and 1946 speech about the massacre at Frayssinet-le-Gélat, his prose style is an example of the rhetorical excesses to which political writers on both the left and the right in the mid-20th century were prone.²⁸⁸ Its characteristics include a contempt for opponents, and an unwillingness to compromise or to seek understanding of contrary opinions. The tone is strident, raw, menacing, snide, needling, and sarcastic. Even one of his admiring obituarists acknowledged Étienne's 'acerbic pen'.²⁸⁹



²⁸⁸ See Chapter 5.

²⁸⁹ ADL 96 J 15, Fonds Verlhac, Obsèques, 1936-1953.

Figure 23: Étienne Verlhac, circa 1946, (ADL 96 J 9).

In these respects, his language is emphatically ‘masculine’, in putting across its author as a strong and aggressive man with ‘strongman’ views, a man who prized ends above means. Étienne squarely blamed Georges’ death on the treachery of Yvonne Wagner. Did he have a particular interest in punishing women? Certainly, the most unhappy events in this mostly unhappy life had involved women. The story of his interactions with Madeleine Tavernier points towards an answer to this question.

The Trials of Madeleine

Just as the war gave Étienne the chance to dedicate himself to national salvation and reform, so it allowed Madeleine freedoms that would have been much further from her grasp in a small provincial town during the Third Republic. The radically altered power dynamics in Cahors, particularly after the German occupation of the *Zone Libre* in November 1942, together with the disruptions to everyday life that the war brought, served to weaken all categories of conventional hierarchy – age, gender, class – and conventional behaviour.²⁹⁰

For Madeleine, these freedoms revolved around the social and the sexual: she was able to have fun, to date the new and foreign men who had arrived in town, to dress well and look attractive, to show off, and to enjoy the affront she thereby caused to the bourgeoisie of her home-town. What was written and said about her was almost entirely composed either of attacks or of defence, mostly impassioned. Allowing for their partisan nature, a picture emerges of an only child who was probably overindulged and who grew into a woman with desires focused on pleasure and display, who had no

²⁹⁰ See for example, Philippe Burrin, *Living with Defeat; France Under the German Occupation, 1940-1944* (London, 1996).

interest in politics or the wider world and was almost certainly not a 'collaborator' in any meaningful way. One woman, interviewed by Hanna Diamond in the 1990s about young women who dated German soldiers in Paris, described them as:

'.... all coquettes, women who just wanted the good life, to go to the theatre, eat in good restaurants, but I don't think that politically speaking they played a very important role.'²⁹¹

As well as being sociable, Madeleine also seems to have been kind, considerate, truthful, and honest, albeit childish and naive. The archive is unclear as to whether she worked; mostly she is recorded in official documents as being 'without profession', but sometimes as a typist.²⁹² Presumably her lifestyle, which, given her age would in relative terms have been extravagant, was supported by her father or her male friends. That her employment status is obscure may be apt: for Madeleine work seems not to have been a priority.

The period of over two years during which she was imprisoned began and ended with two trials in Cahors, the first at the Court Martial in September 1944 and the second at the Civil Court in November 1946. During this time, she was shuttled between various camps and detention houses throughout south-west France. More than 30 witnesses were called to give evidence and more than 40 witness statements were taken, the great majority speaking against her. They were interviewed in three main periods: soon after the liberation of Cahors, in late August and early September 1944 in preparation for the first trial; in late 1944/early 1945 when sympathisers began to come forward and plan for her defense; and in July 1946 in preparation for her re-trial.

At the Court Martial in 1944, Madeleine was formally accused of 'conspiring with the enemy' (*intelligence avec l'ennemi*). Three

²⁹¹ Mme Flore, in Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France*, p. 84.

²⁹² ADLG 1741 W 42, Dossiers des Cours Martiales.

tangible accusations were made against her. Firstly, there were the photographs at the swimming party, which were taken as visual proof that she had consorted with German soldiers. Secondly, she was accused of having denounced a group of young Resisters, leading to their deportation and in some cases their death, an act that would have met the charge of conspiracy with the enemy. And thirdly, she was known to have attended parties at which *miliciens* and Germans were among the guests. However, the witness statements show that in the eyes of many she was really on trial for much broader failings: for modes of behaviour and character traits that were felt to be unacceptable and worthy of punishment. She was held up not only as a girlfriend of Germans, but also as a promiscuous and brazen young woman who took pleasure in flaunting her sexuality and in transgressing local codes of behaviour, and this at a time when her fellow citizens had been suffering the sorrows and deprivations of war.²⁹³

The statements of early autumn 1944 were taken from eighteen individuals. This was a careless and no doubt hurried process: several names were not recorded in full or were misspelt, the statements were not taken under oath, and dates were often missing. As regards the photographs, the longest account was given by one of Madeleine's friends at the swimming party, Simone Salhien. Simone claimed that they had gone to swim in the Lot river and had changed into their bathing costumes; that a German soldier, whom Simone did not know but was apparently called Forster, had arrived to swim and had also changed; that the women had taken turns to put on his uniform and to photograph themselves in it, with a camera that they had brought along for the party; that the negatives had been sent for developing to Toulouse

²⁹³ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

(from where they had found their way to *Le Lot Résistant*). Simone went on to assert that Madeleine had never been the mistress of 'the German called Forster', had never denounced anyone, was incapable of malice and that, in Simone's view, she was:

'...a spoilt child, with a character dominated by a spirit of contrariness, driven only by a desire to shock the people of Cahors by scandalizing them with her behaviour.'

Others among the 1944 witnesses also spoke of the swimming party or parties. One said '...I saw them sunbathing almost naked.' Another claimed to have seen the second, unpublished photograph, showing Madeleine in the arms of a German, saying that '...it was perfectly obvious what they were going to do next'.²⁹⁴

Other statements recounted that on a night in February 1944, a group of young Resisters had seen Madeleine leaving the *Dancing Robinson*, a dance hall that had been requisitioned to house the Gestapo in Cahors. It was also claimed that these young men had previously warned Madeleine against visiting this building and accordingly decided to punish her. Taking her to the main bridge that spans the Lot at the entrance to Cahors, they stripped her naked and then threw her clothes into the river. One witness said that he shouted at them to throw Madeleine in too, but they did not '...for fear of reprisals.' She was forced to walk home naked. Later that month, eleven young Resisters, purportedly including those who had punished Madeleine, were arrested in Cahors and deported to concentration camps in Germany. After the youths' deportation, the rumour was that, in revenge for this degrading incident, Madeleine had denounced them to the Gestapo and thereby caused their arrest. One of the 1944 witnesses, a woman whose son had been among the deportees, stated that he had told

²⁹⁴ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

her 'that whore should be strung up', as if that opinion alone stood as sufficient evidence of guilt.²⁹⁵ Madeleine denied, repeatedly and energetically, being the stripped woman, let alone the denouncer.²⁹⁶

Several of the 1944 witness statements describe, in lurid prose, rowdy, late-night parties attended by Madeleine and other young women that were hosted by *milicien* Pierre Meyrat at his Cahors apartment. One witness stated that at '...one wild party in late 1943, champagne bottles flew about, glasses were broken in a drunken frenzy, and people danced. Girls and men were present.' The noise was so bad that neighbours had to throw stones at Meyrat's windows. Another complained that 'people led a wonderful life at Meyrat's place while the rest of us suffered.'²⁹⁷

Georges Fénelon was the only one among the 1944 witnesses to argue in Madeleine's favour (Simone Salhien's testimony being ambiguous). Georges is sometimes described as Madeleine's fiancé, sometimes as a friend. Although it seems that they only had an intermittent relationship, Georges fought doggedly on her behalf, writing at least six statements in her defence between 1944 and 1946, and organising other witnesses to come forward on her behalf. He himself had a 'good' Resistance record, having sheltered Allied airmen en route to Spain; although, once he publicly took Madeleine's side, he was obliged to prove that record with paperwork. In his statements about Madeleine, he recounted that he had known her since 1937 (when she was 16) and that their relationship had started in January 1944. On 20 August he wrote a typed and erudite two-page note to the police, in which he mounted a considered defence of her. He described her as a person of '... great sensitivity', as

²⁹⁵ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

²⁹⁶ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

²⁹⁷ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

‘...a big-hearted girl, incapable of the least nastiness or malevolence, who has never spoken ill to me of anyone, and prefers to put up with insults rather than fight back.’ She ‘has always sworn to me that she has done nothing serious. In questioning her I have made her cry many times and I don’t doubt her word.’

He also wrote that she was ‘the object of much jealousy in Cahors, because she’s good looking and very elegant’; adding that the charges against her were the product of scheming, including by people who wished thereby to deflect attention away from their own collaboration, and that some of the witnesses did not even know Madeleine (to which other statements indeed attest).²⁹⁸

He admitted to the photographs - he could hardly not - but argued that this was Madeleine’s only mistake and added in mitigation firstly that the German in question, Forster, was highly-educated (a professor of French at Vienna), perfectly mannered and polite, and so by implication not a man to take advantage of attractive young French women. Secondly, Madeleine had been introduced to Forster by Jacqueline Périé, a member of the swimming party and another secretary at the LVF, Fénelon perhaps seeking here to divert blame away from Madeleine and onto Jacqueline. He also acknowledged the parties with *miliciens* but called them civilised evenings (*soirées*) and ‘cordial’ sessions during which ‘politics was never discussed’. As to the public rumour that she had denounced people to the Gestapo, Madeleine did not even know those who had been arrested. In short, she was a good person wrongly indicted, guilty only of ‘...a little childishness and thoughtlessness.’²⁹⁹

At the 1944 Court Martial, Madeleine stood no chance of a fair hearing. After the witness statements were read out, and she had admitted to the photographs but denied having been ‘Forster’s

²⁹⁸ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

²⁹⁹ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

mistress', the prosecution stated that the photographs left no doubt as to Madeleine and Forster having had 'intimate relations' and went on to say that she had '...led a gilded life, with many boyfriends and girlfriends, while a cortege of suffering passed through France...'. The defence (if it can be called that), after drawing attention to some weak points in the prosecution case, demanded 'a rigorous and exemplary punishment, for dishonouring French womanhood.'³⁰⁰

During her incarceration, Madeleine's case was taken up by those who supported her, namely Georges Fénelon, her father Léo, a prominent defence attorney, Élie Calmon, and M. Contou of the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* (French Human Rights League). (Élie Calmon was a lawyer and politician, serving as a socialist deputy for the Lot in the 1920s. Although it does not fall within the scope of this thesis, the question of how the *Ligue* came to interest itself in this comparatively obscure provincial case is interesting. Unfortunately, Norman Ingram's recent work on the *Ligue* only takes the story up to 1944.)³⁰¹ The efforts of Madeleine's supporters only began in earnest in late 1945, probably because Fénelon was engaged in clearing his own name and Léo had briefly been in detention. Demands for a re-trial gained further momentum in June 1945 when one of the young Resisters, liberated from Germany, attested unequivocally to Madeleine's innocence of the alleged denunciation.³⁰²

Earlier, the authorities themselves had begun to question the validity of her trial and sentencing. In August 1945, the Court of Appeal at Agen had discovered irregularities as to the

³⁰⁰ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

³⁰¹ Norman Ingram, *The War Guilt Problem and the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme 1914-1944* (Oxford, 1999).

³⁰² ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne: testimony of Pierre Combes, 14 Dec. 1945.

establishment of the Military Tribunal and the Court Martial in Cahors in August/September 1944, with papers having been deliberately back-dated and improperly executed: in October, the Prefect of the Lot had retrospectively accorded 'state of siege' powers to the military, back-dated to 26 August. Here, it is worth making two points about these Military Tribunals. These were intended to be temporary (despite the Lot one styling itself 'Permanent'), to fill a judicial void pending the re-establishment of the workings of the Courts of Justice and of the regular and long-established military tribunals. There were twenty-four of them, all in what had been the Occupied Zone and in departments where state of siege conditions prevailed at the moment of Liberation. Recent research has shown that the individuals brought before them comprised a disproportionately high percentage of women, and that their sentencing policy was significantly harsher than that of the authorities which replaced them. The second point may be an understandable function of dates and public mood; anger was at its greatest at the time when these Tribunals were sitting. But the first point is important and new statistical evidence of the gendered nature of the *épuration*, and specifically of the fact that women were much likelier than men to be victims of its official (or, in the case of the Lot, its pseudo-official) manifestation. Fabien Lostec has shown that of the total number of those tried by Military Tribunals in the summer and autumn of 1944, 15-20 per cent. were women, compared with a steady figure of around 10 per cent. that had applied for equivalent charges since the late 19th century. At the Périgueux Military Tribunal, the figure was 37 per cent.³⁰³

³⁰³ Fabien Lostec, 'Une justice oubliée: le rôle des tribunaux militaires dans la répression des faits de collaboration en France', *Revue Historique Moderne et Contemporaine*, No. 70-3, (2023/3), pp. 58-87.

In December 1945, on the basis that the Court Martial had had no proper standing, the Procurator in Cahors declared Madeleine's trial and sentencing to be 'null and void'. Six months later, in June 1946, the Court of Appeal at Agen ordered a re-trial, instructing that Madeleine be provided with a properly-appointed defense. (The archives suggest that the long delay was due in part to the muddled state of the 1944 paperwork.)³⁰⁴ Here, we may see evidence of the legal profession reclaiming control of a process that, during the immediate *après-libération*, had been seized and diverted to more political ends by people of the same persuasion as Étienne. Nowhere in the relevant documents in the departmental archives are the names of the members of the Military Tribunal revealed. The sentence on Madeleine shows only handwritten (and largely illegible) signatures, and no typed names. However, we know from other sources that soon after the Liberation René Andrieu, the senior Communist Resister who features prominently in Chapter 8, became both the military commander of Cahors and chairman of the Military Tribunal.³⁰⁵

That same month Madeleine was released from detention and went to live with her father Léo, by then in Bordeaux. In October 1946 a government lawyer reviewed the case. Writing that Madeleine's innocence as regards the young *Resisters* had been established, and that she had merely 'flirted' with Forster and not become his mistress, he concluded that the case did not merit re-trial at the Court of Justice at Agen, referring it instead to the more junior Civic Court at Cahors. She was duly re-tried by the latter in November, on the lesser charge of:

³⁰⁴ ADL 1109 W 1108, Tribunal de grand instance de Cahors: procurator's letter of 27 Dec. 1945; ADLG 1741 W 34: Appeal Court order of 12 June 1946.

³⁰⁵ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, p. 248; René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, p. 96.

‘national indignity, in having knowingly undermined the unity of the nation, notably by keeping company with Germans.’

The 1944 witness statements were re-tabled, but so were several new ones in defence of Madeleine. The court reached a majority verdict of guilty, but the sentence was reduced to five years of national indignity. (National indignity entailed the loss of political and civil rights, and in effect demotion to a second-class citizen.)³⁰⁶

Étienne, meanwhile, had been following Madeleine’s case carefully, and used both his committee-based power and his journalism to push for the most severe punishment. At a meeting of the CDL in late August 1944, he suggested that Madeleine and her father Léo might have been implicated (as passers of alleged denunciations to the Germans in Cahors) in the massacre at Frayssinet-le-Gélat.³⁰⁷ Then in September 1944, *Liberté* covered her sentencing at the Court Martial, describing her case as ‘villainous’ and the photographs as ‘horrible’ and ‘insolent’. The article went on to state that:

‘Tavernier is tall, elegant. She loves luxury, money. Her eyes are evil, lit by anxiety. Her life is lost. Has she denounced? Has she never denounced?’

It ended with ‘We won’t discuss this further. It’s too filthy.’³⁰⁸

Étienne’s attitude to Madeleine’s case and towards other alleged collaborators remained vehemently hardline throughout 1945 and 1946. As late as June 1946, he urged readers of *Notre Quercy* that ‘the *Épuration* must be vigorously resumed’.³⁰⁹ He dismissed, as an insult to the Resistance and to the victims of Germany and Vichy, the suggestion that Madeleine had been treated unfairly and, to the

³⁰⁶ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

³⁰⁷ ADL 1 W 73, Comité départemental de libération; procès-verbaux des réunions, 1944-1948.

³⁰⁸ *Liberté*, (September 1944).

³⁰⁹ *Notre Quercy* (30 June 1946).

argument that her sentence was unduly harsh compared to those of others who had behaved similarly, replied that it was not Madeleine who should be re-tried but the others, whose sentences had been too light.³¹⁰ The archives suggest that he was particularly enraged by the intervention of the Human Rights League. In January 1946, one week before M. Contou of the League was called by the CDL to appear before it about Madeleine, Étienne posted an article in *Notre Quercy* which reprinted the photograph of Madeleine and complained that the League was intervening on behalf of a woman who had 'dishonoured Cahors'. This was followed by a further attack on the League three days later.³¹¹ At the CDL meeting, he pre-empted proceedings by reminding the Committee of its duty to act as the 'emanation of the Resistance' and protesting at the presence of M. Contou, brushing aside the evidence that Madeleine had not denounced the young Resisters by pointing again to the '... life of pleasure' led by her '...in the company of Germans'. This reveals that for him in fact Madeleine's real crime was befriending Germans and behaving in ways that he found offensive.³¹² In July 1946, after Madeleine's release, he wrote a long article bemoaning what he saw as the half-hearted and incomplete *épuration*, and then listing the names of prominent Vichyites who had escaped justice or had been treated, as he saw it, with undue leniency. The list began with Pétain and Weygand and then, improbably, bracketed Madeleine with leading Lotois collaborators, including the Vichyite minister Anatole de Monzie.³¹³

Typicality

How unusual, in the context of Cahors and Quercy, were the behaviours of Étienne and Madeleine? The broader background to

³¹⁰ ADL 1 W 195, Épurations, miliciens et collaborateurs: CDL Minutes, 10 Jan. 1946.

³¹¹ *Notre Quercy* (3 Jan. 1946, 6 Jan. 1946).

³¹² ADL 1 W 195, Épurations, miliciens et collaborateurs: CDL Minutes, 10 Jan. 1946.

³¹³ *Notre Quercy* (28 July 1946).

the temporary powers assumed by men like Étienne was that from the spring of 1944 there was no effective government in Quercy. As described earlier, after the May massacres at Montpezat de Quercy and Frayssinet-le-Gélat, the region had been subjected to an intensifying cycle of horror, which included raids and massacres at other villages, as well as a mass deportation to Germany of civilians from Figeac. Resistance military operations were countered with savage German reprisals against unarmed civilians and torture of suspected Resisters, while the Resistance summarily executed *miliciens* and alleged collaborators among the population. According to one source, the Lot was in the highest category of departments in terms of summary executions, with over one hundred.³¹⁴ Three competing forces fought for power, in an anarchic and increasingly savage process: the Resistance, effectively in Communist hands by the time Cahors was liberated on 17 August; the German army and the Gestapo; and the Vichy *milice*, whose murderous behaviour intensified in inverse proportion to its effectiveness. By 17 August, the Resistance had won the battle. On that day, the Germans withdrew from Cahors and the vicinity without a shot being fired, and the Communist leaders took control of the town and the department. They retained power through the autumn, appointing their own man as Prefect of the Lot.³¹⁵ Étienne's actions at this time need to be understood in this context of hatred and violence that had come to grip the region by August, and further venom was of course added to his own mood by the particular tragedies of his own life.

The memoirs of other prominent male Lot Resisters, and the biography of Chapou, are of some help in assessing the typicality or

³¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 30.

³¹⁵ For the national story, see for example Philip M. Williams, *Crisis and Compromise; Politics in the Fourth Republic* (London, 1964), pp. 17-20; and Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, pp. 29-50. As to Cahors, see René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, pp. 18-19.

otherwise of Étienne's behaviour.³¹⁶ They are less emotional and condemnatory than Étienne's writings, and lack his repeated and strident attacks on collaborators and his demands for heavy retribution. But they were written decades after the war, when tempers were cooler and attitudes had changed, and in that sense cannot be directly compared with Étienne's contemporaneous work. They do however enable us to comprehend something of his rage, in showing just how emotionally charged feelings were in the Lot in 1944. Writing in the 1970s of his time as Communist leader of the FTP Resistance group in the Lot, Robert Noireau provides a reminder that the mental state of men like Étienne needs to be understood in the context of widespread communal terror. Noireau recalled that by the time of Cahors' liberation in August:

'...there was no pity left, on either side. German terror had to be met with a counter-terror that would dissuade waverers from denouncing the Resistance.'

This was 'not a pretty war, with its parades and codes of honour; it was a savage war.' Admitting to 'certain methods of clandestine war (*la guerre des ombres*)', he went on to argue that:

'...not being the stronger side, we had to be the smarter one, the more astute; and to apply the old anarchist formula: for one eye, two eyes, for one tooth, the whole mouth.'³¹⁷

As to the *épuration*, Noireau admitted that mistakes had been made in Cahors and elsewhere, and that innocent people had been wrongly punished. But the *maquis* could hardly be blamed. In the context of the brutality of German and Vichy reprisal actions, 'how could it be avoided that such and such *maquisard*, in such and such a place, flexed his muscles a little too much?' And in any case some of the punishments were the work of criminals:

³¹⁶ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*; Verdier, *Ma Résistance*; Cazard and Metges, *Capitaine Philippe*; Andrieu, *Un rêve fou*?

³¹⁷ Noireau, *Les Temps des Partisans*, pp. 176, 218-19.

'It was to be expected that the feverish weeks leading up to the Liberation and those that followed it were propitious for certain settlements of account among the criminal underworld and particularly in the larger cities.'³¹⁸

In its account of the Liberation of Cahors, the memoir of Noireau's political officer, René Andrieu, makes no mention at all of wrong or excessive punishments by the Resistance.³¹⁹ In short, these two leaders either excused the mistakes, blamed them on others, or failed to acknowledge them, and Noireau's prose displays an attitude to them that is worldly, bordering on cynical.

The masterful form of masculinity displayed at the Liberation of Cahors by these Communist Resistance leaders will be described in the due course, with particular reference to René Andrieu. These other writings also attest to the fact that in Quercy in 1944 law and order had substantially dissolved and there was a long hiatus between the effective demise of Vichy in the spring of 1944 and the eventual reimposition of the state apparatus by de Gaulle's Provisional Government during the course of 1945. These circumstances offered men like Étienne a brief opportunity to take revenge and to plan for new political structures consonant with their beliefs.

In the group of young women who congregated at the Café Tivoli in Cahors lies an echo of the 'little gang' of Albertine's girlfriends who, in an earlier incarnation of female rebellion, Marcel Proust had described as alarming the elderly bourgeoisie of Balbec.³²⁰ In both cases, altered circumstances had encouraged young women to follow their desires and behave in ways that cut across the old rules of class, age and gender. The focus here has been on Madeleine; but the behaviour of the others was not much different from hers

³¹⁸ Noireau, *Les temps des partisans*, pp. 249-56.

³¹⁹ René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, pp. 95-7.

³²⁰ Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past, I* (London, 1983), pp. 845-56.

even if, in the disordered justice during the immediate *après-libération*, their punishments were erratically different. Lucie Clement-Grandcour, the secretary at the LVF who may also have been the mistress of its local chief, Pierre Collin, was suspected like Madeleine of denouncing Resisters, but was given double Madeleine's sentence. Étienne was in no doubt as to the guilt of Lucie, heading a note that he wrote about her to one of the *épuration* commissions '*LA LVF HORIZONTALE*'. (The LVF woman who slept with Germans.)³²¹ Lucie's story is most instructive as to gendered attitudes at the Liberation thanks to a remarkable report written by her interrogator, Inspector Ponsolle, in March 1945. Long and detailed, it suggests that Ponsolle was a romantic novelist or psychiatrist manqué, something of which he himself may have been aware: he felt obliged to remind the reader that 'this report is not of course a novel'. While he describes Lucie as coming 'from an honest, Catholic and practising family and not much chased by the boys', in fact she was:

'A passionate woman without knowing it, her excessive feelings, long suppressed, but of the most intense variety, suddenly released by the evil influence of the unsavoury and disreputable Collin, to whom she became entirely devoted - without perhaps being able to judge the consequences; indeed, she is portrayed by those who know her well as having as little experience of life as a ten-year-old child.'

Later, he painted Lucie as being subject to incessant collaborationist indoctrination: during the day in the office her '... state of mind was greatly influenced by Collin' while in the evenings at home with her parents she was 'in an environment that was similarly strongly pro-Vichy...where even characters tougher than hers would have been stifled'. More importantly, he also

³²¹ ADL 96 J 19, Fonds Verlhac, Comité Départemental de Libération; Comité de Épuration.

accepted that there were no witnesses to 'her exact activity'. Notwithstanding all this, his report concluded with a *volte face* by finding her guilty by association, and by virtue of a public opinion 'which desires despite everything to see her given a harsher sentence than the one she has already received'. In an echo of the prose of Étienne, he recommended a 'pitiless verdict'.³²²

Of the other two women at the swimming party, Simone Salhiem was given six months' internment in October 1944 'for frequent outings with occupying troops'.³²³ That this sentence was considerably less than Madeleine's (and Lucie's) may have possibly been because she denounced other supposed collaborators during her interrogations. Jacqueline Périé was, potentially at least, in deeper trouble than Madeleine and Simone, as she was rumoured to have given the '*Heil Hitler!*' salute while being photographed in the uniform.³²⁴ But like that of Simone, this photograph could not be produced for evidence and there is no record of Jacqueline being punished.

Here it is worth pausing to reflect on the characterisation of the young female defendants made by the various individuals involved. While Madeleine and Yvonne were straightforwardly painted as stereotypical evil sexual temptresses by Étienne and several witnesses (including female witnesses), Madeleine's male defenders, and to some extent Inspector Ponsole in his psychoanalysis of Lucie, tended to excuse their behaviour on the grounds of frivolity, childishness, excess of sentiment, lack of self-knowledge, or weakness of character. Although such an analysis may have had some basis in reality, it does of course come close to another gendered stereotype, that of the woman whose mental

³²² ADL 1 W 182, Répression de faits de collaboration, attitude antinationale, ayant fait l'objet d'internement ou d'assignation à la résidence..

³²³ ADL 1 W 976, Épuration Civile et Administrative.

³²⁴ ADLG 1741 W 34, Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.

frailties or underdevelopment are so pronounced that she cannot be held responsible for her actions and accordingly should not be punished too harshly for them. Nor can society accord her the same rights as others.

Finally, inter-generational conflict is highly likely to have contributed to the persecution of these young women by older men such as Étienne. A member of the *poilu* generation, he had probably already been shocked by the hedonistic behaviour of young people, and especially young women, in the years following the end of the First World War; that is, of women of the generation of Françoise de Boissésou, who were born at around the turn of the century. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the way that the Occupation gave women like Madeleine the chance to behave differently, and the evidence makes it clear that Étienne was morally outraged by that. It is probable that, as he moved into his 50s, he felt considerable anger at the behaviour of these young women, born in the early 1920s, a time when his own youth, given up to the first conflict, was already over.³²⁵ Étienne had experienced two phenomena that have been described as important threats to the conception of bourgeois masculinity, namely an unfaithful wife and an indifferent career, and it is hard not to see the apparent mockery and frivolity of these young women as posing further threats to his sense of his male self.³²⁶

Conclusion

For Madeleine, as for Étienne, the war had served as a time of purpose and of change. Both, albeit in very different fashions, embraced the new conditions of flux and uncertainty that the war had brought, and from them derived new powers. Their stories illustrate how, for a time, both collaboration and then liberation

³²⁵ Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, pp. 92-105.

³²⁶ Rauch, *Le Premier Sexe*, p. 98.

served to upend social conventions, and to undermine law and order. In exercising their powers, each displayed exaggerated forms of established gendered representations: the hard, unbending man and the decorative, pleasure-seeking woman. Liberated by the war from pen-pushing and humdrum local politics, Étienne could devote himself to the conventionally masculine tasks of fighting and then punishing his enemies, while Madeleine was able to play the markedly feminine role of the carefree adventuress, flaunting her enjoyment around town. She could scandalise her compatriots, whom we may reasonably imagine she regarded as staid, boring, and deserving of shaking up. Before the war, the space for a young woman like her to act in these ways in a community like Cahors was absent, because there had been no overriding and novel external power to which she could attach herself and, from that protected position, offend the sensibilities of her fellow citizens.

The stories of Madeleine and her friends recall the *louche* world in which Louis Malle portrayed provincial collaborators in his 1974 film *'Lacombe, Lucien'* (shot in the Lot). Pleasure-seeking is not, in normal times, a crime, but during and after the Liberation it was treated as such. Conventional modes of legality and justice became distorted, such that behaviours and lifestyles could be deemed crimes and rumour could become evidence. 'Horizontal collaboration', in which Madeleine and Lucie were assumed to have engaged, not only offended against familial and communal morality, but was deemed an offence against the nation, the women condemned for having 'surrendered' themselves to a foreign power - a painful (and now punishable) reminder that France, invariably feminine, had herself surrendered to that same power in 1940.

There is no evidence that Madeleine Tavernier helped Vichy or the Germans in any material way, and it seems unlikely that she did. The evidence is neutral as to whether she had sexual relationships with German soldiers. Her real perceived crime was in making friends with Vichyite and German men, in behaving in a sexually confident way and in advertising the fact that she could not have cared less about what the bourgeoisie of Cahors thought of her. Above all, her mistake was to allow herself to be photographed, smiling, in a German uniform. The photograph, indelible and capable of infinite reproduction, showed an attractive young Frenchwoman dressed in the uniform of the conquering enemy and apparently delighted with what she was doing. This single image was taken not as a mockery of the German uniform, but as a mockery of two French symbols which in 1944 were absolutely not to be mocked: France as a proud military nation, now rising from ignominy to expel the conqueror from its lands; and France as a society endowed with the virtues of bourgeois good order and personal respectability. The image was deemed to say: here is a woman who has no respect for her country and who had been leading *la vie en rose* while the good citizens among her suffered deprivation and worse. Madeleine had always stood out. But now she had emphatically sinned, and she needed to be struck down.

The actions against women like Madeleine by men like Étienne Verlhac were not only a judgement on individual women who had collaborated and consorted with occupying troops, but also formed part of a broader matrix of social forces. Most obviously, they marked the brief ascendancy of local forms of improvised rule, which in south-west France as in other areas of liberated Europe - notably northern Italy and the western Balkans - filled the vacuum left by the collapse of state authority and the rule of law. Étienne

Verlhac, Robert Noireau, and René Andrieu were able to act as they did because there was in effect nobody to stop them, and because the titles and offices they assumed cloaked their actions with a certain veneer of legitimacy. Étienne saw himself as the agent of the avenging will of the people, and his power reflected the way in which authority around the moment of liberation was vested emphatically at the local level rather than in more vertical hierarchies of responsibility and command.

In addition, however, the case of Madeleine was the expression of the confused dynamics of gender relations at the liberation. The war years had disrupted much but, especially in the village and small-town cultures of south-west France, it had thrown into question the interlocking hierarchies of class, age, and gender. Madeleine embodied these disturbing changes. Societal disruption had given her the space to enjoy both freedom and the chance to flaunt her connections with the new power in the land. With the war over, and the widely felt wish to return to a certain normality, she was a demonstration of the exceptionalism which many wished to see brought to an end. Thus, in contrast to Étienne's other, more political ambitions, the prosecution of a figure such as Madeleine enjoyed a broad coalition of support, including from many who had no sympathy for Communism, or indeed for the Resistance.

It is hard not to believe that the tragedies in Étienne's life intensified his appetite for revenge. Surely the murder of his only son added to his earlier personal woes to produce a form of brutal, grief-fueled rage that played a part not only in his probable involvement in the executions of Yvonne and Louis Wagner, but also in his hounding of Madeleine and others like her. His private tragedies, with which women were so closely bound, may also have tipped him into aggressive misogyny, which may have been

exacerbated by his advancing years and his ailing health. Some of his prose indicates misogyny. While the evidence does not allow a firm conclusion on this facet of his make-up, it seems that the dramas of his life led to intense emotion and physical stress, and that in consequence his identity was reshaped and accentuated.

That there was a wider surge in gendered violence during the liberation is unquestionable, and Étienne's actions must be seen as part of that. But the history of that wider episode is nuanced. Gender relations at the liberation were a contested field, reflecting both the many opportunities that the war had presented to women to act outside the roles ascribed to them by family and local community, and the erosion of French male authority that had also come with the war.³²⁷ Madeleine well expressed that fluidity, and it is tempting to see, in the actions of Étienne and the other men who attacked her, a half-conscious attempt to reassert male leadership over women. This must, however, only be a partial truth. Many women shared in the desire to see the punishment of those like Madeleine, who through their public reputation appeared to symbolise the betrayal of the local community and of its traditional mores. Her punishment therefore had a logic which was larger than a disciplining of errant women: it reflected a wider settling of accounts within the dynamics of a provincial society.³²⁸ This period of reckoning gave Étienne his brief opportunity to act, but also explained the rapid waning of his power once the exceptionalism of the liberation had passed, and the more predictable and stable authority constituted by the Gaullist Provisional Government re-established a monopoly over state power. The imposition of this new authority spelt the end of Étienne's quasi-governmental power,

³²⁷ See for example Michael Kelly, 'The Reconstruction of Masculinity' in Kedward and Wood (eds), *The Liberation of France*, pp. 117-28, and Corran Laurens, 'La Femme au Turban': les Femmes tondues', in the same volume, pp. 155-79.

³²⁸ Koreman, *Expectation of Justice*, pp. 92-147.

as it also provided Madeleine with a more considered judicial process and a reduced sentence.

Étienne Verlhac died relatively young, at the age of 60, and not long after the war's end. Madeleine Tavernier lived to the age of 88. She died near St. Tropez in 2009.

Chapter 7

The Making of a Heroic Male: The Life and Death of Jacques Chapou

(*'Capitaine Philippe'*)

Introduction

'Full of drive and initiative, he distinguished himself by his bravery and his risking death. Hard on himself, but kindly to his men, he soon created the legend of Capitaine Philippe, the captain-commander of the department's military, seeming to be in all places at once, working himself to death, constantly on the road, checking out Resistance sabotages, he threw himself, alone or with a handful of men, into attacking enemy troops...never ceasing to harass the *boche*, he met death at a roadblock where, wounded and refusing to bear the German yoke, he preferred to take his own life with a bullet to the head.'

These words were written in January 1945 as part of the citation for the posthumous award of the *Croix de la Libération* to Jacques Chapou (1909-44).³²⁹ They reflect that, even before his death six months earlier, Chapou had become a model of the romantic, rural *maquisard* leader, and the most important symbol of the Resistance in his region. This representation was extended into the immediate postwar period, and still holds good today. He was seen as a charismatic true 'son of Quercy', rooted in his native soil. One Resistance comrade later said, '...he went straight into legend, young and proud, hailing from his sunlit *Causse*.'³³⁰ Today, the main square in Cahors is named after him and a bust of him on a plinth stands at its centre. Numerous other squares and streets in the Lot are named after him, as was one of the rugby stadia in Toulouse.

³²⁹ ADL 1 W 249, Médailles.

³³⁰ Jacques Duclos (ed.), *Maquis de Corrèze, 150 combattants et témoins*, (Paris, 1975); testimony of Jean-Paul Magnac, p. 446.

Every anniversary of the liberation of Cahors on 17th August a wreath is laid at the plinth in Cahors.³³¹

Chapou had a powerful physical presence, and was considered fearless, selfless, determined, effective, and stoical. He was an inspiring commander, who led by example and was loved by his men. Above all, his story ended in a dramatic and mysterious death, one deemed fitting for a hero. In the collective mind in Quercy, he came to be regarded as a man possessed of exceptional capabilities, one who stood outside the ordinary run of men. He embodied a form of hegemonic French masculinity: a shining exemplar of the noble and pure French patriot and fighter. This ideal identity was much in demand during the final stages of the war, as the country emerged from defeat and occupation and its people sought a palatable narrative to account for their collective actions during the war.

This chapter will address three overlapping questions in relation to this part-mythologised identity. How did Chapou evolve from the pacifist, left-leaning, and rather lowly schoolteacher he had been up to 1939 into a Communist military leader whose main aim was to 'kill *boches*'?³³² How was his masculine identity remoulded as the war developed? How far removed was the reality of the man from the paragon of manhood that he came to represent?

³³¹ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', p. 1.

³³² Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', p. 32.



Figure 24: Bust of Chapou in Main Square of Cahors, (Author's Photograph, 2022).

Early Life (1909-38)

Jacques Chapou was born in April 1909 in Montcuq, a small town situated in the south-west corner of the Lot department. His parents, Étienne-Fernand and Camille, were both schoolteachers in the town. He had one sister, Marguerite, who was 5 years older and who, like him, was to die young, in 1949. Their childhood was dominated by the death of Étienne-Fernand in the First World War. He too was reputed to have met a hero's end. Badly wounded in the head during the Battle of the Aisne in late September 1914, he suffered a lingering death uncomplainingly for several days before

expiring in early October. The family memory has it that he even spent part of his dying days playing the violin, to help bear his ordeal and to prepare himself for death.³³³ In 1919 he was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur* for bravery.³³⁴ The youth of his only son Jacques was thus marked by an awareness not only that his father was a victim of war, but also that he was regarded as a hero. On the first of these aspects his biographer Georges Cazard wrote:

‘Mourning enveloped the family. From his early years, Chapou heard nothing but talk of war and of its horrors. How often did he see sad tears run from his mother’s eyes!’

And on the heroic aspect, he quoted a family friend as describing Étienne-Fernand in terms similar to those that would later be used to describe his son Jacques:

‘A firm and resolute heart, loyal and honest, at once both keen and calm, kind and benevolent to others but hard on himself, stoical in the face of pain, he was a great soldier’.³³⁵

Chapou was aged 5 when his father died. As the son of a dead soldier, he became a ward of the state and thus his mother Camille received official financial assistance for his education. Camille was a very strong-willed woman. According to Jacques Chapou’s daughter Françoise, Camille raised her son ‘with an iron hand’, and this compensated somewhat for the absence of a father.³³⁶ Camille’s character is mostly recalled with reference to her behaviour as a prisoner at the Ravensbrück camp in 1944 (where Marie-Antoinette Orcival also was), and to her conduct when faced with death there. The family memory of this was set down in a harrowing letter written in 1994 by Françoise’s younger brother Pierre to the

³³³ Interview with Françoise Chapou, (b. 12.4.40), conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

³³⁴ Notification of award, (Chapou Family Archive).

³³⁵ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 22.

³³⁶ Interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

organisers of celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of Cahors. Chapou's children were concerned to ensure that the pervasive memory of their father should be balanced with some attention to the bravery and terrible death of their grandmother Camille. The letter is based on witness statements given by Ravensbrück survivors to an enquiry in 1946, and states that Camille had:

‘ ... sung the ‘Marseillaise’ each morning as the *réveille* sounded, was then punished for her patriotism by being denied food and water; and condemned to complete nakedness apart from a tattered straw hat; was then taken to the crematory ovens, still shouting the ‘Marseillaise’ at the top of her voice, laid out on one of the sinister wheeled platforms that were used to roll the corpses into the ovens, but in her case still alive and so burnt to death, without even having the right (how can I write this?) of being gassed.’³³⁷

Even allowing for the likely embellishment in this letter, Camille was certainly a formidable woman, one who would have instilled in her son the virtue of stoical courage in the face of adversity.

