ABSTRACT

“I WAS NOT POLITICAL”:
THE GENDERING OF PATRIOTISM AND COLLABORATION DURING WORLD WAR II

by Miranda Carrell

This paper examines the experiences of French people during World War II and the German occupation to discover whether the men and women had gendered constructs on what constituted patriotism and collaboration. The main sources used are memoirs authored by both men and women and demonstrates that the war and Occupation were gendered experiences. This paper argues that masculine patriotism continued to be directed towards militarism and service to the State and feminine patriotism emphasized their subservience to traditional gender roles. Despite the changes to their daily lives, both men and women continued to have distinctly gendered experiences. The definitions of collaboration changed after the Liberation and both men and women were punished differently. The conclusions of this paper demonstrate the difficulty in defining patriotism and collaboration as mutually exclusive categories.
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THE GENDERING OF PATRIOTISM AND COLLABORATION DURING WORLD WAR II

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Miami University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

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2009

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"We have slept with Germany, and the memory will remain sweet to us." - Robert Brasillach

Introduction: Order Was Preserved

It was, as historian Marc Bloch would later lament, a peculiar defeat for the French. From the moment the German tanks stormed through the Ardennes in May 1940, it took only six weeks for the German blitzkrieg to scatter the French army, a humiliating defeat that shocked French citizens deeply. The leaders of France—Paul Reynaud and Albert Lebrun—had wanted to escape to North Africa and continue the war in exile, but Marshal Philippe Pétain argued that it was the responsibility of the government to share in the misfortunes of its people. In the end, Reynaud and Lebrun agreed with the National Assembly to surrender the country to a new ruler, Marshal Pétain, and flee for the South. At the end of those chaotic few weeks in which millions of French (mainly women and children) left their homes for the lives of refugees to the southern cities, Pétain announced on the radio that he was giving the French the gift of his person and that they should acquiescence to an armistice. General Charles de Gaulle followed that address a day later on the BBC with one of his own, imploring the French not to surrender. Very few heard the latter address and the atmosphere of defeat and its consequences filled the heads of a majority of citizens.

The armistice was a signal to the people that the chaos had ended, and for most, that was enough. The Third Republic was collapsing in 1940 at the hands of the Germans, the very same engine that had brought about its birth in 1870. On 22 June, Pétain formally surrendered to Germany. In numerous memoirs of the war, the defeat is greeted with intense shock. Marc Bloch, himself a soldier and longtime patriot of France, set out to examine the causes of the defeat: “They whispered—I have heard them—that Hitler was not nearly so black as he was painted; that the nation would save itself a great deal of suffering by opening its gates to the enemy, instead of setting itself to oppose invasion by force of arms. How, I wonder, do these noble apostles feel to-day in that occupied zone which lies in starvation beneath the jack-boot of tyranny?”

Numerous historians have examined the circumstances surrounding the defeat. A

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common thread attributes it to an aversion to the disruptive forces of war, which many French citizens still remembered from over twenty years before. The collective French memory went even further still: the defeat brought to mind the loss of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, when Emperor Napoleon III was sent into exile following his capture at the Battle of Sedan. The French experience with war in relatively recent history established an aversion to intense social disruption and the destructive forces that could be unleashed by war. But how did this historical development affect how the French defined their patriotism?

Marc Bloch wondered, “most of us can say with some justice that we were good workmen. Is it equally true to say we were good citizens?” And thus he articulates what would come to be the dominant question regarding the French experience between 1940 and 1945, whether the only true patriots were those who resisted the Nazis. There is a distinction that becomes evident in this paper between patriotism being defined as active resistance, and “good citizenship,” which implies passive obeisance to the French national state. But for Bloch, his views on citizenship, coupled with the context of his involvement in Resistance activities, conveys his perception that resistance was the only correct avenue for the French people to display citizenship. The subversive actions of the French Resistance that were aimed at undermining Vichy and Nazi control over France during World War II have been lauded as the singular true expression of patriotism, inflating the idea that France was “a nation of resisters.”

The assumption that only those who were a part of a resistance group saw themselves as patriots—or as being good citizens—creates a limited conception of what the word “patriotism” means, as well as “collaboration”. This type of binary classification tends to be accepted at face-value, and this is problematic for historians because it inhibits a fair examination of the actions and expressions of the rest of French society, especially those who were branded as collaborators after the Liberation in 1944. It does not reveal the extent of the debate surrounding who was a “good citizen”. We must remember that at the time of the Montoire signing, ‘kollaboration’ did not carry the context of high treason that it did by the end of the Occupation. For the French, the meaning of their everyday actions under Vichy rule or under Nazi occupation lies mainly in the discourse supplied by Marshal Pétain, his cabinet, and his ideologists.