According to Cazard, the death of Étienne-Fernand caused the family, like the Noëls, to become ardent pacifists. He continued:

‘The fierce hatred of war and ardent love of peace that drove Jacques Chapou throughout his youth and up to 1939 was doubtless born at this time [his early childhood] when aged only 15, he was already telling us of his hope for the universal peace for which his father had lain down his life.’³³⁸

Chapou was educated first at the *Collège de Figeac* and from 1924, aged 15, at the *Lycée Gambetta* in Cahors. These moves – Montcuq to Figeac, Figeac to Cahors – were consequent upon his mother's various teaching posts. Aged 19, having decided to become a teacher himself, he moved to the *Lycée de Toulouse* to begin

³³⁷ Letter of Pierre Chapou to Mlle. Scorbiac, 1994, (Chapou Family Archive).

³³⁸ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 22.

studying to enter the elite *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris. According to Cazard, this decision was made primarily because both his parents, and his maternal grandmother, had been teachers and he resolved to follow the family tradition.



Figure 25: Teachers and senior pupils of the *Lycée Gambetta*, Cahors, c. 1927. Jacques Chapou is at the far right of the bottom row. (Chapou Family Archive).



Figure 26: Enlargement of Figure 25: Jacques Chapou at right.

He was an intelligent and diligent child, but Cazard's memories of the youthful Chapou focus more on his sporting prowess, liveliness, and leadership qualities than on his scholastic abilities. Of seeing the 14-year-old playing rugby, he wrote of being:

'.... astonished by his agility and suppleness. Moving more fluently than the others, tall and nimble, he was the leader, giving advice, issuing orders.'³³⁹

Again according to Cazard, Chapou was a generous, popular boy, acting as a mediator in disputes and much liked and admired by his classmates.³⁴⁰

In the summer of 1930, he failed to pass the demanding entry examination for the *École Normale Supérieure*, but still wished to pursue a teaching career. He therefore secured a position as a *maître d'internat* at the *Lycée de Castres*. This was one of the lowest posts in the French teaching system, and *maîtres d'internat* were mockingly referred to as '*pions*' (pawns or 'dogsbodies').

³³⁹ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 21.

³⁴⁰ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 30.

Meanwhile, he continued his studies at the *Université de Toulouse*, where he worked toward a degree in Letters, specialising in ancient Greek. The duty of a *maître d'internat* was to supervise the pupils during the evening and night, over the lunch break, and during the early afternoon. The remainder of the time was intended for study but in effect the young male *maîtres d'internat* were largely free to do what they wanted. In addition, they had one day off a week and, if the *lycée* had more than one *maître d'internat*, it was possible to swap days such that a two-day break could be taken.³⁴¹

Chapou held this position at Castres for two years and then undertook another two years in the same role at the *Lycée de Montauban*. When the Montauban position ended in the summer of 1934, Chapou was 25 years old and was obliged to undertake one year's military service, which he had hitherto been able to defer as a student. His daughter Françoise recalls her mother telling her that, as evidence of his continuing pacifism, he deliberately failed the spelling test required to become an officer.³⁴² The year of service was passed uneventfully in an infantry regiment at Tarbes. In October 1935, he obtained yet another *maître d'internat* position, this time at the *Lycée Gambetta* in Cahors. A year later, he obtained a teaching position, as assistant professor at the *Collège de Condom*, and a year after that was able to secure the same position back where he had been a pupil, at the *Lycée Gambetta* in Cahors.³⁴³

By now it was 1937 and he was 28. The preceding several years had been itinerant and far from arduous. Chapou took full advantage of the substantial free time given to *maîtres d'internat*. While he appears to have been a competent and much liked

³⁴¹ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 27-40.

³⁴² Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1': transcript therein of interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Sarah Chabert, (undated but circa 2021, Appendix).

³⁴³ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 27-40.

supervisor, his heart did not really lie in a teaching career. Cazard recalled an episode of a summer evening in Cahors in 1936 when a friend had confided to Chapou how much he yearned to spend the summer holidays with his family at home in Millau, some 175 km. from Cahors. On an impulse, Chapou decided to drive the friend through the night to Millau. He dropped the friend there, turned around and drove straight back through the night, reaching Cahors around 9.00 a.m. the following day. This incident led Cazard to reflect:

‘I understood that Chapou was capable of doing much, with an extraordinary energy, astonishing physical strength, and limitless generosity. I also understood that he had gone astray in his profession which, though an admirable one, was too sedentary for him.’³⁴⁴

Chapou’s energy was in fact expended mainly in sport and other leisure activities, and through his 20s he was less the scholar than the sportsman, the organiser, and the general ‘jolly good fellow’ (*‘un gai luron’* in Cazard’s words). From about 1933 he also put aside working towards his degree at Toulouse. He had been an avid rugby player as a schoolboy and continued to play as an adult, at fly-half and to a high standard. (His nose was broken in consequence.) Rugby was an important element in Chapou’s particular brand of masculinity. It is a highly physical contact sport in which players are not afraid to be hurt and to hurt others. Its ethos encourages a homo-sociability from which women were, at least at that time, excluded. Playing it well also involves discipline and chains of command, which often revolve around the pivotal position in which Chapou himself played, fly-half. The rugby team contains leaders and followers, and positions that are more central and others that are more peripheral. Chapou was a leader, and

³⁴⁴ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 40.

typically at the centre of whatever he was doing. He was also dedicated to hunting (deer and wildfowl, though he was especially keen on shooting wild boar), and to fishing the rivers of the south-west – he was, according to another friend and comrade, ‘an intrepid hunter and a fine fisherman; fiery, passionate and enthusiastic’.³⁴⁵ When not engaged in sports or country pursuits, he passed his free time in a highly active social life, playing cards and partying in all the towns in which he was supervising pupils or theoretically studying on his own account. He had a wide circle of friends, was very popular, and ‘the life and soul of the party.’³⁴⁶ In short, during these years he enjoyed himself. He also had his failings: according to Françoise, her mother had told her that he was a ‘*bon vivant*’, a spendthrift who had no financial sense (*‘un panier percé’*), and a man who liked his drink but could not hold it.³⁴⁷

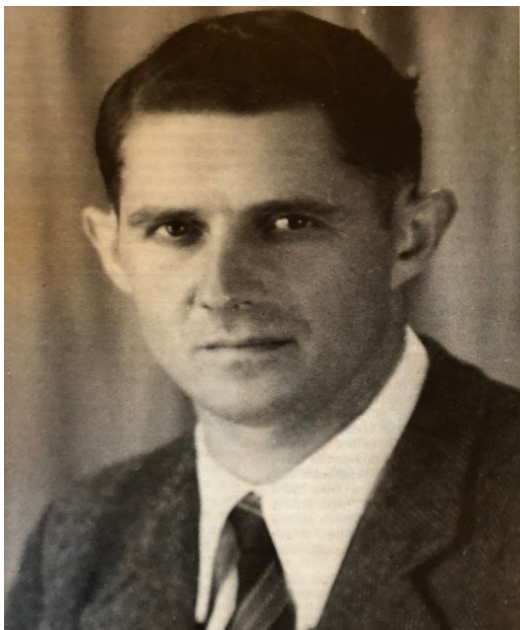


Figure 27: Jacques Chapou circa 1940, (Chapou Family Archive).

³⁴⁵ Roger Mendes, *La Résistance en Quercy*, (place of publication unclear; undated), Chapou Family Archive.

³⁴⁶ Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1’, p. 34.

³⁴⁷ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 33-8, 45.

Chapou's identity in his 20s was emphatically masculine, and of a particular type. His professional activities took place in exclusively male environments, and his pastimes (rugby and hunting) were then male-only pursuits. His social life seems to have revolved around cards, parties and male clubability. Cazard makes no reference at all to girls or young women, and leaves the impression that Chapou's friendship group was predominantly or even wholly male. If he had girlfriends, none are mentioned by Cazard; nor by his great-granddaughter Sarah Chabert who has, as noted in Chapter 2, recently written a thesis on him at the University of Avignon. The first woman of his own age to be mentioned in Cazard is Yvonne Contou, whom Chapou met in the summer of 1932. She was the daughter of artisans from Cahors and was then studying to qualify as a teacher, which she achieved the following year. They became engaged at Easter 1933 and were married in Cahors that July. But the early years of their marriage were marked by long periods of separation, as Yvonne taught at Lalbenque, near Cahors, while Chapou was based some distance away, at Montauban and then at Condom. It was only when they both obtained teaching positions in Cahors in 1937, four years after their marriage, that they were able to live together on a permanent basis. They had two children, Françoise, born in 1940, and Pierre, born in 1942.³⁴⁸

Chapou was an imposing figure with penetrating dark eyes, as captured in the photograph reproduced above. According to his daughter Françoise, he was thought highly attractive to women, and his striking appearance was much remarked upon. Françoise has said that he became an unfaithful husband, having several affairs after his marriage.³⁴⁹ And, as we will see, during the war he

³⁴⁸ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 36-9.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

also had an affair with his liaison agent, Jacqueline Lazargue. His physical charm struck men as well as women. The Resister and surrealist poet Jean Marcenac had been a childhood friend. In 1969, in a speech to mark the unveiling of the bust of Chapou in Cahors, he said:

‘Now all I can see is a dark boy, beautiful as an archangel, his eyes brown and sometimes sad. For us youngsters, he was bathed in glory, admired, and adored.’³⁵⁰

By the late 1930s, when he was approaching the age of 30, Chapou probably felt some measure of frustration and purposelessness in pursuing a career that did not really fulfill him. In this respect he resembled Étienne Verlhac who, despite being almost twenty years older than Chapou, appears to have shared with him the restless dissatisfaction of being marooned in not quite the right profession and at a fairly humble level. With the apparent aim of compensating for these professional disappointments, the two men also devoted themselves to similar extracurricular activities. While Étienne busied himself with socialist politics and freemasonry, Chapou’s outlets were freemasonry too, but also labour activism.

Engagement (1936-40)

Chapou became involved with the trade-union movement in 1936 while teaching at Condom and when his status as a ward of state (and his father’s death in combat) permitted him to join the union for retired servicemen (*L’Union Fédérale des Anciens Combattants*). In Cahors the following year, he made rapid progress in this world, becoming secretary of the local branches of two unions: the CGT-affiliated secondary-school teachers’ union

³⁵⁰ Jean Marcenac, speech of 17 Aug. 1969, reproduced in *50ème Anniversaire* brochure, p. 5.

(*Syndicat des professeurs de l'Enseignement secondaire*) and the civil servants' union (*Fédération des fonctionnaires*). He strongly supported a confederated trade unionism that was independent of political parties, in line with the politics of the syndicalist labour leader Léon Jouhaux.³⁵¹

During the Munich crisis, his commitment to pacificism was given a public airing when (at Cazard's invitation) he spoke of the need for peace at a meeting of young people and First World War veterans in the Quercy town of Molières, where Cazard was a councillor. Cazard described Chapou's pacificism at this time in these terms:

'He was one of those sincere and pure pacifists for whom the fight starts well before mobilisation in order to avoid the latter, arms in hand after mobilisation when the dice have been thrown.'³⁵²

With the words 'arms in hand after mobilisation', Cazard implies that Chapou's pacifism had its limits, although this may have been an *a posteriori* reading of his pre-war thinking. Later, on the eve of war, Cazard wrote of recalling Chapou both framing his father's death as being as a sacrifice in the cause of peace, and continuing (despite Munich's failure) to believe in the possibility of peace by negotiation or even by popular insurrection:

'No, my father won't have died for nothing. If the dictators want war, the people will come out onto the streets in order to impose peace.'³⁵³

He was initiated into freemasonry in 1938. Pierre Lafargue, a friend of his father, introduced him to the 'Lighthouse of Quercy' lodge in Cahors. Chapou was apparently suitably discreet about his masonic activities, but it is known that he rose up the ranks and by the

³⁵¹ Bernard Georges and Denise Tintant, *Léon Jouhaux: cinquante ans de syndicalisme* (Paris, 1964).

³⁵² Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 43.

³⁵³ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 46.

outbreak of war had become the lodge's treasurer. Cazard wrote that Lafargue had stated:

'From that time our contacts became more frequent, because I rapidly formed an affinity with this young man whose frankness, energy and enthusiasm for great causes and noble ideas reminded me of my old comrade [Chapou's father] Fernand Chapou.'³⁵⁴

Chapou remained a committed freemason at least until joining the Communist Party in 1944. He also displayed his membership of it: when a *maquis* leader, he signed his orders with his *nom de guerre* followed by a masonic symbol.³⁵⁵ He was an atheist, and neither of his children was baptised (which was unusual in the Lot at this time).³⁵⁶ However, his was an easy-going atheism. He had many Catholic friends and often attended services in the cathedral of Cahors, enjoying '*tête à tête*' gossip with his friends among the congregation.³⁵⁷

This pre-war activism did not extend to party politics. Although he was briefly a member of the socialist party in the late 1930s, once he became attached to Jouhaux's brand of syndicalism, his involvement with the socialists ceased.³⁵⁸ He was thought, including by the senior Resister Noireau and by his family, to have been moderately anti-Communist until his sudden adherence to that cause in late 1943 or early 1944.³⁵⁹ He was certainly a Republican, and there is evidence that he had a romantic attachment to the Republic of 1792 and the *levée en masse*. When he was transferred from the Lot to the Corrèze in 1944, he changed his *nom de guerre*

³⁵⁴ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 44.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Sarah Chabert, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 1 Nov. 2022.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

³⁵⁷ Marcenac, speech of 17 Aug. 1969.

³⁵⁸ Vaissié, *Cahors et le Lot sous l'Occupation*, p. 28.

³⁵⁹ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, p. 122; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

from 'Phillipe' to 'Kléber', after the Revolutionary general who had come from a working-class background and had remained committed to the Republic even while serving Napoleon. Other Resisters shared this sense of following in the footsteps of the soldiers of 1792; one claimed that 'the FFIs really embodied the *levée en masse* of the French people against the invader'.³⁶⁰ In referring to Chapou's moderate anti-Communism, Noireau later wrote that he:

'... was of too independent a mind to become an orthodox Communist and he was driven rather to seek a fraternity of arms springing from shared action and shared goals.'³⁶¹

When asked if he would pursue a military career after the war, Chapou replied that he might, but only if that army became truly 'the emanation of the people'.³⁶²

He was called up at the outbreak of war and spent nine months in an infantry reconnaissance unit in Provence and the Basses-Alpes until the French surrender. He was able to use this time to improve his marksmanship and to learn how to operate a field radio, but the winter passed in the mountains was, according to Cazard, a 'calm and idle' sojourn during which this 'enforced tourist' learned to ski and was able to indulge in 'many excursions and walks'.³⁶³ Thus, Chapou's rather leisured existence lasted until 1940, when he was 31.

Resistance (1940-3)

After demobilisation in the summer of 1940, Chapou returned to Cahors. He spent time with Yvonne and their first child, Françoise, and resumed teaching at the *Lycée Gambetta*. However, like many in his networks of friends and colleagues in Cahors, he soon found

³⁶⁰ Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, p. 414.

³⁶¹ Noireau, *Les temps des partisans*, p. 122.

³⁶² Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 257.

³⁶³ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', p. 3; Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 57-62.

himself classed as an opponent of the new government. From the summer of 1940 through 1941, members of groups banned or disfavoured by Vichy felt a growing sense of repression and persecution. They came to regard themselves as outsiders, or even as outcasts, from the state. Individual reactions varied widely, from mild to extreme.³⁶⁴

The spate of Vichy legislation in 1940 included the first measures of repression against freemasons, Jews and Communists. The masonic lodges were dissolved by decree in August and legislation was enacted giving the government greater power to control and dismiss civil servants, including teachers. Pétain made no secret of the fact that he partly blamed the teaching profession, with its leftist and pacifist tendencies, for the military collapse in May 1940.³⁶⁵ In addition, with the CGT in disarray, Chapou found himself with free time to return to the studies in Toulouse that he had abandoned in 1933.³⁶⁶

He was doubly affected by this new political climate, being both a freemason and schoolteacher, and this seems to have prompted him to take his initial steps towards resistance. Returning to Toulouse led to contact with the individuals from Cahors and Toulouse who, as we have seen with Étienne Verlhac, decided in November 1940 to form the first Resistance network in the Lot, as well as to begin the reconstitution of the CGT in the south-west. In February 1941, Chapou hosted a meeting at his mother's house in Cahors at which the first local Resistance Committee was established, whose members included Verlhac, Lafargue, Chapou and three others; they were mostly socialists and/or freemasons. Cazard records that

³⁶⁴ Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France*, pp. 163-4.

³⁶⁵ Denis Peschanski, 'Exclusion, persécution, répression', in Azéma and Bédarida (eds.), *Le Régime de Vichy et les Français*, pp. 211-16.

³⁶⁶ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 64.

Chapou also devoted much of that winter to hunting, fishing, and walking, time he used to ponder France's future and his own.³⁶⁷

Chapou's longer trajectory, from his early engagements of 1936-8 to when he 'took the *maquis*' in July 1943, appears to have been marked not by one leap but rather by a series of individual steps. As with many Resisters, his overlapping personal and professional networks – family, friends, sportsmen, schoolteachers, socialists, trade unionists, and freemasons – seem to have been influential in causing him to evolve from disaffection with Vichy to a stance of active resistance. These networks included men who would come through the Resistance to occupy key positions of power in Cahors at the Liberation, including his brother-in-law Louis Contou, Verlhac and Lafargue, Louis Parazines and Raymond Naves. Some, like his father's friend Lafargue, and Verlhac too, were of an older ('*poilu*') generation, and able to give guidance and avuncular support to the younger leaders such as Chapou.³⁶⁸

However, the single most important event in his metamorphosis from pacifist to armed Resister was his being sacked from his teaching and study posts in the autumn of 1941.³⁶⁹ The Vichy anti-masonic legislation required teachers to sign a declaration to the effect that they were not freemasons. Chapou had refused to do so and in October 1941 this caught up with him: he was dismissed from his teaching position at Cahors and from the university in Toulouse. Although he had known for a year that this was likely, the reality of being a victim of the legislation hit him hard. Vichy had deprived him of his livelihood, and a 'downcast and careworn' Chapou told Cazard:

³⁶⁷ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 4-5; Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 64-6.

³⁶⁸ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 4-5; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022. See also Chapter 7.

³⁶⁹ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 32-3.

‘ “I will be really sad to leave the [teaching profession] because I’m proud to have been a member of it. Life is all about knowing how to leave. I will lose my profession and means of existence. That prospect doesn’t trouble me at all.... This ordeal, far from knocking me back, reinforces my courage. If I must fight, then I will know more clearly why I am doing it.” ’³⁷⁰

Putting a brave face on it, the blow was thus re-cast as an opportunity, and the possibility of combat was envisaged – perhaps, at the time, a typically male response to adverse news.

He quickly obtained a managerial role at a transport company in Cahors. This involved extensive travel in Quercy, an opportunity he used to extend his contacts among actual and prospective Lotois Resisters, and to distribute Resistance tracts. Jacqueline Lazargue also had a job in the paper industry, and she and Chapou met through working there.³⁷¹ He continued to spend time clandestinely rebuilding trade unions in the region, particularly from 1942 when Jouhaux came to live (under house arrest) in Cahors, and the town became the unofficial headquarters of the French labour movement.³⁷² Chapou concentrated on postal and railway workers whose support for the Resistance was to become key to the success of later *maquis* actions. In 1942 and 1943 several Resistance movements were created. Some, such as *Libération*, were based in the region, while others formed part of groups with a wider reach across the ‘Free Zone’, such as *Combat*, *Libérer et Fédérer* and the Communist *Franc-Tireur*. As elsewhere in France, these movements began to coalesce, and the Lot section of Jean Moulin’s federating organisation, the MUR (*Mouvements Unis de la Résistance*), was established in June 1943. Chapou was closely involved in these

³⁷⁰ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 66.

³⁷¹ Issolan, ‘La Condition des femmes’, p. 176.

³⁷² Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1’, p. 5.

developments. By the spring of 1943, the first *maquis* groups were created in the Lot, mostly under his command.³⁷³

He and his family now came under Vichy suspicion. His home in Cahors was raided in November 1942, but only hunting arms were found. Then, in June 1943, the Radio Vichy broadcaster and well-known Vichyite propagandist Philippe Henriot visited Cahors, and Chapou together with others were briefly imprisoned as a precautionary measure. He took this as a cue to disappear underground, moving to Arcambal, a village outside Cahors where a *maquis* had been set up by his brother-in-law Louis Contou. His wife Yvonne, by now herself actively involved in helping him with Resistance work, was left in Cahors, while his children (now two, following the birth of Pierre in December 1942) were hidden with relatives at Cremps, another village in the *causses*.³⁷⁴

By this time Chapou had earned the reputation of being a fine leader. The principal historians of the *Armée Secrète* (AS) in Quercy stressed how much faith Chapou's men had in him:

‘Only Chapou was acceptable to everyone. He was the only example to follow, the respected advisor, instinctively acknowledged.... automatically accepted by all the *maquisards* of the *Armée Secrète*’³⁷⁵

Several aspects of his character that had been evident from his youth helped him to grow into an inspiring Resistance leader: his energy, his physical presence, his vitality and charisma, his capacity to be liked and to be followed. He was still the dashing rugby player and hunter of game, the ‘jolly good fellow’, now with a nick-name taken from the famous brand of cheese, *La Vache Qui Rit* (The Laughing Cow). His attraction to the daring and the

³⁷³ Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1’, pp. 6-7.

³⁷⁴ Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1’, pp. 6-7; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

³⁷⁵ Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, p.74.

adventurous was admired, but he was determined too, and obstinate; Françoise has said that, according to her mother, 'once he had an idea in his head, he had no way of stopping himself'.³⁷⁶ These conventionally masculine traits formed a consistent part of his identity from the pre-war period until his death. However, other aspects of his character were changed by his involvement in the risks of his Resistance life.

Combat, Communism, and the Corrèze (1943-4)

From the summer of 1943 until his death a year later, Chapou was constantly engaged in planning or executing Resistance combat operations, either attacking German troops and Vichy paramilitaries and infrastructure, or evading capture. He was almost always on the move, and did not return home between July 1943 and July 1944. His experiences during this year took place within the growing violence and lawlessness in the region which, as described earlier, had spiraled into states of brutal war and near-civil war by the summer of 1944. His involvement in the conflict was total, and it took an inevitable mental and physical toll on him.

His first significant engagement was the successful sabotage of the Ratier factory in Figeac in January 1944. Ratier was an important manufacturer of aircraft propellers, then being supplied to the Luftwaffe. One month later, the Cahors office of the STO was raided and all of its files destroyed. That same month, to the great surprise of most of his comrades, Chapou announced that he had decided to join the Communist party. He organised a vote of those under his command as to whether they would follow him in joining the Communist FTP Resistance forces. They voted in favour of doing so and accordingly, in one single move, the great majority of Resisters

³⁷⁶ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 32-5; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Sarah Chabert, as detailed above; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Dec. 2022.

operating in Quercy came under Communist control. This 'thunderclap' caused a major political shock throughout the region.³⁷⁷ But whether it indicated a real shift towards Communism, either by Chapou or by the majority of men under his command, is highly doubtful. The vote appears to have been positive in large part because the men wished to follow Chapou, and most retained whatever political preferences, if any, they had hitherto had. Some even subsequently claimed to have been surprised to learn that they had been enrolled as Communists.³⁷⁸

For Chapou, the motive for this change of allegiance appears to have been strictly military. Communist resistance groups owed their appeal in part to admiration of Soviet success on the Eastern Front, but tactical and local factors counted for more. Communist Resistance groups were committed to immediate military action, in contrast to the more cautious approach followed by their non-Communist comrades, and were well financed and well organised; and in the south-west, where their ranks had been stiffened by Spanish Republican veterans, hardened by service in the Spanish Civil War, they enjoyed the reputation of being the best fighters.³⁷⁹ Chapou wanted to fight, and had had enough of the so-called *attentisme*, the wait-and-see attitude as to the war's outcome, that was usually contrasted with active Resistance or active collaboration. *Attentisme* was also sometimes attributed to the Gaullist (MUR/AS) component of the Resistance to which Chapou had belonged and which indeed wished to delay any substantial military action until the Allied landings.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 110-11.

³⁷⁸ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 110-35; Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, pp. 176-8; Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, pp. 74-5. As to the final point, Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, p. 130.

³⁷⁹ Noireau, *Les temps des partisans*, pp. 112-23.

³⁸⁰ Chabert, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1', pp. 115-16.

But adhering to Communism was not an easy decision for him: Noireau recorded that he was given the responsibility of negotiating with Chapou for the transfer of his troops to the FTP. This was delicate and took time:

‘His education, his past, his friends, all worked against him adhering to a cause that, as a syndicalist, he had fought against. His freemasonry, his affiliation with the CGT of Jouhaux, his teacher friends were all relationships that held him back.’

Henri Vayssettes, head of the MUR in Figeac and a close colleague of Chapou, later said:

‘He was a man of action with a military spirit... he often showed his annoyance with sterile discussions... and was particularly tired of having to explain his actions to men whom he often considered incompetent. He was sometimes criticised, and he took that badly... He also disliked debates about the political future.’³⁸¹

And as Chapou was reported to have said of the Communists:

‘They offer us the chance to act, and I’ll take that chance at the run. I’ve seen them in the field. Maybe they made mistakes in the past, but they know how to fight, and they know how to die.’³⁸²

While to Cazard he said:

‘The MUR’s orders are to wait... for the invasion... My men have been chafing at the bit for too long. Immediate action is necessary, for the young guys who are keen to fight, and to harass an enemy who should no longer be allowed to feel safe on our soil!’³⁸³

Under the leadership of an impatient Chapou, the Quercy *maquis* had been growing at a very fast rate: men under arms in the Lot

³⁸¹ ADL 74 J 30, Témoignage de Henri Vayssettes.

³⁸² Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 179.

³⁸³ As in preceding note.

were estimated by Robert Noireau at 150 in August 1943, 600 in December 1944, 2,500 in June 1944, and 6,000 in August 1944.³⁸⁴ The result of the changes just described was that from early 1944 they were mobilised into direct conflict with the German and Vichy forces. Many among the Communist leadership adhered to a strategy whereby an escalation of armed Resistance actions would set off civilian uprisings. In turn, the thinking ran, these could, if sufficiently widespread and effective, provoke a nationwide revolt that might expel the enemy, overthrow Vichy, and usher in a Communist or pro-Communist order. The military actions of the Quercynois Resistance under Chapou were directed within that strategy.³⁸⁵

In Quercy, two main engagements resulted. The occupation of the town of Cajarc in April was the first significant overt action by *maquis* forces in the region. The plan was to occupy a town and not leave it until the enemy had been engaged. Chapou led the operation, deputised by René Andrieu, the important Communist Resistant who was mentioned in the preceding Chapter and is discussed at more length in the next. Andrieu had been a pupil of Chapou's at the *Lycée Gambetta* and by now usually reported to another committed Communist, Robert Noireau. According to the latter, Andrieu was to observe and manage the 'political consequences'.³⁸⁶ The town was duly occupied, and an ambush laid on the road to Cahors. Chapou then forced a captured *milicien* to telephone the Germans in Cahors to ask for their help in dealing with a *maquis* attack on the town. German troops came and were duly caught in the ambush, suffering 15-20 casualties. Following an

³⁸⁴ Noireau, *Les temps des partisans*, p. 119.

³⁸⁵ Philippe Buton, *Les Lendemain qui déchantent; Le parti communiste à la Libération* (Paris, 1993), pp. 81-99; Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, p. 170; Gildea, *Fighters*, pp. 290-1.

³⁸⁶ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, p. 205.

ad hoc court martial chaired by Chapou, three *miliciens* were executed in front of the assembled townsfolk, and Resistance tracts distributed. With German reinforcements on the way, the *maquis* withdrew at nightfall, with Chapou commanding the rear-guard.³⁸⁷

This was a successful operation that had a positive impact locally, leading the Intendant of Police in Toulouse to conclude that this sector of the Lot had grown into the major Resistance centre in the region.³⁸⁸ It was followed almost immediately by Chapou being transferred – notionally promoted – to head the FTP in the Corrèze department, which lies due north of the Lot. The next target for occupation, and in this case insurrection and liberation, was much more ambitious, and ended in abject failure. This was the action in and around the Corrèzien town of Tulle, on 7 June. With Tulle, a much larger town than Cajarc, it was hoped that, in line with Communist strategy, an uprising by the local population could be fomented once the town had been occupied. At first the occupation was successful, and the German garrison was forced to take refuge. Captured members of the Gestapo and (as at Cajarc) *miliciens* were shot in public.³⁸⁹ About forty German troops were also killed in defending the town, prisoners were summarily executed, and a German doctor reported that the bodies of some forty dead Germans had been horribly mutilated.³⁹⁰ These Resistance acts had disastrous consequences.

Unfortunately for Chapou's *maquis*, and more so for the citizens of Tulle, the armoured *Das Reich* division of the Waffen-SS had been redeployed near to the town, and was easily able to recapture it. There was moreover no civilian insurrection, Tulle proving to have

³⁸⁷ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, pp. 204-9; note from Sarah Chabert to the author, 12 Apr. 2023.

³⁸⁸ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 130-1.

³⁸⁹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, p. 172.

³⁹⁰ Hastings, *Das Reich*, p. 118.

been a poor choice in that respect. The outcome of the operation was that, although the Resistance succeeded in occupying the town for 15 hours, the next day saw the expulsion of the *maquisards*, and this was followed by one of the worst German reprisals of the war years in France: 99 civilian men were publicly hanged from balconies and lampposts in the town centre, and a further 149 deported to Germany.³⁹¹ Tulle was a costly miscalculation by Chapou and other Resistance leaders, born of hubris, poor intelligence and planning, and insufficient training; in short, wishful thinking and military inadequacy. Similar disasters took place elsewhere in France, but Tulle was one of the most damaging for the Resistance.³⁹²

Chapou recognised this. He wrote at the time that it had been a 'failure', consequent upon 'political theory taking precedence over military sense'; and that as a result 'the people of Tulle are arranged wholly against us, blaming us alone for the Nazi repression.'³⁹³ He was also aware that it had had a 'deplorable' effect on the morale of many FTP troops and particularly on those among them who came from Tulle and whose families had remained in the town.³⁹⁴ In 2023, eighty-one years later, Edmond Réveil, one of the Tulle *maquisards*, now aged 98 and close to death, confessed that at least thirty of the German dead had been killed in cold blood, together with a Frenchwoman suspected of collaboration. Réveil also revealed where the corpses had been buried. At the time of writing, a search for the mass grave is ongoing.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 170-4

³⁹² Gildea, *Fighters*, pp. 346-7.

³⁹³ Laborie, 'Sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort...', p. 15.

³⁹⁴ Fabrice Grenard, *Tulle; enquête sur un massacre, 9 juin 1944* (Paris, 2014), pp. 239-53; and *Maquis du Corrèze*, p. 398.

³⁹⁵ 'Corrèze: des fouilles pour exhumer des corps des soldats allemands tués en 1944', *Le Point* (16 Aug. 2023); 'Soldats allemands exécutés en 1944: les corps introuvables, les recherches vont se poursuivre', *TFI Info* (24 Aug. 2023).

In short, Tulle was a disaster for which Chapou bore a large part of the responsibility. The mass hangings and deportation of French citizens was a consequence of ill-judged decisions made by him and others, and it is likely that he was implicated in the summary executions of prisoners of war. The effect on him personally was severe. Witnesses recalled that this ‘was a terrible wound’ and that after it ‘you needed kid gloves to go anywhere near him.’ The historian Pierre Laborie concluded that his ‘confidence was shattered.’³⁹⁶

Death

On 12 July Chapou was appointed by the FTP to take command of its forces in the Creuse, Haut-Vienne, and Indre departments. Another apparent promotion, this meant moving even further north and away from his home ground in the Lot. Before assuming this new post, on 13 July he embarked on a few days’ leave to visit his family in Cahors, travelling south with his *agente de liaison*, Jacqueline Lazargue (*nom de guerre* ‘Jackie’), whom he dropped off somewhere en route. On arrival in Cahors, he was greeted with the news that his mother Camille had been deported to Germany on 1 July, as a consequence of his own Resistance actions. (Camille Chapou was killed at Ravensbrück on 10 July, but that news did not reach the Lot until after Chapou’s own death.) According to Françoise Chapou, he then spent the night of 14/15 July at Rocamadour, where his wife Yvonne had gone into hiding following the arrest of Camille.³⁹⁷

Chapou and Jacqueline Lazargue had for some time been having an affair, which was known to his wife Yvonne. According to Françoise,

³⁹⁶ Duclos, (ed.), *Maquis du Corrèze*, p. 410; Laborie, ‘sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort...’, p. 13.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Nov. 2022.

during this visit to Yvonne, he undertook to end it. He was also able to catch up with some of his old Lotois comrades near Cahors. Among these was Cazard, who wrote that Chapou spoke brightly of the forthcoming strategy and of 'hanging out our laundry on the Siegfried line'. However, he also dwelt on the failure of Tulle, now a 'dead town', on the many French deaths he had witnessed and on how he himself had 'been everywhere where it was toughest'; Cazard wondered if he was contemplating his own death.³⁹⁸ On 16 July, he then collected Jacqueline and drove north with her, to Bourgueuf in the Creuse.³⁹⁹

Much of what happened next is uncertain, and Pierre Laborie's extensive 1984 investigation into Chapou's death ended with an open verdict, the facts being obscured because Jacqueline was the only available witness and proved to be an unreliable one. Her loose and inconsistent testimonies were, it has been assumed, the result of her embarrassment at being alone in the car with Chapou. In any event, it is certain that he had decided to drive up to Bourgueuf, several hours north of the Lot, with only Jacqueline as company, armed only with his revolver and without any military back-up. (Normal protocol would have been that his car should have contained other, armed men and that a second car, again with armed men, should have followed behind.) Furthermore, he was wearing his FTP uniform with a distinctive Soviet red star, and the car (a black front-wheel drive Citroën saloon) was known to be a model favoured by the Resistance. Finally, the last leg of the route was unknown to him, and the area contained a heavy German presence, of which he should have been aware. Laborie inclined towards the view that Chapou, consistent with his character,

³⁹⁸ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 256.

³⁹⁹ Laborie, 'Sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort', pp. 4, 12, 20-1; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Nov. 2022.

decided to take a calculated risk that he and Jacqueline would arrive safely. In the event, they ran into a German ambush just short of Bourganeuf. Jacqueline managed to escape but Chapou was wounded and then took his own life with a bullet to the head.⁴⁰⁰

There has been much speculation about the circumstances of Chapou's death, centering on why there was a German ambush at that time and place. Rumours, debates, and arguments started immediately, and were later rekindled first by Laborie's 1984 article and then in 1987 by a fictionalised account of the move northwards of the *Das Reich* division.⁴⁰¹ Since the Laborie article, there have been no discoveries to shed further light on the puzzle. His death is most unlikely to have been mere bad luck, an accidental encounter with German troops. The trap had been carefully set, with a felled tree placed across the road to prevent vehicles from passing. It is therefore probable that, at the very least, the Germans had been informed that a Resistance commander, perhaps Chapou, would be driving into Bourganeuf at that time.

They might have been told this by a German or Vichy spy or informant within the ranks of the Resistance, but this would also have been unlikely. Alternatively, Chapou might have been given away by a *bona fide* Resister, and naturally it is this possibility that has aroused most speculation. It has two sub-sets. One is that Chapou could have been betrayed to the Germans by Gaullist Resisters, with the aim of impeding Communist success at the Liberation. The second is that he was betrayed by the Communists themselves. Here, the speculation has run as follows. Given that Chapou made no secret of his motives for joining Communist ranks

⁴⁰⁰ Laborie, 'Sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort', pp. 9, 12, 20-1; interview with Françoise Chapou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 30 Nov. 2022.

⁴⁰¹ Michel Peyramaure, *La division maudite* (Paris, 1987).

being primarily pragmatic, and given too that with his stature he could, had he wished and had he survived the war, have become a significant regional political figure after the Liberation, the Communist political leadership might well have concluded that his arrest or death would free them to establish a more reliable political leader in postwar Quercy.

The truth is unlikely ever to be established. But here it matters less than the way these speculations have embellished the mythology that came to surround Chapou in the aftermath of his death, and thereby shaped his identity in the collective memory. The possibility that this Resistance hero might have been the victim of a cynical and ruthless political act by his own comrades has naturally added further drama to this mythical identity.

A Perceived Identity

Implicit in the idealised conception of the *maquisard* were multiple notions: that, with right on his side, he stood as a noble model to which others could aspire, and even see themselves in; that he had sprung from and was inseparable from his *terroir* – ‘one of us’, known and supported by the surrounding *paysan* community, and respectful of it; often, that he was something of an ‘oddball’, an unusual character prone to disregarding convention and opposing authority; often too that he resembled the quintessential outlaw, simultaneously ubiquitous and invisible to the enemy; that his life told the story of a tough mission successfully accomplished, and that accordingly he was a man living an entirely fulfilling and complete existence. Finally, his life might be crowned by its ending in a glorious death.

In many respects Chapou’s Resistance story did indeed conform with the different components of this ideal, and also contributed to its perpetuation. Chapou the *maquisard* was certainly seen as noble

and pure. In 1944 and in the decades that followed, he came to represent the model of an admirable and unblemished French patriot, and of a virile French masculinity. This was captured by Marcenac in his 1969 speech. He said that since his death Chapou had been:

‘.... for the men of our land the undeniable mirror of what hidden grandeur demands...that they become.’ And that ‘.... we might try to discern, through the mists of time, this life of a man in whom each of us, here in this land, has the right to see his own face....’⁴⁰²

As noted earlier, such an identity was one that postwar France was keen to believe in. Chapou could be counted among the ‘good French’ of the resistencialist myth, a hero whom French men could respect, but also one in whom they could see reflected their own ‘better selves’, and one whom women could admire.⁴⁰³ And there was flexibility in his heroism: the Communists could claim him as one of theirs, as the Red Star on the monument to him at Bourganef illustrates (see Figure 29 below.) In addition, as Sarah Chabert has noted, there has been a remarkable unanimity of view as to Chapou’s great qualities; his reputation has not been dogged by the same squabbling that has muddied those of other Resistance leaders.⁴⁰⁴

His attachment to his native area was central to the myth; he came to symbolise the armed Resistance in Quercy in a similar fashion to Georges Guingouin in the Limousin, and indeed even as de Gaulle did at the national level.⁴⁰⁵ It is telling that Chapou was not comfortable with being posted away from the Lot in April 1944, and things certainly went catastrophically wrong for him – the disaster

⁴⁰² Marcenac, *Je n’ai pas perdu mon temps*, p. 50.

⁴⁰³ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 10. On the ‘good French’ narrative, see Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, pp. 5-7.

⁴⁰⁴ Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou 1’, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰⁵ Kedward, *The Resistance and its Legacy*, p. 57.

of Tulle and his demise at Bourganeuf – as he was progressively moved further away from his familiar territory in the Lot, first to the Corrèze and then to the Creuse. Marcenac stressed this ‘*nostalgie de boue*’ in 1969: in addition to the reference to ‘the men of our land’ quoted above, he said (presumably while gesturing to the new bust of Chapou):

‘Chapou is not here in this square to give us some lesson from his solitary perch on high. He is with his own, at their level, with those who come on market day to banter about prices.....’⁴⁰⁶

Maquisard testimonies give colour to the relations he cultivated with local communities. One is Joseph Nodari’s. He had known Chapou and his family, and said that the man himself ‘was worth his weight in gold’. He attested to Chapou’s punishment of *maquisards* who had stepped out of line by robbing *paysan* households. He also alluded to his leader’s sense of justice: of the summary executions of supposed collaborators in Cahors at the Liberation, he said ‘... one execution of a mere kid was a total injustice. Chapou would never have allowed it to happen if he had been alive.’⁴⁰⁷ Another, Maurice Darnault, spoke of how Chapou’s men were embedded in *paysan* communities:

‘We found people who would give us things and supply us regularly with food.... In all the months of hiding and moving there were no problems about our sexual life. We were relatively well-known in the villages and took part in occasional dances. People met up and relationships were made.’⁴⁰⁸

Chapou’s homespun persona was underscored by a maverick’s dislike of formality and conventional etiquette: it was claimed that

⁴⁰⁶ As for preceding note.

⁴⁰⁷ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 256-7: testimony of Joseph Nodari, given to H.R. Kedward, 29 Mar. 1991.

⁴⁰⁸ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 257-9: testimony of Maurice Darnault, given to H.R. Kedward, 7 Mar. 1991.

he would wear *paysan* clogs when calling at the *mairie* or dining in the smartest bourgeois restaurants of Cahors.⁴⁰⁹ The historian H.R. Kedward has noted that Resisters were often individuals with odd or unusual character traits. He has also written of their status as outlaws, people who were condemned by the state as ‘terrorists’ operating against society and the law, but admired by their supporters as romantic figures acting for the people against their oppressors. This led to an inversion of traditional norms, such that the Resistance ‘outsider’ who defied the law and fought the state came, in the minds of many, to represent the protector of the people, and the state the enemy.⁴¹⁰ During 1940-4, ‘terrorists’ indeed represented themselves as heroic protectors, and Vichy mutated from shield to pariah. In the case of a Resister like Chapou, the mantle of protector was underpinned by the generally good relations between his *maquisards* and the *paysan* communities to which they were close. His own resemblance to fictional outlaw heroes was referenced by Abbé Gauch, the *curé* of Arcambal, who had worked alongside him in helping to hide *réfractaires*, and later recalled that ‘he had the image and status of Robin Hood’.⁴¹¹ René Andrieu, writing in the 1990s, stated that Chapou was:

‘ the spark that set alight the armed resistance in the [Lot] department. It was he who took charge of the first *maquis*, twenty or so men armed with revolvers and old shotguns.... he was a trainer of men, always ready to give of himself, a musketeer, courageous to the point of rashness. He had the distinction of setting up, in conditions that were difficult but also romantic and primitive, the first armed groups in the department.’⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Chabert, ‘Jean-Jacques Chapou, 1’, p. 34

⁴¹⁰ Kedward, ‘The Maquis and the Culture of the Outlaw’, pp. 232-51.

⁴¹¹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 261-3: testimony of Abbé Gauch, given to H.R.Kedward, 15 March 1991; see also, Kedward, ‘The Maquis and the Culture of the Outlaw’, pp. 232-51.

⁴¹² René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, pp. 82-3.

Andrieu's description has several of the components of the idealised romantic warrior: here is a man who took the initiative, who trained, led, and cared for his subordinates, who never put himself first, who courted danger and seemed indifferent to his own safety. And the reference to 'musketeer' was presumably intended to remind the reader of Dumas's swashbuckling 'Three Musketeers'.

As has been stressed in the case of Étienne Verlhac, for some people participation in the Resistance meant engaging in a mission, a task whose pursuit and successful completion would allow them to feel that their lives were now endowed with real purpose, and that they could thereby be 'made whole'. That purpose was sublime: national salvation, an effacing of the shame of defeat, occupation, and collaboration. The grandeur of the purpose, and its elevated location at the level of national politics, rendered this desire specifically masculine.⁴¹³ In myth and fiction moreover, the notion of the mission merged with that of the quest, in which the epic journey becomes the pursuit of glory but also, according to the conventions of Classical literature, accompanied by or ending in tragedy.

Framed in this way, Chapou's Resistance trajectory became this archetypal masculine quest. From the relative comfort and security of Cahors, where his wife and children remained, he ventured out, with only a few hand-picked men, into the wilderness of the Quercy *causses*, then north to the mountainous Corrèze, and finally even further north to the Creuse. Along the way, he met with triumphs like Cajarc, and came through disasters like Tulle, before the journey ended in Bourgneuf, where he met a fitting death. His was

⁴¹³ On tasks and gendered identity, see for example Michael Kelly, 'The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation' in Kedward and Wood (eds.), *The Liberation of France*, pp. 119-20.

a '*belle mort*' in the tradition of the French soldiers who valiantly gave up their lives for their country.⁴¹⁴ In the context of wartime France, his death was glorious in the explicit sense that the presumed motive for his suicide was to avoid revealing Resistance information under torture. René Andrieu later wrote:

'Surrounded by Germans, he preferred to kill himself rather than be taken. His last bullet was for himself. That too, he had already told me. And he was true to his word. He was a brave man.'⁴¹⁵

And lastly, an added twist of melodrama was provided by the speculation that he was entrapped by his own side.

The reality of the *maquisard* experience was of course much more heterogenous than this mythical rendering of it. For some, anguish and despair were not uncommon, particularly during the severe winter of 1943-4, as Resisters were beset by cold, hunger, poor shelter, and the fear of being betrayed or killed, or of being captured and then tortured.⁴¹⁶ By the spring and summer of 1944 however, as warm weather returned and it became increasingly clear that the Liberation was close, spirits in general lifted. In these better times, the *maquisard* experience could be one of intense happiness, or at least was remembered as such. Many testimonies speak of a euphoric sense of wellbeing in these better times, of the thrill of adventure, and of a heightened sense of being alive. Jean Cassou described the Resistance as '.... a style of life, an invented life...' Henri Frenay remembered it '...as a secret garden...'⁴¹⁷ Cazard himself looked back upon 'the exalting adventure of the *maquis*'.⁴¹⁸ Marcenac wrote 'our state of mind? It was one of joy, of

⁴¹⁴ Rauch, *Le Premier Sexe*, p. 75.

⁴¹⁵ René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, pp. 82-3.

⁴¹⁶ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, pp. 125, 231-2, 248.

⁴¹⁷ Laurent Douzou, 'Jean-Pierre Vernant, Résistant', in *Le Genre humain*, Vol. 45-6, (2006), pp. 15-16.

⁴¹⁸ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 9.

infinite friendship...’⁴¹⁹ René Andrieu too recalled ‘a quite intoxicating adventure’, that ‘oddly, we had feelings of liberty and fraternity’, and that ‘our *joie de vivre* was all the greater because our lives were at stake.’⁴²⁰ This sense of elation, intensified by high risk, is suggested by what Cazard recounted of Chapou’s words during their reflective conversation on 15 July:

‘Teaching calls for qualities that combat has taken from me. But I’ll make my way. I’m made for the great outdoors, the open air, leading men into battle, a life full of action and danger.’⁴²¹

The Mask Slipped

There are several respects in which the reality of Chapou the man sat uncomfortably with the legendary identity just described. First, he was less the relatively young warrior that his myth implied, and more a paternal figure: by 1944, he was 35 and no longer a dashing young man. He was around 15 years older than most of the *maquisards* under his command, and Sarah Chabert has made the point that his relationship to them was probably akin to the teacher-pupil relationships that he had had while teaching.⁴²² Here then is another type of wartime inter-generational relationship.

Next, he had not been a faithful husband. At the Liberation and subsequently, his affair with Jacqueline Lazargue was excised from the story, and his earlier infidelities have never been written about. This was partly out of respect for his wife and widow, but also because marital infidelity was dissonant with the upright male moral code for which the Resistance, and especially the Communist Resistance, wished to be admired. Thus, the need to align Chapou’s story with the ‘resistencialist’ myth required that ‘Jackie’ be

⁴¹⁹ Marcenac, *Je n’ai pas perdu*, p. 329.

⁴²⁰ René Andrieu, *Du bonheur et rien d’autre* (Paris, 1975), p. 100.

⁴²¹ Cazard, *Capitaine Philippe*, p. 257.

⁴²² Interview with Sarah Chabert, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Cahors, 1 Nov. 2022.

ignored in the memory (and this may well have contributed to the opacity surrounding the causes of his death). The affair is not mentioned at all in Cazard's biography, nor in *maquisard* memoirs of the early Liberation. It was not until Laborie's investigation in the 1980s, and latterly Chabert's work, that it has been more widely disclosed.

Moreover, by the spring of 1944, the affable persona of Chapou's earlier years had been replaced by a harder, wearier, and less compromising man. Liberation and later accounts have tended to play down the debacle at Tulle, which was in fact a significant blemish on his military reputation. The summary executions of *miliciens* and suspected collaborators at Cajarc and Tulle, which were carried out on his orders or under his command, the executions of prisoners, and the alleged mutilations at Tulle, have either been deemphasised or not mentioned at all. His earlier self might well have baulked at or argued against those executions. This evolution of his real male self was different from that of Étienne Verlhac, in lacking the rage of the bereaved and the uncompromising convictions of the ideologically-committed Communist. Nonetheless, in the thick of war Chapou had, unsurprisingly, become a less forgiving and more brutalised man, no longer the 'jolly good fellow' of the 1930s. And the bitter feelings of the people of Tulle towards the Resistance after the failure of July belie the image of the outlaw *maquisard* admired and much loved by a supportive civilian population. These darker aspects of his final months are understated in Cazard's biography.

Chapou's appearance too changed after he had 'taken the *maquis*', as reflected in the photograph reproduced as Figure 28 overleaf. The face shows a man who had aged considerably, and it bears little suggestion of *bonhomie*. One fellow *maquisard* recalled that

he had been introduced to Chapou as the latter was leaving a café in March 1944. He was struck by Chapou's 'expressive face' but also by the taste for risk-taking suggested by his outfit:

'in the style of an officer or a hunter... leather jacket, officers' trousers with gaiters, belt....so different from us, who took care to look as unremarkable as possible in the street'.⁴²³

All of this suggests a more complex account of the state of Chapou's mind during the ten weeks from the time of his move to the Corrèze at the end of April 1944 up to his death in mid-July, and one that parts company with Chapou the myth. Noireau had thought that Chapou had already become a lonely and unhappy man when the negotiations with the FTP began, and thus even before his estrangement from the Lot ('... he felt alone').⁴²⁴ The loneliness of command, and the relentless succession of attacks and of dodging the enemy in an increasingly hateful and pitiless war, took their toll. By July, his personal doubts may well have turned into desperation. Equally, as claimed by Andrieu, he may have already decided upon suicide in the event of capture. Laborie has perceptively argued that behind the face of strength that he showed the world lay a vulnerability that was expressed by his having constantly to prove by example to his comrades, and to himself, that he could himself do what he was asking of them, a vulnerability that led to 'risk-taking that sometimes exceeded all prudence'.⁴²⁵ Perhaps here was a man who felt forced to prove his manliness to the point of self-destruction.

⁴²³ Duclos (ed.), *Maquis de Corrèze*, p. 444: testimony of Jean-Paul Magnac.

⁴²⁴ Noireau, *Les temps des partisans*, p. 166.

⁴²⁵ Laborie 'Sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort...', p. 8.

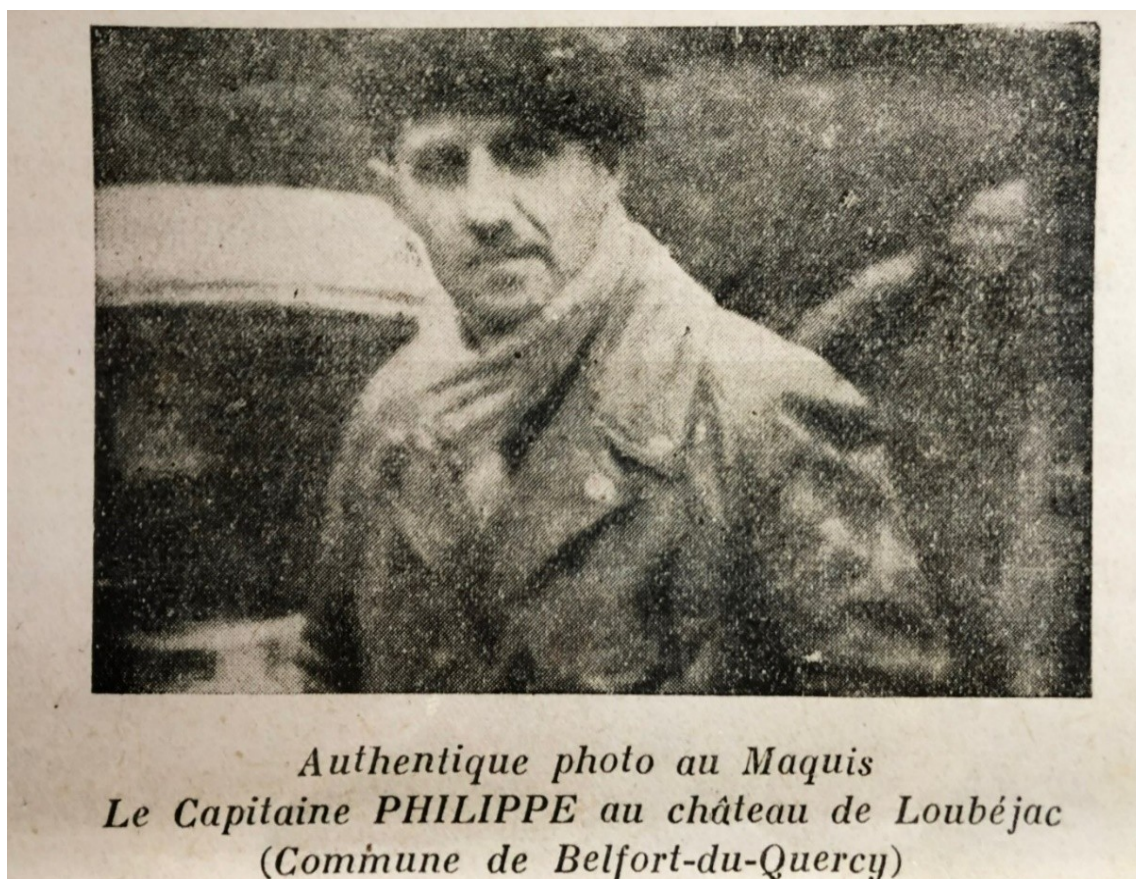


Figure 28: Jacques Chapou, 1944, (Chapou Family Archive).

René Andrieu was in no doubt that Chapou had deliberately courted danger:

'It wasn't the first time that he had fallen into an ambush; but he had confidence in his *baraka* [good luck]. I had seen him a little earlier when he had by a miracle just escaped death. He said jokingly to me: "The bullet that will kill me hasn't been made yet."'⁴²⁶

Here Andrieu was speaking of the time shortly before Chapou's death. In contrast, it is telling that, in writing of the period prior to his enrolment in the FTP, one testimony drew attention to his much more cautious military tactics: 'It wasn't his style to mount flamboyant operations, but to take a step-by-step approach.'⁴²⁷ This was of course in sharp contrast to the rashness of his actions at

⁴²⁶ René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, p. 82.

⁴²⁷ Picard and Chaussade, *Ombres*, p. 74.

Tulle, and the apparent disregard for danger during the drive to Bourganeuf.

By the time he left the Lot for Bourganeuf in July, it is fair to imagine that he was under intense psychological pressure. That long journey was made in order to take up a second new responsibly in another unknown and dangerous territory. During it, he would have had the fate of his mother as well as the hangings at Tulle on his mind; and he was trying to hold his marriage together by promising to end his affair – an affair with the very woman who was now his sole travelling companion. Did he use the drive to tell ‘Jackie’ that he was ending the relationship, as he had promised his wife? We cannot know. While there is no evidence that a nervous breakdown was taking place in the days leading up to the journey, it would hardly be surprising if it were.

Conclusion

The comparison between Étienne Verlhac and Chapou bears further comment. They shared two elements in their pre-war lives that facilitated their decisions to transition into active resistance. Both were energetic men who had found themselves pursuing rather pedestrian careers to which they were not fully suited. They were ready to seize the chance of doing something more challenging and meaningful with their lives, a chance that resistance offered. Both were also actively involved with networks, involvements that preceded and to some extent evolved into decisions to resist. Networks were a framework within which action could be discussed and encouraged; and it is hardly surprising that by 1940-1 Chapou and Verlhac were among the men who founded the first Resistance networks in the Quercy region. The comparison goes further. Both men suffered tragic personal loss in the final months of the war in Quercy. In the previous chapter it was argued that the execution of

Étienne's son Georges was a blow that drove him into a sort of rage of revenge. With Chapou, it is hard not to suppose that he blamed himself for Tulle, for the deportation of his mother, and for the crisis over his wife and his lover, and that these events and the guilt associated with them induced behaviour that was reckless and perhaps intentionally dangerous to himself.

But here the similarities end. Étienne was a *sédentaire*, a back-room operator, effective in his immersion in committees, debates, and journalism. Chapou was a flamboyant man of action, seeking fulfillment in an outdoor life of movement and drama, as if he had transposed the ethos of the rugby pitch and the tactics of the card table to military operations in the *causses*. Before the war, he had a masculine identity of a particular but conventional type, one that was well suited to *maquisard* leadership. Being sacked by Vichy provided both an opportunity and a motive to resist, and the early phase of his armed resistance was satisfying and probably at times exalting. Later, during the winter of 1943-4, his mood darkened as he changed territory, had to manage unfamiliar men, and attached himself to a cause the politics of which he did not share. Later still, during the spring and summer, he found himself in the centre of a war of growing brutality in which civilians became victims. By July, after Tulle, to this unhappiness was added a sense of personal failure and of his own direct responsibility for the large-scale loss of innocent lives. And alongside all this, his personal life had become beset by crises centering around the women in his life – his wife, his lover, his mother.

Up to early 1944, there had been a substantial convergence between the legend of Chapou and the actuality of the man: he was pretty much the man depicted in the legend. But, as the nature of the conflict and his part in it took a bleaker and bloodier path, his

outward persona slipped to reveal underlying vulnerabilities that could not be associated with a perfect Resistance hero. Because of the lack of written evidence and of credible witnesses, we cannot have certainty about his mental state on that last journey, but it was surely one of acute turmoil, both relating to his public life, and more personally to his male identity.



Figure 29: Monument to Jacques Chapou, where he was ambushed, outside Bourganeuf, showing the Red Star of the USSR, (Author's Photograph, 2023).

Chapter 8

An Invisible Woman: Janine Andrieu and the Quercy *maquis*

The Checkpoint

The moment of greatest danger in 19-year-old Janine Andrieu's work as a Resistance agent came in the early summer of 1944. She had to pass through a German checkpoint as she left Figeac by bicycle. She had been in the town to draw a plan that included the number, type, and disposition of German troops and munitions in and around it, and to measure the bridge that spanned the River Célé at its centre. She knew that if a thorough search was ordered at the checkpoint the soldiers would examine not only the contents of her small suitcase but her bicycle too, and even inside its handlebars. So she decided to flatten the large plan - measuring 80 centimeters square - and to hide it inside her bra. She would be safe, she calculated, unless the soldier decided to search there.

There was a queue at the checkpoint. When Janine's turn came, she was ordered to open her suitcase. The soldiers took out its contents and scattered them in disorder across the road. Then one began to tap her legs, her hips under her skirt, and then her back. This soldier,

'.....was young, and when I was able to catch his eye, I held my gaze on his for one or two seconds; perhaps he was ashamed, or perhaps he didn't dare, but he didn't touch my chest.'⁴²⁸

Women Resisters were able to use their gender to good effect during the war. Sometimes when being questioned or searched they would smile charmingly at the soldier, or on other occasions

⁴²⁸ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde dans le maquis, récit*, (L'Harmattan, 2005), pp. 90-1.

they would hide their illegal items inside or under food, or in a baby's cot. They could thereby distract the investigating men with gendered signals associated with flirtation or with established fields of female domain, such as feeding and nurturing; areas that demanded respect and privacy. In locking her eyes with those of the young German soldier's, Janine sent out a different signal, namely a reference to the untouchability of a woman's breasts.⁴²⁹



Figure 30: Janine Andrieu, c. 1943, (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, opp. p. 83).

Her Resistance work had begun some months earlier when she was taken to meet Robert Noireau, alias 'Georges' (1912-99), the senior Communist Resistant who was to become head of the FFI for the Quercy region and who was mentioned in the Chapter on Jacques

⁴²⁹ See Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, pp. 145-6 for instances of these tactics.

Chapou. Aged 32 when Janine met him, he had been born and raised in the tough northern mining town of Vicq. He learnt to sing the *Internationale* at the age of nine or ten, and had been a Communist activist since 1936, when he was 24. He joined the Paris Resistance in September 1940 and fled south after being arrested in February 1941.⁴³⁰ At this first meeting Noireau appointed Janine as his liaison agent, reporting directly to him. It was the gendered aspects of the encounter that remained most prominent in her memory, and which shaped her subsequent relations with Noireau and his men. In her memoir, she described Noireau as:

‘...a tall man, pretty attractive, very authoritarian....fairly intimidating to start with – well, to end with, too. He said little, only what was required.’

⁴³⁰ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, pp. 25-76.



Figure 31: Robert Noireau, c. 1944. (Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, opp. p. 110.)

After he had told her she was to work as his agent:

‘He added dryly, “I don’t want any mucking about with the lads here, you know what I mean?” He used the familiar second person [*tutoyer*], which surprised me. It took me a few seconds to understand what he meant. I said nothing, but I felt deeply upset, not to say humiliated, that he could have assumed that I knew what he was talking about.’

A well-brought up and unmarried young woman was supposed to be ignorant about sex, and Janine's annoyance lay in Noireau's implication that she could not be such a woman. Elsewhere, the memoir reveals that although she had been sexually ignorant as a child Noireau's supposition as to her lack of innocence by this time was indeed correct, a clue as to Janine's use - hardly unique, of course - of double-standards as to her moral identity.⁴³¹

After explaining to the reader that at that time her knowledge of sex was limited, and her interest in it negligible, Janine continued:

'I later realised that Georges did not follow to the letter the behaviour that he prescribed for others. As for me, he always adhered to the line of conduct he had set down at the interview. That message must have also been passed to the lads, as none of them ever made a pass at me.'⁴³²

Janine's first mission for Noireau was to spy on two women from Marseilles who were renting a house near Figeac. He did not tell her what they were suspected of, and Janine wondered if the mission had been concocted in order to test her reliability and resourcefulness. She managed to talk her way into spending a night with the women and reported to Noireau that she had discovered nothing suspicious. 'OK, we'll let them live then', he replied. She could not be sure if he meant it.⁴³³

Her reconnaissance work in Figeac followed this initial task. Her account of the work goes on to show how casually liaison agents, invariably women, could be treated by their male superiors, and how little value the men often appeared to ascribe to the women's work, however dangerous and important. In this case, the work was unquestionably dangerous: Figeac was full of German troops, the mood was tense, and Janine was a single woman and a stranger in

⁴³¹ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 4, 7-8.

⁴³² Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 83-4.

⁴³³ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 92.

town. Completing the plan took her three days, and she stayed in a hotel. Her presence in the hotel and as she walked around the town, making notes as surreptitiously as she could, made her highly vulnerable to being reported and arrested.

Her work was also potentially important, because Resistance actions in and around Figeac significantly impeded both the movement of German troops northward following the D-Day landings as well as their ability to engage in successful counter-Resistance operations in Quercy. While nationwide the military effectiveness of the Resistance was limited, the *maquisards* with whom Janine worked were in no doubt that their activity was not only dangerous but was also making a considerable contribution to the overall war effort.⁴³⁴ Thus, in his own war memoir, Noireau quotes de Gaulle's words from the latter's *Mémoires de guerre* that Resistance actions had caused the *Das Reich* division to arrive in the north late, 'exhausted and decimated'.⁴³⁵

The Resistance reaction to Janine's work in Figeac was far from commendatory. When she handed in the plan at the *maquis* headquarters, the man who took it said merely, 'That's fine; thank you', not even looking up from his papers. Subsequently, no one ever spoke to her about what she had done in Figeac. While allowance must be made for the generally fraught circumstances of guerrilla warfare, not often conducive to informal conversation, and for the need to maintain secrecy, the lack of recognition given to Janine at the time by her superiors, and their perfunctory treatment of her, are striking. As we will see, this belittling disregard of her efforts extended into the postwar period and beyond.

⁴³⁴ For a historian's summary of the military contribution of the Resistance to the Allied war effort, see Olivier Wieviorka, *The French Resistance*, (Cambridge, Ma, 2016), pp. 469-70.

⁴³⁵ Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, p. 328.

Early Life

Janine Andrieu (1924-2022) was not recruited into the Resistance, but contacted it entirely on her own initiative. She was born Jeannine Vigié in Paris. Her parents were working class, and she lived with them in the capital until the age of nineteen. However, the family's roots were in rural Quercy: both parents came from the Lot, where they had met after the First World War, and where they married in 1919 after her father Fermin Vigié had been demobilised. Summer holidays were spent in the Lot, at the house of Janine's Occitan-speaking paternal grandmother, and it was there that she and her parents sought refuge during the *exode* from Paris in June 1940. Similarly, René Andrieu (1920-98), whom she married in 1947, came from the village of Beauregard in the Lot. After the war, Janine lived for much of the time at Beauregard, and after René's death in 1998 lived mainly in their house. There she wrote her memoir in the late 1990s and died there in 2022, aged 99. It was these connections with the Lot that enabled Janine to join the Resistance in 1943.

From the elderly author's descriptions of herself as a young girl in her memoir, *La Joconde dans le maquis* (published in 2005), the traits of character that would later lead her to accept challenges and to cope with - and perhaps enjoy - danger are clear to see. She was an only child who had a particularly tight relationship with her parents ('all three of us were very close, living as in a cocoon...'). In this sense, it was a comparatively unusual upbringing. Janine was an independent if not willful girl, who preferred to think things through for herself rather than ask questions. She wrote that as a child:

'I liked to sort things out on my own. Despite the kindly attitude of my parents and the love they gave me, I was a very

solitary girl. I easily got bored, and had to make up occupations for myself.... Distractions were rare, so one had to invent them.'⁴³⁶



Figure 32: Maria and Fermin Vigié, Maria probably early 1920s, Fermin during the First World War, (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, p.33).

She developed an early taste for risk-taking. Although her parents allowed her to play on the pavement, crossing the road was strictly forbidden. She duly broke this rule when a boy dared her to cross it. She wrote of the incident:

'The rule had been transgressed, as would be many others later in my life...with the joy of having undertaken a heroic act. Heroic in the sense that my father's angers, though rare, were formidable....the temptation had been too great.... I had reveled in the challenge.'⁴³⁷

Her parents expected her to perform well academically and were keen that her education should lead 'to a respectable profession, with a career in teaching often being held out as a goal'.⁴³⁸ Fermin

⁴³⁶ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 19-20, 23.

⁴³⁷ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 23-4.

⁴³⁸ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 42.

Vigié was employed by the national railway company, one of the team responsible for the dispatch by train to the provinces of the Paris press, including all the main national newspapers. The workers were entitled to free copies of almost all the papers and magazines distributed, and so the house was always full of the latest news and views. The one paper not given out was the Communist *L'Humanité*, which Janine's father had her go out to buy every day. After the war, when she came to vacate the house, she found copies of *L'Humanité* and Resistance tracts hidden up a chimney. (Janine later asked her husband René why *L'Humanité* had been excluded. He thought that it was probably because the paper was too poor to give out free copies, though it might have been due to anti-Communist feeling among the railway company managers.)⁴³⁹

Janine's father had been vague with her about his political convictions partly, she guessed, because he thought her rather loose-tongued. But she was in no doubt that both her parents were firmly on the left, and she too developed a left-wing outlook as she matured. There had been 'euphoria' in the family for the Popular Front in 1936, and the teenage Janine was a firm supporter of the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. Later, Fermin was dismayed by the feeble French fighting spirit in May 1940. When Janine listened to de Gaulle's broadcast of 18 June, she said to herself 'At last!'. Fermin's reaction was more equivocal. Pulling a face, he exclaimed 'A general! And with the English to boot!'⁴⁴⁰ She knew that her father, who had been wounded in the First World War, had long held Pétain in low esteem, since he had:

⁴³⁹ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 30-1.

⁴⁴⁰ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 43-6.

‘...ordered the execution of French soldiers.... who in the face of the barbarity and the butchery had been unable to fight on...’

Fermin Vigie carried ‘heavy physical and psychological burdens’ from his time as a *poilu*. Though wounded, he had served the full four years and, though like many veterans he rarely spoke of his experiences, Janine remembered vividly his occasional bitter aside of ‘war, such a bloody mess! (*quelle saloperie!*)’. His only consolation had been the conviction that the ‘Great War’ had indeed been the ‘war to end wars’, but that belief gradually dissolved into despair as the 1930s wore on and another war loomed. Janine meanwhile had come to assume some of the ‘burdens’ of her father,

‘....it was really tough for me to carry this heritage. I suffered from my father’s war, I carried a part of his sufferings within me, his dark moods, above all as the European situation became threatening [once more].’⁴⁴¹

Janine states that it was her father who was the stronger partner, ‘the sole authority’. Her mother Maria, eleven years younger than her husband and probably of Spanish descent, was ‘very pretty, very sweet’, and was more easy-going than her father; Maria and Janine ‘were complicit, she forgave me everything’.

⁴⁴¹ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 42.



Figure 33: Janine and her mother Maria, c. 1930, (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, p. 29).

Fermin decided that Janine should be enrolled in a nearby Catholic school, despite he and Maria being non-believers and on the left politically. At the time, her parents told Janine that the nearest lay schools were too far from where they lived. Perhaps this was a case of the parents of a much-loved only child wishing to keep the apron strings as short as possible. Whatever his motivations may have been, that Fermin was a wise father is suggested by a conversation overheard by Janine. A friend had asked in surprise why Fermin, ‘with your ideas’, would send his child to a girls-only Catholic school, and Fermin had replied: ‘She’ll make her own choices, and I’m sure she’ll make the right ones.’ Janine also emphasised that her father did not try to inculcate her with his own political views, but instead allowed her to find her own way. He would encourage her to read the political cartoons in the press, and then question her about them.⁴⁴²

Janine entered this Catholic school aged 7 in 1931 and remained in it until 1943, when she abandoned her education prematurely. In the first years of this strict religious environment, she came to

⁴⁴² Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 27, 33, 35.

embrace Catholicism fervently and completely. Knowing that her parents were non-believers who never stepped inside a church caused her agonies of worry and of conflict. While she expected them to die in sin and go to hell, which greatly upset her, she also recognised that Communism had its own strengths as a system of belief; and she wrestled over the troubling duality of Catholicism and Communism.

She never became a doctrinaire Communist and had only a superficial understanding of its intellectual framework; she heard of Marxism for the first time in 1944 and found Communist theory 'unreadable'.⁴⁴³ Rather, she was driven by a loose humanitarianism, and stood on the left politically because she sought social justice:

'My politics was founded on feelings. Why was I a Communist? For the weak, for the poor against the rich. Although my father's ideas had - despite his intention - conditioned me [to the left], I could just as easily have fallen in with [the Catholic church] if it had joined in the Resistance'.⁴⁴⁴

Janine had therefore been raised in a close-knit and loving family. Her parents were educated, intelligent and hard-working. They devoted themselves to her upbringing and wished her to do well in life. Her childhood was happy and secure, if serious and rather sheltered, and it endowed her with independence of mind and self-confidence. Like her parents, Janine was also intelligent and diligent. On the other hand, they had done little for her emotional education and her understanding of personal relationships. When she was fifteen, Janine was kissed by a boy and worried that the kiss might have made her pregnant.⁴⁴⁵ The lack of parental advice on these matters could not in her case be mitigated through relationships with siblings, and her taste for solitude, as well as her

⁴⁴³ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 236.

⁴⁴⁴ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 130, 182.

⁴⁴⁵ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 40.

Catholic schooling, would have added to this ignorance. Additionally, she had few close friendships with other girls, and this continued into adult life. Her key relationships, starting with her father, were all with men, usually men who were significantly older than her.

The Decision to Act

Janine recalled in *La Joconde* that her religious faith began to wane in the early years of Vichy, when she was 16 or 17, around the time that schoolchildren were required to chant '*Maréchal, nous voilà!*' in school after prayers. This she surreptitiously sang as '*Nous voilà, Maréchal!*' - 'one of my first acts of resistance'.⁴⁴⁶ Her father's prediction that she would 'make her own choices' was proved correct. By the time of the fall of France, when Fermin was making no secret of his dislike of Pétain and his approval of the existence of an opposition in London, and with the family radio tuned nightly to the BBC, Janine had matured and changed. Her faith was ebbing away, and she was clearly predisposed to stand against Vichy's National Revolution and its return to 'traditional values'.

However, disliking Vichy and Nazi Germany and supporting opposition to them was one thing; armed resistance as a way of life was another entirely. Unusual courage and determination were required to cross from the one state to the other. Janine took that step following the heavy blows of her mother's death in late 1942 aged 43, and then her father's not long after, in March 1943 aged 54. These deaths proved to be the pivot-point in Janine's life. In September 1940, when she had just turned sixteen, the family had returned to Paris from their summer refuge in the Lot and she went back to school. When her mother fell ill some months later and was hospitalised, the doctors told Janine that her mother had a terminal

⁴⁴⁶ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 45.

pulmonary condition. It was left to Janine to give this news to her mother and father:

‘My overprotected adolescence was brutally ended. I abandoned both God and my schoolwork.’

Not long after, Fermin himself was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and had by law to be hospitalised to minimise contagion. He died soon after.⁴⁴⁷

Janine continued to live at home in Paris, but now on her own, and physically and mentally drained. She dropped out of school and never took the *baccalauréat* (thereby limiting her subsequent options). After then falling ill herself, she returned home and listened to the BBC - ‘*Radio Londres*’ -

‘I heard talk of the Resistance, and of *maquis* groups in the countryside. I realised that I could have a reason for living and above all a desire to exist.....my goal [became] joining the army of ‘terrorists’.’

At this point in her memoir, Janine stepped back to reflect on what her relationship with love and sex had been at this time, when she was 19:

‘I didn’t know much about life. However, I was sure that, despite the attentions of a few young men, I was not ready for love. I was absolutely certain that I would never give in to marriage. This conviction was easier to bear thanks to my never having experienced any desire.’

These words immediately follow those that describe her decision to join the Resistance. The text certainly implies that her lack of interest in relationships, in sex and in marriage, was a benefit in respect of her Resistance work; and perhaps too that the absence of a man in her life at that time (and indeed of children) meant that the decision, hers alone, was an easier and more natural one to

⁴⁴⁷ Janine Andrieu. *La Joconde*, pp. 49-57.

take. However, although she did not state it, the conclusion that the reader draws is that the decision was driven by the death of her parents and the need to do something with her life by way of thanks and tribute to them - and to find a new 'family'.⁴⁴⁸

In 1943, Janine was young and alone in occupied Paris. Her parents were gone, and she had no close friends on whom she could lean for support and advice. She had turned her back on God and cut short her education. With all these familiar structures suddenly removed, what was the purpose of her life and where did she belong? She resolved to find a new structure within which to live and, given her political sympathies, the Resistance was the obvious choice. As the spur for her action, the deaths of her parents also stand as a reminder of the random exceptionalism that often forms part of the mix that creates change.

She had continued to tune in to the BBC and now heard more specific news, including reports of active *maquis* groups in the Massif Central. She decided to write to Janète, a childhood friend in the Lot and now a schoolteacher in the village of Gorses in the Lot, asking if she knew how to join such a group. Janète wrote back telling Janine to come down to Gorses, and that she would make an introduction. (Given censorship, the two young women were taking a very high risk in writing *en clair*, something that Janine later realised.) She resolved to travel south to her homeland in the *causses* and to find and join the Resistance. She told several of her Parisian friends about this decision, as well as the local butcher. Most tried to dissuade her. One retorted:

‘ “Who are you going to risk your life for? For people who you don’t know and who won’t give a damn about you?” He wasn’t

⁴⁴⁸ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 71-2. (Both quotations are from p. 71.)

wrong. I replied that it was for me, because I couldn't do otherwise.'

The butcher was the only one who agreed with her, saying he would love to do the same. Later, she wondered if he had thought she said '*L'Écosse*' (Scotland) as opposed to '*les causses*'.⁴⁴⁹ She travelled south by train without incident and took a room in Gorses where, through Janète's secret introductions, she waited to be contacted by the *maquis*. Not long after, she was visited by the FTP and summoned to meet Noireau. Her new life as a liaison agent had begun, soon leading to the espionage in Figeac.

Later Wartime Missions

As recounted in Chapter 2, Janine recorded the story of her Resistance work in her memoirs, *La Joconde dans le maquis*. The memoir describes several other missions that she undertook for Noireau. Following her espionage in Figeac, he tasked her to assist with the arrangements for the funeral of a *maquisard* killed in combat. This would be held in the dead man's home village, and Noireau wished to use the funeral procession as a provocative demonstration of Resistance and Communist strength. To this end, Janine was to procure from a florist a large wreath composed exclusively of red (Communist) flowers, which would be placed prominently on the coffin as it was taken through the village. This task might have been given to a male Resistant, but it is hardly surprising that one relating to flowers and decoration should be assigned to a woman. Janine arranged for the wreath to be made by a florist in Figeac, which was still heavily occupied by German troops. She succeeded, with difficulty and courting danger, in getting it back to the village. But the funeral was delayed for several days, and the flowers began to wilt in the heat. Fearful of Noireau's anger, she asked a *maquisard* comrade - a 'fearless' 16-

⁴⁴⁹ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 77-80. (Janète's surname is not given.)

year-old - to steal all available red flowers from private gardens in and around the village, so that she could remake the wreath. This was done and the funeral duly held, with a large attendance that included, Janine imagined, many of the people whose gardens had been denuded of their flowers. Her account of this episode is quite clear that what she retained most vividly in her memory was not the serious danger of being caught by the Germans, but rather her nervousness that the theft of the flowers would be noticed during the funeral, or that Noireau might scold her for the now amateurish wreath.⁴⁵⁰

On or around the D-Day landings on 6 June, she was summoned to debrief Noireau in the town of Assier on another mission she had completed. He arranged for her to stay the night there, and she was put up in a large bourgeois house. Here again, the incident that lodged most forcibly in her memory was both banal and personal, namely needing to visit the lavatory during the night. Not knowing where it was and not wishing to wake the owners of the house, she resorted to using a flower-vase in her room and then slowly pouring the resulting contents down the wall outside her bedroom window. Of this she wrote,

‘...I had succeeded in the thing that seemed most important to me, which was to make no noise and not to wake anyone. I am ashamed [about this episode] to this day.’⁴⁵¹

Waking the next morning to find that Assier had been invested with tanks and troops of the *Das Reich* division, she fled on foot, with no idea of where she was heading. Tired of her uncomfortable wooden-soled shoes, she threw them away only to realise that walking barefoot on the road was even more painful. Eventually, her feet a bloody mess, she met a detachment of *maquisards* led by a man

⁴⁵⁰ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 92-6.