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2 Ibid, 173. 
The origin of collaboration as it was understood during WWII in France came from Pétain himself. He was anxious to create a more positive outcome for his country in the post-defeat terms, and at the signing of the armistice agreement at Montoire on 24 October 1940, Pétain brought up “kollaboration” between the two countries. Several days later, Pétain announced to the French people that “une collaboration a été envisagée entre nos deux pays. J’en ai accepté le principe.” From its conception, many French would have understood collaboration as an arrangement between the governments of France and Germany that entailed their agreement to the terms of the defeat (i.e. the paying of occupation costs to Germany). For that reason, the perception of their actions while going about their everyday lives alongside their occupiers, and alongside the government that supported that occupation, without taking drastic actions, was not seen as a form of collaboration. This paper sets out to examine the various experiences of French citizens during the Occupation and how notions of patriotism and collaboration were constructed in terms of who was a “good citizen” of France.

Much of the historical treatment of collaboration and resistance emphasizes political analysis and attempts to classify the 96% of the French population who were neither active collaborators nor active resisters. Historian H.R. Kedward argues: “The understanding that the French people had of the occupation went through three stages. First, it was the consequence of French defeat and French failures; second, it was the heavy presence of the Germans with all their national characteristics; and third, it was an ideological domination by a tyrannical Nazism.” Not everybody proceeded through these stages—some remained at stages one or two, and some started at stage three. This frames the integral character of wartime France: that the people were divided in their support or acquiescence of the occupation. Because the French people had different levels of contact with the Occupation in their everyday lives, they reacted in different ways and at different times. The differences in condemnation and support of the Occupation are illustrated by the analysis of everyday life in occupied France, particularly in comparison to Britain. Many of the popular social activities from before the war such as cafes, nightclubs,

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horse-racing, and the producing and viewing of films continued after the armistice in 1940.\(^7\) While this has been interpreted by many French people as a form of resistance to the occupation, it has also provoked accusations of indifference towards the German presence in France. Kedward points out that Britain, which felt the effects of the war severely during the bombings of their cities, continued particular activities such as delivering milk bottles to bombed houses, and nobody accused them of indifference to the wartime reality because “there is a consensus on the meaning of such acts.”\(^8\) The British viewed the continuity of such actions as a form of resistance and survival in the face of mass deaths and widespread destruction. The French did not experience the same violence, and this prevented them from forming broad opposition to the armistice and occupation; hence, they could not define the continuity of their actions as defiance. Robert Paxton reinforces this, arguing that “to use chaos itself as the ultimate weapon, a people must be stripped of the comforts of property and the solace of routine irrevocably enough to have renounced them, but not quite to the point of passivity.”\(^9\) Many French people feared the chaos of war, and many found it easy at first to accept the terms of the defeat if it could help them maintain order. The German Occupational authorities were very invested in keeping the French pacified in order to avoid devoting many resources to its occupation. The desire to maintain order extended to the French government. Fearing that antagonist forces within France would take advantage of the chaos of defeat and attempt to rebel, Prime Minister Reynaud told the Paris police, as he fled to the south, to make sure there was “no communist coup, so that order would be preserved.”\(^10\) The roots of this fear of social disruption lie in historical experience. There had been attempts to radically alter French society post-war several times in the past century and each had been violently repressed: it happened in 1830, 1848, 1871, 1917, 1936, and many did not want to see what would happen after 1940.

For most French, their actions were often a form of nationalism and operated within the framework of what constituted patriotism. Historians have also brought to the forefront the question of whether patriotism and collaboration were mutually exclusive. Patriotism is a multifarious concept since both those who actively resisted and those who, whether actively or

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\(^7\) Ibid, 13.
\(^8\) Ibid, 14.
passively, helped Vichy and the Nazis saw themselves as patriots. For example, the government officials, both in Vichy and in the Occupied zone, who pursued the policy of collaboration and were aware that they were collaborators (only without the connotation it holds today) believed that they were doing what was best for France. What actually constituted patriotism and what constituted collaboration have since been contentious arguments.

Not only are “patriotism” and “collaboration” difficult to define as distinct categories, I believe that they also require gendered definitions. The litmus test against which women were judged as patriots and/or collaborators was different than that for men. Historians such as Robert Paxton, John Sweets, and H.R. Kedward, whose works are considered primary treatments on France from 1939 to 1945, do not address gender. Paxton, for example, focuses on the top-down processes—the politics and the statesmen—who dominated the policies of collaboration during those years. However, he does not address the political and civics sphere in gendered terms—the people who were significant to his research were men, but his conclusions about wartime France were not cast as a specifically male experience. John Sweets comes to different conclusions about the nature of the French people’s collaboration based on his research in the area of Clermont-Ferrand, arguing that there was such a thing as active or passive collaboration. And yet despite the narrower scope of his research, Sweets does not question whether his conclusions were perhaps better suited to men, and whether women would require a different thesis argument. Much of this comes down to the perception of whether the personal was political.

After Liberation in 1944, both men and women insisted that their activities in militaristic organizations, state service, work, leisure time, and social groups were simply outpourings of nationalism or the performance of national duty—not collaboration. But they denied that their actions were collaborative only because the official definition of collaboration after the Liberation was political and negative. Yet, because of the contentious quality of defining collaboration, we can see much in the personal (daily lives and sex) that is indeed political—but this did not necessarily equate collaboration. When women’s experiences were mainly relegated to their daily lives, that their wartime experiences might represent something political in itself was precluded because of their lack of participation in the traditional political and civic processes. Historians have reached back into wartime France to bring women’s experiences to the forefront and attributed historical meaning to them. Fabrice Virgili argues that women’s
collaboration was made explicitly sexual, as many women became symbolic scapegoats for France’s collaboration with Germany after Liberation, despite the perception that collaboration was political where women stereotypically were not. As much as Virgili is a trailblazer in the historiography of female collaboration, his research is focused on the reprisals that targeted women after the Liberation. There must be a limit to applying his paradigms to France during the occupation years because a bias in interpretation must be assumed due to the intensive efforts of the French people to reconstruct the history of their recent experiences to fit in with the new myth of France as a nation of resisters.

In terms of the actual experience during Vichy and the Occupation, Hanna Diamond’s and Shannon L. Fogg’s extensive research have provided us with an expansive understanding of how women’s lives changed because of the war and the occupation, especially how the necessities of their daily lives made personal issues such as food, work, and sex political. Virgili, Diamond, and Fogg emphasize the “other” experience of the Occupation, one that mainly consisted of women. However, they do not explore how the difference in women’s experiences might make some of men’s experiences unique as well, nor do they make the connection between the politics of daily life and of women’s personal experiences, and what this meant for the construction of “patriotism” and “collaboration”. I intend to fill those gaps by examining the different constructions of patriotism and collaboration on gendered terms, not simply as the normative interpretation and the “other.” I also explore victimhood as a third pole between patriotism (good citizenship) and collaboration (bad citizenship) and the role motivation plays in how people perceived their own actions.

Of French society, Luce Irigaray comments that more emphasis is placed on male children because of their increased importance to the future of the state, and that in terms of describing society and history, “man is the universal placeholder.”¹¹ We see that, for example, with Robert Paxton’s work, which assumes the experiences of men at the state and political level can provide definitions for collaboration that can be applied to French people as a whole. Irigaray argues, rightly, that this makes the discourse of the state very sexed rather than neutral—citizen, worker, and soldier are often meant to be specifically masculine terms. I argue, as well, that in terms of

history and the way the WWII French experience is disseminated, the male experiences are often presented as a monolithic, linguistically gender-neutral history. Miranda Pollard posed the question of whether framing history to include women’s experiences would change how we saw the overall history of World War II France.\footnote{Miranda Pollard, “Whose Sorrow? Whose Pity? Whose Pleasure? Framing Women in Occupied France,” in \textit{Gender and Fascism in Modern France}, Melanie Hawthorne and Richard J. Goslan, eds. (Hanover: University Press, 1997), 143.} I think that while investigating this, it is also an entirely valid response to conversely analyze the “placeholder” version of WWII French history, which deals almost exclusively with men, in masculine terms, in order to see whether this changes how we see men’s experiences as well as women’s. By analyzing World War II French history through gender differences, we see that patriotism and collaboration, as well as punishment after Liberation were gendered experiences.

The personal is political where both men and women were involved. For men, there was continuity in masculine experiences during and after the war that allowed them to continue to express their patriotism through militarism and loyal service to the state. Nationalism and patriotism were at the root of all of those activities, whether they were labeled after Liberation as specifically “resistance” or “collaboration”. The daily experiences of women in terms of their work, food, and personal relationships created a definition of patriotism that was tied up in their feminine roles and a definition of collaboration that was linked to their gender. The power of the female experience lay in its potential to disrupt traditional society, as it threatened the stabilization of France after the armistice.