⁴⁵¹ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 103-5.

whom she only ever knew by his *nom de guerre* of 'Plastic'. 'Plastic' was a young anti-fascist German who had fled Hitler, so called because he was an expert in plastic explosives. Janine's narrative suggests that she and 'Plastic' were attracted to each other, but that these feelings never had the chance to blossom. He was renowned, wrote Janine,

'...for his intrepid nature, for his courage and daring. But what I saw in front of me was a shy young man, with a very sweet manner - at least with me - that contrasted with his athletic build. He tended my wounds with what came to hand - a piece of chiffon and some water - and with great gentleness.'

Janine spent some days with 'Plastic's' *maquis*. When the time for her departure came, he told her, 'After the war you and I will walk together under the Arc de Triomphe.' Then he

'...presented me with a wildflower, which he had picked for me, under my eyes, timidly and clumsily. As I turned to leave, he made a sign with his hand and said, "See you soon, I hope, and don't forget the invitation to eat with us." '

He was killed soon after, when his detachment unexpectedly ran into a German column. Janine never discovered his real name.⁴⁵² Here the reader may wonder whether, writing sixty years after the event, Janine had come to turn her encounter with 'Plastic' into something more romantic and sentimental than it had really been: here is the story of a brave, strong, handsome, and carefree young warrior, coming from abroad and known only by his exotic alias, who gives a flower to his new-found sweetheart at their *adieu* and then loses his life in battle. It reads like something out of romantic fiction. While it seems from the record that 'Plastic' did indeed exist and led a small *maquis* group under the name of 'Georges

⁴⁵² Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 106-10, 112-15.

Plastic',⁴⁵³ we cannot be sure if Janine's account of her involvement with him is embellished. (His German nationality was not unusual; several anti-Nazi Germans fought with the *maquis*.⁴⁵⁴)

Noireau next ordered her to join the management of a team giving courses in Marxist political theory, history, and art to the swelling numbers of young men who were applying to join the FTP. This was run by Jean Marcenac (1913-84), the Surrealist poet, philosopher, and Communist. The courses were run first at Château Bessonies and then at Château de la Boisse, both located in the remote north-east of the Lot, near the Cantal border.⁴⁵⁵ Noireau did not tell Janine why he had chosen her for this; to her it seemed an incredible choice as she had no teaching or administrative experience. La Boisse was, according to Janine, one of various châteaux in the Lot in which over three thousand works of art from the Louvre were being hidden from the Germans. (These included the 'Mona Lisa', and hence the memoir's title.) Some, she wrote, hung in the bedroom allocated to her, but she had no idea at the time of their true origin and later attributed this to her natural lack of curiosity.⁴⁵⁶

She writes of having developed a strong relationship with Marcenac at the châteaux. On the one hand she felt that his own brilliance brought out Janine's intellectual inferiority complex:

'I lagged behind, and I do still today, like a cretin, [thanks to having] abandoned my studies at the beginning of my *baccalauréat* year.'

⁴⁵³ See Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, p. 358: document 27, list of Lot *maquisard* leaders.

⁴⁵⁴ See for example Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, pp. 205-6.

⁴⁵⁵ For Marcenac's account of this programme, see Marcenac, *Je n'ai pas perdu mon temps*, pp. 327-32.

⁴⁵⁶ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 139.

But Marcenac had taken her under his wing, and in some respects had become another father-figure, as had Noireau, and as René Andrieu and Georgres Cogniot would later become:

‘In certain ways - himself the father of a family - he tended to treat me as a little girl, and acted as if he was responsible for me.’

One day he caught her smoking and reprimanded her ‘exactly as my father would have done.’⁴⁵⁷

As it became clear at the château that, in Quercy at least, the war was ending, Janine’s insecurity intensified, knowing that her comforting sense of belonging to the Resistance ‘family’ was under threat:

‘The *maquis* was for a time my only family, friendly and warm, and I came to realise, I dare to say with apprehension, the end of this time....it was so difficult to cut the cord.....this brutal severing from all that had been our purpose in life, fighting, dying.’⁴⁵⁸

The ‘cocoon’, with the protective male figures guarding it, would soon be gone.

The offhand attitude of her superiors to this dedicated and brave agent was again demonstrated when, as the Liberation neared in August 1944, she was effectively abandoned, left alone at La Boisse after Marcenac and his fledgling troops had left to find glory in the final days of combat.

The Liberation, Marriage, and the Postwar Years

Janine made her way to Cahors and witnessed the town’s Liberation on 17 August. There she reconnected with many *maquisard* comrades, but they were no longer a unit, now returning into the society from which they had come: ‘The FTP, once my second

⁴⁵⁷ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 137.

⁴⁵⁸ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 137-8, 145.

family, was being dispersed.’ (This sense of a community lost was echoed in France’s inability to forge a political party out of the Resistance movement.)⁴⁵⁹ Janine’s insecurity was eased when she was asked to lead a group of young women put to work knitting winter clothing for French troops still fighting in the east – another typically female duty. The dashing figure of René Andrieu, now appointed as the town’s military commander, also entered her life and soon began to assuage her sense of abandonment and loneliness. Though she had come across him once or twice earlier that summer in the *causses*, Janine first met him properly at a dance in Cahors after its Liberation, in which he had played an important role.



Figure 34: René Andrieu (on the right) in conversation with the Communist artist and Resistant Jean Lurçat in Cahors, following its liberation in August 1944, (Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, opp. p. 262)

Four years older than Janine, René came from a left-wing *paysan* family in the Quercy *causses*, but was better educated than her. He

⁴⁵⁹ See for example, Williams, *Crisis and Compromise*, pp. 18-19.

had attended the *lycée* in Cahors and, by 1940 and his mobilisation, was teaching at Figeac while preparing a dissertation on Stendhal for his *agrégation* at the University of Toulouse. (*Agrégation* is a competitive examination leading to the right to teach at the highest levels in secondary and tertiary education.) The trigger for his joining the FTP and the Communist party was, he later wrote, the German occupation of the south in November 1942. Called up for STO in the summer of 1943, he absconded to the *causses* and before long became Noireau's right-hand man.⁴⁶⁰ And, as we have seen in relation to Étienne Verlhac, he became head of the Military Tribunal in Cahors, that for a time wielded supreme power in the Lot, ordering the execution or imprisonment of many alleged collaborators. With Jacques Chapou dead, Noireau, Andrieu, and their Communist comrades were not only the victorious leaders of the liberation of Cahors and the region but also for a brief period the undisputed masters of Quercy, having assumed military and political power. As mentioned in Chapter 6, their actions in the weeks following 17 August reveal both ruthlessness and an acceptance, seeming to verge on the callous, that the innocent among their victims were an inevitable consequence of the fevered atmosphere of the moment. In their later writings, as will be discussed, there are hints of the confident swagger of the male victor, free for a time to 'clean up'. Their casual approach to violence and to the exercise of justice is illustrated by the summary executions that took place after 17 August, in Cahors and at a nearby detention camp. These were carried out under René Andrieu's orders, and the archives suggest that he may himself have supervised them. In at least one batch, according to a witness, the victims were shot in the back of the head, copying the Soviet practice. The executions were arbitrary, and many of the victims

⁴⁶⁰ René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, pp. 77-83.

have since been shown to have been guilty of only minor acts of collaboration, or even of merely 'doubtful activity'.⁴⁶¹

Janine's account of what happened after the dance at which she met René is revealing of them both. They left together in the early hours of the morning, stopping first at his hotel. She made to say goodbye, when he interrupted with: 'You can't leave me here, stay with me.' Janine continues:

'I certainly did want to stay a few minutes more, but on the pavement. There was no question of my going up to his room. The crippling fear of the abyss of perdition (my Catholic upbringing). The simple fear of the unknown: what would happen? I've no idea. Perhaps the notion that for him it would be just another conquest (he had had quite a few) crossed my mind. No doubt the passion that sweeps aside all such obstacles had not yet come into play, despite the attraction I felt for him.

'Then followed what for me was the first episode of René's anger, a black anger. His frustration got the better of his affection and his words were harsh: 'You've led me up the garden path. You gave me a glimpse of something, and I'll never forgive you'. He then left me, in a fury.'⁴⁶²

René's presumption that Janine should and would bow to his desires, her refusal and his rage, and then her analysis of the episode and its aftermath, are all revealing. Although they were in a world in which women were still expected to be virgins until marriage (but men not), the Liberation was a moment of moral flux and uncertainty, and in the mix was the notion that returning soldiers deserved sex with women as a form of recompense and tribute for their wartime service. Not long after this incident, by which time '...the passion that sweeps aside....' had presumably come into play, not only did Janine sleep with René but she set up

⁴⁶¹ ADL 74 J 84, Autour des conditions de l'épuration à Cahors et dans le Lot; Vaissié, *Cahors*, pp. 195-225.

⁴⁶² Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 147-8.

home with him, living 'in sin', initially in Cahors and then for two years in Paris, until their marriage in 1947. René's proposal of marriage was hurtfully casual; *à propos* of nothing, he blurted out, 'What if we got married?' Janine was upset, but she accepted, later rationalising that neither of them cared 'much about formalities, nor about the future.' René's cursory attitude towards her was repeated when he abruptly announced that they were going to Yugoslavia.⁴⁶³ Only a few months lapsed between the marriage and the move to Yugoslavia. We may speculate that René knew about the move beforehand and felt that they would need to be married before travelling to a Communist regime, where loose morals were less tolerated than in Paris. Were that so, then the marriage for him might be deemed one of mere convenience. But there is no evidence to confirm this.

Janine's purported insouciance about the future may have been because she felt secure once again, in a relationship with an older man of higher status than hers. From the time of her involvement with René she willingly assumed a subordinate position to him, and all the incidents narrated up to the memoir's end in 1951 are consequent upon his desires and actions. By 1946 he had turned to journalism, securing a good job on the Parisian daily *Ce Soir*. Meanwhile, she found a less good one as a secretary at an industrial firm. Early in 1947, he (with her tagging along, as the narrative paints it), was sent to Belgrade and thereafter Bucharest to work on the Communist magazine PPD (*'Pour un paix durable, pour une démocratie populaire'*). This magazine was produced by Cominform, an organisation founded in 1947 at the initiative of Stalin. Cominform's main ostensible purpose was to create and diffuse Soviet and anti-Western propaganda, but it played an

⁴⁶³ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 147-8, 165, 171.

influential part in the process by which the Eastern European states (bar Yugoslavia) were moulded into full Soviet satellites during 1945-8. And production of PPD was Cominform's main tangible output.⁴⁶⁴ The Andrieus' four years behind the Iron Curtain comprised about one year in Belgrade (curtailed when Tito broke with Stalin in 1948, and the agency was relocated to Romania), and then about three in Bucharest during which they visited the Carpathians, Moscow, and Yalta. Much of Janine's description of this period is travelogue, although there are some incidents of note.

Janine on Men: Lasting Impressions

In addition to her relationships with Noireau, 'Plastic', Marcenac, and René, *La Joconde* also deals with several other encounters with men but few with women. As noted earlier, it seems that her female friendships were brief and superficial, and it was men who particularly interested her, mostly in the form of older, more dominant partners. In the main, these resemble father-figures (starting of course with her father himself) but occasionally feature as menacing superior powers, such as the German soldier at the checkpoint. Other men correspond to the idealised, romantic, and unthreatening younger hero-figure, such as 'Plastic', or the boy who stole the flowers for her, or the *maquisards* (who never made a pass at her) collectively. Much later, in Bucharest and when married, she had a similar putative romance with a 17-year-old Serbian who had fallen in love with her.⁴⁶⁵ Her first boyfriend Jacques, 'young and good-looking', had been another figure in the younger mould. As if thinking that the reader might imagine that Jacques and she

⁴⁶⁴ Adam B. Ulan, *Titoism and Cominform* (Cambridge, Ma, 1952); Mihaela Teodor, 'Cominform Propaganda Arm; For a Lasting Peace. For a People's Democracy', *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, 14, (2010), pp. 189-208.

⁴⁶⁵ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 236-7.

had had sex, she writes, 'No! We didn't sleep together, he was a 'gentleman' [she uses the English term].'⁴⁶⁶

But it was older and more powerful men who made deeper impressions. Half-way through the memoir she reveals that Marcenac and René were:

'Two men...[who] had a determining influence on my future. I had will-power, and a certain form of courage that sometimes sprang from unawareness, [but also] caverns of ignorance compared with their intellectual depths, and an upbringing that had left me lacking in worldliness. They instilled in me a measure of self-confidence that stood me in good stead when I had to integrate into postwar society.'⁴⁶⁷

In René's case, we may suppose that Janine was attracted to him because he was intelligent, good company, and also handsome, ambitious, and something of a rising star in the Resistance and in Communist circles. But that was not all: both Marcenac, fourteen years her senior and René, four, stood to some extent in the roles that might have been expected of a father. Another such figure, even older, was Georges Cogniot (1901-78), a Communist politician and scholar from the same generation as her parents. Janine acted as Cogniot's secretary and tour guide when he visited Bucharest. Later, he hired her as his parliamentary secretary after she and René had returned to Paris in 1951. She records that, when introduced to Cogniot as his proposed secretary, he said, 'What do you want me to do with that? You're offering me a little girl.' Thereafter he called her his 'little cat'. Janine does not write disapprovingly of this, nor of Marcenac's earlier scolding her like a schoolgirl for smoking, leading one to reflect that being treated as a child, and thereby being taken back to her happy and secure

⁴⁶⁶ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 79.

⁴⁶⁷ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 138.

childhood, was something she tolerated and probably rather liked.⁴⁶⁸ The teacher-pupil nature of the relationship with Cogniot is also suggested by the photograph overleaf:

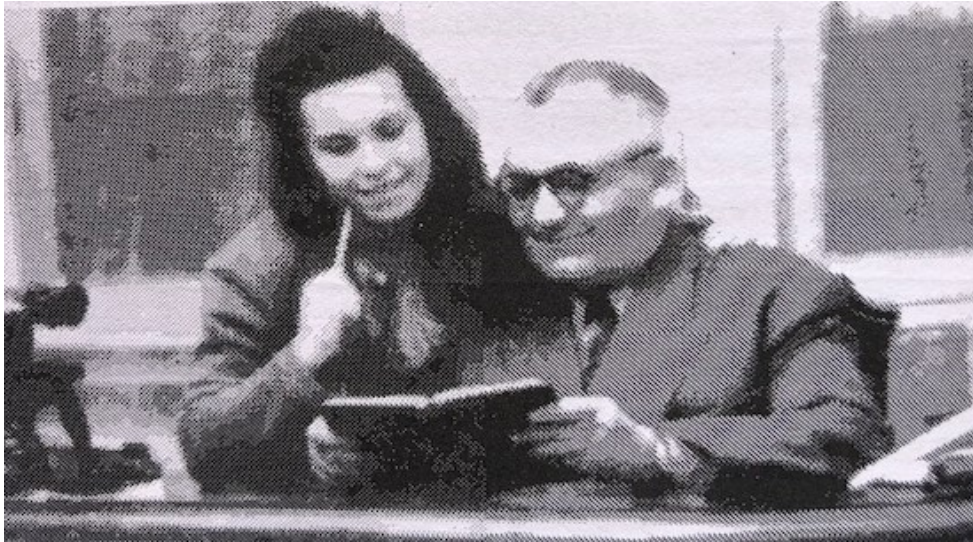


Figure 35: Janine with Georges Cogniot, Bucharest, late 1940s. (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, p. 220.)

Men on Janine: Effacement

‘Women? You must know that without them half our work would have been impossible. The only liaison agents I have had have been women [...] One of them did 75 kilometers in one day on a bike.’⁴⁶⁹

These words were spoken by the Resistance leader Henri Rol-Tanguy, just after the Liberation of Paris and although, as we have seen in Chapter 2, some leading French historians continue to pay relatively little attention to women, Rol-Tanguy’s esteem for the value of women to the Resistance is now shared both by most historians and in the French collective memory.⁴⁷⁰ However, this was not the case in the postwar period and emphatically not so with

⁴⁶⁸ For an account of Cogniot’s life, see his memoir, George Cogniot, *Partis pris; cinquante ans de l’humanisme réel* (Paris, 1976).

⁴⁶⁹ Quoted in Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, p. 146.

⁴⁷⁰ See Chapter 2, Historiography section.

Janine. She was given no credit at all for her contribution in the relevant published works, and her case seems to be an egregious example of how women were excised from the Resistance story after 1944. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this misrepresentation was embedded in the nationalist and gendered attitudes that underlay the resistencialist myth. The absence of women from the story continued beyond the 1960s, both in official French versions and in the historiography, arguably until after the trial of Klaus Barbie in 1987.⁴⁷¹ There is also no record at all of Janine's activities in the Resistance files in the Lot departmental archives. Doubtless this was in part due to her failure to claim official Resistance status after the war. That she did not do so may be a consequence of her own self-effacing character; but it certainly also reflects the surrounding discourse in the postwar period when, in a society where public affairs remained largely a male domain, humility or lack of assertion *viz-à-viz* men led many women to down-play their wartime contributions.⁴⁷²

Noireau, Marcenac, and René Andrieu published their memoirs in 1978, 1982 and 1996 respectively. They all ignore Janine. In *La Joconde*, she recounted how she had overheard a heated row between Noireau and Marcenac over which of them should be her boss, in the course of which she heard Noireau say, 'I absolutely need her.'⁴⁷³ Assuming this to be true, knowing what we do of Janine's work for Noireau in Figeac, and knowing too that he had, again according to her own credible account, appointed her as his liaison agent reporting directly to him, it is striking that in his war memoir of nearly 400 pages there is not a single reference to her. There is nothing in *La Joconde* (or in the other sources researched

⁴⁷¹ On the postwar understatement of women's contribution to the Resistance, see for example Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, pp. 468-72.

⁴⁷² See for example, Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, pp. 147-8.

⁴⁷³ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, p. 120.

here) to suggest that Noireau and she had fallen out, which could have led to his erasure of her. So it seems that she was forgotten because Noireau's memory reflected the postwar discourse in which the contribution of women was largely forgotten; in short, because they were women and did not count. Similarly, while Marcenac made a deep impression on Janine, the reverse seems to have been the case with him: there is again not a word in his memoir about her when he writes of his time running the FTP courses in the châteaux. And lastly, there are no references to her in any of the local histories of the *maquis* listed in the Bibliography appended here, including one specifically covering the *maquis* actions in and around Figeac.⁴⁷⁴

Do these failures to mention Janine suggest that in *La Joconde* she had exaggerated or even falsified her contribution to the Resistance? The veracity of this memoir has been discussed in Chapter 2. It is not possible to find other accounts or paperwork that corroborate the fact that it was she who undertook the espionage work in Figeac. Although she recorded that 'the bridge' had been blown up, not one of the three bridges in Figeac itself was destroyed. So, what she wrote was wrong, but nonetheless it may well be imagined that Noireau had planned to blow up the bridge as an act of Resistance propaganda, a much more spectacular version of the Resistance funeral. Next, we have seen that 'Plastic' does indeed appear to have been a real person. And Marcenac's failure to mention Janine does not mean that she was not, as she wrote, part of the FTP training course. Where *La Joconde* does seem to have strayed from fact into fiction is in respect of the hidden Louvre works of art. This is important, not least in that the memoir's title is the French term for the 'Mona Lisa', which was one of the works in

⁴⁷⁴ Lacan, *Figeac en Quercy*.

question. Neither of the two *châteaux* in which she stayed, Bessonies and La Boisse, are listed in the records as being among those in which the works were hidden.⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, while Marcenac's memoir does name these two as being those in which the courses were held, he makes no mention of the works being there, which he does in respect of a third *château*, Montal, in which he later briefly stayed and which the Louvre records do name as one of the relevant *châteaux*. So, assuming that Marcenac did not mention the works as being at Bessonies or La Boisse because they were in fact not, then a charitable explanation of Janine's assertion that she slept in the bedroom hung with Louvre masterpieces might be that she had also stayed at Montal; or that, as the decades passed, her memory understandably came to conflate these various *châteaux* in the northern Lot that were used by the Resistance for different activities – training, hiding men and arms, hiding works of art. It also bears repetition here that *La Joconde* is generally vague as to places and dates. Less charitably, perhaps here she was guilty of some fanciful writing in pursuit of a spicier story.⁴⁷⁶ (Enquiries by the author at the two *châteaux* have yet to provide corroboration of Janine and Marcenac having stayed at either.)

The photograph of René Andrieu reproduced overleaf captures his self-confidence and easy charm, and perhaps his self-regard too. His account of his life after marriage in his memoir, *Un Rêve Fou?*, barely mentions his wife. This might be taken as typical in a memoir of a man's public life, and much of this one is indeed devoted to sweeping analyses of world affairs, and little to the personal. However, Janine worked with and for him during the years they spent behind the Iron Curtain and the fact that she is

⁴⁷⁵ See for example: http://www.lot.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/catalogue_louvre-sur-lot_20-03-2019.pdf.

⁴⁷⁶ Marcenac, *Je n'ai pas perdu mon temps*, pp. 327-32.

barely mentioned is jarring. While René does give credit to women liaison agents collectively and records that one of them (unnamed) would later become his wife, he refers to her - for example when accompanying him on an international trip or to an event in Paris - as he might his suitcase or wallet, a useful but inert appendage. Here the way that René (and Noireau and Marcenac) writes could be marshalled as support for the simplistic thesis, as discussed in Chapter 3, that men succeeded in imposing a wholesale reassertion of 'traditional' gender values in the postwar period. Given that the memoir was written in the 1990s, it certainly does illustrate how those values persisted in the mindset of many men of René's generation throughout their lives.⁴⁷⁷

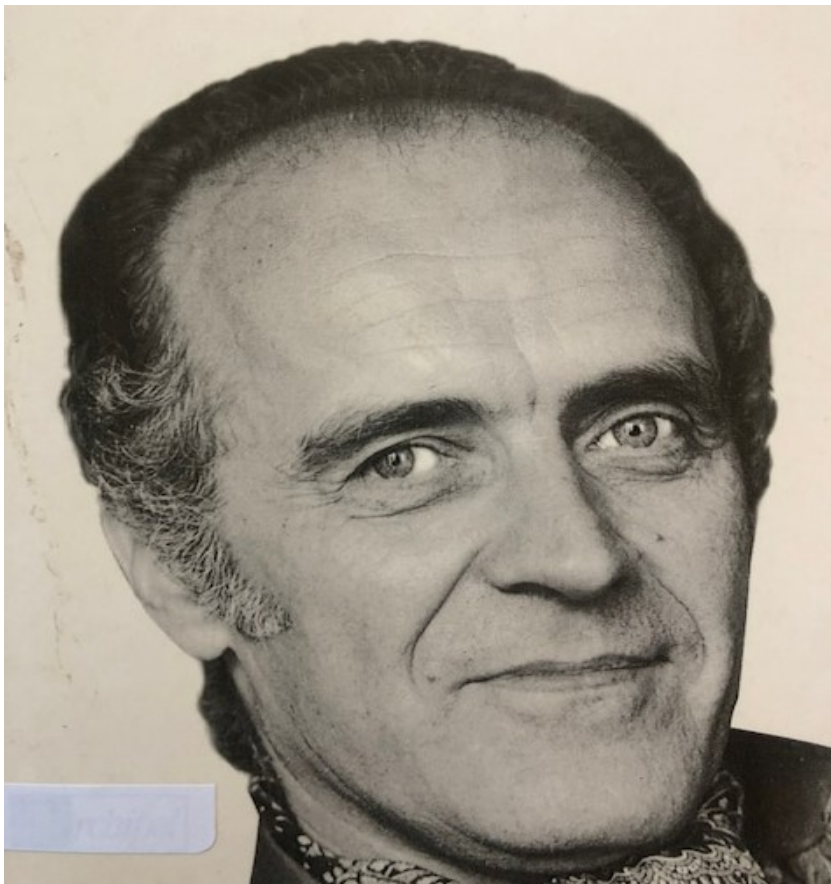


Figure 36 René Andrieu, probably 1970s, (from the cover of Andrieu, René, *Un Rêve Fou?*).

⁴⁷⁷ René Andrieu, *Un Rêve Fou?*, pp. 88-9.

René bore another quality that owed more to the past than to the later 20th century. According to Janine, he was incapable of expressing emotion or of talking candidly with her about intimacies or matters of importance to their life as a couple. Her family had been expressive, demonstrating their love of one another openly, while René, Janine reasoned, had a more overtly *paysan* mentality in which 'the joys of the heart and the deepest sorrows were not shown.' This dissonance particularly upset Janine when it came to their only child, Michelle, who was born in Rumania in 1948. Michelle was handicapped and died young. Janine and René rarely confided in one another, and she implies that the marriage had soon become one of convenient coexistence with an emotional void at its heart.⁴⁷⁸

La Joconde is mute as to what Janine felt about the often curt and demeaning way in which René treated her, but when she does betray her feelings about the gendered behaviour of René or of other men towards her, it is in the form of asides to the reader along the lines of, 'Well, that's the way things were....' or, 'Huh! Typical of a man.....!'. A sort of ironic and passive acceptance of the status quo is implied. René's postwar career was full of incident and by the 1970s he had become a prominent media personality. And he wrote copiously about himself. By contrast, *La Joconde* ends with Janine's return to Paris in 1951. Is that because she had tired of writing the memoir, or because she felt that she had nothing of note to say about the rest of her life?

Conclusion: Independence and Dependence

Janine's story and her character were marked by paradox. In her Resistance work she was self-possessed, brave, and resourceful, but in other respects she lacked self-confidence, particularly as

⁴⁷⁸ Janine Andrieu, *La Joconde*, pp. 166-7.

regards her perceived lack of education and intellectual prowess, and her unworldliness, including as to sex. On another level, her courage, sense of adventure, and self-possession stand in contrast to her apparent dependence on dominant male figures, particularly older men and starting with her father. Apart from two brief interludes lasting in sum only a few months, she was in relationships with such men for all of her life, up to René's death in 1998 when she was 74. (The interludes were between the death of her father and her being taken on by Noireau, and between her being left in the château by Marcenac and her going to live with René.) Yet another paradox is that an apparent indifference to some key bourgeois norms – the institution of marriage and the view that after marriage a woman of her class should not work – sat alongside a social and sexual conservatism: her reaction to Noireau's 'no sex here' instruction, her worry about the stolen flowers, her lifelong embarrassment over urinating in the jug; her initial rejection of René's sexual advances. This third paradox is reflective of the shifting values of the time, with class and age hierarchies, as well as gendered and sexual mores, all in flux and with change proceeding unevenly across France. By the late 1940s 'living in sin' was not socially unacceptable in left-wing milieux in Paris, but was still taboo in Cahors and rural Quercy.

The second paradox is the key, since it was Janine's willing acceptance of, or perhaps seeking, father-figures that determined the arc of her life, as she evolved from bright only-child through Resistance agent to playing the unassuming wife behind the extrovert public figure. Courage, daring, and determination were certainly required when she sought out the Resistance and then worked on dangerous missions in it, but that world also satisfied her continuing need to belong and to be housed within structures

that replicated the security blanket of the patriarchal family that she had just lost. The roots of Janine's choices and actions thus lay in her relationship with her parents. They taught her to be independent, but the familial classroom was, to use her own term, a 'cocoon'. The Resistance was a family too, and in her later relationships with men it is not hard to see the same desire for continuity and stability.

As for the men in Janine's life, with the notable exception of her father, the older among them seem usually to have treated her in an offhand, dismissive, and often hurtful way. That they entirely wrote her out of their Resistance stories is up to a point understandable given the generalised exclusion of women from the postwar narrative. But the excuse of that narrative cannot be used to explain away her husband's memoir, written as it was in the 1990s. By then, feminism had made wide inroads into French life, particularly in the left-wing Parisian milieu which he inhabited. Perhaps René Andrieu underscores that Communism and feminism have never been comfortable bedfellows, as well as the fact that new mores do not always dislodge entrenched attitudes. Perhaps too there was a generational element at play. All in all, it is instructive to read *La Joconde* alongside the other accounts and thereby to observe in stark terms the disconnect between a woman's contribution to the Resistance and the disregard for it on the part of the men directly involved.

Janine's passive reaction towards men ignoring or belittling her is a companion then to the behaviour of the men themselves, all in concert with older gendered norms. Hence, she was quite different to Marie-Antoinette Orcival and Françoise de Boisséson. These other women were flamboyantly unusual, acting much more emphatically against the grain, and Françoise was a leader of men.

Neither manifested the same ready acceptance of male leadership as did Janine, who was not a leader and not one to elbow her way to the front. The comparison should be taken more as an illustration of the singularity of the other two than as any implied negative comment on Janine: her nature, and the largely uneventful fabric of her life after the memoir ends, were somewhat closer to the norm. She was also very different to Yvonne Wagner, sharing little of Yvonne's drive and desire to control. On the other hand, her postwar life cannot be characterised as representing a mere return to prewar norms: her work for Cogniot and for René was significant and far removed from that of a *femme de foyer*. In summary therefore, Janine's life can be placed in an intermediate region between 'older' and 'newer' values and modes of behaviour. Thus, she illustrates the jagged pathway that characterised the evolution of women's roles in society.

Janine may perhaps be most closely compared with Madeleine Tavernier. Double-standards were embedded in the way that women's wartime actions were judged. We have seen how Janine's Resistance work was not merely denied praise but was in effect expunged from the record. In part, this reflected the 'resistencialist' preference for defining 'Resistance' narrowly, as applying only to combatants and thus only to men. On the other hand, when it came to punishing women for collaboration, a broad definition was allowed, such that a woman like Madeleine ran into trouble partly because of behaviour that reflected nothing more than lifestyle choices, rather than any desire to help the enemy, or any sympathy for Germans *per se*.

Reflecting on the longer-term significance of this case study, it would be instructive to reach back into an earlier period of French history, and to examine how the attitudes of Janine's parents might

reveal the social changes they experienced in their transition from Quercy to the cosmopolitan and industrialised Paris of the interwar years. That could contextualise Janine's distinctive upbringing; but it would fall outside the scope of this thesis. Janine's story reveals the space that emerged during the Occupation for a young woman from a modest background to engage in activities which stood entirely outside of the conventions of the time, a space that had been prepared by the social changes following the First World War, but that was only significantly opened by the Second. However, the new independence that Janine grasped was exercised within a framework that was rooted in established norms of gendered behaviour, one in which men possessed a defining authority over women's lives. Her 'new' identity was conditioned by elements of the 'old'. In this way, her story, and the way she chose to relate it, serve as a reminder of the uneven and complex ways in which gender relations evolved in 20th-century France.

Chapter 9

Rebellion, Honour and Power: Françoise de Boissésou and Her Family

German General: 'Madame la Marquise, will you swear to me on your honour that you are not involved in the Resistance?'

Françoise de Boissésou: 'General, I swear that I am not but - don't you know? - women have no honour.'⁴⁷⁹

Transgressions

One day in the spring of 1941, 43-year-old Françoise de Boissésou, recently widowed and a mother of two teenage boys, was riding near the family home of Château de Lacquy in the Armagnac region of south-west France. She came across a man sitting on the side of the road who looked exhausted and was obviously foreign. Questioning him, she learnt that he was a British pilot who had been shot down and was trying to make his way home via the Pyrenees and Spain. She took him in, looked after him and then searched among her friends to arrange safe passage for him over the mountains. In his memoir, *Souvenirs de ma jeunesse*, Françoise's younger son Jean-Vianney later wrote:

'From that moment she committed to this activity and continued with it, taking ever greater risks and eventually earning the *Croix de Guerre* at the Liberation.'⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Purported exchange, 1944: Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs de ma jeunesse* (de Boissésou Family Archive, 1999), p. 53. The principal sources for this Chapter are (i) the *Souvenirs* (ii) interviews conducted with Françoise's grandson Gilles de Boissésou, (b. 1.1.56), by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, at Lacquy, on various dates as detailed below, and (iii) Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, (23 Aug. 2021), written to Richard Lesmoir-Gordon. (Jean-Vianney (1925-2012) was Françoise's second son. The *Souvenirs* was completed in 1999 when he was 74 and Françoise had been dead for 25 years.)

⁴⁸⁰ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 46.

Not long after this incident, in June 1941, Françoise told Jean-Vianney 'with the offhand air that she knew how to adopt when required' that she had rented an apartment in Pau, some 100 km. south of Lacquy.⁴⁸¹ Jean-Vianney, then 15, was aware that his maternal grandmother, staying with them at the time, greatly disapproved of this move, but he also immediately recognised his mother's expression, the one she wore when 'she was prey to an irresistible temptation' and he knew that in such moods it was pointless to try to change her mind as she would only 'dig in her heels like a capricious child.'⁴⁸²

Françoise's lover, Capitaine Gérard Naud, came to live with her in the apartment in Pau, and to help her with the escape network. He had resigned from Vichy's Armistice Army and left his wife and two children in Lyon – but not his horse, which he had had sent on to Pau. (Horses feature in this story.) Jean-Vianney wrote that at this point the die was cast 'and henceforth he and my mother lived together in the sight and knowledge of Pau society.' Later he learnt that 'in truth my mother and her darling Gérard had without telling anyone joined a network run by the *Armée Secrète*' (an umbrella term for Gaullist Resistance groups in the Unoccupied Zone). For Françoise and 'Le Capitaine', as Naud was known in the family, 'the great adventure had started'.⁴⁸³

Jean-Vianney's memoir of his childhood, *Souvenirs de ma jeunesse*, shows Françoise transgressing in two ways during the war. First, to the chagrin of her own and her dead husband's families, she openly set up home with her married lover, and in a luxury that would, given the straightened times, have been greatly disapproved of by most of her compatriots. Second, she turned her back on the

⁴⁸¹ Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, *Souvenirs*, pp. 45-6.

⁴⁸² Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, *Souvenirs*, p. 45.

⁴⁸³ Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, *Souvenirs*, p. 46.

French government in order to help the Allies, which also hurt and angered her family who, though anti-German, were conservative and, at least until the latter stages of the occupation, Pétainist.⁴⁸⁴ This Chapter will show how, in the life of Françoise, we see a woman pushing back at familial pressures and conventional societal expectations, and whose behaviour oscillated between what was deemed honourable and what was regarded as unacceptable, both at the time and in memories. Her decisions to take a lover and to engage in clandestine work were acts of personal assertion, but both brought her some measure of dishonour in the eyes of her family, who later demanded a form of retribution.

Biographies

Françoise was born in 1898 in Marseilles into the wealthy de Greling family. She was the eldest of four children, the others being a brother born in 1899 and two sisters in 1901 and 1906. Originally Swiss businesspeople, the de Grelings had moved to Marseilles in the late 17th century. Françoise was raised and schooled in Marseilles. In 1922 she married an aristocratic soldier, Maurice de Boisséson, on what was largely an 'arranged' basis (meaning that the marriage would first have been agreed in principle by the two sets of parents, and then the couple would have been encouraged by their respective parents to get to know each other with a view to marriage). They had two children, Paul and Jean-Vianney, born in 1923 and 1925 respectively.

Maurice was a career army officer. Born in 1890, he graduated from the élite St. Cyr military college in 1913 and joined the cavalry. In 1914, during the first days of the First World War, he was taken prisoner and spent the remaining four years of the war

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Gilles de Boisséson, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Lacquy, 3 July 2023.

as a POW in Germany. His elder brother Joseph was killed at the front in 1915. After the Armistice he rejoined the army and participated in the Rif war in Morocco. He returned from Morocco to Marseilles, where he met and married Françoise in 1922. He was 32 and she 24. In the interwar period, Maurice's military career took the couple to live in Saumur on the Loire for several years, and in Compiègne and Lyon for shorter spells. During these years, Françoise also spent time at properties owned by the two families across the south, in Marseilles, the Gers, and the Tarn-et-Garonne. Following the outbreak of war in 1939, Maurice was posted to the Ardennes front while Françoise, the children, and other members of the family moved into Lacquy, an Armagnac-producing estate on the Gers-Landes border belonging to the de Boissésous. For Jean-Vianney the war years were divided between term-times at Marseilles where he stayed with his de Greling grandparents and attended a Jesuit school, and Pau/Lacquy in the holidays when he stayed with his mother and Naud.

Maurice was killed in May 1940, the victim of a direct hit from a Stuka bomb that caught him while he was trying to organise the defense of his cavalry troop from air attack. (He too was awarded the *Croix de Guerre*.) As a result of his death, Françoise took over the running of the Lacquy estate. Her Resistance activities comprised two phases. The first was in Pau, where she helped those fleeing German or Vichy persecution until late 1942 or early 1943. The second was back at Lacquy, where she founded a local *maquis* group which she and Naud later jointly ran. At the Liberation, she briefly became a central figure in the public life of the village. Thereafter, she ceased involvement in public life, living for most of her later years in an apartment on Avenue Montaigne, one of the

most expensive and exclusive addresses in Paris. She died in 1974, aged 76.



Figure 37: Château Lacquy, 2023, (Author's Photograph, 2023).

Clandestine Work: Pau and Lacquy

Jean-Vianney's account emphasises that his mother's commitment to the Allied cause, and her willingness to help those who found themselves on the wrong side of the authorities, dated at least from the summer of 1940. Soon after Maurice's death in May, and when she was living alone at Lacquy, Françoise gave refuge to her friends Louis and Gian de Cabrol. Louis was a French soldier who had been captured by the Germans but had managed to escape and to rejoin his English wife Gian. Thanks to Françoise's help, the de Cabrols were able to make their escape back to England before long. (She used her influence with the authorities in Bordeaux to

help them, and they eventually escaped by boat from the Basque coast.)⁴⁸⁵ During this same period, she took in other friends, as well as a Jewish couple from Paris, the husband being a furrier from whom she had bought fur coats before the war. Françoise appears to have rejected the antisemitic attitudes that were commonplace in her social milieu. The Jewish family stayed for a year before moving to a safer hiding-place further away, as Lacquy lay too close to the demarcation line between the Occupied and Unoccupied Zones to be safe; they survived the war and Françoise later resumed contact with them in Paris.⁴⁸⁶ The *Souvenirs* recall that the presence of the de Cabrols at Lacquy in the summer of 1940,

‘...helped my mother to realise that the British were determined to continue the war and that they were right to do so. She had supported Britain in the war against Germany even before de Gaulle’s appeal of 18th June.’

Moreover, he remembered that her support for Britain was diminished neither by the evacuation from Dunkirk in May, which many French people saw as a selfish act of abandonment by the British, nor by the sinking of the French fleet by the British at Mers-el-Kébir in July 1940.⁴⁸⁷ Although Françoise’s attitudes were formed in part by her Anglophilia, her reaction to German Occupation may have been that of the ‘visceral, patriotic’ type that the historian Margaret Collins Weitz has observed as a common trigger among women who resolved to resist early in the war.⁴⁸⁸

It appears, therefore, that by the summer of 1940 Françoise had already come to oppose Vichy and to express that opposition in actions. Her resistance intensified in 1941. The apartment that she rented in Pau belonged to a rich American who had fled home to

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Gilles de Boissésou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Lacquy, 3 July 2023.