I chose to categorize my chapters around three particular themes: militarism (Ch.1), feminine roles (Ch. 2), and daily lives of men and women (Ch. 3). Chapter 1 focuses on men, and Chapter 2 on women, but I chose to compare men and women in Chapter 3 more directly in their daily lives. Both men and women worked and were affected by the Occupation in their day-to-day activities, but in different ways that can be attributed to gender differences. It is not that the opposite sex is absent in the first two chapters, merely that there is a strongly gendered experience in each one that necessitates a degree of separation. These themes emerged as a result of my utilization of memoirs as primary sources.
Reading through various memoirs from the Second World War, it becomes clear that there is a significant gender difference in the content that their authors felt fit to share with readers. On one hand, the men have a tendency to focus on their own personal experience and/or discuss the abstract notions of patriotism and the politics of the defeat and Occupation. Marc Bloch and Antoine de Saint Exupéry both served in the military, and Paul Baudouin served as first the Foreign Minister, then the Minister of Information during the early Vichy years. Women do not appear in these memoirs, simply because they did not have direct bearing on Marc Bloch’s experience in the Army as it attempted to hold off the German advance nor when it scattered to the winds after the Armistice was announced; they were not a part of Paul Baudouin’s discussions with other officials in the Vichy government, and they did not play a part in Saint Exupéry’s laments on French nationalism and patriotism.

The women, on the other hand, tend to include the daily lives of those around them—men and women. With the latter, it is easier to get a picture of what was going on in society, of the complexity of experiences under the Occupation. I included Irene Némirovsky as a primary source in this paper because even though her novel is technically a work of fiction, the circumstances surrounding it provide the same kind of glimpse into French society as several other female memoirs. Némirovsky wrote Suite Française after the chaos of the defeat and continued writing up until 1942, when she was arrested by the Nazis for being a Jew and sent to Auschwitz where she died. Her work suffers no post-Liberation bias, and its contents display a range of gray areas that existed in French society after the defeat. The combinations of those two traits make her work perhaps more truthful about France after 1940 than even some memoirs penned after Liberation. Suite Française pays little attention to the politics of the state level, and focuses rather on the personal lives of its characters. But simply because Némirovsky did not emphasize politics in her novel does not mean that her novel is not political, or that her descriptions of everyday life in the first few months after May 1940 are apolitical either. To overlook women authors’ everyday memoirs, to dismiss them as lacking political agency, “is to overlook precisely that which is historical and political about [their] work; it is to support the interpretation of women’s writings as limited to the realm of the personal.”13 What is political

about Némirovsky’s novel is the degree of sexual collaboration that is depicted as an uncomfortable reality during the Occupation.

This gendered focus is also referred to in different degrees in the other primary sources such as the memoirs of Madeleine Henrey, Lucie Aubrac, Marguerite Duras, and Madeleine Gex le Verrier. With the exception of Lucie Aubrac’s memoirs, all four of the female authors emphasized the lives of women and the utterly ambiguous experiences that characterized French life under the Vichy government and Nazi occupation. These grey areas are incredibly revealing and heavily impact our interpretation of patriotism and collaboration as gendered categories. Lucie Aubrac is an interesting exception that in some ways proves the rule. As a member of the Resistance, she focused a lot on what her relationships with the men involved—yet, her own role was traditionally feminine. However, she does break away from that feminine role, which allows us to infer a number of interesting conclusions about gender roles in both the Resistance and the rest of French society. The subsequent chapters will highlight the different effects that the defeat, armistice, Occupation, Vichy, and Liberation had on French men and women.

Gender differences very much defined life in France between 1940 and 1945, and this contributes to the contentious definitions of patriotism and collaboration. There is, despite the disruption of life during these years, continuity in gender roles, even when women left the domestic sphere to work in factories and to take over formerly male-oriented jobs. And there is continuity in masculine experiences during the war and afterwards that made the defeat and subsequent Occupation a gendered event for quite a number of men. What this paper will illustrate is the fact that historians cannot come up with generalized or blanket definitions for value-loaded words such as “patriotism” and collaboration” because to do so would leave out important factors such as how a variety of French people saw themselves. Attempting to create precise definitions would leave out perceptions of one’s own citizenship and the role that motivation played in whether French men and women saw themselves as good citizens. That is not to say that the French people had a clear idea of how to define those terms, it was a contentious issue among the French during the Occupation and especially after Liberation when the context of those words had changed.
Chapter 1: Militarism and the Masculine Identity