⁴⁸⁶ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 41.

⁴⁸⁷ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 41-2.

⁴⁸⁸ Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 88.

the United States. It was of the highest quality and had views to the Pyrenees. Pau was a cosmopolitan resort town, designed for relaxation and pleasure. It offered spas, riding, a casino, and skiing in the mountains.⁴⁸⁹ Before the war it had been home to wealthy expatriate American and British communities; the British had introduced foxhunting. After the outbreak of war it had, according to Jean-Vianney, 'been enriched by many new arrivals who lived in apparent luxury and with the utmost nonchalance'.⁴⁹⁰ Pau was also close to the Spanish border and (like Lacquy) to the demarcation line. Thus, by 1941, it had, in Jean-Vianney's words, become 'a crossroads on which everyone who had a good reason for leaving France and going over the Pyrenees converged.'⁴⁹¹ These included many categories of individuals who needed to evade the Germans and Vichy: escaped POWs, Allied airmen who had been shot down, Resisters on the run, and Jewish refugees.

Apart from the *Souvenirs*, the indirect evidence for the Pau escape network is limited to a report by the Local Liberation Committee (CLL) of Lacquy, probably written in the second half of 1944, which refers to Françoise and 'her friends' in Pau having helped escapees get into Spain.⁴⁹² This is derived, one must assume, from the statements of Françoise and Naud and there is no independent corroboration of its existence. (There appear to be no papers on the network in the departmental archives at Pau, but this may be expected since it was never discovered by the Vichy authorities.) While we know nothing about the extent of its operations, or how many people it helped on their journey into Spain, we do have

⁴⁸⁹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 46; Sandra Ott, *Living with the Enemy*, pp. 29, 33; and *Pyrénées, Côte d'Argent - Guide Michelin Régionaux 1930-31* (Weissenbrück, 1930), pp. 95-7.

⁴⁹⁰ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 46.

⁴⁹¹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 46.

⁴⁹² Rapport du Président du C.L.L. de Lacquy, (de Boissésou Family Archive, undated, but probably second half of 1944).

occasional snapshots of Françoise's role in it from Jean-Vianney's *Souvenirs*. His strongest memories of this time were of his mother enlisting him to help in her clandestine work. On one occasion, he returned to the apartment to find it full of men 'who were dressed in town clothes and had the air of having fled a catastrophe'. These men were evidently en route for passage over the Pyrenees: Jean-Vianney was dispatched by Françoise to a sports-shop to buy a batch of climbing boots, and later to collect false identity cards from a *bistrot*.⁴⁹³

In early 1943 Françoise gave up the apartment in Pau and closed the network, choosing instead to develop a *maquis* group, based at Château Lacquy, which took its name from the nearest town, Villeneuve-de Marsan.⁴⁹⁴ (The group's activities are described in some detail in the CLL report of 1944 and in a booklet about it written by a local historian and published locally. In addition, the group's activities are also described in various press articles that appeared in the war's immediate aftermath, and in other miscellaneous papers in the family archives. All these have been consulted from the de Boissésou Family Archive.)⁴⁹⁵ The decision to leave Pau was probably prompted by the German occupation of the Zone Libre in November 1942, which resulted in a large German military presence in the town, although it may also have been connected to Naud receiving orders from the Free French authorities in Algeria in 1942 to commence organising resistance in Armagnac.⁴⁹⁶ Again, there are limited sources about the Lacquy/Villeneuve-de-Marsan group. There is little about it in the departmental archives and, in addition to the *Souvenirs*, we have

⁴⁹³ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 46-7.

⁴⁹⁴ Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁵ Rapport du Président du C.L.L. de Lacquy; Guy Mandron, *Un Village Landais dans la tourmente; la Résistance à Villeneuve-de-Marsan*, (place of publication not clear; undated).

⁴⁹⁶ Rapport du Président du C.L.L. de Lacquy.

only a laudatory booklet-history about it, published locally, the minutes of a 1944 CLL meeting that describes it, and miscellaneous papers in the de Boissésou family archive at Lacquy. Together these offer only an episodic picture of the group, but they make it clear that it was run jointly from the château by Françoise and Naud, that eventually it comprised about sixty *maquisards*, and that its principal activity was to collect and distribute arms and other supplies dropped in the area by parachute from British planes. By the spring of 1944, it had become affiliated to the much larger *Corps Franc Pommiès* Resistance group covering the south-west and led by Major André Pommiès. Like Naud, Pommiès was a former officer in the Armistice Army.⁴⁹⁷ There are two passing references to Naud in Pommiès's own history of his group, dating to 1943 and 1944.⁴⁹⁸ Members of the Lacquy/Villeneuve-de-Marsan *maquis* were initially recruited from among the local *paysans*, but also among shopkeepers of Villeneuve-de-Marsan; and from the family too, in the shape of Paul and Jean-Vianney. According to the *Souvenirs*, its activities seem initially to have been somewhat amateur and ramshackle, but by 1944 it had become more organised – and exposed to greater danger, in part because of the presence at Mont-de-Marsan of an important German airbase.⁴⁹⁹

During this second period of Resistance activity, there were incidents in which Jean-Vianney was involved and which he vividly remembered. One was during the summer of 1943, when German troops had intercepted a parachute drop outside the village nearest to Lacquy. When news of this and of the ensuing German raid on the village reached the château, Françoise set about preparing for

⁴⁹⁷ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 61; Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows*, p. 339.

⁴⁹⁸ Jean-André Pommiès, *Le Corps Franc Pommiès* (Paris, 2014), pp. 189, 233.

⁴⁹⁹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 47. See also Christian Levaufré, *Mont-de-Marsan et autres lieux, un jour de mars 1944*, (Archives départementales des Landes), pp. 19, 59-67.

a visit from the Germans. While Naud took off to hide in the countryside, she instructed Jean-Vianney to bury in the garden a box of papers relating to the *maquis*. As he turned a corner of the château with this box on his way to find a spade, he was confronted by two German soldiers. Far from apprehending him and seizing the box, the Germans had come to ask permission for the commander of the troops who had raided the village to have lunch that day on the château's lawn. Françoise arrived, coolly gave her permission and the lunch for the troops duly took place a few days later.⁵⁰⁰

This episode underlines that Françoise, perhaps partly in consequence of her social status, had a leadership role in the *maquis*; that she had to decide, to act, and to command men. It also suggests composure when under pressure. She herself also transported the canisters from the parachute dropping zones to clandestine arms depots. She was thus an active Resister, rather than a châtelaine who supported the *maquis* indirectly. She took a further step in that direction after the Allied landings in June 1944 when, following a denunciation, it was feared that the château might be raided and burnt down. Françoise decided that Lacquy had to be abandoned and that she herself must '*prendre le maquis*'. Accordingly, she and her *maquisards* set up an open-air camp in a remote ravine 3 or 4 km. from Lacquy, staying there for several weeks until after the German withdrawal in August 1944.⁵⁰¹

By the end of that month, Naud had been ordered by his superiors in the Resistance to take up an appointment in Mont-de-Marsan and Françoise had become, according to the memoirs of Jean-Vianney, mayor of Lacquy as well as the head of the local Liberation

⁵⁰⁰ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 53.

⁵⁰¹ Mandron, *Un Village Landais*, pp. 54-5; Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 61-2.

Committee, the CLL. She owed these positions to her wartime record and to the respect she had earned among the men who composed the appointments' committees, who were mainly communist or socialist Resisters from her *maquis* group.⁵⁰² This respect is evidenced by the eulogistic terms of an article written about her in the local newspaper, *La Résistance Landaise*, in November 1944. Under the heading 'Madame la Marquise de Boissésou de Lacquy, a Real Resister', this spoke of '...her modesty in suffering, her implacable hatred of the Boche, her propaganda against the shameful policies of Vichy, her utter contempt for danger'. Her example, the article continued, had 'fired our courage', and she had 'never made the least complaint or shown the slightest regret for having abandoned the good life of the château.'⁵⁰³ This is clearly a hagiographic text, and there seems to be no independent evidence to confirm her formal or informal role as mayor of the commune from 1944 to 1945. However, this may well simply have been the consequence of the disappearance of structures of official power in the area around the moment of Liberation; and the account provided in the *Souvenirs* would suggest that she did indeed occupy the office of mayor.

In the *Souvenirs*, Françoise is portrayed as a confident, determined, impulsive, and brave woman. By the war's end, she had clearly achieved much, occupying positions of importance that would ordinarily have been filled by men. She had run an escape network in Pau, founded and then co-run a *maquis* group at Lacquy, and become head of the local CLL as well as occupying the post of mayor. Her actions were recognised in 1947 with the award of the *Croix de Guerre*. As far as can be ascertained, the Lacquy *maquis* was the only such group in all of France to have been founded by a

⁵⁰² Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 62.

⁵⁰³ *La Résistance Landaise* (18 Nov. 1944), reprinted in Mandron, *Un Village landaise*, pp. 54-5.

woman, and in this respect Françoise's story deserves recognition in the national history of women's contribution to the Resistance.⁵⁰⁴

Questions

Françoise's retort to the German general about honour, quoted at the opening of this Chapter, is a popular family anecdote. It is recorded in the *Souvenirs* and is repeated today by Gilles de Boissésou.⁵⁰⁵ Gilles is a grandson of Françoise, a son of Jean-Vianney, and the present proprietor of Lacquy. Family memory also has it that in 1944, at a moment when the Germans were increasingly suspicious as to what was happening at Lacquy, Françoise was summoned to their headquarters in Mont-de-Marsan for questioning. After the exchange with the general, she was allowed to return home without restrictions. On one level, the vignette offers an interesting example of a woman Resister 'performing femininities', employing her gender to distract enemy attention from her clandestine work.⁵⁰⁶ At another level, the anecdote and its popularity with the family are apposite because much of Françoise's life was played out around a dichotomy between honour and dishonour, between conformity with the norms expected of someone of her class and gender, and rebellion against them. If the anecdote is true, then her retort may also have been an internalised nod to her own character, in the sense that she was aware of her non-conformity with the type of 'honour' that had been conventionally defined for her. This family memory, and the other features of Françoise's wartime story, raise several questions. After

⁵⁰⁴ The historian Robert Gildea has been consulted on this and is not aware of any other such case. One of the founders and leaders of the *Comète* group was a woman, Andrée de Jongh. But while *Comète* was an important network for the exfiltration of Allied airmen from France and Belgium into Spain, De Jongh and the other founders were Belgian, and the network might fairly be described as Belgo-French. On *Comète*, see Airey Neave, *Little Cyclone* (London, 1954).

⁵⁰⁵ Interviews with Gilles de Boissésou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Lacquy, 7 and 8 Dec. 2019.

⁵⁰⁶ See for example, Valerie Deacon, 'Fitting into the French Resistance: Marie-Madeleine Fourcade and Georges Loustau-Lacau at the Intersection of Politics and Gender', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 50 (2), (Apr. 2015), p. 272.

her husband's death, as a widow she would have been expected to reside quietly in one of the family properties, where she would concentrate on the upbringing of her children, on household management, on local duties, and on charitable causes. A prolonged period of mourning would not have been out of place. Françoise instead made entirely different choices. Why then did she decide to enter a world of clandestine activities, and to embark on an open affair with a married man?

This Chapter, more than the others in this thesis, raises questions about the reliability of the source material. The family legend of the exchange with the German officer has no corroboration, and might be regarded as too perfect in the way that it presents Françoise as a strong-willed and quick-witted woman, sure of her ability to outwit her German interlocutor. That may indeed be wholly or largely true, but we can have no certainty that the event even occurred. In the absence of other significant sources, we must rely mainly on the *Souvenirs*. Memoirs always present many challenges for the historian, and these memoirs written by a son of his mother are no exception. From study of the document itself and from interviews with Gilles, it seems that Jean-Vianney's intention was to leave a record of his youth and of his parents, one that was to be read by his descendants and was not intended for any wider circulation. The *Souvenirs* tell us a great deal about his mother's family environment, her character, and her married life; and a good deal too about him. How did Jean-Vianney wish to portray his mother in the memoir, and would she have been content with what he wrote? Françoise's grandson Gilles has been most helpful with this Chapter, and specifically in providing his own critique of the *Souvenirs*. He came to know his grandmother well while living with her in Paris in the 1970s when he was a teenager. Interviews have

been conducted with him and he has allowed access to the relevant family correspondence.⁵⁰⁷ Moreover, he has re-read the *Souvenirs* as well as the correspondence, financial accounts, and other papers in the archive at Lacquy. His opinions differ from those of his father as recorded in the *Souvenirs* in some significant respects. He believes that the marriage of Françoise and Maurice was more loving and less distant, and the relationship between Françoise and the de Grellings more nuanced and less continually fractious, than they are portrayed in the *Souvenirs*. He also parts company with his father as to some aspects of the chronology. Most importantly, Jean-Vianney and Gilles have different views as to when the affair between Françoise and Naud began, Jean-Vianney suspecting that it had started before the war and thus before Maurice's death (and thus of course much more transgressive), and Gilles firmly believing that it did not begin until after 1941. The family archive includes cryptically-worded letters of remonstrance written to Françoise by her mother in the late 1930s. Jean-Vianney interpreted these as referring to the affair with Naud, while Gilles thinks they relate to Françoise having fallen out with her mother-in-law. Gilles also believes that Naud did not join Françoise in Pau until after 1941 and that the rental may have been paid in full by her rather than shared with him.⁵⁰⁸

Gilles also emphasises that, because of the nature of noble upbringing at this time, Jean-Vianney would have seen little of his parents, and could not have known his mother that well at that time. Gilles has also drawn attention to the imaginative and romantic strain that runs through the *Souvenirs*, and indeed Jean-Vianney admits to this in the work itself. Allowing for these

⁵⁰⁷ In particular, interviews with Gilles de Boissésou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Lacquy, 7 and 8 Dec. 2019.

⁵⁰⁸ Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, pp. 2-3.

qualifications, the memoir is nonetheless a fair guide to the traditions of the two families, and to the main events in his mother's adult life. In addition, they are of course also of value in providing insights as to how a perceptive and elderly man, writing in the 1990s, attempted to reconstruct the life of his mother during 1918-45. As to intentions, it seems that Jean-Vianney meant that the memoir should show both what he saw as his mother's good qualities as well as her faults; and from what we know of her, we may guess that she would not have much objected to his portrait of her.

While there is nothing to suggest that any part of the *Souvenirs* has been invented, it presents a selective account of an exemplary 'good' Frenchwoman of the war years: early adherence to the Allied cause, commitment to the clandestine world after the epiphany of encountering the British airman, giving refuge to Jewish refugees, an escape network in Pau, the founding of a *maquis* group, the hiding of the box of papers, the insouciance with which the Germans are treated, the decision to '*prendre le maquis*', and the grand finale of the *Croix de Guerre*. But how far does this public story of personal bravery and clear-cut choices reflect the reality of her war years? And what drove her to make unconventional choices, in both the public and the private spheres? In the absence of much corroborative evidence, we may wonder about how far her actions in Pau were really motivated by a spirit of resistance; just as her *maquis* network in Lacquy may have acquired its clear-cut character more in retrospect than at the time. Above all, what remains unclear is the nature of the relationship between her private and public lives. The available sources can therefore take us only so far in reconstructing, and more especially understanding, the nature of Françoise's choices during the war. To go beyond, we

need to look back to the pre-war period, to families and to marriage.

Families, Places and Personalities

Those choices were in part rooted in her marriage, the character of which in turn was formed by differences between the families on each side of it, and between the married couple themselves. The de Greling and de Boissésou families formed part of the southern provincial nobility. Both were conservative, Catholic, and wealthy, with many houses and large staffs. There were English and Russian governesses, and servants in livery, some French and some Arab. Typically, the men went into politics, the administration, or the military, and managed their estates, while the women were occupied with domestic and social arrangements.⁵⁰⁹

However, in other respects the two families were decidedly different. The Marseilles society to which the de Grelings belonged had amassed fortunes from shipping and soap, while the de Boissésous were more dependent on 'older' (and thus 'nobler') income from the land. The de Grelings, although based at Château Sec in Marseilles and thus technically 'provincial', were sophisticated, intellectual, and cosmopolitan. The de Boissésous, with houses further into rural Languedoc and Gascony and a base at Castres in the Tarn, were more localised and introverted. Jean-Vianney emphasises the extreme disparity between the mentalities of the two families.⁵¹⁰ While the de Grelings were:

'...related to the Fortons, to the Lagoys, to all the grand, rich and influential families of the Provençal nobility, and had remained, despite their provincial origins, elegant and refined, dressing well and living in beautiful houses that were designed and decorated in that taste that is particular to the Provençales, a blending of the Parisian and the Italian,

⁵⁰⁹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs* pp. 15-18, 23-4.

⁵¹⁰ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 22.

speaking without accent, travelling the world, open to all sort of foreign influences...'

The de Boissésos, by contrast:

'...had remained provincial in the Balzacian sense of the term, badly dressed, badly shod, treating their external appearance as a source of amusement. Certain among them did in fact manage to emerge from this swamp, notably my grandfather. [Jean-Vianney's grandfather Paul had been mayor and *Conseiller Général* of the city of Castres.] Others had graduated as engineers from the best schools, become ambassadors of France, high-ranking military men, presidents of cooperatives or savings associations, directors of the Banque de France; but always feeling themselves to be exiled when not in their family circle.'⁵¹¹

Exile is indeed part of the de Boissésos story. A century earlier, they had been Royalist *émigrés*, fleeing France after the 1789 Revolution. Maurice's great-grandfather Hercule had fought with the Russian army against Napoleon at Borodino, and Hercule's son Constantin was born in Odessa in 1820. In the 1940s Uncle Boris lived at Lacquy. He was an elderly and impoverished Russian family member, another *émigré* but in his case from the Bolsheviks. As shown in the photograph reproduced overleaf, he was employed as a driver. Gilles de Boissésos has suggested that this history of loss, opposition, and exile, of to an extent being outsiders, may help to explain why the family tended to keep to itself.⁵¹²

Françoise's high spirits and chic family background did not weld comfortably with these more insular and rural in-laws who, according to Jean-Vianney, when gathered *en masse* seemed more like a group of farmers at an agricultural fair than the nobles that they were. She developed the habit of mocking the de Boissésos for their lack of sophistication; while her own frenetic energy, apparent frivolity, and love of shocking people all sat badly with:

⁵¹¹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésos, *Souvenirs*, p. 22.

⁵¹² Interview with Gilles de Boissésos, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Lacquy, 3 Feb. 2021.

‘the strict morality of her parents-in-law, ardent defenders of the throne and altar and bound together by their clannish spirit which reacted against any non-conformist and external influence.’⁵¹³

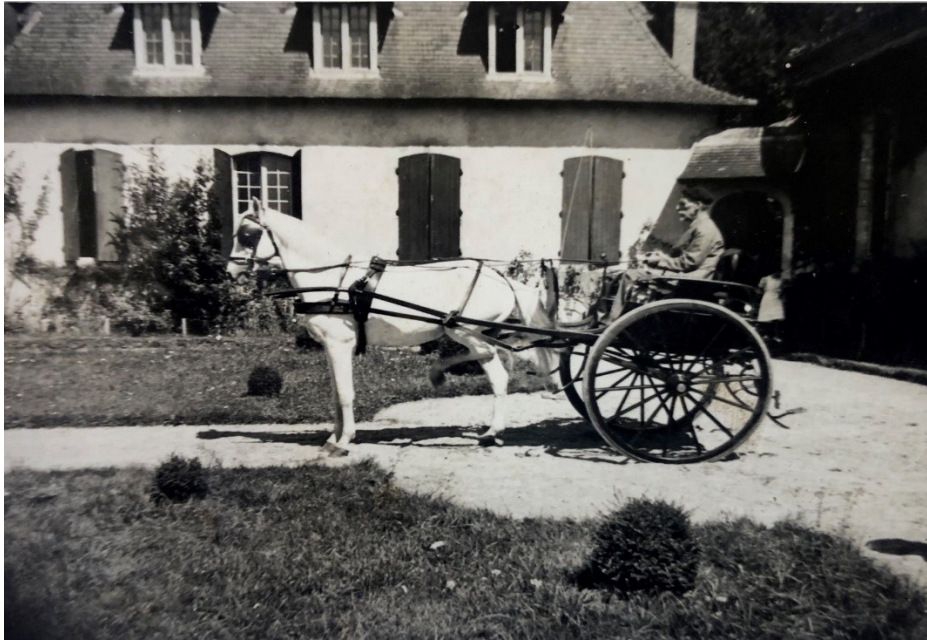


Figure 38: Uncle Boris at Lacquy, probably early 1940s, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

Françoise fell out seriously with her mother-in-law, Charlotte de Boissésou, and ceased contact with her in the late 1930s. Charlotte had lost her elder son at the front in 1915, and then her husband in 1922. According to Gilles, ‘she then became immersed in her mourning, never shedding her black attire’. He goes on to state that Françoise’s visits to her in-laws had become increasing onerous for her and ‘her behaviour and character (her vivacity, gaiety, her love of life, her pretty outfits) were a source of annoyance for her mother-in-law, who let her know as much.’⁵¹⁴

Françoise and the de Grelings

If Françoise came into conflict with her in-laws, her relations with her own family were hardly smooth. This was especially apparent to

⁵¹³ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 23.

⁵¹⁴ Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, p. 3.

Jean-Vianney during the war when he was continually shuttled between two camps, Lacquy/Pau, with his mother and Naud, and Marseilles with the de Grellings. According to him, Françoise caused particular suffering and offence to her mother and her two unmarried sisters. It was even suggested that her behaviour might have caused such outrage as to reduce the chances of the sisters achieving suitable marriages among the southern nobility.⁵¹⁵ Jean-Vianney describes his maternal grandmother as a woman of strict morals, who was 'at a loss to understand the loosening of values following the First World War' and whose 'eldest daughter's frivolity of conduct was a cross that she had to bear until the end of her days.'⁵¹⁶ Gilles feels that his father may have overplayed the antipathy between mother and daughter, but he agrees that Mme. de Greling was upset by Françoise's rental of the apartment in Pau, by her seeming to prioritise her Resistance activities over her maternal duties, by her affair with Naud, and by her having fallen out with her mother-in-law. A further cause of friction was that her two best friends, Gian de Cabrol and Jacqueline Cintrat, were both divorcees. Gilles has stressed that the objections of the older generation were not so much to Françoise's affair *per se*, but to it being with a married man; it was marriage that was sacrosanct, and divorce taboo.⁵¹⁷

Much of this intergenerational discord may be attributed to Françoise's experience, as a young woman, of a fast-living, big-city world, and of the way that such milieux affected women in the postwar period. The *Souvenirs* portray Françoise as almost a look-alike of Mary Louise Roberts's 'Modern Woman' of the 1920s, enjoying a life of partying, new fashions, and a new personal

⁵¹⁵ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 70.

⁵¹⁶ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 17.

⁵¹⁷ Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, pp. 3-4.

liberation that for some included sexual promiscuity.⁵¹⁸ It could be that in his memoir Jean-Vianney plays up this side of his mother. Nonetheless, though the image of the carefree, hedonistic 'flapper' tripping, champagne glass in hand, from party to party through *les années folles* has become a cliché, it seems that Françoise indeed bore some resemblance to the type.

She was aged 20 in 1918 and the heady ambience of postwar Marseilles, where she spent the four years between the war's end and her marriage, made a profound impression on her. Much later she told Jean-Vianney of a city flooded with troops passing through, from the French colonies and:

'...from the British Empire – Australians, Indians, Middle Easterners; but above all Americans bringing a love of life, the exuberance of the New World and of a new civilisation, their casualness, in short their youth. Château Sec...suddenly beat to the extravagant rhythms of jazz and the Charleston. Boys in uniform who had just left Hell were attracted like flies to young girls in the bloom of their youth. My mother, the eldest sibling, had a vital *élan* that she was barely able to contain throughout her life.'⁵¹⁹

Figures 39 and 40 below and overleaf show, first, Françoise seated next to one of her sisters in the grounds of Château Sec, and second the château itself. They point to the world of leisured luxury in which she was raised. Her gaze into the camera in Figure 39 suggests confidence and perhaps a knowingness too, in contrast to the withdrawn expression of her introverted sister. Her ankle and smart shoe catch the eye. The photographs are undated but are from around 1918.

⁵¹⁸ Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, pp. 19-87.

⁵¹⁹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 20.



Figure 39: Françoise and her sister Gabrielle, circa 1918, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

In contrast to the ambience of postwar Marseilles, the de Greling world was one in which the norms of female deportment and political conformity always remained clearly defined. When he stayed at Château Sec in the early 1940s, the teenage Jean-Vianney found himself in an environment in which Vichy was regarded as a bastion against communism and moral collapse, the British as two-faced at best, de Gaulle as a traitor – not even to be spoken of as ‘de Gaulle’, but merely as ‘Gaulle’ – and the Resistance as terrorists fighting a legitimate authority.



Figure 40: Château Sec, early 20th century, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

By 1942 or 1943, the de Grellings knew not only that Françoise, whose husband had given his life for his country in 1940, was living openly with a married man in Pau, but that she had come to associate with those engaged in armed opposition to the government. Given the conservative values and Catholic beliefs of the de Grellings, it is easy to imagine the dismay that her behaviour and choices would have provoked. By his own account, Jean-Vianney was exposed to a sort of schizophrenia, living between the extremes of one world in Marseilles in which traditional Catholic morality and Vichyite politics held sway, and another at Lacquy, where his mother's relationship with Naud was at the centre of the household, where by 1943 a *maquis* group was based, where opinion was 'fiercely Gaullist', and where her mother lived outside the norms of gendered convention.⁵²⁰ (Gilles qualifies the de Grelling's Pétainism by stressing that they were also anti-German,

⁵²⁰ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 42, 44, 47, 61.

and makes the point that by 1944 Françoise's brother Jacques de Greling was actively engaged with the Resistance, losing a leg in combat with the Germans during the Battle of Marseilles. Here then is another reminder of the complexities of the France of 1940-4, of how matters were often far from clear-cut, and of the importance of dates.)⁵²¹

Françoise and Maurice

By Jean-Vianney's account, his parents' marriage, while not a disaster, was not particularly happy. He draws attention to the fact that it was arranged, and not a 'love-match':

'I know that, if my father was love-struck at first sight, this was not the case with my mother, and my father had to exercise great perseverance to ensure that she accepted this marriage of convenience, even if for her he represented a 'good catch'. Who knows of what (or of whom) the young Françoise dreamed?'⁵²²



⁵²¹ Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, p. 4.

⁵²² Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 22.

Figure 41: The marriage of Françoise and Maurice de Boissésou, Château Sec, Marseilles, 1922, (de Boissésou Family Archive). (The figure standing apart and to the right is probably Charlotte, the mother of Maurice, in mourning for her elder son Joseph, killed in action in 1915 and possibly for her husband, who died in the same year as the marriage.)

Maurice and Françoise certainly had markedly contrasting personalities and experiences of life before marriage. The difference of age between them was eight years, but their experiences and the impact of the First World War probably meant that it was more like a generational gap. Maurice's formative years had been pre-1914 while Françoise's were closer to post-1918. By the time they met, he had spent four years in a POW camp, lost his brother in the war and then fought another war in Morocco. By contrast, Françoise had been a schoolgirl for much of the First World War, living in comfort and mainly at Château Sec and, as we have seen, apparently living a rather 'fast' life in postwar Marseilles.

In the *Souvenirs*, Jean-Vianney portrays his mother as a natural rebel and nonconformist, tending to take against whatever values her two families upheld and to form friendships based on first impressions and sentiment rather than on social status.⁵²³ She was 'a complex personality, criticised by some, adored by others and leaving no-one indifferent' with 'a charm that was difficult to escape and that led others to become unconditionally fond of her throughout her life'. She was also:

'...endowed with a remarkable, vital energy...which did not seem to derive from her parents who, solid and balanced in all respects, did not appear to have that grain of folly that can transform a personality. She had inherited, I believe from her maternal grandfather Henri de Exupéry, a lust for life and a taste for looking on the bright side that she retained until her death and which gave her a reputation for frivolity that was the despair of her family.'

⁵²³ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 26.

while by contrast, her sister Gabrielle:

‘...though she was influenced by her elder sister [Françoise] in her manner of tackling life with joy and gaiety, with her that influence was always tempered by a deep morality that was integral to her character and that saved her from the excesses to which her sister was victim.’⁵²⁴

The *Souvenirs* describe Maurice as a strikingly different character. His son recounts that, although he could be charming, Maurice was also often taciturn and mostly a distant figure of whom Jean-Vianney saw little and knew less. It seems that Maurice’s overriding interest lay in horses, in riding and particularly in dressage, of which he became a champion and, possibly, an obsessive. Jean-Vianney believes that he put his commitment to dressage ahead of his military career, refusing several promotions in order to remain a cavalry instructor. The son writes of dressage as akin to a drug that cause its addicts ‘to live a life apart’.⁵²⁵ Figure 42 overleaf shows Maurice at dressage, executing the pose in which the horse must rise to the highest possible angle on its hind legs without falling backwards, while the rider must maintain a completely straight back. It suggests something of the highly formalised, almost abstract nature of this sport, in which man and horse interact intensely.

One trait that Maurice did share with his wife was Anglophilia. He admired the English for their ‘composure and sense of humour...but also for their love of horses and of silence’.⁵²⁶ Françoise too was Anglophile and, as noted earlier, her friendship with the de Cabrols played a part in her early commitment to the Allied cause. Maurice and Françoise were both fluent in English, and they made frequent visits to friends in England. Françoise was also an avid

⁵²⁴ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 11.

⁵²⁵ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 11.

⁵²⁶ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 11-12.

horsewoman, although she did not share her husband's dedication to dressage.⁵²⁷ Jean-Vianney does not state this, but the *Souvenirs* lead the reader to wonder whether Maurice put horses ahead not only of his career, but also of his wife.

Soon after their wedding, Maurice and Françoise moved to Saumur, so that he could take up the position of instructor at the school of cavalry. They spent much of the 1920s and 1930s there. Saumur suited Maurice's devotion to horses, and its social life and proximity to Paris suited Françoise's taste for excitement and society. According to the *Souvenirs*, Saumur was:

'the gayest and most carefree town in France, even Europe....the country's gilded youth came as cavalry officers and off-duty lived a wild life, scandalizing the staid citizens of the town who pursued their business in a Balzacian and Protestant fashion, [and frequenting] the nightclubs of Angers and even Paris.'⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷ Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, *Souvenirs*, p. 27.

⁵²⁸ Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, *Souvenirs*, pp. 6, 24.



Figure 42: Maurice at Saumur, 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

A taste of Françoise's life in Saumur is provided in the next photograph:



Figure 43: Françoise at Saumur, with her sons Jean-Vianney and Paul to her left (Maurice does not seem to be pictured), mid-1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

The *Souvenirs* imply that at Saumur Françoise's affections might have wandered. Jean-Vianney writes of her irresistible charm, and he imagines that, surrounded as she was by attractive younger men pressing to be admitted to her court – as the photograph may reflect – she must have found it hard not to flirt and perhaps have her head turned. In any event, word of her frivolity and indiscretion reached the de Boissésou 'clan' far away in the south. Jean-Vianney continues:

'The relationship [between my parents] remains a mystery to me and I guard against passing judgement, but I think that my father was certainly unhappy about it although as far I was aware he never let it appear so. As far as I can tell, he blamed

himself for failing to be, for his wife, the brilliant and authoritarian husband that he should have been.’⁵²⁹

Gilles’s views of the marriage differ from those of his father. He points to intimate letters between Françoise and Maurice which suggest that, at least at certain periods, mutual love and mutual physical attraction were both present. He also feels that Françoise’s own love of horses and equitation may have mitigated any reservations that she may have had over her husband’s dedication to dressage and to his teaching at the cavalry school.⁵³⁰ All this is a reminder of how nuanced private relationships can be, and how unknowable their totality. Whatever the case, it is striking that her husband’s death in combat does not seem to have played any part in Françoise’s decisions to oppose Vichy and join the Resistance. Remembering the words of the Resister Marguerite Gonnet in Lyon in May 1942 when addressing a German colonel *à propos* of why she had taken up arms, ‘Quite simply, colonel, because the men had dropped them,’⁵³¹ we may wonder – although the *Souvenirs* do not – whether Françoise partly saw herself as a woman trying to deal with the mess in which French men had left their country in 1940, defeated and half-occupied. If she had made a brutal assessment, she might have seen herself as the widow of a man who had spent the First World War in a German POW camp, devoted much of the interwar period to dressage and then, in the *Débâcle* of May 1940, lost his life while guarding his horses against a Stuka attack.

Françoise and Gérard

Françoise and Maurice met Gérard Naud when the latter was posted to Saumur in the 1930s, and came to live with his wife and children in an apartment in the same block as theirs. He was

⁵²⁹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 24.

⁵³⁰ Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, pp. 1-2.

⁵³¹ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 45.

originally from Châteauroux in the Indre, where his father had been a lawyer. Jean-Vianney makes it clear that Naud ranked far below the de Boissésos in social status. He describes *'Le Capitaine'* as 'a good-looking man, large and well-built, dark-complexioned and with a rather 'hidalgo' air.' As noted earlier, Jean-Vianney believed that Françoise's affair with Naud must have secretly begun in Saumur in 1937 or 1938, though Gilles dates it from 1941 at the earliest.⁵³²

At Lacquy during the war, Jean-Vianney had seen Naud as a pleasant enough fellow, fond of animals and the outdoor life. When older, he came to conclude that he was in fact a 'simpleton whom my mother kept under her thumb and who could refuse her nothing, entranced as he was by her.' It may be tempting to infer from this picture of Naud that for Françoise he was little more than a good-looking, simple, middle-class soldier who she found amusing and attractive. And yet, this appears to be contradicted by the way that they remained bonded to each other for the remainder of their lives, including through the dangers of the war years.⁵³³

⁵³² Gilles de Boissésos, *Memorandum*, pp. 1-2.

⁵³³ Jean-Vianney de Boissésos, *Souvenirs*, p. 28.



Figure 44: Gerard Naud, probably 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

After the War: Disempowerment

In summarising the process at the end of the war by which French men took back the powers that women had acquired during it, the Resister Célia Bertin has written that French women such as her,

‘Desiring to secure an independent future for their country and themselves...had taken action to break the criminal laws of the Pétain régime. No one seemed to acknowledge their sacrifices nor the dangers that they courted. Mostly, they returned, both within their families and within society, to the same second-class status that they had had before the war. It’s true that they gave us the right to vote, but otherwise nothing changed.’⁵³⁴

While, as already explained, this thesis contests Bertin’s ‘otherwise nothing changed’ assertion, the case of Françoise provides an

⁵³⁴ Bertin, *Femmes sous l’Occupation*, pp. 217-18.

example of postwar female disempowerment. Her reign at Lacquy proved to be short-lived. By the war's end her elder son Paul had come of age, and had begun to resent Naud's presence and involvement in the estate. Françoise had decided to appoint a new day-to-day estate manager, a man called Parrot. By 1946, when Jean-Vianney in turn had come of age and had arrived for the summer holidays at Lacquy, relations between Parrot on one side, and Françoise and Naud on the other, had become close to breaking-point. Jean-Vianney believed that his aunts in Marseilles were using Parrot to plot against Naud, aiming at his eviction from Lacquy and from the families' lives.⁵³⁵ Moreover, in a more prosaic diminution of her power, Françoise had stood for election as mayor at the local elections in 1945, but lost to the socialist candidate, a man.⁵³⁶

After the war, Jean-Vianney decided that he wished to devote himself to running the estate, while Paul began a career in the law in Paris. The *Souvenirs* records that accordingly the delicate task of easing Françoise and Naud out of Lacquy was left to Jean-Vianney. This proved messy and took two years. He was obliged to treat his mother 'with a mixture of love and firmness'. Matters were eased because Françoise received a substantial sum of money following a sale of property by the de Grelings in Marseilles. With part of the proceeds, she invested in a new business with Naud near Biarritz, and bought a villa there where they went to live. Jean-Vianney then managed Lacquy for several decades before handing it over to his son Gilles. Some years later, when Château Sec was sold and Françoise received her share of those proceeds, she moved to Avenue Montaigne in Paris. According to the *Souvenirs*, she and

⁵³⁵ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 64-6; Gilles de Boissésou, *Memorandum*, pp. 3-4.

⁵³⁶ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 66.

Naud lived there together until his sudden death in 1970, although Gilles believes that he continued to live mainly with his wife.⁵³⁷ They never married; this may have reflected Françoise maintaining in later life her distaste for conventional behaviour, or Naud not wishing to divorce his wife, or more simply the fact that by the 1960s norms had further evolved, such that 'living in sin' was not the taboo that it had been in the 1940s and before; or some combination of all these reasons.

Conclusion

There is no longer any strong collective memory in the local community of Françoise's role in the Resistance, nor of her brief time as mayor. There are no commemorative plaques or annual ceremonies that refer to her. Perhaps this is to be expected, given that the activities of her *maquis* group were relatively modest. Gilles has stated that, although she accepted the *Croix de Guerre*, she never sought any other recognition and never bragged about her Resistance activities, a self-effacement that she of course shared with many female Resisters.⁵³⁸

The importance of her wartime actions may therefore lie less in their consequences than in the fashion in which her life seems to encapsulate the ways that the war catalysed changes already taking place in female lives in the upper levels of French provincial society. Françoise was a lively and wilful 20-year-old in 1918, who had been brought up in a grand, wealthy, and sociable family in cosmopolitan Marseilles. She was thus perfectly placed to be exposed to, and to absorb, the new values that characterised well-

⁵³⁷ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, pp. 66-9; email from Gilles de Boissésou to Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, 21 June 2023.

⁵³⁸ Interview with Gilles de Boissésou, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Lacquy, 1 May 2021; Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, pp. 7-11.

heeled, big-city life during the years following the First World War. However, her family imposed on her the values and style of life in which they had themselves been raised in the mid-19th century. As a consequence, she found herself in a largely arranged marriage which appears to have been not entirely fulfilling for her, and may also have been disappointing and sad for her husband.

Maurice's death in 1940, and the other consequences of war, defeat, and German Occupation, provided a context in which she was able to fashion a different life, one that she could control and in which she could act and assume responsibility outside the domestic sphere. His death led to her taking charge of the estate at Lacquy, but also removed his conservative and restraining influence. At the same time her engagement in French opposition to Germany and Vichy provided a framework for rebellion on a wider front. The move to Pau in 1941 was probably the main transgressive step, the moment that crystallised an urge to do something different with her life after 20 years of marriage and aristocratic ease. From there, she began clandestine work and then set up home with her married lover. In these ways, the war years offered space for this spirited and unconventional woman to exercise her own power and to reject the identity that was expected of her.

As with Chapou, Françoise's exploits in the Resistance recall Jean Cassou's description of it as 'a way of living, a lifestyle, an invented life, that lives in the memory as a period unique to itself, almost a dream.'⁵³⁹ Invented identity formed part of Françoise's story, both as it was lived and as it was repainted by her son in his memoir. Moving to Pau in 1941 was the opening of a new life, and we should see it as part of a bold reshaping of her identity, so that while her nobility remained firmly part of it, as too did her *joie de vivre*, she

⁵³⁹ Quoted by Laurent Douzou in 'Les Résistantes, point de l'historiographie', in Gilzmer et al (eds.), *Les femmes dans la Résistance*, p. 41.

now embraced the world of clandestine activities, including taking on the invented persona of Mme. Béraud, a schoolteacher from the north of France. Françoise thus adopted multiple identities. Figures 45 and 46 below illustrate this:



Figure 45: Françoise de Boissésou, probably 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive).



Figure 46: Françoise de Boissésou, false identity card, 1943, (de Boissésou Family Archive).

Françoise avidly took up the opportunities opened to her by war in order to pursue a new life of greater diversity but also, one must assume, of personal freedom. This brought her radically new powers and responsibilities: a leadership role in a *maquis* group, management of an estate, and, it would seem, the office of mayor of a village. How far any of this was the consequence of individual choice – or indeed a deliberate decision to redefine her gendered identity – must remain unclear. Chance too was undoubtedly a factor. Hanna Diamond has recorded that, while many women joined the Resistance because of political commitment, for others a chance event was the trigger.⁵⁴⁰ For Françoise, it may have been the British airman at the roadside that served as the trigger that

⁵⁴⁰ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War*, p. 117.

other Resisters have remembered of the moment when they committed to clandestine activism.⁵⁴¹

A price was exacted for this new life. In the eyes of many in her family, and probably of many others among her class, Françoise had been doubly dishonourable, in acting both against her country and against the conventions of marriage and widowhood. By 1945, when her boys had reached adulthood and with her conservative siblings on the counterattack, the responsibilities that she had taken on during the war were removed from her. And while the *Souvenirs* shows Jean-Vianney's admiration of his mother's vibrant personality and Resistance record, it is hard not to see in his writing the hurt that he felt on behalf of his father. Of his mother in 1940, he wrote:

'She was 42 and did not share the outlook of the widows of 1918 who could be seen in black for the rest of their lives. Looking back, I would not have wished that on her, even though in retrospect I am saddened by it for my father's sake, who did not deserve what he would himself have certainly taken as a dishonour.'⁵⁴²

Whether Françoise regretted her choices, and the damage they caused to her family and others, remains difficult to assess. She was not somebody inclined to confide her feelings to others, or in personal writings; nor one much inclined to look back. Instinct and the courage to act, rather than reflection and analysis, were probably the dominant drivers of her actions, as to both love and war. In 1983, the Resister Marie Granet asked,

'Why did these women say, 'No, we cannot accept defeat.' It is very difficult to explain. Georges Bernanos [the Catholic writer] perhaps expressed our response when he said, "Honour is an instinct, like love." '⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 293.

⁵⁴² Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, *Souvenirs*, p. 69.

⁵⁴³ Interview of Marie Granet, Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 93.

Françoise's life can be described in two ways. The first is as her son perceptively summed it up at the end of his memoir, when he shows us a woman who had to balance unsteadily between two opposing sets of values, such that she was:

‘a victim of her times, which obliged her to ride two horses, one that was pre-1914 and the other post-1944, which she rode in a free, rebellious and somewhat anarchic style, one that allowed her to brave difficult situations in living on the fringes of morality and convention, as a woman of the 18th century might have done.’⁵⁴⁴

A second description, however, would be of a life composed of a relatively brief but explosive middle period, beginning with the death of Maurice in 1940 and ending with her loss of positions of authority after the Liberation of 1944. After those four years, she returned to a more private existence, while continuing to live on her own terms with the man whom she had herself chosen. In this way, her life seems to encapsulate the ambivalence of the changes wrought in gendered identities by the war years. Françoise was not, in any substantive sense, a feminist; but she was somebody who broke away from the constraints of family and obedience to public authority to embrace four years of high drama, years that were preceded and followed by two longer stretches during which, outwardly at least, she mainly conformed to a more traditional identity.

⁵⁴⁴ Jean-Vianney de Boissésou, *Souvenirs*, p. 69.

Chapter 10

A New Man for a New France: Aimé Noël

The Firing Squad

On 25 July 1944, 27-year-old Aimé Noël (1917-95) found himself in front of a firing squad. A German unit had arrived at his family home in the hamlet of Ceint d'Eau, just outside Figeac, yelling 'show us the terrorists - where are the terrorists?!' They arrested Aimé together with two men who had come, as they did every day, to buy milk. All three were put against the wall of the barn, and machine guns levelled at them in preparation for their execution.

Aimé knew some German. He hurriedly explained to the officer in charge that they were absolutely not 'terrorists', proof of which could be seen in their footwear: all three were in light *espadrilles* that were falling to bits, and no real 'terrorist' would go around in such flimsy shoes. The officer ordered his men to lower their arms. Aimé and the two others were taken into Figeac and, after further questioning in the presence of the mayor, were released. This brush with death was, he later told his wife '...the most terrifying day of my life'.⁵⁴⁵

That evening, Aimé wrote up an account of the incident. In this, he did not dwell on the narrative, but rather on its emotional, spiritual, and moral aspects. First, he set down how profound the experience of facing death had been, and how narrow his escape:

'...it had been a stage in my life, a page that I had read in full before turning it over.... the sight of the machine-guns pointing at my chest will stay with me forever. It was [only]

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with Marguerite Noël (Aimé Noël's widow, b. 1932), conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 4 Aug. 2022.

because I could speak [German] that I was able to prove my innocence and to draw attention to the injustice that this execution would have been. Over and above myself, my defense covered the two men who shared my fate.'

Nonetheless, he continued, he had been able to look quite dispassionately at death (*'de regarder froidement le bord de la tombe'*), probably, he reasoned, because of the testing experiences that he had endured in the war hitherto. Secondly, he reflected on the metaphysics of courage. Although he refrained from recording the details, it seems from his account that the two other men had behaved in a cowardly fashion in front of the firing squad, while he had not; they had been 'pathetic and undignified'. He went on:

'But the worst aspect of this tragedy lies in the fact that these men, these Frenchmen on whose courage we should count, had behaved so very badly, and even worse had not shown that spiritual composure that we should find at the moment of death.....not all men know how to die.'

Such composure, and the courage which flowed from it, were for Aimé unquestionably only to be derived from spiritual engagement:

'This strength can only be found by giving of oneself entirely... even when times are good there is this species of courage, coming directly from a man's spiritual education, and it must be understood that those who have taken nothing in will give nothing.'

Then, drawing attention to God, without whom man is lost, he continued:

'...this courage does not belong to me...it has been given to me by a special grace, and I thank God for it.... The trials that we suffer are usually the result of our failing to take up our responsibilities. We run away at the moment when we are called to affirm our faith and our courage. Alas, the world is to be pitied.'⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶ Aimé Noël, typed note, 25 July 1944, (Noël Family Archive).

This Chapter will show how one man's Christian faith, allied to his ambition and drive, led him to shun the war, and how instead he resolved to work on ameliorating its effects and on planning for a better postwar world. Aimé Noël's trajectory was straight and unwavering, and this consistency of identity from the 1930s to the 1950s marks him as quite distinct from the other individuals studied here. His story well illustrates how varied were the ways in which identities and experiences interacted in wartime France.

The seven years leading up to Aimé's moment facing the firing squad had given him plenty of time to reflect deeply on his own purpose, as it related to his God and to his country. In 1937 he had embarked on two years of military service, which was followed by nine months of mostly desultory participation in the 'phony war'. His soldiering was brought to an end in May 1940 when he was taken prisoner. He then spent a further two years as a POW in Germany before escaping in July 1942 and making his way back to France. From November 1942 until the summer of 1944, he lived a clandestine and itinerant life in the south-west, neither joining the Resistance nor supporting Vichy. He returned to Figeac at the Liberation, where he settled for the rest of his life. He died in 1995.⁵⁴⁷

The faith that had developed in his childhood and youth helped him to deal with both the *longueurs* of 1937-40 and then with the challenges of captivity and clandestinity during 1940-4. His experiences during these seven years further strengthened his faith, and gave him plenty of time to ponder how, once the war was over, France might develop a Christian-based and democratic society that would be marked by peace, social justice, and harmony. These years also allowed him to consider what he himself could do

⁵⁴⁷ Noël Family Archive.

to help France with that project. As the war ended, Aimé was indeed able to play his own part in a better future when, on 14 October 1944, he proudly issued the first edition of *La Vie Quercynoise*, a weekly Christian democrat regional newspaper. It has been continuously on sale since that date.⁵⁴⁸



Figure 47: *La Vie Quercynoise*, first edition, 14.10.44, (Noël Family Archive).

In many respects, Aimé represented a 'new man' in postwar France, a thinker and activist whose identity was defined against what he regarded as the bankrupt Third Republic, and who saw himself as one of the men and women called upon to heal the divisions in French society that had developed in the 1930s, and that defeat and occupation had then exacerbated. A Christian democrat, full of

⁵⁴⁸ Noël Family Archive.

optimism for a revitalised France, his beliefs were reflected in a new political party, the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP), which he supported both through his journalism and through electioneering. His political philosophy was first and foremost Christian, but this was a new genre of Christian politics, one that was divorced from its traditional companions of monarchism and nationalism, and that set itself in opposition both to the newly-strong Communists and to the discredited Radicals and Socialists.⁵⁴⁹ However, in 1947 his hopes as to his own role in this project were dashed, when control of *La Vie Quercynoise* was wrested from him after a battle fought on the old ground of provincial civic rivalry. His success in the postwar years, like that of the MRP and indeed the Fourth Republic, was only partial.

Early Life

Aimé was born into a working-class family in 1917 outside Figeac, the second largest town in Quercy after Cahors. His father André was a builder and housepainter. He had one younger brother, Jeannot, born in 1919. Both parents were conservative and Catholic, his father practising only occasionally but his mother Marthe regularly and devoutly. The dominant early influences on Aimé were an aversion to war and a deep attachment to the Catholic faith. Like many French families, the shadow of the First World War fell heavily over the Noëls. His father had been wounded in the stomach in 1914 but had rejoined the fighting and was at the front when Aimé was born. His much-loved maternal uncle, after whom he was christened, was killed at Verdun in 1916, and according to Marguerite Noël this 'devastated' Aimé's mother.

⁵⁴⁹ Pierre Letamendia, *Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire; histoire d'un grand parti français* (Paris, 1995); Jean-Marie Mayeur, *Des Partis catholiques à la Démocratie chrétienne* (Paris, 1980), pp. 161-9; Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, pp. 51-60; Vinen, *Bourgeois Politics*, pp. 137-72.

Referring to the Second as well as the First World War, Marguerite Noël has said that Marthe ‘spent her life in war’ and that for her the period from 1914 to 1945 was really ‘a thirty years’ war’. The fact that both her sons became POWs (Jeannot too was captured in 1940) was very hard for her. It was a family that had vowed ‘never that again’ (*plus jamais ça’*), and Marguerite has stressed that Aimé’s aversion to war long pre-dated his own involvement in the second conflict.⁵⁵⁰ (A significant portion of the family archive comprises paperwork relating to the parcels that Marthe sent to her sons in Germany. These highly detailed papers suggest that much of her time and efforts during the war were devoted to caring for them at long distance.)⁵⁵¹



Figure 48: Aimé Noël, First Communion, March 1927, (Noël Family Archive).

⁵⁵⁰ Interviews with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 31 May 2019, and 6 Aug. 2022.

⁵⁵¹ See Fishman, *We Will Wait*, pp. 109-10, 128.

Alongside this early exposure to pacifism, in childhood he also developed a strong attachment to Catholicism. This was nurtured both by his mother and by the church itself, and it was suggested by the local *curé* that he should train for the priesthood. In the event, he left his Catholic school in Figeac aged 16 in 1934 to become apprenticed to a firm of architects in Figeac and to study architecture at the School of Public Works in Paris. This prospective career was interrupted by military service, and he never returned to it.⁵⁵²

During his teenage years in the 1930s he was able to develop his faith, and to put it to practical use, through an active and committed involvement with the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* (JOC) movement. This was a key element in his formation as a young adult. Founded in 1927 by a Belgian priest, Abbé Cardijn, the JOC was one of several Catholic lay social organisations that were established in the 1920s and 1930s as part of an international movement, known broadly as Catholic Action. Its members became known as *jocistes* and its philosophy as *jocisme*. This movement had its roots in the 19th century, when the church had begun to address the challenges posed to it by the phenomena of industrialisation and democracy and, in France specifically, by the anticlericalism of the Third Republic. Its objective was to reverse the growth of secularism and the decline in religious attendance by injecting a new dynamism into the church's engagement with institutions and communities. In France, Catholic social organisations such as the JOC stood alongside other similarly-motivated bodies, including Catholic trade unions, some new though small Catholic political parties, and a new Catholic press.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵² Noël Family Archive.

⁵⁵³ Oscar L. Arnal, 'Towards a Lay Apostate of the Workers: Three Decades of Conflict for the French Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (1927-1956)', *Catholic Historical Review*, 73.2, (Apr. 1987), pp. 211-17; Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918-1945*

By the interwar period, Catholic leaders were even more concerned with what they perceived as a waning of both faith and moral rectitude, especially in the larger cities and among the poor. Added impetus came from a sense among Catholic activists that the loss of human life in the First World War and the revolutionary violence in Russia were the consequences of the secular developments of the nineteenth century: materialism, individualism, and nationalism were blamed not only for eroding religious belief but also for leading to war and slaughter on an unprecedented scale. Countering these malign forces with a revival of faith could therefore help to maintain peace between and within nations. Following from this, the JOC and its fellow social organisations, as well as the new Catholic press and political parties, all aspired to the creation of a peaceful 'new order' that would usher in a better world, one that would be more Christian, more cohesive, and less prone to descend into conflict.⁵⁵⁴

(London, 1997), pp. 38-62; Letamendia, *Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, pp. 37-9; James F. McMillan, 'France', in Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1945*, (Oxford, 1996), pp. 35-52; Michel Winock, *Histoire Politique de la Revue 'Esprit'* (Paris, 1975), pp. 77-94.

⁵⁵⁴ Arnal, 'Towards a Lay Apostate of the Workers', pp. 211-27; Conway, *Catholic Politics*.



Figure 49: Aimé with a priest, probably mid-1930s, (Noël Family Archive).

Much of the intellectual framework that supported these ideas was provided by two Frenchmen, the philosopher Jacques Maritain and the writer Emmanuel Mounier. Maritain argued that Christianity should be the mechanism by which the individual and society could be encouraged to interact harmoniously; a 'third way' could thereby be fashioned that would avoid the evils both of individualistic free-market capitalism and of Marxist collectivism. The relationship between Catholic Action and the world of politics was, however, not

straightforward. The JOC itself was apolitical, concerned with personal and communal reform through spiritual renewal, and it disapproved of its members engaging in politics. However, in practice many *jocistes* were on the left. The wider movement of Catholic Action did develop a political philosophy, most importantly through the work of Mounier and the influential journal that he ran, *Esprit*. His political thinking resembled that of the anti-republican French right (and initially many Catholic activists came to support Vichy, albeit mostly only in its early years). Nonetheless, across the entire movement, religion came before politics, and this meant that its political prescriptions were, at least until the 1940s, varied and somewhat vague.⁵⁵⁵

The JOC was aimed at young male workers but was open to any youth aged between 14 and 25; young women were recruited into a separate group, the JOCF (the two were merged in 1987). It was nationwide, and large: by 1937, the JOC and its counterpart for women had 150,000 members and its publications were taken by 450,000 subscribers. Parallel groups were set up for the benefit of agricultural workers and students. The objectives were to develop and strengthen young people's attachment to Catholicism, to encourage a purposeful Christian life and to stand as a bulwark against Communism and specifically against the Communist Party's rival organisation, the *Jeunesse Communiste*. Typically, a JOC group might meet twice a week, for prayer and religious and spiritual reflection mixed with sports and performative leisure activities, the latter including singing, and theatrical and musical

⁵⁵⁵ Conway, *Catholic Politics*, pp. 53-8; W.D. Halls, *Politics, Society and Christianity in Vichy France* (London, 1995); James F. McMillan, 'France', in Buchanan and Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism*, pp. 35-68; R. William Rauch, Jr., *Politics in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy, 1932-1950* (The Hague, 1972), pp. 239-44.

productions. *Jocistes* were known for their enthusiasm, liveliness, practicality, openness as to their beliefs, and friendship.⁵⁵⁶



Figure 50: Cover of Brochure of JOC Congress of July 1937, (18 JUILLET 1937, Paris, 1937).

Aimé Noël became an active member of the JOC in Figeac and was President of the local branch in 1935 and 1936. The high-point of his involvement came in July 1937, when he led a group of about twenty Figeacois *jocistes* to the annual JOC Congress in Paris. This meeting attracted 80,000 attendees and was a milestone in the mass associational movements of the interwar period. Attendees were later sent a brochure commemorating the Congress, and this gives a feeling both for the scale of the event – see Figure 50 above

⁵⁵⁶ Renée Bédarida, *Les catholiques dans la Guerre, 1939-1945* (Paris, 1998), p. 19; Françoise Richou, 'Apprendre à combattre: l'engagement dans la Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (1927-1987)', *Le Mouvement social, (Jeunesses XXe Siècle)*, No. 168, (1994), pp. 51-82; James F. McMillan, 'France' in Buchanan and Conway (eds), *Political Catholicism*, pp. 35-52.

- and for the *jociste* spirit. Its opening lines praised their achievements:

‘They have maintained their commitment and their devotion to the cause of the working class. They have sung of the glory of work. They have idealised the grandeur of the family. They have undertaken the construction of a new city, by a proud, working youth, pure, joyful and conquering.’⁵⁵⁷

While fulfilling his military service during 1937-9, Aimé was able to maintain his *jociste* commitment, convening and attending meetings at Montluçon and while on leave in Figeac. The notes he made at the time about his involvement with the organisation show the same idealistic desire for a better world that was central to the *jociste* cause and that was to characterise his postwar journalism and political activism.

His attitude towards Communists and Communism is instructive. In 1936 he aspired to bring about a local rapprochement between the JOC and the *Jeunesse Communiste*, whose members he regarded as ‘brothers who we want to love and serve’. This attempt at fraternal cooperation foundered on the rocks of what he perceived to be Communist intransigence, and thereafter he and his *jociste* colleagues resumed what they saw as an evangelical battle against atheistic Communism for the soul of the worker. As he wrote:

‘The JOC wants to work on the construction of a better world... and will send its activists out to conquer their brothers and particularly to conquer brothers who, mistaken and bitter, follow those who spread the partisan hatreds of the class struggle’.⁵⁵⁸

Given the aversion to war embedded in Aimé’s family, the *jociste* linkage of faith with peace strongly appealed to him. Of equal personal importance was the organisation’s emphasis on action and

⁵⁵⁷ 18 JUILLET 1937, *PARC DES PRINCES*, (Paris, 1937), (Noël Family Archive).

⁵⁵⁸ Aimé Noël, notes made in 1936, (Noël Family Archive).

engagement, reflected in Abbé Cardijn's motto, 'see, judge, act'. Aimé's involvement with the JOC gave him a sense of purpose and belonging, and it was the *jociste* stress on tangible outcomes that particularly drew him in. His widow Marguerite has emphasised the profundity of his commitment to the belief that Christians should 'live their faith', such that all their daily actions be animated by the spirit of Christ. This was echoed in the practical and community-based Christianity that the *jociste* movement espoused. While Aimé remained apolitical, and thus in line with JOC policy, the ultimate aim of Catholic Action to create a 'new order' chimed with his grand ambition 'to change the world', in the words of Marguerite. The JOC also played to his taste for organising and leading others, in which he was able to indulge through his involvement in *jociste* theatrical productions as a director of plays and musical performances. This interest in the theatre, especially in directing, was life-long and he continued to direct plays and musicals both as a POW and in Figeac in the 1950s.⁵⁵⁹

A Fantastical War

In the family archive and in interviews, the story of Aimé's war is often described as '*rocambalesque*', meaning fantastical or incredible. Some incidents in it do indeed seem so unusual or picaresque as to be inventions, but as noted earlier the story is corroborated in many of its key elements by the sources. Consistent with his *jocisme*, his attitude towards military life was lukewarm: he wrote that 'I thought I had no aptitude at all for arms, but I acknowledged that a son needed to serve his country'. The period before his capture was largely passed in prosaic soldiering. Some

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 6 Aug. 2022.

colour was added to these dull months by his being taught the outdated skill of military communication by carrier-pigeon, by his sketching of the Lorraine landscape and by a friendship, and perhaps a putative love affair, that he developed with Françoise Deray, the daughter of a tobacconist in Gravelines.

He kept a sporadic journal during the winter of 1939-40, in which the most arresting passages reflect his faith but also his profound sense of his country's perceived moral decline, a disillusionment that some historians have seen as characteristic of France towards the end of the 1930s.⁵⁶⁰ His journal entries also presage the mood in France following its military collapse, when many came to blame the sudden and complete defeat on what they perceived as a decay that had eaten away at the nation in the 1930s, which many Catholics associated with secularism and ebbing religious faith. As Cardinal Pierre-Marie Gerlier of Lyon wrote after the defeat: 'Through becoming secularised, France ran the risk of dying.'⁵⁶¹

Witnessing drunkenness and prostitution near the front, he wrote of the corrupting effects of war: that military life turns men into animals, that 'all around us evil gains ground', that he felt himself 'lost in a desert of infamy and growing vice' and that he had 'lost my youth, my soul grown cruel'. He went on:

'Today I can announce the bankruptcy of the earthy city. All have contributed to its ruin. In creating immense factories where man is enslaved. In creating mansions where prostitution goes on with impunity, in allowing French women to live without morality or faith. Institutions have followed society and, instead of respecting and defending men, have turned them into puppets and tools. The generations to come will say that the 20th century was the century of vice in all its forms.'

⁵⁶⁰ For example, Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years* (London, 1995).

⁵⁶¹ Quoted in W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford, 1981), p. 63.



Figure 51: Aimé Noël in uniform, probably 1939, (Noël Family Archive).

His apparent reference to St. Augustine may suggest that like that saint he had himself fallen prey to the temptations to sin that were on offer to soldiers; although Augustine's City was a frequent *jociste* motif. This dark passage continues by pointing the finger of blame at the materialist philosophies that had characterised the works of Voltaire and Zola, with strong echoes of the moralism that would soon mark the Vichy Regime. But in a letter to his parents of 10 May 1940, written when he had just heard that German troops had invaded Belgium, he was moved, despite that news, to strike a more positive note. He wrote optimistically that 'no doubt we are moving towards the decisive phase, and soon peace will return and will allow us to take up our tools and with them fashion useful things.'⁵⁶²

⁵⁶² Aimé Noël, letter to his parents, 10 May 1940, (Noël Family Archive).

This period of lassitude, boredom, and revulsion was terminated when Aimé's unit was surrounded and captured outside Lille on 31 May. He then spent almost exactly two years in the Stalag III D POW camp near Berlin, where he was put to work in building autobahns and painting buildings. The papers in the family archive reveal that he had been an uncooperative worker: he wrote that his 'ill-will' had led him to be transferred from one building site to another no fewer than 22 times during his two years as a POW. Otherwise, the archive points to a life that was typical for most POWs: the drudgery of the work, and the rhythm of contacts with home that was marked by the arrival of parcels of food and clothing from his parents in Figeac, and the dutiful dispatch of thank-you letters by return.⁵⁶³

In Aimé's case however, this dispiriting existence was alleviated by his being able to indulge his artistic interests. Resuming the hobby of drawing that he had pursued during the early months of war, he produced a number of sketches of camp life. (See Figure 52 below for one example.) He was also able once again to satisfy his passion for the theatre that had first found expression in his *jociste* days: he directed several plays that the POWs organised to pass the time. He wrote a poem to his mother lamenting the suffering that war had brought to her, and he composed a 'Song of Exile' that dwelt on the prisoner's yearning for home and nostalgia for happy times past; the song was performed at a camp concert.

⁵⁶³ Noël Family Archive.



Figure 52: Sketch of Work in Germany, Aimé Noël, c. 1941, (Noël Family Archive).

A much more unusual distraction from Aimé's daily life was provided by the friendship that he struck up with two German sisters, Cato and Mietje Bontjes van Beek. These young women came from an intellectual and artistic anti-Nazi family whose home in Berlin had become a meeting place for others who shared its opposition to Hitler and the Third Reich. In 1940-1, the sisters, Cato then aged 20 and Mietje 18, began furtively to visit and to chat with French POWs while the latter were working on construction sites. They became particular friends with Aimé. He and Mietje found themselves reunited in 1985 by a television programme that brought together long-lost friends or lovers. There is some suggestion in the correspondence between Aimé and Mietje that developed after the programme that they may have formed a romantic attachment during the war. However, there was a tragic epilogue to the wartime story. By late 1941, Cato had become much more deeply involved with anti-Nazi resistance, joining the 'Red Orchestra' underground group, which supported the USSR and was

in communication with the Soviet NKVD. In the summer of 1942, the Germans succeeded in breaking the code used by 'Red Orchestra' to communicate with Moscow, leading to the mass arrest of its members by the Gestapo. These included Cato, who was executed for treason the following year.⁵⁶⁴

In the first half of 1942 Aimé and a fellow POW, Louis Lafont, began to consider means of escape. By chance they found themselves working alongside two Frenchmen who were voluntarily in Germany, as encouraged by Vichy in the early years of the Occupation. These men had no money, whereas Aimé and Louis had been able to save some *reichmarks* from the payments they had received for their work, and in Aimé's case from selling his sketches to other prisoners. A deal was hatched whereby Aimé and Louis would buy the work contracts, and so obtain valid paperwork for their journey back to France. This was initially rejected as the workers valued their papers more than the money, but it became feasible when they were transferred to work in Norway and by administrative oversight were not required to hand in their old papers. Aimé and Louis duly acquired the contracts, and Aimé became Pierre Cartier, a chauffeur from the Vaucluse.

The two POWs cut through the camp wire on 13 July 1942, dressed in civilian clothes that they had stolen from the stock of costumes kept for the camp amateur dramatics. Louis was soon recaptured but Aimé was able to infiltrate himself into a group of French workers outside Berlin and to obtain a job as a driver for the German postal service. He was then involved in a road accident, and briefly hospitalised with a cut arm. During the period that he was allowed to take off work for convalescence, he was able to

⁵⁶⁴ Ina R. Friedman, 'The Red Orchestra and Cato Bontjes van Beek' in John J. Michalczyk (ed.), *Confront! Resistance in Nazi Germany* (Lausanne, 2004), pp. 151-61; Noël Family Archive.

abscond and travelled by train from Berlin to Frankfurt, armed with his new papers as Cartier the driver from the Vaucluse who worked for the German post office.



Figure 53: Aimé Noël, false identity card as German post office employee, August 1942, (Noël Family Archive).

On the train to Frankfurt, Aimé befriended a young French woman who was returning home from work in Germany. This woman's papers were not in order, but she had a contact in Metz whom she hoped could help her to make a covert crossing of the frontier into France. Aimé was able to join her in this endeavour and the contact in Metz duly led to an introduction to a *passeur* at the frontier and a successful entry into France. (*Passeurs* were guides who helped refugees, escaped prisoners, and others to cross French frontiers, usually for payment. The frontier referred to here was not the pre-1940 French national frontier: following Germany's annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, a new frontier was established between those

regions and the rest of France, such that Metz became part of Germany until the Liberation.) At Lyon, Aimé presented himself to the French military authorities who instructed him to go to Bourg-en-Bresse, where he was formally demobilised at the end of August. He then returned to his parents at Figeac.⁵⁶⁵

He stayed at the family home outside Figeac for six months, from September 1942 until March 1943. The archive does not explain what he did during this period; perhaps it was a time of rest and recuperation after the strains of captivity and escape. However, following the German occupation of the Free Zone in November 1942, his position became much more insecure, and he chose to go into hiding. It is a measure of the growing disorder in the Vichy administration that he was sought both by the French police as an escaped POW but also, separately, by the administrative authorities in Figeac and Brive who on several occasions summoned him for compulsory work duties under the STO legislation. He ignored these summonses. By March 1943, through a friend – we may imagine a fellow *jociste*, although the record does not say – he was able to secure a job at Limoges, as the assistant manager of a youth club. He worked in this club teaching drama and acting, which included putting on puppet shows, and thereafter in another youth club in Brive, until May 1944. These jobs may be seen as a way of continuing his *jociste* activities.⁵⁶⁶

Aimé's eventful wartime story continued during the summer of 1944. The most dramatic moment was his near-execution on 25 July, but he had two other narrow escapes from the Germans, first in Figeac and then in Tulle. In May, hearing of German activity in the Figeac area, he decided to return from Brive to Figeac in order

⁵⁶⁵ Aimé Noël, typed and handwritten accounts of captivity and escape, (Noël Family Archive, undated).

⁵⁶⁶ Noël Family Archive.

to check that his parents were safe. However, having arrived at Figeac station on 12 May he found himself in the middle of the major German raid that took place on the town that day, and that resulted in the deportation of over 800 citizens of Figeac and surrounding villages to Germany, of whom 145 never returned.⁵⁶⁷ (One of the men taken from Figeac was Marguerite Noël's elder brother, Pierre Aymard. He spent May 1944 to June 1945 on the eastern front, partly digging trenches against the Russian advance.⁵⁶⁸) Arrested and made to join a group of men held in a school, he managed to escape by jumping out of a window. He made his way back to Brive, but from there was sent to teach drama at a college for apprentices, this time in Tulle. He arrived in Tulle on 8 June, the day that that town was caught up in a pitched battle between *maquisards* and German troops. As we saw in Chapter 7, this battle ended in a German victory that was followed by the hanging of 99 male civilians from lampposts and balconies. Again, Aimé was able to extricate himself from a perilous situation, walking the 30 kilometers from Tulle to Brive, mainly along the railway line.⁵⁶⁹

Can we take as true this colourful account of escape, return to France and clandestine shuttling between various towns and cities of the south-west? While elements of it do indeed seem fantastical, the documentation in the family archive supports the fact that Aimé was able to secure employment with the German post office, and there is no reason to doubt the other elements in the story. If he had made up all or part of the account, why would he have done so? None of the interviews conducted with people who knew him

⁵⁶⁷ Laborie, 'Une révolution silencieuse', p. 231.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 13 June 2023.

⁵⁶⁹ Noël Family Archive.

suggest that he was untruthful or a fantasist. The question of veracity is nuanced by the fictionalised account of his escape that Aimé wrote after the war, but there is nothing in that novel to suggest that the actual account is untrue. Accepting that it is in fact broadly true, it suggests that Aimé was determined, resourceful, and a man who was ready to take his chances.

The family archive does not provide any clues as to his state of mind during the semi-clandestine life that he led during 1942-4. According to Marguerite, he continued to reflect on the futility of war and to plan what contribution he might make to France once hostilities were over. He did not join the Resistance. Marguerite has explained that this was partly because he had had enough of fighting, that he had 'turned his back on the war' by the time of his escape; and partly because, though he numbered communists among his friends, he was fundamentally opposed to the undemocratic nature of communism. That the communists had managed to exert increasing control over the Resistance in Quercy during 1943-4 meant that it was not a natural movement for him to join. Marguerite says that he did occasionally deliver messages for Resisters, but that was the extent of his involvement.⁵⁷⁰

Nor was he any sort of active collaborator. While Aimé's father had been a firm supporter of Pétain (at least initially), there is no evidence that this attachment was shared by Aimé. We may suppose that certain aspects of Vichy's 'National Revolution' would have appealed to him, such as its stress on Church, family, and traditional social values; but we may equally suppose that he would have disapproved of its anti-democratic character. In any event, during the early years of Vichy, he was a prisoner in Germany and largely insulated from its programme and policies in France. Soon

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 29 Sept. 2022.

thereafter, he was on the run from the authorities. The youth clubs in which he worked would have been managed along lines laid down by Vichy, but this gives no grounds for interpreting his employment in them as suggestive of sympathy with Vichyite ideology. Marguerite has stressed that, at least until the time of his involvement with the MRP, Aimé's interests in public affairs had been concentrated on the social rather than the political, in keeping with the *jociste* spirit.⁵⁷¹

We may reasonably conclude that Aimé, like most French people, treated the war as an ordeal to be worked through as best he could, keeping his head down and coping from day to day.⁵⁷² In his case the decision not to engage or to 'take sides' was more considered and conscious, and less reactive, than it was for most, and he spent more time meditating on his and France's postwar futures than was typical, but the consequent avoidance of the conflict was itself widespread. It must however be stressed that the war did serve further to develop Aimé, in that the periods of reflection that it allowed him prepared the ground for his future career.

The Liberation: *La Vie Quercynoise*, and the MRP, 1944-7

By the summer of 1944, Aimé had settled upon his postwar vocation. His war had included periods of boredom and comparative inactivity, but at the Liberation he threw himself with great energy into creating a new life. He resolved to spread the message of Christian democracy to a wide regional audience, and decided that the most effective medium through which to do that was the press.

The Liberation was accompanied by a flourishing French press, and Aimé's efforts during 1944-7 made a significant contribution to this

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 21 Sept. 2022; Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, pp. 326-56.

⁵⁷² See for example, Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*.

revival at the regional level. When Cahors was liberated on 17 August, there was no organised press at all in the Quercy region. The chaos in the weeks leading up to the Liberation meant that the roughly six Vichyite local titles had all ceased publication, and in their place stood only one- or two-page Resistance tracts of the sort produced by Étienne Verlhac and others, which necessarily had limited content and circulation.⁵⁷³ This hiatus was followed by a burst of activity over the following two years. Sixteen new local papers were founded, and a further two were re-launched, including the Lot edition of the dominant Toulouse-based *La Dépêche du Midi*, which had been shut down by Vichy in 1941. Almost all the new titles were either directly associated with the Resistance or were Communist, or both. Most of them were short-lived, and by 1950 only six of the eighteen had survived.⁵⁷⁴

This frenetic activity in Quercy reflected the national story. The immediate postwar period has been described as a 'golden age' for the French press. A wave of energy and improvisation meant that the formidable hurdles – a lack of material, correspondents, and subscribers – were soon largely overcome. Paris alone boasted twenty-eight dailies by early 1946. The energy of writers and publishers, and the avidity of readers, was in part a response to the lack of news, and the absence of a free and lively press, during the four years of Occupation. People were keen to devour news and to debate it after a long period when news was scarce, censorship heavy, and talk could be dangerous. Not only did the number of titles surge, but so did circulation, which in 1946 exceeded the 1939 level by over 50 per cent. As in Quercy, nationally the political

⁵⁷³ See Chapter 6.

⁵⁷⁴ ADL: index for PER series (*Liste des Périodiques*); Olivier Wieviorka, 'La presse', in Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon (eds.), *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, (Paris, 1994), pp. 140-57; and Christian Delporte, 'Presse de droite, presse des droites à la Libération', in Gilles Richard and Jacqueline Sainclivier (eds.), *La Recomposition des droites en France à la Libération* (Rennes, 2004), pp. 37-40.

left dominated, accounting for 48 per cent. of circulation at end-1944, compared with 11 per cent. in 1939. Moreover, most of the new titles were owned by sole-proprietors or small groups of journalists, rather than by the large companies that had run the sector pre-war. However, as in Quercy, many of the new titles soon fell by the wayside, and control came to be assumed by the same genre of large corporate owners (the 'trusts' in the terminology of the time) who had presided over the press before the war. The reversion to the *status quo ante* was complete by the end of 1947.⁵⁷⁵

Aimé's own venture into journalism reflected much of the foregoing story. In a rush of enthusiasm, he set about creating a newspaper from scratch, with no previous relevant experience and no capital. Given these formidable handicaps, that he succeeded in his aim is testament to great strength of will. In August 1944 he initiated planning meetings with potential staff members for the launch of what would be a new regional (Quercy-wide) Christian weekly newspaper. After eight frenetic weeks spent in assembling finance, paper, printers, permissions, contributors, and subscribers, *La Vie Quercynoise* appeared for the first time on 14 October, with Aimé as editor and managing director. It was, his wife later wrote, 'the best day of his life'.⁵⁷⁶ Carrying the strap-line '*Hebdomadaire Chrétien et Social de Libération*' (which inelegantly translates as 'Christian and Social Weekly of Liberation'), the leading article on its front page was in the form of a letter to readers, the opening sections of which read:

'*La Vie Quercynoise* is not the organ of any political party; nor does it wish to engage in partisan polemics.....each week it will bring you Christian reportage, the reportage of Christians who obey all the demands of their ideals of Justice and Love, the reportage of Christians who did not accept defeat,

⁵⁷⁵ See preceding footnote.

⁵⁷⁶ Noël Family Archive.

servitude and the half-disguised negation of true Church doctrine.⁵⁷⁷

The wording is elliptical, and a reminder of the care that had to be taken with language in the early months of Liberation, when wounds were still open and tempers still hot. Christianity is linked to resistance, but the word 'Resistance' is not used. It is not stated who had imposed 'servitude' (the Germans certainly, but Vichy also?). And the text quoted here ends with what seems to be an oblique reference to the Catholic church's association with Vichy. Two months later, the Christmas letter to readers struck a more explicitly *jociste* note in stressing how important it was for Christians to extend a hand of goodwill and friendship to non-believers and to members of other faiths.⁵⁷⁸

On the night of the paper's first publication, Aimé took time to write a letter to one of his clerical mentors who had assisted in founding the paper. In part it read:

'I won't hide from you that I am so emotional that I have a great lump in my throat, because I have put my whole life into it. I am not exaggerating, *La Vie Quercynoise* has been the fruit of long and hard work but because it has been an immense project it has profoundly moved me.....Before all else I must excuse myself before the Good Lord if in the course of the ground-work if I have ruffled a few feathers but we must remember that we have had only one objective: our ideals. You will know that if in this moment of emotion I have a silly desire to cry this is only because I have not fully given what I was capable of....I am writing you these lines to bear witness to you of all my fidelity to the [Christian] cause.'

The passage underlines Aimé's conviction that the creation of the paper stood as the outcome of his many years of contemplation and planning, going back to his *jociste* days. It also welds that personal

⁵⁷⁷ *La Vie Quercynoise* (14 Oct. 1944).

⁵⁷⁸ *La Vie Quercynoise* (23 Dec. 1944).

achievement to his religious convictions, and is testimony to their depth. The reaffirmation of faith is then taken as an opportunity to confess to some shortcomings (the reference to the feathers that he had ruffled, reflecting the precept of Catholic Action that it would be necessary to ruffle feathers in order to make progress). Finally, the reference to crying also shows that he could admit (and to another man, albeit a cleric) emotional weakness.

The letter was written at a time when many French Catholics were full of optimism. There was a sense of a renewed religious vitality and purpose which, it was hoped, could in turn inspire a different and better politics. De Gaulle was a practising Catholic and, as we will see, Catholicism was now for the first time in many decades linked to a credible political party. The pre-war religious associations such as the JOC that had blossomed in the interwar period may have withered under Vichy, but many of the individuals who came to prominence in public life after the Liberation had been members of them when younger or had been associated with pre-war Catholic publications such as *Esprit*.⁵⁷⁹ As the Dominican theologian Yves Congar wrote:

‘Whoever did not experience the French Catholicism of 1946-1947 missed one of the most wonderful moments in the life of the Church.’⁵⁸⁰

That the first publication of *La Vie Quercynoise* was ‘the best day’ of Aimé’s life should therefore be placed in this context of the immediate postwar era, when a spirit of renaissance infused Catholic activists. This mood was even accompanied, though only momentarily, by a euphoric hope that the successful conclusion of the war could forge a French unity that would bring people

⁵⁷⁹ Étienne Fouilloux, *Les chrétiens français entre crise et libération 1937-1947* (Paris, 1997), pp. 245-65.