During the exodus from Paris in Irene Némirovsky’s *Suite Française*, young Hubert Pericand decides to abandon his mother and siblings to join the soldiers fighting the approaching German onslaught. His mother desperately tries to convince him to stay, telling him that this war was over and it was his duty to save himself for the next war, only to elicit his scornful thoughts: “Did they understand nothing at all? Life was like Shakespeare, noble and tragic, and they wanted to debase it. Women were inferior creatures; they didn’t know the meaning of heroism, glory, faith, the spirit of sacrifice.”14 Hubert idolizes the French soldiers and romanticizes the idea of suffering and sacrifice. To him, dying gloriously in battle to defend France is the ultimate attainment of manhood. His frustrated thoughts also demonstrate an attitude towards women’s patriotism; namely, that when it came to war women were not willing to do what was necessary and therefore they were incapable of true patriotism. Némirovsky detects in at least some men she observed, the belief that being in the military was the highest act of patriotism that a French person could perform, an act limited to men. However, the experience Hubert has during the “battle” of Moulins is anything but the masculine fantasy of warfare he had possessed: “At every moment he expected to see more troops appearing on the road to Saint-Pourçain. “We’re here, lads,” they’d shout, “don’t worry! We’ll beat them!”—or some other warlike cry. But no one came.”15 Instead of standing their ground and fighting to the death, the French soldiers Hubert was with scatter and go into hiding to evade the Germans who were beginning to approach the nearby villages and towns.

At the end of June 1940, 92,000 soldiers had been killed and a further 1.85 million had been taken as prisoner of war, most of those men who were leaving behind wives and children.16 This would have a significant impact on life back home in France and the ability of families to cope and survive. But what kind of impact did the defeat have on the masculine identities of French men? How did it define their experiences during the subsequent five years? Most importantly, what avenues were there left for French men to perform their patriotic duty as good citizens? There is a certain continuity of masculine experience, during the war and after the defeat, which

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15 Ibid, 90.
is grounded in militarism. Through Marc Bloch and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s memoirs we discover that the life of a soldier in May of 1940 shared two peculiar traits in common with the men who joined some type of militaristic organization during the occupation years: both were defined by the exclusion of groups of men from the core of society, and they relied on nationalism as an unifying force. Most importantly, both traits were present in militaristic organizations that have been labeled “collaborative” as well as those labeled as “resistance”.

Marc Bloch’s *Strange Defeat* contains numerous opinions on patriotism, even his own. In order to establish the validity of his opinions, he felt the need to demonstrate how he was himself a true Frenchman despite being by birth a Jew: “I need say no more in rebuttal of such a charge than that my great-grandfather was a serving soldier in 1793; that my father was one of the defenders of Strasbourg in 1870; that both my uncles chose to leave their native Alsace after its annexation by the Second Reich… I was born in France. I have drunk of the waters of her culture. I have made her past my own…and I have done my best, with others, to defend her interests.”  

His ancestors’ greatest claim to citizenship was their service in France’s military, and Bloch defines his own patriotism on those terms, since he served in the military during both world wars. Bloch’s own experience in the military, particularly during the six weeks of war and shortly after the announcement of the armistice, contain many parallels to the experiences and motivations of the men who joined groups such as the Chantiers de la Jeunesse, the Milice, and even the Maquis.

The Chantiers and the Milice were bastions of masculine recourse after the French Army was disbanded: the first to keep young men physically and mentally prepared for armed service by training them in secluded locations in the mountains, the second to help maintain order and obedience mainly in the towns and villages of the southern zone. The Maquis were a group of resistance cells whose members roamed the hills and secluded areas, who aimed to carry out guerilla attacks on those who were (actively) collaborating with Vichy and the Nazis. The lowest common denominator with these militaristic groups and Bloch’s experiences in the Army is the removal of these men from mainstream society. Bloch was evacuated at Dunkirk along with thousands of British soldiers and what was left of the French Army. He recalls: “the one thought in everybody’s mind was to get clear of this damned stretch of coast before the enemy

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17 Bloch, 3.
should smash through our last defences; to escape captivity by the sole road open to us—the sea. A sort of escape-hyste

ria had got ahold of this mob of men.” Abandoning the country was a traumatic experience for many French men, even if most of them returned later at locations where they were not encircled by the enemy. Despite the emasculating experience of defeat, the same conditions that had shattered young Hubert Pericand’s illusions about the glory of warfare, the desire to isolate themselves from both French society and the enemy continued even after the armistice. This created a discourse of the wartime experience that was specifically masculine, shared by few women.