⁵⁸⁰ Quoted in Fouilloux, *Les chrétiens français*, p. 253.

together across both politics and belief, as reflected in Louis Aragon's poem *La Rose et le Réséda* which, with its refrain,

‘*Celui qui croyait au ciel,*
‘*Celui qui n’y croyait pas....*’,

celebrated the comradeship that Catholics and non-believers had found in the Resistance.⁵⁸¹

The early editions of *La Vie Quercynoise* devoted considerable space not only to family, which was natural given its editorial line, but also more specifically to women, which was more unusual. The topics aimed at women ranged from their contribution to the Resistance to how they could now take more active roles outside the home, in business and politics.⁵⁸² The character of this content is in sharp contrast to that in the women's sections of most newspapers, which continued to concentrate on issues linked to marriage and motherhood. The decision to give prominence in the paper to women would have been taken by Aimé, and is reflective of his progressive nature. An incident from the early weeks of the Liberation that deeply affected him gives added force to this. During the autumn of 1944 Aimé said that he attended one of the many more or less spontaneous public political meetings that were held in the squares of Figeac. On this occasion, a well-known woman collaborator had rashly joined the crowd. She was recognised, and the crowd turned on her. Fearing that she would have her head shaved or worse, Aimé and a group of his friends were, by his account, able to protect her by erecting a defensive shield of chairs and barricades around her until the police arrived

⁵⁸¹ Louis Aragon, *La Diane Française* (Paris, 1944). ('The one who believes in heaven, the one who does not...')

⁵⁸² *La Vie Quercynoise* (1944-5).

and took her away. The story reflects his strong disapproval of violence and is also suggestive of a respect for female dignity.⁵⁸³

Moreover, in July 1945 *La Vie Quercynoise* published an article that condemned the head-shavings of three women that had taken place in Cahors on 25 June.⁵⁸⁴ These improvised public punishments arose following the return to the Lot of POWs and civilian deportees who had been liberated in Germany and Eastern Europe. They had come home not only with tales of the horrors of the camps, but also with fresh news as to who had collaborated during the Occupation and who had denounced people to the authorities. This led to a temporary return of the bitterly vengeful mood of the main period of *épuration* during August-October of the preceding year.⁵⁸⁵

The article merits close examination because it provides an unusual insight into how the phenomenon of women's punishment at the Liberation was treated in a high-minded, Christian Democrat publication. Aimé was not the article's (male) author, but it must be taken that he would have approved it, as editor. The article notes that the incident had not been covered elsewhere in the local press. It admits that 'certainly none of the victims deserved prizes for virtue' but points out that all had been acquitted of the charge of '*intelligence avec l'ennemi*'. While it is highly critical of the 'abominable scenes', the condemnation is nuanced in several respects as to gender, and in one respect as to race. It describes in detail the ordeal of one of the three, a Spanish woman whose head had been shaved and a swastika then painted on her forehead. In what are arguably sensationalist or perhaps even voyeuristic terms, the author wrote:

⁵⁸³ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 21 Sept. 2022. (It has not been possible to corroborate this account with the archival sources.)

⁵⁸⁴ *La Vie Quercynoise* (7 July 1945).

⁵⁸⁵ Virgili, *La France virile*, pp. 153-7.

‘Unsteady and falling, and falling again, jolted to left and right like a mere puppet of herself...her head like a man’s, sightless eyes, wordless lips, spent of force and spent of shame, spent of martyrdom and spent of horror, under the indifferent eyes of the crowd, this damned woman “took the boulevard”. Oh, what a godsend for the children who formed the bulk of the cortege and who swirled around the demented woman as flies swirl around manure on a summer’s day!’

Next, the writer suggested that the event might not have been so reprehensible if the chastisers had been women:

‘If it had only been women, amongst themselves and only amongst themselves, who had revenged the honour of their sex! But it was men, it was Frenchmen, and they were thirty against one....’

Then he argued that head-shavings alone might have been acceptable, but that the subsequent parading was not:

‘Wouldn’t it have been enough to shave the heads of these three women? Everybody, or nearly everybody would have approved of such a shaming, and nobody in Cahors would have dared to complain much about it...that torture undergone, they could then have just been set free.’

Finally, towards the end of the article:

‘A Senegalese, working outside Crédit Lyonnais, and who spoke quite good French, in seeing this unfortunate woman passing by, said to the author “She should be left in peace.” What shame for white men to hear these words from a black man!’

So, the parading around town was deemed to be so deplorable that ‘even’ a black colonial subject – with values implicitly assumed to be baser than those of white French men – could be moved to disapprove of it.

In short, the article condemned the people of Cahors for their behaviour, but the condemnation was qualified: it could have been acceptable had women only carried out the punishment, had it been

done behind closed doors, and had it not been followed by a humiliating parade around town. The author was more critical of the disordered mob action than he was of the treatment of the women, whose punishment he allows to have been understandable, and perhaps even deserved. It is noteworthy that, assuming as we must that Aimé approved the article, someone of his Christian and 'modern' disposition was unable unequivocally to condemn the punishment. This must be taken as testament to how savage the Lot had become in the summer and autumn of 1944, and to the seriousness of the brief resumption of that mood a year later. One aspect of that mood was a return to the traditional belief that women whose gendered and sexual behaviour did not meet conventional norms should be punished, often publicly; and in this context such behaviour was taken as an affront to French men, to 'proper' notions of French femininity, and to national honour. As editor, Aimé would have been chary of publishing an account that flew in the face of public opinion at this moment of renewed vengeance, however 'progressive' his own views may have been; as the article stated: '...nobody in Cahors would have dared to complain about it much.'

Notwithstanding the apolitical stance of *La Vie Quercynoise*, from early 1945 Aimé began to involve himself in politics. As noted earlier, he had not been politically active hitherto: he had had a low opinion of the political parties of the Third Republic and probably only a rather vague political conception of what the postwar 'new order' in France might comprise. This changed with the creation of the MRP, which allowed him to give concrete political form to his moral and social principles. The roots of the party lay in the pre-war groundwork of Catholic Action to create room for a Catholic politics that was disassociated from the traditional right. Many

MRP leaders and officers were, like Aimé, former *jocistes*. Following the Liberation, this space was further widened as the right was badly discredited as a consequence of its association with Vichy, and the MRP's ability to occupy it was reinforced by its Resistance credentials.

The party was both Christian and democrat. It stressed its newness; its commitment to a radical rupture with the past (its first manifesto spoke of 'revolution') and thus its independence from the politics of the 1930s; and its desire to inject a new (Christian) morality into public life. It advocated policies that mixed elements of both right and left, while depending on an electorate that was for the most part socially conservative. The MRP's opponents, notably the Communists, condemned it as a political place of refuge for collaborators, using the slogan: '*MRP = Machine à Ramasser les Pétainists*', but this was an unfair characterisation of the party itself, which in fact could be proud of the Resistance records of its leaders, such as Georges Bidault and François de Menthon.⁵⁸⁶

For these reasons, the MRP quickly became an important force in French politics. By 1945 it had 100,000 members and stood as the main opponent of the Communist Party, leaving the SFIO and the Radical Party in a much weaker position than they had enjoyed pre-war. It went on to obtain 28 per cent. of votes cast in the November 1946 election, a remarkable success for such a new party. Thereafter its fortunes waned, chiefly because of the challenges posed to it on the political centre ground by de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du Peuple Français*, but also because it became associated with the '*immobilisme*' and colonial entanglements of the Fourth Republic. And as the years passed, so the memory of its Resistance heritage faded.

⁵⁸⁶ See note 5 above.

In the run-up to the general election of October 1945, and following Aimé's decision to involve himself in politics, *La Vie Quercynoise* dropped its apolitical editorial line in order to back the MRP. An editorial written by Aimé in advance of the June 1946 election looked back to the October decision and explained that:

'...faced with socialo-communists on one side and the forces of reaction on the other, we were no longer able to remain neutral. We don't want Marxism at any price, and the radical or conservative right will deny us the chance to create a new order capable of satisfying the desires of the working masses.'⁵⁸⁷

While the MRP was in contrast:

'... the most authentically democratic party, the one most smitten by liberty, in favour of economic and social freedom.... born out of the Resistance, not conforming with the old ways.... the MRP wants to see the triumph of spiritual principles, as opposed to the outmoded sectarianism of the radicals and the materialism of the revolutionaries. Only the MRP can stop Christian values from being hidden behind a bushel.'

These words speak clearly of Aimé's enthusiasm for a new form of politics that could, in the tradition of Catholic Action, carve out a distinct path between what he saw as the two hitherto-dominant political blocs, and in particular could save working-class voters from Communism.

Aimé took it upon himself to find the party's candidate to stand as deputy for the Lot department. He decided that Abel Bessac was the right man, someone who might be an agent of change. Bessac was a prominent local businessman who before the war had held senior positions in the JOC's agricultural sister-organisation and also had a solid Resistance record. Aimé persuaded him to stand and then campaigned for him during 1945 and 1946. This effort,

⁵⁸⁷ *La Vie Quercynoise* (25 June 1945).

which included the organisation of 150 political meetings, bore fruit when Bessac was elected as deputy for the Lot in October 1945, a position he held until 1955.⁵⁸⁸

Adversity, 1947-51

Aimé was proud of the successful work that he had put in on behalf of Bessac and the MRP, but his involvement in politics became partly to blame for what turned into the greatest disappointment of his life. His descent from the euphoria of 1944-5 into a black depression traced a similar arc to that of the MRP. From the foundation of *La Vie Quercynoise*, there had been misgivings in Cahors, the departmental capital of the Lot and the chief city of Quercy, that a regional newspaper should be based in Figeac, a town that was secondary to Cahors and in some senses a rival to it: Cahors was predominantly an administrative centre, while Figeac was stronger commercially, thanks mainly to the presence there of the large Ratier aviation works. Civic pride was strong in both. Cadurcien jealousy of Figeac was nursed not only at the *mairie* in Cahors, but also among some senior clerics there. In addition, political power in Cahors lay mainly in the hands of Communists, and of Radicals who had been prominent in local politics during the Third Republic. The possibility of an attack on the paper, and on Aimé, had thus been present from the outset, but Aimé's turn to politics provided the Cahors faction with the opportunity to act.

In February 1945, Aimé had incorporated the paper in the form of a limited private company that had a life of 20 years. He brought in outside shareholders, among whom were a significant number of Cadurcien investors, and this proved to have been a serious mistake. The Cadurciens who wished to gain control of the paper began plotting to that end and to oust him as managing director.

⁵⁸⁸ Noël Family Archive.

Marguerite Noël believes that it was primarily driven by Cahors versus Figeac civic hostility, though she acknowledges that there was also an element of anticlericalism and leftist dislike of the MRP among Aimé's secular enemies in Cahors. The salary of the deputy that Aimé had hired to fill the vacancy left by his own political engagement was paid by the MRP, and this was used against him. Additionally, Marguerite has stated that the rather staid Radicals within the Cahors faction found Aimé's dynamism, from which he produced a stream of ideas for the paper, difficult to cope with.⁵⁸⁹ It is also possible that his lack of Resistance credentials played against him, though he would have had some kudos as an escaped POW. Lastly, it may be that his tendency to lead from above rather than to manage by consensus or to 'work the room' did not help his cause.

The Cahors faction was able to argue that the time he had spent away from the paper on his political activities had damaged it, and that its finances were poorly run. After a long and acrimonious battle, in the spring of 1947 they succeeded in their aim and Aimé was sacked, several of the Cadurcien shareholders who had privately pledged him their support voting against him. Marguerite says that the loss of the paper in 1947 was the most devastating blow to Aimé. He regarded it as his own creation and achievement, and felt that it had been treacherously taken from him. The friend who drove him back from the shareholder meeting at which he lost control subsequently told her that at that time he worried that Aimé might take his life. He did not but, again according to Marguerite, he remained depressed and bitter until their courtship began in 1951, and mistrustful ever after.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 22 Sept. 2022; Noël Family Archive.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 22 Sept. 2022.

Later Life, 1951-95

Very badly bruised, for the next seventeen years Aimé devoted his time to religious journalism and to Figeac local affairs. He built up a network of Catholic parish newsletters; led pilgrimages to Lourdes and Rome; became a town councillor and the president of the annual Figeac agricultural show, holding both positions for twenty-five years; and wrote a history of the town. These activities reflected his deep commitment to Figeac, as well as the value that *jocisme* placed on service to the local community; his work for Figeac was recognised in 2015 when a street in the town was named after him. In 1964, as the termination of the company that owned *La Vie Quercynoise* approached, he was able to negotiate its purchase by himself and other Figeacois investors, and to resume his position as managing director.⁵⁹¹

Aimé's respectful attitude to women has already been mentioned, and the story of Marguerite's life after their marriage broadly adds to this. She and Aimé agreed that she would give up her career as a schoolteacher in order to help him with the running of the parish newsletters. She took responsibility for the administration of these magazines, including learning how to type-set. After 1964 when he regained control of *La Vie Quercynoise*, she did similar jobs for the newspaper. When their children were young, she would get up at 3 a.m. to deal with her administrative work before attending to them. Thus, she did have a career, though she admits ruefully that it was unpaid. It might be inferred from this that Aimé was prepared to see his wife's teaching career sacrificed in order to secure some free labour for his journalism, but this would probably be too

⁵⁹¹ Noël Family Archive.

cynical a reading of what seems to have been a happy working collaboration between husband and wife; and, while recounting this, Marguerite took the trouble to stress that Aimé was always 'modern in his outlook towards women'.⁵⁹²

Conclusion

Aimé Noël was representative of a certain type of masculinity that was present, but not typical, in mid-20th century Europe, and that in its ensemble represented something new and different. His was a more nuanced masculinity than that of traditional models, and one that was inseparable from the type of Christianity that he practised. It can be delineated by what it was not: while brave and resourceful, he was a pacifist, opposed to war and militarism. Although as a soldier he had carried a gun, figuratively he never did, and in this respect he stands apart from the thrusting and more overtly combative or militaristic male figures that we have seen with Étienne Verlhac, Jacques Chapou, and René Andrieu. His masculinity was of course even further removed from the hard-edged versions that were developed within the fascist and communist movements. Moreover, Marguerite asserts that he was no womanizer, and treated woman with respect; her view is supported by the terms of his correspondence with Francine and Mietje, by his intervention in Figeac to protect the woman who faced lynching, and by the content of *La Vie Quercynoise*.⁵⁹³

As with his public life, his gendered identity sprang above all from his Christianity, and in particular from the Christianity of the New Testament, with its emphasis on pastoral care and the Christian duty to others, women as well as men. He was animated by the

⁵⁹² Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 24 Dec. 2022.

⁵⁹³ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 21 Sept. 2022.

form of faith that had been developed under the aegis of Catholic Action, a socially active and purposeful Christian humanism. It prized service to others, engagement with the community, reconciliation, and aversion to conflict. Some of the most prominent features of that form of Christian ethic are those typically associated more with conventional female than male behaviour, such as caring about the feelings of others, and striving for social and familial harmony. While he certainly had traits that spoke to notions of masculinity that at the time were more conventional, such as the desire to lead and to organise others, and the ambition to make a success of his career and public life, this specific genre of faith was the key component of his persona.

Aimé was also an emotional man, who experienced moments of great joy and great depression, as when he created and then lost *La Vie Quercynoise*. He was moreover open to sharing his emotions with others, another trait that did not form part of the conventional masculine credo. It is also worth recalling here that in writing of the men who had behaved poorly in the face of execution, rather than using terms such as ‘a lack of manliness’ or ‘not behaving like real men’, Aimé had instead chosen to emphasise their lack of ‘spiritual composure’; and, rather than describing his own courage as a quality that was only natural to a ‘manly man’, had stressed that it was a product of his faith.

As to love and sex, an interest in his own gender might be inferred from the fact that he married late, or from his involvement in the male-only world of the JOC. There is however no evidence to support such an inference, and the archives and interviews point rather to a man who when single had had some romantic involvements with women: Francine Deray in Gravelines, Mietje Bontjes van Beek in Germany and, it has been suggested by one

interviewee, perhaps with young women involved with the theatre in Figeac before he met Marguerite. His religion would of course have demanded celibacy before marriage, though there is no clue as to this in the sources. After his marriage, there is no suggestion that he was other than a faithful husband for the following five decades. In addition, Marguerite has stated that he had qualities that appealed to women: he was good-looking, charming, full of energy, made people laugh, and told good stories.⁵⁹⁴

How was this identity changed by his experiences of war? Certainly, the war had shown him that he had courage; but, as noted above, he had at once attributed this to his faith as opposed to any innate strength of his own. Soldiering and captivity entailed long periods of inactivity or repetitive physical labour, and these gave him the opportunity to contemplate his faith and to reflect on how a better, Christian France might be built, and to decide on the form of practical contribution that he could make to that. But these consequences of wartime experience did not reshape his identity. Rather, his exposure to military service, to war at the front, to captivity, and then to life as a fugitive, all served only to reinforce his commitments to Christianity, pacifism, and the need for a new and better postwar world. After the war, he created opportunities, in journalism and politics, to put these ideals into practice. For Aimé the war was a test to be endured, as Christians are expected to endure tests. Participation in war or being imprisoned can lead individuals to doubt or even abandon their faith, but Aimé's faith was hardened rather than weakened by those experiences.

His trajectory was thus a consistent one. There is a clear thread of continuity and purpose in his nature and actions that ran from his youth and found full expression in the postwar period. The seeds

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with Marguerite Noël, conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon, Figeac, 5 Aug. 2022.

were sown by his family's hatred of war and by the faith instilled in him at an early age by his mother and his Catholic teachers, and they flowered in tangible form first with his commitment to *jocisme* and later with his Christian-based journalism and politics. Unlike most of the other individuals studied here, the experience of war was not so much one from which new personal opportunities could be seized or new or altered identities assumed, but rather one in which Aimé's already strong and distinct identity was exposed to vicissitude and danger and was by exposure reconfirmed.

Chapter 11

Conclusion

This thesis has examined a small number of individuals as they responded to a dramatic series of events at the national and more especially local levels, with the aim of throwing fresh light on processes of social and emotional change in mid-twentieth-century France. Its central focus is gender, as the thesis explores how the events and experiences of war reshaped gendered identities in selected areas of provincial France from 1940 to 1944. From this question others follow: what changes occurred; how representative were they of wider trends; and how profound and long-lasting did they prove to be? In addressing these questions, the thesis does not study the years between 1940 and 1944 in isolation, but rather places the impact of the events of the war years in the longer time frame of individual lives. It also does not consider gender as an autonomous factor but instead one that was entangled with other aspects of identity, notably of family, community and of social class. In this way, this thesis is both a study of gender *per se*, and one which uses gender as a prism to address wider issues of identity.

Before turning to the answers suggested by the case studies, two general points, one historiographical and one methodological, should be recalled. First, the thesis has concentrated on provincial rural France. Historians of gendered change in the 20th century have tended to limit their research to Paris and France's other major cities and to French history at the national level. The provinces have received relatively little attention, and this thesis has sought to contribute to rebalancing the historiography in that respect. It has looked mainly at individuals from the bourgeoisie, very broadly defined, in Quercy. Typically, these people led lives

that were rooted in both rural and urban contexts. Several form a loose group, in that they knew each other or had paths that crossed, and they lived in and around the medium-sized towns of Cahors and Figeac. The thesis has sought to assess the ways in which gendered identities evolved in this milieu, partly as a consequence of the disruptive impact of the war, and partly as a consequence of wider social and economic changes. It has concluded that, while hard to measure, the pace of change was undoubtedly slow, and that this was probably particularly true of Quercy relative to other rural provinces. In 1940, the region remained heavily dominated by agriculture, where methods of production were notably backward, its population was on average old, and its social and cultural norms had changed little over the preceding decades. It has moreover been suggested, albeit the proofs lie beyond the remit of the thesis, that the impact of the war and of German Occupation was more disruptive in a region such as Quercy where the extent of change had hitherto been limited, and its tempo very slow. In contrast to a major city such as Paris, where change had been woven into the fabric of modern life, in Quercy the war was a sudden and disruptive break in the more entrenched structures and rhythms of life.

This connects to a second point, which is the need to place these wartime lives in a longer time frame. It has been stressed throughout the thesis that the changes observable in the individuals during the war years did not spring *de novo* from the impacts of war, but formed part of a longer process of change that predated the war and continued after it. However, it has also been argued that the wartime changes cut deeper than had their antecedents and that, over a longer period, the wartime legacy was accelerative of social and cultural change, and thus more profound.

This was especially the case during the final months of the German Occupation in Quercy, during the spring, summer, and early autumn of 1944. The acute tensions of those months can be seen as the emotional climax of the events of the preceding five years. From the early spring, more intense Resistance activity and in response more intense German and Vichyite countermeasures laid the ground for Franco-German and Franco-French conflicts that were marked by an escalation of atrocities, and finally by the collapse of state authority, near civil war, and widespread lawlessness. The exceptionally strong emotions that this generated prompted extreme forms of behaviour, ranging from acts of heroism to violent criminality. This did not disappear at the Liberation. As the structures of the new provisional government struggled to make themselves felt, much real power lay in the hands of local Resistance leaders, whose actions were legitimated by their credentials as the wartime protectors of the local community and then as victors over the enemy. The requirement for revenge, and the ability of the Resistance leaders pre-emptively to appoint themselves to power in Quercy, formed the backdrop to a process of 'social cleansing' that punished collaborators but also claimed victims among the innocent. Harsh sentences were handed down for what in less heated times would have been seen as minor offences.

The disruptive impact of the final months of the German Occupation, and the roughly six-month period of improvised local rule which followed the Liberation, were profound. Many lives were changed irredeemably in this period, generating a sense of rupture which defined the remainder of their lives. At the same time, it also had wider societal consequences, disrupting former social hierarchies, and creating a tangible generational change in the

leadership in society. In this way, the events of 1944 were both important in themselves, and also acted as a catalyst of the changes that would take place over the immediate postwar decades.

These themes emerge through the case studies examined in the thesis. Six main conclusions can be drawn from them. The first is the essential one of diversity. Although important commonalities were present, the changes in gendered behaviour described in the cases were often heterogenous and multi-directional. Differing age cohorts, childhoods, characters, and specific wartime circumstances led to differing outcomes. Janine Andrieu's story has already been cited as the strongest example of nuance. She was the youngest of the individuals studied here. Her background as an only child, raised by intelligent and enlightened parents, and then their successive early deaths, spurred her to find and join the Resistance, and so to enter a new world of responsibility and danger. However, her predilection to live her life with father-figures and her attachment to certain bourgeois conventions meant that, once she became married to another strong and (in his case also egotistical) man, her postwar life was lived largely within the confines of a conventional gendered role. In these respects, she stands in contrast to Maire-Antoinette Orcival and Yvonne Wagner. Marie-Antoinette was fourteen years older than Janine, and had been in professional work for several years before the war's outbreak. Similarly, Yvonne, while only three years older than Janine, had been able to start a career in the early 1940s. These employments were of central importance in determining the actions of the two women in 1944. A different contrast is shown between the type of carefree, knowing, and confident femininity that Françoise de Boisséson could affect when dealing with Germans, and the more passive and innocent version employed by Janine

Andrieu when being searched at the roadblock. Other manifestations of difference lay in the varying forms of masculinity. This was illustrated by the distinction between the heroic form on display in the case of Jacques Chapou as he was mythologised after his death and as he appears to have been in reality before 1944, and the less confident and more troubled man that he became in the weeks preceding his death in 1944. Both of these self-representations – or performances of masculinity – differed from the coldly vengeful masculinity of Verlhac, or from the consistency of beliefs and actions displayed by Aimé Noël.

Changes in gendered behaviours therefore came in a variety of shapes. This heterogeneity leads into the second point. It bears repeating that identities are complex and multi-faceted, and that each of the elements of which they are formed lies on a spectrum. Models, or types, have been used here as a reference, and it must again be stressed that, while people do resemble types they rarely replicate them. The subtleties of identity mean that while, for example, the war rekindled certain more traditional forms of masculinity, this was often a relatively short-lived phenomenon. However, it does not follow that men who had authoritarian traits or military backgrounds ceased to have power or influence in postwar France. Similarly, women who followed the historically dominant life-pattern of marriage followed by motherhood and with no professional career did not disappear. They continued to be valued after the war, and still are a tangible presence in French provincial society. What is described in this thesis is therefore a process of incremental change that has been ragged and untidy, but in which certain directional trends can nonetheless be discerned.

Thirdly, the thesis has shown that the war was not simply destructive. It presented some people with the means to find a fresh sense of purpose in their lives. It acted as a door for the opening up of new possibilities, gendered and otherwise. New lives were available, and new or substantially altered identities could be shaped. Among the men, this is most strikingly so with Verlhac and Chapou, both older men whose careers had been less than satisfying and who by 1940-1 were ready to take up radical challenges. With five of the seven main individuals, the catalysing action was the decision to join or help the Resistance (Orcival, Verlhac, Chapou, Andrieu, and de Boissésou). This applied to both genders and across all the age cohorts: thirty-six years separated Étienne Verlhac and Janine Andrieu. Of those who did not join the Resistance, Madeleine Tavernier seized on a quite different opportunity, one of taking pleasure for pleasure's sake but also in order to irritate her more conservative elders and social 'betters'. She thereby contravened several interlinking provincial bourgeois taboos relating to age, class, gender, and female sexual conduct. Aimé Noël employed the war as a means of deepening his faith and of shaping his ideas for a postwar future. As to the Wagners, matters are more opaque. We can certainly suggest that Yvonne's strength of character spurred her to take a prominent role in the fate of her village on the day that the German arrived, and perhaps before then; and also that, assuming Louis did enrol in an arm of the Vichy paramilitary, he may have seen this as his chance to do something more positive with his life, and to improve his standing with his wife.

Fourthly, we have seen how the combinations of upbringing, education, work, and activism had prepared the individuals to exploit new opportunities thrown up by war and occupation. The

prewar experiences of four of the women shaped the new assertiveness that marked their wartime actions: the ambitions of her parents to ensure that Janine Andrieu pursued her education; Orcival's work as a nurse; Yvonne Wagner's education and her work as a teacher; and de Boisséson's early exposure to a liberated social world. All of these cases indicate how, notwithstanding the endurance of gendered norms, women's lives (and their aspirations) in these regions were already changing before the war. Male lives also reflected these earlier changes. Teaching was again formative for Chapou, and specifically it was his exclusion from the profession by the Vichy regime that triggered his joining the Resistance. Freemasonry was also important with Chapou in reinforcing an oppositional frame of mind. With Verlhac, a chequered professional career that included involuntary retirement from the army, and a decade of accountancy, combined with political and other forms of activism to lead him into the Resistance. René Andrieu's teaching and political affiliation forged him into a natural enemy of Vichy and Germany. And we have seen in some detail how Noël's early exposure to pacifism and Christianity, which was built upon through his commitment to *jocisme* in the 1930s, led him to take an entirely different road to these other men during and after the war. The exception to this pattern was Louis Wagner. Little in his pre-war history would seem to have influenced his wartime behaviour, which appears to have been essentially opportunistic in nature.

Fifth, the case studies show the importance of emotion in driving people's actions. The reconfigured behaviours described in the thesis sprang from the extreme emotional tension, and the accompanying partial breakdown in social relations and political authority, that characterised Quercy in the summer and autumn of

1944. This is especially striking in the cases of Verlhac and Chapou, who were driven to extreme forms of emphatically masculine behaviour by personal tragedies wrought by the war. The harrowing story of Verlhac's estranged and murdered wife predated the war by two decades, but in 1944 his only son was also murdered, in Verlhac's eyes largely due to the pro-German treachery of a French woman. In Chapou's case, a family tragedy was exacerbated by the complexities of his relations with two women, his expanding responsibilities as a Resistance leader, and the guilt he felt for a grave mistake that caused large loss of life among French civilians. Unsurprisingly, these strains seem to have combined to produce a mental crisis. And Marie-Antoinette Orcival's behaviour was prompted by enraged indignation at the violation of her village.

In sixth and final place, it hardly seems necessary to state that the consequences of these new configurations for the protagonists themselves were profound, given that in most cases they involved the risk of death, and in some cases its actuality. For these people, for their friends and their families, the choices that they made, and the actions flowing from those choices, were of the deepest significance at the time. However, it is more difficult to assess their consequences over the long term. Much historical work on the war years has presented them as essentially an exceptional period, during which 'another life' came and went. The cases presented in this thesis provide some confirmation for this argument, by demonstrating how the circumstances of the latter war years encouraged hyper-masculinised forms of behaviour which did not endure in the long run. In the 1950s these forms of male action were seen as so shameful that it needed to be erased from the collective memory. In the postwar decades, France had new

priorities. It looked to 'modernity' and to the future more than to the past, and its population was becoming tired of war stories and of the beating of 'resistencialist' drums.

However, with respect to the new identities assumed by the women here, and to the new type of masculinity described by the life of Aimé Noël, the thesis suggests more durable changes. Two of the five women died during the war, and a third disappeared from view soon after it. It is clear however that in their families the two who died in 1944-5, Marie-Antoinette Orcival and Yvonne Wagner, have been remembered much as they have been shown in the thesis; that is, as forceful and unusual, if not extraordinary people who behaved during the war in ways that were unconventional for their gender and that represented a significant assertion of the female self. This applies also to Françoise de Boissésou, both as to her postwar life and as to how she is remembered. Memories of significant parents or grandparents play a part in forming the identities of those in the following generations, and so these memories are significant. This leaves only Janine Andrieu, in whose case it must be allowed that there seems to have been a reversion to a more conventionally gendered role after the war. Taken together, the stories of all the women show how war experiences encouraged a stronger sense of a more independent female identity. This was not necessarily at the expense of family and maternity, and the postwar boom in births was highly important. However, their education and participation in more active and defined careers before the war had prepared them for the possibilities of independent choice and action.

Aimé Noël's is one of the most important among the cases studies. He is differentiated by an identity that was largely unwavering, from his early exposure to Christianity and pacifism, through his young adulthood in the 1930s, his war experiences, and thereafter

into his later life as an important figure in Figeac and Quercy. His identity contrasts with the other men not only as a consequence of his religious and political ideals but also through his relative openness to emotional display and in his attitude towards women. As such, his life in the 1950s was redolent of a new masculinity which came to express the future, just as the male Resisters came to represent the past.

In summary therefore, the cases divide between those in which the altered identities described can be seen as forming part of longer-term social and cultural trends at the national level, and those that form part of a decline. The newer trends include the gradual advancement of women into positions of influence in the professions and in public life, and the growing tendency of men both further to shed their self-identification with the citizen-warrior model, and to accept that women could and should play significant roles in national life. The war, and especially the period from spring 1944 to summer 1945, was a period of intense drama in Quercy which saw considerable redefinition of identities, but the impact of those months can only be fully understood by placing them in a longer time frame. This presents a model for how we might approach the history of gendered identities in 20th century France.

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Orcival Plaque, Place de la Mairie, Montpezat-de-Quercy. (Author's photograph, 2019.) Page 4.

Figure 2: Salvetat Memorial, Montpezat-de-Quercy. (Author's photograph, 2019.) Page 5.

Figure 3: modern map of south-west France. Page 7.

Figure 4: map of Quercy (Royal administration, 18th century.) Page 8.

Figure 5: Marie-Antoinette Orcival. Date and place unknown. Probably 1930s, Quercy, (Orcival Family archive.) Page 81.

Figure 6: Marie-Antonette Orcival, 1934, probably in Quercy. (Orcival family archive.) Page 82.

Figure 7: Adrien Orcival with Marie-Antoinette and Marguerite, 1940. (Orcival family archive.) Page 84.

Figure 8: Marie-Antoinette and her brother Raymond (left) and in her Red Cross uniform. (Dates unknown; Olivet & Aribaud, *La Mémoire*, p.169.) Page 91.

Figure 9: Orcival plaque, Place de la Mairie, Montpezat-de-Quercy. (Author's photograph, 2019.) Page 94.

Figure 10: Monument to those Deported, Interned or Made Hostage, Montpezat-de-Quercy. (Author's photograph, 2021.) Page 95.

Figure 11: M. Jacques Théron (interviewee and veteran of the Indochina and Algerian wars) at the 8 May VE Day in Europe Ceremony, Montpezat-de-Quercy 2021. (Author's photograph.) Page 96.

Figure 12: the 2017 performance of "Marie des Brebis", Village Fête. (www.gandoules.fr.) Page 97.

Figure 13: the 2017 performance of "Marie des Brebis", German Reprisal. (www.gandoules.fr.) Page 98.

Figure 14: Mural at Frayssinet-le-Gélat; the caption reads 'Remember, don't forget.' (Photographed by the author, 2019.) Page 103.

Figure 15: Memorial at Frayssinet-le-Gélat: ‘To the Victims of Nazi Barbarity, 21st May 1944, Remember.’ (Photographed by the author, 2021.) Page 104.

Figure 16: Yvonne Wagner and fellow pupil, Villefranche-de-Rouergue, probably late 1930s, (Wagner-Bories Family Archive). Page 108.

Figure 17: Louis Wagner, 1940, (Wagner-Bories Family Archive). Page 112.

Figure 18: Drawing from *Notre Quercy*, 10th December 1944. Page 116.

Figure 19: Extract from Frayssinet-le-Gélat brochure produced to record the schoolchildren’s re-enactment of the 1944 massacre, February 2016. , (Mairie, Frayssinet-le-Gélat). Page 123.

Figure 20: Madeleine Tavernier, Summer 1943, (*‘Le Lot Resister’*, January 1944; ADL 1 PER 76/1). Page 130.

Figure 21: Étienne Verlhac, on campaign, circa 1914, (ADL 96 J 9). Page 135.

Figure 22: Georges Verlhac and his wife Solange, 1943 or 1944, (ADL 96 J 9). Page 140.

Figure 23: Étienne Verlhac, circa 1946, (ADL 96 J 9). Page 142.

Figure 24: Bust of Jacques Chapou in Main Square of Cahors. (Author’s photograph, 2022.) Page 160.

Figure 25: Teachers and senior pupils of the *Lycée Gambetta*, Cahors, c. 1927. Jacques Chapou is at the far right of the bottom row, (Chapou Family Archive). Page 163.

Figure 26: Enlargement of Figure 26: Jacques Chapou at right. Page 163.

Figure 27: Jaques Chapou circa 1940, (Chapou Family Archive.) Page 166.

Figure 28: Jacques Chapou, 1944, (Chapou Family Archive.) Page 187.

Figure 29: Monument to Jacques Chapou, where he was ambushed, outside Bourganeuf, showing the Red Star of the USSR. (Author's photograph, 2023.) Page 190.

Figure 30: Janine Andrieu, c. 1943. (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, opp. p. 83.) Page 192.

Figure 31: Robert Noireau, c. 1944. (Noireau, *Les Temps des Partisans*, opp. p. 110.) Page 193.

Figure 32: Maria and Fermin Vigié, Maria probably early 1920s, Fermin during the First World War, (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, p.33). Page 196.

Figure 33: Janine and her mother Maria, c. 1930, (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, p.29). Page 198.

Figure 34: René Andrieu (on the right) in conversation with the Communist artist and Resistant Jean Lurçat in Cahors, following its liberation in August 1944, (Noireau, *Les temps des Partisans*, opp. p. 262). Page 207.

Figure 35: Janine with Georges Cogniot, Bucharest, late 1940s, (Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde*, p. 220). Page 211.

Figure 36: René Andrieu, probably 1970s, (from the cover of Andrieu, René, *Un Rêve Fou?*). Page 215.

Figure 37: Château Lacquy, 2023, (Author's Photograph, 2023). Page 222.

Figure 38: 'Uncle Boris', at Lacquy, probably 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 232.

Figure 39: Françoise de Boissésou and her sister Gabrielle, circa 1918, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 235.

Figure 40: Château Sec, early 20th century, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 236.

Figure 41: The marriage of Françoise and Maurice de Boissésou, Château Sec, Marseilles, 1922, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 237.

Figure 42: Maurice de Boissésou at Saumur, 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 240.

Figure 43: Françoise de Boissésou at Saumur, with her sons Jean-Vianney and Paul to her left (Maurice does not seem to be pictured), mid-1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 241.

Figure 44: Gerard Naud, probably 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 243.

Figure 45: Françoise de Boissésou, probably 1930s, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 246.

Figure 46: Françoise de Boissésou, false identity card, 1943, (de Boissésou Family Archive). Page 247.

Figure 47: La Vie Quercynoise, first edition, 14 October 1944, (Noël Family Archive). Page 252.

Figure 48: Aimé Noël, First Communion, March 1927, (Noël Family Archive). Page 254.

Figure 49: Aimé with a priest, probably mid-1930s, (Noël Family Archive). Page 256.

Figure 50: Cover of Brochure of JOC Congress of July 1937, (*18 JUILLET 1937*, Paris, 1937). Page 258.

Figure 51: Aimé Noël in uniform, probably 1939, (Noël Family Archive). Page 261.

Figure 52: Sketch of Work in Germany, Aimé Noël, c. 1941, (Noël Family Archive). Page 262.

Figure 53: Aimé Noël, false identity card as German post office employee, August 1942, (Noël Family Archive). Page 264.

Bibliography

(A)

PRIMARY

SOURCES

(1) ARCHIVES

French Departmental Archives

Landes (for Françoise de Boisséson)

105 W 207 Villeneuve-de Marsan.

283 W 71 Actions de la Résistance.

Lot (for A Longer View)

1 W 73 Comité départemental de libération; procès-verbaux des réunions 1944-1948.

1 W 96 Médecins. Pharmaciens.

1 PER 14/31 *Le Journal du Lot.*

1 PER 39/5 *La Défense (La Croix du Lot).*

1 PER 52/2 *Le Travail.*

1 PER 68/4 *La Vie Quercynoise.*

Lot (for Marie-Antoinette Orcival)

5 M 10 Santé publique et hygiène, 1921-1941.

Lot (for Yvonne Wagner)

1 W 167 Épurations civiles.

1 W 187 Affaire Bories.

1 W 189 Frayssinet-le-Gélat.

1109 W 11 Épuration civile.

1109 W 1011 Justice, 1953-1959; Affaire Bories.

1 PER 67 *Notre Quercy.*

1 PER 68/1 *La Vie Quercynoise.*

PER 13 Bulletin officiel de l'instruction primaire dans le département du Lot.

99 J 48 *Notre Quercy.*

1109 W 1108 Épuration civile.

96 J 29 '50ème anniversaire de la libération du Lot'
(brochure).

Lot (for Étienne Verlhac and Madeleine Tavernier)

1109 W 1108 Tribunal de grand instance de Cahors.

1180 W 9 Épuration, activités, arrestations, exécutions: listes,
rapports, correspondance, (1944-1946).

1 W 73 Comité départemental de libération; procès-verbaux des
réunions, 1944-1948.

1 W 87 Situation dans le département après la Libération, 1944-
1949.

1 W 167 Épuration civile: enquêtes sur des personnes suspectes.

1 W 171 Épuration civile: procès-verbaux.

1 W 182 Répression de faits de collaboration, attitude
antinationale, ayant fait l'objet d'internement ou
d'assignation à la résidence.

1 W 195 Épuration, miliciens et collaborateurs.

1 W 249 Médailles

1 W 976 Épuration Civile et Administrative.

1180 W 9 Juifs, maquis, épuration.

1 PER 64 *Liberté*.

1 PER 66/1 *Notre Quercy*.

1 PER 67/1 *Le Lot résistant, and Liberté*.

4 M 133 Fonds Mirouse.

J 2539 Fonds Mirouse.

Fonds Verlhac (in Lot Departmental Archives)

96 J 8 Papiers personnels, 1887-1951.

96 J 9 Photos, 1912-1947.

96 J 10 Cartes individuelles, 1944-1949.

- 96 J 11 Service militaire, 1916-1927.
- 96 J 13 Reconnaissances de participation à la Résistance pour le couple, 1944-1953.
- 96 J 14 Correspondance de la famille, 1915-1950.
- 96 J 15 Obsèques, 1936-1953.
- 96 J 18 Gestion, 1944-1947.
- 96 J 19 Comité Départemental de Libération; Comité d'Épuration.
- 96 J 22 Fonctions et élections politiques, 1940-6.
- 96 J 24 Discours et notes politiques, 1946-1948.
- 96 J 27 Correspondance, 1944-1946.
- 96 J 30 Cartes des adhérents.
- 96 J 31 Cahiers des statuts, 1904-1925.

Lot (for Jacques Chapou)

- 1 W 249 Médailles.
- 74 J 30 Témoignage Henri Vaysettes.

Lot (for Janine Andrieu)

- 74 J 84 Autour des conditions de l'épuration à Cahors et dans le Lot.

Lot (for Aimé Noël)

- 1 68/1 *La Vie Quercynoise*.

Lot-et-Garonne (for Étienne Verlhac and Madeleine Tavernier)

- 1741 W 34 Cour de Justice de Lot-et-Garonne.
- 1741 W 42 Dossiers des Cours Martiales.

Pyénées-Atlantiques (for Françoise de Boisséson)

34 W 4, 5, 46, 47, 55, 56, 63 Comités de Libération.

Tarn-et-Garonne (for Marie-Antoinette Orcival)

1188 W 65 Événements de Montpezat-de Quercy, 1944.

Resistance and Deportation museums.

Cahors: Musée de la Résistance, de la Déportation et de la Libération du Lot, Cahors. (MRDC).

For Yvonne Wagner:

REP 10 001 Gardes Mobiles de Réserve.

REP 17 014 Étienne Verlhac.

For Étienne Verlhac:

COM2 004 Étienne Verlhac.

Family Archives

Orcival Family Archive: correspondence; photographs.

Raymond Massip Archive: texts of speeches.

Wagner-Bories Family Archive: letters, photographs, miscellaneous papers.

Chapou Family Archive: letters, photographs, miscellaneous papers.

Noël Family Archive: letters, photographs, miscellaneous papers.

de Boisséson Family: *Souvenirs* the unpublished memoir of Jean-Vianney de Boisséson, (1999); correspondence; photographs.

(2) PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

Books

Andrieu, Janine, *La Joconde dans le maquis, récit* (Paris, 2005)

Andrieu, René, *Du bonheur et rien d'autre* (Paris, 1975)

Andrieu, René, *Un Rêve Fou?* (Paris, 1996)

d'Aragon, Charles, *La Résistance sans héroïsme*, (Paris, 2001)

Aubrac, Lucie, *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse* (Paris, 1984)

de Beauvoir, Simone, *La Force de l'âge* (Paris, 1960)

de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex* (London, 1997)

de Beauvoir, Simone, *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome* (London, 1960)

de Beauvoir, Simone *Force of Circumstance, Vol. 1, After the War, 1944-1952* (New York, 1977, first published 1965)

Bloch, Marc, *Strange Defeat; a Statement of Evidence Written in 1940* (New York, 1968)

Boylesve, René, *La jeune fille bien élevée* (Paris, 1924)

Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth* (London, 1934)

Cogniot, Georges, *Partis pris; cinquante ans de l'humanisme réel* (Paris, 1976)

Duclos, Jacques (ed.), *Maquis de Corrèze, 150 combattants et témoins* (Paris, 1975)

Ernaux, Annie, *Les années* (Paris, 2008)

Fourcade, Marie-Madeleine, *L'Arche de Noé, réseau 'Alliance'* (Paris, 1968)

Frenay, Henri, *The Night Will End*, (London, 1977; originally published as *La Nuit finira* (Paris, 1973))

Frenkel, Françoise, *No Place to Lay One's Head* (London, 2015)

Gaulle, Geneviève de, *La Traversée de la nuit* (Paris, 1998)

Groussard, Colonel, et Loustau-Lacau, Georges, *Consuls, prenez garde!* (Paris, 1952)

Guéhenno, Annie, *L'Épreuve* (Paris, 1968)

Guéhenno, Jean, *Diary of the Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2016)

Guiral, Suzanne, 44.694. *F. De Saint-Michel à Ravensbrück* (Fleurey-sur-Ouche, 1946)

Humbert, Agnès, *Résistance; Memoirs of Occupied France* (London, 2008 originally published as *Notre Guerre* in 1946)

Léger, Ennat, *Connaissez-vous la cuisine de la Gestapo?* (city of publication not clear; published by MB Composition, 1983)

Loustaunau-Lacau, Georges, *Mémoires d'un Français rebelle* (Paris, 1948)

Marcenac, Jean, *Je n'ai pas perdu mon temps* (Paris, 1982)

Massie, Allan, *A Question of Loyalties* (London, 1989)

Millar, George, *Maquis; the French Resistance at War*, (London, 2003)

Neave, Airey, *Little Cyclone* (London, 1954)

Noireau, Robert, *Les temps des partisans* (Paris, 1978)

Ouzoulias, Albert, *Les fils de la nuit* (Paris, 1975)

Peyrouton, Marcel, *Du Service Public à la prison commune, Souvenirs, Tunis-Rabat-Buenos Aires-Vichy-Alger-Fresnes* (Paris, 1950)

Pyrénées, Côte d'Argent - Guide Michelin Régional 1930-31 (Weissenbrück, 1930)

Renouard, Jean-Pierre, *Un Uniforme Rayé d'Enfer* (Paris, 1993)

Teissier du Cros, Janet, *Divided Loyalties; A Scotswoman in Occupied France* (London, 1962)

Thamier, Henri, *Le Rouge et Le Coeur* (Cahors, 1988)

Tillon, Germaine, *Ravensbrück* (Paris, 1973 and 1988).

Verdier, Gilbert, *Ma Résistance* (Paris, 2003)

Journals, Newspapers and Magazines

Bureau, Paul, 'Honneur aux mères fécondes', *Pour La Vie* (May 1920)

'Corrèze: des fouilles pour exhumer des corps des soldats allemands tués en 1944,' *Le Point* (16 Aug. 2023)

Jeunesse Ouvrière, 1937

Narquet, Louis, 'La Française de demain d'après sa psychologie de guerre', *Revue Bleue* 19-26 (Oct. 1918)

'Soldats allemands exécutés en 1944: les corps introuvables, les recherches vont se poursuivre.', *TFI Info* (24 Aug. 2023)

Poetry and Novels

Aragon, Louis, *La Diane Française* (Paris, 1944)

'Cantarnal, Pierre', *Conquête de la Liberté* (Aurillac, undated [1944 or 1945])

Leduc, Violette, *La Bâtarde* (Paris, 1964)

Mondiano, Patrick, *La Place de l'Étoile* (London, 2015)

Margueritte, Victor, *La Garçonne* (Paris, 2016; first published 1922)

Némirovsky, Irène, *Suite Française* (London 2006)

Proust, Marcel, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris, 1913-1927)

Signol, Christian, *Marie des Brebis* (Paris, 1989)

Sites Visited and Ceremonies Attended

Memorials, monuments and ceremonies in connection with deportation, reprisals and liberation, including the ceremonies at Montpezat-de-Quercy on 8 June 2019, 8 May 2020 and 8 May 2021; at Perches on 6 June 2021; and at Frayssinet-le-Gélat on 21 May 2019 and 21 May 2021.

(3) ELECTRONIC PRIMARY SOURCES

Films

L'Armée des Ombres, dir. Jean-Pierre Melville (1969)
Au Revoir Les Enfants, dir. Louis Malle (1987)
Le Chagrin et La Pitié, dir. Marcel Ophuls (1969)
Confidences, dir. Christian Salès (interview with Lucie Aubrac) (2006)
Lacome Lucien, dir. Louis Malle (1974)
A Self-Made Hero, dir. Jacques Audiard (1995)
Les tricheurs, dir. Marcel Carné (1958)
La Vie de Château, dir. Jean-Paul Rappeneau (1965)

Television

Résistance, (Series ; Franck, Dan, 2014)

(4) INTERVIEWS

Oral History Interviews (all conducted by Richard Lesmoir-Gordon)

Interviews with Witnesses, Descendants, and Family Friends

For Marie-Antoinette Orcival:

M. Jean-Hugues de Font-Réaulx (b. 1930) interviewed at Montpezat de Quercy on 22 May 2019.

M. Lothar Jaross, (b. 1950) interviewed at Montpezat-de-Quercy on 5 June 2021.

M. Bernard Longuet (b. 1949) interviewed at St. Paul de Loubressac on 5 December 2020.

M. Raymond Massip (b. circa 1935) interviewed at Montpezat de Quercy on 12 August 20, 19 August 20, and 10 December 2020.

M. Bernard Méravilles (b. 1943) interviewed at Perches on 11 May 2021.

Mme Madeleine Moureau, (b. circa 1945), interviewed at St. Paul de Loubressac, 29. May 2022.

Gen. José-Marie Orcival (b. 14.7.43) interviewed at St. Paul de Loubressac and Toulouse, on 28 August 2018, 2 September 2018, 28 September 2018, and 20 November 2020.

Mme. Olga Théron (b. 1941) interviewed at Montpezat-de-Quercy 6 December 2023.

M. Jaques Théron (b. circa 1934) interviewed at Montpezat de Quercy on 11 April 2018, and 6 December 2023.

Mme. Paulette Vincent (b. 1937) interviewed at Perches on 11 May 2021.

Mme. Martine Wolff (b. circa 1960) interviewed at Gandoules, Montpezat de Quercy on 12 August 2020.

For Yvonne Wagner :

M. Daniel Sourt (b. 1954) interviewed at Frayssinet-le-Gélat on 7 January 2019, 11 February 2019, 21 May 2019, 7 December 2019, 5 December 2020, and 9 February 2021.

M. Jacques Verlhac, (b. 1943) interviewed at Frayssinet-le-Gélat on 21 May 2022.

M. Gilles Wagner (b. 1964), interviewed at St. Paul de Looubressac on 27 December 2022.

M. Philippe Wagner, (b. 1966) interviewed at St. Paul de Lobressac on 27 December 2022, 12 April 2023, 30 April 2023, 21 May 2023, and 14 August 2023.

For Françoise de Boisséson :

Gilles de Boisséson (b. 1956) interviewed at Lacquy on 7-8 December 2019, 16-18 September 2020, 2-5 February 2021 and 3 July 2023.

For Aimé Noël:

Mme. Marguerite Noël, (b. 1932) interviewed at Figeac 31 May 2019, 4-6 August 2022, 21-22 September 2022, 24 December 2022, 13 June 2023, and 5 December 2023.

Mme. Denise Peyrière (b. 1923) interviewed at Figeac on 22 September 2022.

M. Louis Roussilhes (dob n/a) interviewed at Figeac on 29 March 2019, 5 July 2019, 1 October 2020, and 22 September 2022.

Other Interviews

Interviews of Mme. Janine Andrieu with *La Dépêche du Midi*, published 28 May 2015 and with M. Jean-Luc Couderc and Élodie Mazel, September 2019. (Recording held by Musée de la Résistance et la Déportation, Cahors.)

Meetings With Professionals (on various dates)

M. Jean-Luc Couderc, Directeur, Musée de la Résistance
et la Déportation.

Cahors

M. Christophe Galinon, Archiviste de la Ville.
Figeac

Mme. Marie Llosa, Lot departmental archivist.
Cahors

Mme. Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, historian.
Cahors

(A) SECONDARY SOURCES

(1) BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, (Abingdon, 2016).

Agullo, Guillaume, *Forain* (Villemur-sur-Tarn, 2004)

Andrieu, Claire, 'Les résistantes, perspectives de recherche', *Le Mouvement social*, (Jul.-Sept. 1997, No.180, Pour Une Histoire Sociale de la Résistance), pp. 69-96

Andrieu, Claire, Bougeard, Christian, Douzou, Laurent, Frank, Robert, Guillon, Jean-Marie, Laborie, Pierre, Marcot, François, Mencherini, Robert, Peschanski, Denis, Sainclivier, Jacqueline Wolikow, Serge, « La réaction d'un collectif d'historiens au supplément publié le 9 juillet dans *Libération* : "Les Aubrac et les historiens : le débat". Déplorable leçon d'histoire », *Libération*, 25 July 1997.

Arnaud, Patrice, *Les STO, Histoire des Français requis en Allemagne nazie 1942-1945* (Paris, 2014)

Arnal, Oscar L., 'Towards a Lay Apostate of the Workers: Three Decades of Conflict for the French Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (1927-1956)', *Catholic Historical Review*, 73.2 (Apr. 1987), pp. 211-37

Auricoste, Françoise, *Histoire de FRAYSSINET-LE-GÉLAT* (Frayssinet-le-Gélat, 2017)

Azéma, Jean-Pierre, and Bédarida, François (eds.), *Le Regime de Vichy et les Français* (Paris, 1992)

Azéma, Jean-Pierre, and Bédarida, François, (eds.), *La France des Années Noires* (Paris, 2000)

Barcellini, Serge and Wieviorka, Annette, *Passant, souviens-toi: les Lieux de souvenir de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (Paris, 1995)

Bard, Christine, *Les filles de Marianne, Histoire des féminismes 1914-1940* (Paris, 1995)

Bard, Christine, *Les femmes dans la société française au 20^e siècle* (Paris, 2001)

Barton, Nimisha, *Reproductive Citizens. Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945*, (Ithaca, NY, 2020).

Bédarida, Renée, *Les catholiques dans la Guerre, 1939-1945* (Paris, 1998)

Berlière, Jean-Marc, *Polices des Temps Noirs, France 1939-1945* (Paris, 2018)

Bertin, Célia, *Femmes sous l'occupation* (Paris 1993)

Bertin-Maghit, Jean-Pierre, *Le cinéma français sous Vichy. Les films français de 1940 à 1944* (Paris, 1980)

Bonnet, Marie-Josèphe, *Violette Moriss* (Paris, 2011)

Borzeix, Jean-Marie, *One Day in France; Tragedy and Betrayal in an Occupied Village* (London, 2016)

'La bouche de la vérité? La recherche historique et les sources orales' in *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP*, Cahier No. 21, November 1992, (Paris, 1992).

Bourdel, Philippe, *L'Épuration Sauvage* (Paris, 2002)

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Masculine Domination* (Cambridge, 2001)

Bourke, Joanna, *Rape, A History from 1860 to the Present* (London, 2007)

Branche, Raphaëlle, *Papa, qu'as tu fait en Algérie? Enquête sur un silence familial* (Paris, 2020)

Branche, Raphaëlle, and Virgili, Fabrice (eds.), *Rape in Wartime*, (London, 2012)

Brewer, John, 'Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 7.1 (2010), pp. 87-109

Brossat, Alain, *Les Tondues: Un carnaval moche* (Paris, 1994)

Burrin, Philippe, *Living with Defeat; France Under the German Occupation, 1940-1944* (London, 1996)

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, 2007, first published 1990)

Butler, Judith, *Bodies That Matter, On the discursive limits of "sex"* (London, 2011, first published 1993)

Buton, Philippe, *Les lendemains qui déchantent; Le parti communiste à la Libération* (Paris, 1993)

Capdevila, Luc, Rouquet, François, Virgili, Fabrice, Voldman, Danièle, *Sexes, genre et guerres (France 1914-1945)* (Paris, 2010)

Cayrou, H.-F., *Journées Sanglantes de Montpezat-de-Quercy* (Montauban, undated)

Cazard, Georges, (with Metges, Marcel), *Capitaine Philippe; une histoire du maquis du Lot au travers de la biographie de J. J. Chapou* (Cahors, 1950)

Chaumont, Jean-Michel, *La concurrence des victimes; genocide, identité, reconnaissance* (Paris, 2010)

Cholvy, Gérard, and Hilaire, Yves-Marie, 'Le contraste des tempéraments régionaux', in eds. Cholvy, Gérard, and Hilaire, Yves-Marie, *Histoire Religieuse de la France Contemporaine*, Vol. 2, 1880-1930, (Toulouse, 1986).

Cobb, Matthew, *The Resistance: the French Fight against the Nazis* (New York, 2009)

Cobb, Richard, *Essays on France and French History* (Oxford, 1969)

Collins Weitz, Margaret, *Sisters in the Resistance; How Women Fought to Free France 1940-1945* (New York, 1995)

Conway, Martin, *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918-1945* (London, 1997)

Conway, Maartin, 'The End(s) of Memory; Memories of the Second World War in Belgium', *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*, Vol. XLII 2-3 (2012), pp. 170-87

Conway, Martin, *Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945-1968* (Princeton, NJ, 2020)

Conway, Martin, Lagrou, Pieter, and Rousso, Henri (eds.), *Europe's Postwar Periods, 1989, 1945, 1918, Writing History Backwards*, (London, 2019)

Coquart, Elizabeth, *La France des Glis: Histoire d'un amour déçu* (Caen, 2003)

Corbin, Alain, *Village of cannibals; Rage and Murder in France, 1870* (Cambridge, Ma, 1992)

Crémieux-Brilhac, Jean-Louis, *La France Libre* (Paris, 1996)

Curtis, Michael, *Verdict on Vichy, Power and Prejudice in the Vichy France Regime* (New York, 2002)

Dalisson, Rémi, 'La Propagande festive de Vichy : Mythes fondateurs, relecture nationaliste et contestation en France de 1940 à 1944', *Guerre mondiale et conflits contemporains : Revue d'histoire*, No. 207 (2002), pp. 5-35

Deacon, Valerie, *The Extreme Right in the French Resistance, Members of the Cagoule and the Corvignolles in the Second World War* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2016)

Deacon, Valerie, 'Fitting into the French Resistance: Marie-Madeleine Fourcade and Georges Loustau-Lacau at the Intersection of Politics and Gender', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 50, (No. 2), (Apr. 2015), pp. 259-73

Delporte, Christian, 'Presse de droite, presse des droites à la Libération', in Gilles Richard and Jacqueline Sainclivier (eds.), *La Recomposition des droites en France à la Libération*, (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), pp. 37-48

Descamps, Florence, *Archiver la mémoire, de l'histoire orale au patrimoine immatériel*, (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales [Paris], 2019)

Desprairies, Cécile, *Sous l'Oeil de l'Occupant; La France vue par l'Allemagne 1940-1944* (Paris, 2010)

Diamond, Hanna, *Women and the Second World War in France, 1939-1948; Choices and Constraints* (London, 1999)

Dombrowski, Nicole, *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent* (London, 1999)

Douzou, Laurent, 'La Résistance, une affaire d'hommes?', *Les Cahiers de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent*, no. 31, (Oct. 1995), pp. 11-24

Douzou, Laurent 'L'entrée en Résistance', in Antoine Prost (ed.), *La Résistance, une histoire sociale* (Paris, 1997), pp. 9-20

Douzou, Laurent, *La Résistance française: une histoire périlleuse* (Paris, 2005).

Douzou, Laurent, 'Jean-Pierre Vernant, Résistant', *Le Genre humain*, Vol. 45-46 (2006,), pp. 13-17

Douzou, Laurent, *Lucie Aubrac* (Paris, 2009)

Laura Lee Downs, 'And so we transform a people': Women's social action and the reconfiguration of politics on the right in France, 1934-1947', *Past & Present*, 2014-11, Vol.225 (225), p.187-225.

Dreyfus-Armand, Geneviève, *Septfonds 1939-1944; Dans l'Archipel des Camps Français* (Paris, 2019)

Duchen, Claire, *Feminism in France, From May '68 to Mitterrand* (London, 1986)

Duchen, Claire, *Women's Rights and Women's Loves in France 1944-1968* (London, 1994)

Faimberg, Haydee, *The Telescoping of Generation, Listening to the Narcissistic Link between Generations* (Hove, 2005)

Farmer, Sarah, *Martyred Village; Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley, CA, 1999)

Farmer, Sarah, 'Popular Justice in France; Bordeaux 1953', in István Deák, Jan T. Gross and Tony Judt (eds), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe; World War II and its aftermath* (Princeton, NJ, 2000)

Fauroux, Camille, *Produire la guerre, produire le genre : des Françaises au travail dans l'Allemagne nationale-socialiste (1940-1945)*, (Paris, 2020))

Les Femmes dans la Résistance, Actes du Colloque tenu à l'initiative de l'Union des Femmes Françaises, Paris - La Sorbonne, 22 et 23 novembre 1975 (Paris, 1977)

Finlay, Robert, 'The Refashioning of Martin Guerre', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 93 (3), (1988), pp. 553-71

Fishman, Sarah, *We Will Wait; Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven, CT, 1991)

Fishman, Sarah, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution, Gender and Family Life in Postwar France* (Oxford, 2017)

Fogg, Shannon, 'Refugees and Indifference: The Effects of Shortages on Attitudes Towards Jews in France's Limousin Region During World War II', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 1, (Spring 2007).

Fouilloux, Étienne, *Les chrétiens français entre crise et libération 1937-1947* (Paris, 1997)

Fourastié, Jean, *Les trentes glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*, (Paris, 2010, first published 1979)

French, Phillip, *Malle on Malle*, (London, 1993)

Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, (London, 2010, first published 1963)

Friedman, Ina R., 'The Red Orchestra and Cato Bontjes van Beek' in John J. Michalczyk (ed.), *Confront! Resistance in Nazi Germany* (Lausanne, 2004), pp. 151-62

Gellately, Robert and Fitzpatrick, Sheila (eds.), *Accusatory Practices; Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989* (Chicago, IL, 1999)

Georges, Bernard & Tintant, Denise, *Léon Jouhaux: cinquante ans de syndicalisme* (Paris, 1964)

Gildea, Robert, *The Past in French History* (New Haven, CT, 1994)

Gildea, Robert, *Marianne in Chains; In Search of the German Occupation of France 1940-45* (London, 2002)

Gildea, Robert, *France since 1945* (Oxford, 2002)

Gildea, Robert, 'Resistance, Reprisals and Community in Occupied France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 13 (2003), pp. 163-85

Gildea, Robert, 'The Long March of Oral History', *Oral History*, vol. 38, no. 1, (Spring 2010), pp. 68-80.

Gildea, Robert, *Fighters in the Shadows; a New History of the French Resistance* (London, 2015)

Gildea, Robert, and Simonin, Anne (eds.), *Writing Contemporary History*, (London, 2008)

Gildea, Robert, Wieviorka, Olivier, and Warring, Anette (eds.), *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini; Daily Life in Occupied Europe* (London, 2006)

Ginzburg, Carlo, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, MD, 1989)

Gilzmer, Mechthild, Levisse-Touzé, Christine, and Martens, Stefan (eds.), *Les femmes dans la Résistance en France*, (Paris, 2003)

Grenard, Fabrice, *Tulle; enquête sur un massacre 9 juin 1944* (Paris, 2014)

Gross, Jan T., *Neighbors, The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland, 1941* (Princeton, NJ, 2003)

Halbwachs, Maurice, *La Mémoire collective*, (Paris, 1950).

Halimi, André, *La Délation sous l'Occupation* (Paris, 2003)

Halls, W.D., *Politics, Society and Christianity in Vichy France* (London, 1995)

Halls, W.D., *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford, 1981)

Harouel-Bureloup, Véronique, *Histoire de la Croix-Rouge* (Paris, 1999)

Hastings, Max, *Das Reich; the March of the 2nd SS Panzer Division Through France* (New York, 1981)

Hawthorne, Melanie, and Goslan, Richard J. (eds.), *Gender and Fascism in Modern France* (Hanover, NH, 1997)

Helm, Sarah, *Ravensbrück, Life and Death in Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (New York, 2015)

Héritier, Françoise, *Masculin / Féminin, La pensée de la différence* (Paris, 2012)

Higonnet, Margaret R., Jenson, Jane, Michel, Sonya, and Collins Weitz, Margaret (eds.), *Behind the Lines, Gender and the Two World Wars*, (New Haven, CT, 1987)

Histoire des femmes en occident vol. V *le xx siècle*, eds. Georges Duby and Michelle Pierrot (Paris, 1992)

Histoire du Quercy, ed. Jean Lartigaut, (Paris, 1993)

Histoire de la vie privée, Vol. 5, De la Première Guerre mondiale à nos jours, eds. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Paris, 1999)

Horn, Gerd-Rainer, *The Moment of Liberation in Western Europe: Power Struggles and Rebellions, 1943-1948* (Oxford, 2020)

Horne, Alistair, *A Savage War of Peace, Algeria 1954-1962*, (New York, NY, 2006)

Hussey, Andrew, *The French Intifada, The Long War Between France and its Arabs* (Cambridge, 2014)

Ingram, Norman, *The War Guilt Problem and the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme 1914-1944* (Oxford, 1999)

Jackson, Julian, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001)

Jean, Raymond, and Gallant, Mavis, *The Affair of Gabrielle Russier* (London, 1973)

Jobs, Richard Ivan, *Riding the New Wave, Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford, CA, 2007)

Joutard, Philippe, *La légende des Camisards* (Paris, 1977)

Judt, Tony, *Past Imperfect, French Intellectuals 1944-1956* (Berkeley, CA, 1992)

Judt, Tony, *Postwar, a History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2010)

Karakasidou, Anastasia, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago, IL, 1997)

Kedward, H.R. (sometimes Rod), *Resistance in Vichy France; A Study of Ideas and Motivations in the Southern Zone 1940-1942* (Oxford, 1978)

Kedward, H.R., 'The Maquis and the Culture of the Outlaw', in H.R. Kedward and Roger Austin (eds.), *Vichy France and the Resistance Culture and Ideology* (London, 1985), pp. 232-51

- Kedward, H.R., *In Search of the Maquis; Rural Resistance in Southern France 1942-1944* (Oxford, 1993)
- Kedward, H.R., *The French Resistance and its Legacy* (London, 2022)
- Kedward, H.R., and Wood, Nancy (eds.), *The Liberation of France; Image and Event* (London 1995)
- Kochanski, Halik, *Resistance, the Underground War in Europe, 1939-45* (London, 2022)
- Koreman, Megan, *The Expectation of Justice, France 1944-1946* (Durham. NC, 1999)
- Laborie, Pierre, *Résistants, Vichyssois et autres, l'évolution de l'opinion et des comportements dans le Lot de 1939 à 1944* (Paris, 1980)
- Laborie, Pierre, 'Sur J.-J. Chapou et sa mort: un essai de bilan', *Quercy-Recherche*, No. 59-60 (Sept.-Déc. 1984), pp. 4-22
- Laborie, Pierre, *L'Opinion publique sous Vichy* (Paris, 1990)
- Laborie, Pierre, *Les Français des années troubles* (Bilbao, 2001)
- Laborie, Pierre, *Le chagrin et le venin; La France sous l'Occupation; mémoire et idées reçues* (Montrouge, 2011)
- Laborie, Pierre, *Penser l'événement, 1940-1945* (Paris, 2019)
- Laborie, Pierre and Marcot, François (eds.), *Les comportements collectifs en France et dans l'Europe allemande; historiographie, normes, prismes, 1940-1945*, (Rennes, 2015)
- Lacan, Gilbert, *Figeac en Quercy sous la terreur allemande* (Brussels, 1945)
- Lee, Daniel, *Pétain's Jewish children: French Jewish youth and the Vichy regime, 1940-1942*, (Oxford, 2014).
- Lee, Daniel, 'The Chantiers de la Jeunesse, General de la Porte du Theil, and the Myth of the Rescue of Jews in Vichy France', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Feb. 2015), pp. 139-70
- Lee, Daniel, *The SS Officer's Armchair, Uncovering the Hidden Life of a Nazi* (London, 2020)
- Letamendia, Pierre, *Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire; histoire d'un grand parti français* (Paris, 1995)
- Levaufre, Christian, *Mont-de-Marsan et autres lieux, un jour de mars 1944*, (Archives départementales des Landes, undated)

Lilly, J. Robert, *La Face cachée des GIs: les viols commis par des soldats américains en France, en Angleterre et en Allemagne pendant la seconde guerre mondiale (1942-1945)* (Paris, 2003)

Mandron, Guy, *Un Village Landais dans la tourmente; la Résistance à Villeneuve-de-Marsan* (place of publication not clear, undated)

Marchand, Olivier, and Thélot, Claude, *Deux siècles de travail en France, population active et structure sociale, durée et productivité du travail*, (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (Paris, 2019)

Mauge, Annelise, *L'Identité Masculine en Crise au Tournant du Siècle* (Paris, 1987)

Mayeur, Jean-Marie, *Des Partis catholiques à la Démocratie chrétienne* (Paris, 1980)

McMillan, James F., 'France', in Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1945* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 35-52

Mendes, Roger, *La Résistance en Quercy* (Paris, undated)

Michel, Henri, *Histoire de la Résistance en France* (Paris, 1950)

Millet, Kate, *Sexual Politics* (New York, 2016, first published 1969)

Moorhead, Caroline, *Village of Secrets; Defying the Nazis in Vichy France* (London, 2014)

Muel-Dreyfuss, Francine, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin* (Paris, 1996)

Nora, Pierre, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris, 1986)

Novick, Peter, *The Resistance Versus Vichy; The Purge of Collaborators in Liberated France* (London, 1968)

Olivet, Louis, and Aribaud, André, *La Mémoire: Heurs et malheurs; Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur*, Comité Départemental du Prix de la Résistance et de la Déportation du Tarn-et-Garonne (Montauban, 2008)

Olson, Lynn, *Madame Fourcade's Secret War* (New York, 2019).

Ott, Sandra, *Living with the Enemy; German Occupation, Collaboration and Justice in the Western Pyrenees, 1940-1948* (Cambridge, 2017)

Passerini, Luisa, *Autobiography of a Generation; Italy, 1968* (Middletown, CT, 1996)

- Paxson, Maggie, *The Plateau* (New York, 2019)
- Paxton, Robert O., *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (New York, 1975)
- Peniston-Bird, Corinna, and Vickers, Emma (eds.), *Gender and the Second World War* (London, 2017)
- Peyramaure, Michel, *La division maudite* (Paris 1987)
- Picard, Raymond, and Chaussade, Jean, *Ombres et Espérances en Quercy* (Cahors, 1999)
- Pineau, Frédéric, *La Croix-Rouge française, 150 ans d'histoire* (Paris, 2014)
- Pollard, Miranda, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilising Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago, IL, 1998)
- Pommiès, Jean-André, *Le Corps Franc Pommiès* (Paris, 2014)
- Portelli, Alessandro, *Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories, form and meaning in oral history* (New York, 1991)
- Prost, Antoine, *In the Wake of War, 'Les Anciens Combattants' and French Society 1914-1939* (London, 1992)
- Prost, Antoine (ed.), *La Résistance, une histoire sociale*, (Paris, 1997)
- Prost, Antoine, 'Frontières et espaces du privé' in Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, (eds.), *Histoire de la vie privée; 5, De la Première Guerre à nos jours* (Paris, 1999)
- 'Questions à l'histoire orale' in *Les Cahiers de l'IHTP*, Cahier no. 4, June 1987, (Paris, 1987).
- Rauch, Jr., R. William, *Politics in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy, 1932-1950* (The Hague, 1972)
- Reynolds, Sian, *France Between the Wars; Gender and Politics* (London, 1996)
- Richou, Françoise, 'Apprendre à combattre: l'engagement dans la Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (1927-1987)', *Le Mouvement social, (Jeunesses XXe Siècle)*, No. 168, (1994), pp. 51-82
- Rigoulet, Pierre, *Les Enfants de l'Épuration* (Paris, 1993)
- Rioux, Jean-Pierre, *The Fourth Republic* (Cambridge, 1987)
- Roberts, Mary Louise, *Civilization without Sexes; Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago, IL, 1994)

- Roberts, Mary Louise, *What Soldiers Do; Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago, IL, 2013)
- Ross, Kristin, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies, Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Ma, 1995)
- Rouquet, François, *L'Épuration dans l'administration française: agents de l'état et collaboration ordinaire*, (Centre Nationale de la recherche scientifique) (Paris, 1993)
- Rouquet, François and Virgili, Fabrice, *Les Françaises, le Français, et l'Épuration, 1940 à nos jours* (Paris, 2018)
- Rousso, Henri, *The Vichy Syndrome; History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Ma, 1991)
- Rousso, Henri, *Face au Passé, Essais sur la mémoire contemporaine* (Paris, 2016)
- Schlimm, Anette, *Regieren in Dörfern. Ländlichkeit, Staat und Selbstverwaltung, 1850-1940* (Cologne, 2023)
- Schwartz, Paula, 'Partisanes and Gender Politics in Vichy France', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 1, (Spring 1989), pp. 126-51.
- Schwartz, Paula, *Today's Sardines Are Not For Sale*, (Oxford, 2020).
- Scott, Joan, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec. 1986), pp. 1053-75
- Scott, Joan, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 2018)
- Sebba, Anna, *Les Parisiennes; How the Women of Paris Lived, Loved and Died in the 1940s* (London, 2016)
- Semelin, Jacques, *Unarmed Against Hitler; Civilian Resistance in Europe 1939-1943* (Westport, CT, 1993)
- Souaïdia, Habib, *La sale guerre, le témoignage d'un ancien officier des forces spéciales de l'armée algérienne* (Paris, 2012)
- Summerfield, Penny, *Histories of the Self; Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (London, 2019)
- Surkis, Judith, *Sexing the Citizen, Morality and Masculinity in France 1870-1920* (Ithaca, NY, 2006)
- Sweets, John F., *Choices in Vichy France; the French Under Nazi Occupation* (New York and Oxford, 1986)
- Thalmann, Rita, 'L'oubli des femmes dans l'historiographie de la Résistance', *Clio, Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, No. 1 (1995), pp. 21-35

Theweleit, Klaus, *Male Fantasies, I, Women, floods, bodies, history* (Cambridge, 1987)

Todorov, Tzvetan, *A French Tragedy; Scenes of Civil War, Summer 1944* (Hanover, NH, 1996)

Tumblety, Joan, *Remaking the Male Body: Masculinity and the uses of Physical Culture in Interwar and Vichy France* (Oxford, 2012)

Teodor, Mihaela, 'Cominform Propaganda Arm; For a Lasting Peace. For a People's Democracy', *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, (No. 14/2010), pp. 189-208

Ulam, Adam B., *Titoism and Cominform* (Cambridge, 1952)

Vaissié, Cécile, *Cahors et le Lot sous l'occupation* (Toulouse, 2016)

Veillon, Dominique, *Vivre et survivre en France, 1939-1947* (Paris, 1995)

Verdet, Anne, *La logique du non-consentement; Sa genèse, son affirmation sous l'Occupation* (Rennes, 2014)

Vince, Natalya, *The Algerian War, the Algerian Revolution* (London, 2020)

Vinen, Richard, *The Politics of French Business 1936-1945* (Cambridge, 1991)

Vinen, Richard, *Bourgeois Politics in France 1945-1951* (Cambridge, 1995)

Vinen, Richard, *A History in Fragments, Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2000)

Vinen, Richard, *The Unfree French; Life under the Occupation* (London, 2007)

Virgili, Fabrice, *La France 'virile'; des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris, 2000)

Warner, Marina, *Alone of All Her Sex; the Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Oxford, 1976)

Weber, Eugen *The Hollow Years* (London, 1995)

Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. (ed.), *Gender in History, Global Perspectives*, (Hoboken, NJ, 2011)

Wieviorka, Annette, *Déportation et génocide ; entre la mémoire et l'oubli* (Paris, 1992)

Wieviorka, Olivier, *Nous entrerons dans la carrière ; de la Résistance à l'exercice du pouvoir* (Paris, 1994)

Wieviorka, Olivier, 'La presse', in H. Buton and J.M. Guillon (eds.), *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération* (Paris, 1994), pp. 140-57

Wieviorka, Olivier, *Histoire de la Résistance, 1940-1945* (Paris, 2013 ; and Cambridge, Ma, 2016, as *The French Resistance*)

Williams, Philip M., *Crisis and Compromise; Politics in the Fourth Republic* (London, 1964)

Winock, Michel, *Histoire Politique de la Revue 'Esprit'* (Paris, 1975)

Wylie, Laurence, *Village in the Vaucluse*, (Cambridge, Ma, 1974)

(2) UNPUBLISHED THESES AND OTHER UNPUBLISHED WORKS

Theses

Chabert, Sarah, 'Jean-Jacques Chapou, 'créateur et animateur du maquis du Lot', (Masters' thesis in two parts, 1 and 2, supervised by Frédéric Monier, University of Avignon (copy provided by Sarah Chabert to Richard Lesmoir-Gordon)

Issolan, Anne, 'La Condition des femmes dans la société française, 1914-1945', (Masters' Thesis supervised by Pierre Laborie, University of Toulouse, 1996), (Archives Départementales du Lot, BR1 art. 466)

Spina, Raphaël, 'La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire (1940-1945)' (Doctoral thesis, École normale supérieure, Cachan, 2012, consulted online)

Other Unpublished Works

de Boissésou, Gilles, *Memorandum*, (addressed to the author; de Boissésou family archive, 23.8.21)

de Boissésou, Jean-Vianney, *Souvenirs de ma jeunesse*, (de Boissésou family archive, copy provided by the family to the author, 1999)

Frayssinet-le-Gélat, Dimanche 21 mai 1944, 'Pour Mémoire', ed. Daniel Sourt, (Frayssinet-le-Gélat, 2011)

Spina, Rafaël, *La France et les Français devant le service du travail obligatoire (1940-1945)*, École normale supérieure de Cachan (Cachan, 2012)

(3) WEBSITES

Marie des Brebis, (annual village show, Gandoules, Tarn-et-Garonne). See www.gandoules.fr. Last accessed : 31.10.23.

On camps in Germany (Marie-Antoinette Orcival), see <https://www.gedenkstaetten-hamburg.de/en/> Last accessed 25.8.23.

On Tavernier family in aftermath of Cajarc occupation, see <http://manusagoma77.free.fr/Robert-Decosse/page15.htm> Last accessed 21.1.23.

On northern Lot châteaux in reference to Janine Andrieu, see http://www.lot.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/catalogue_louvre-sur-lot_20-03-2019.pdf Last accessed 14.4.23.