Marc Bloch witnessed the disbanding of the French Army after they were shipped back into France and transported near Rennes: “I saw a German column debouching on the boulevard. Not a shot was fired. A number of French soldiers, including a few officers, just stood and watched. I learned later that whenever the Germans came across a soldier still in possession of his arms, they merely made him smash his rifle and empty his ammunition pouches. I had long decided that I would take any step to avoid capture…it was more and more clearly borne in on me that the only manner in which I could continue to serve my country and my family was by escaping before the trap should finally be sprung.” Avoiding capture and eluding the Germans was not an instinct limited to resistance groups in which Bloch later took part. A part of the reason why many men joined the Chantiers, the Milice, and the Maquis was not support of the Nazis, or necessarily Vichy ideals, but rather an impugned nationalism. One of the terms of the armistice was that Vichy had to provide employees for the Germans, and some of those jobs were in Germany. First, there was the Relève scheme, in which Vichy presented the exchange of French workers for prisoners as an “opportunity for French workers to demonstrate their patriotism by helping out the long-suffering prisoners of war.” Vichy couched a rather controversial term of the Armistice agreement within the discourse of good citizenship—discourse that centered on obeying the State even in this. Putting up with Occupation was one thing in French people’s minds, going to work in Germany was another—especially when people discovered that the terms entailed that three skilled workers were to be exchanged for a single prisoner-of-war.

18 Ibid, 18.
19 Ibid, 22.
20 Sweets, 24.
The Unoccupied zone was sheltered from the effects of the Relève until the 1942 Allied landings in North Africa prompted the German authorities to enforce total occupation in all of France. Where the Occupied zone had supplied 130,000 skilled workers, the Unoccupied zone had only provided 2,500; after December of 1942, the Nazis demanded that 15,000 men be provided. As Kedward argued in his outline of the different stages of French experiences of the Occupation, the rapid change in circumstances awoke French men in the Unoccupied zone from their complacency and prompted them to strike and to take to the hills, joining the Maquis as resistance fighters, or to join militaristic organizations such as the Chantiers de la Jeunesse or the Milice. Because of the unwillingness of many workers to voluntarily participate in the Relève, a compulsory labor service was created, the Service du Travail Obligatoire. The STO put French people at odds with the police and the state, since protests against these “deportations” required a heavy police presence to enforce the transportation of workers, and when the workers escaped the police could not rely on citizens to provide help tracking them down. Compulsory labor in Germany was an infringement of French men’s national rights, and it brought to home precisely what the terms of the defeat meant. At this point in the Occupation of France, the men in the south were now progressing through Kedward’s later stages.

The Chantiers de la Jeunesse were a youth organization that had originally been created for the 100,000 men who had been called up to military service shortly before the defeat in the spring of 1940. The goal was to “create a reserve for the future of men who, without military training per se because this was impossible under the terms of the Armistice, would be physically and morally prepared to form the disciplined core of a new French army when circumstances would permit it to emerge.” In the subsequent years, the Chantiers were used as an obligatory service for twenty year-old men who had to serve an eight-month stage in one of the encampments, and this also served to delay their “volunteering” for the STO. Vichy meant for the youth organizations such as the Chantiers to educate young men on their patriotic duty towards the French state. Marc Bloch had argued that a national army should not consist of soldiers blindly following orders, but rather “discipline is necessary…but it should be an

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22 Sweets, 61.
23 Ibid, 61.
extension of civic virtue.” He protested the beating down of soldiers until they were empty vessels that merely toed the line—he thought that there needed to be a degree of civic education in order to build a strong national army that was truly loyal to the state. Only thus could the army be strong and band together, and only then could the army successfully apply its patriotism into results.

No evidence, however, proves that the Chantiers de la Jeunesse were strongly loyal to Vichy’s collaborationist policies. They had demonstrated disrespect towards the Germans and Hitler: “German officers had complained about their lack of respect for the Führer when newsreels of Hitler shown in cinemas…had been greeted with whistling and howls of laughter from members of the Chantiers.” The Germans were deeply suspicious that the Chantiers were conducting camouflage military training in their isolated encampments, and thus the youth organization was disbanded in early 1944. Vichy may have cultivated masculine patriotism through militaristic organizations, intending to create loyal soldiers who believed wholeheartedly in the goals of the National Revolution; what they got were young men who had a strong nationalistic desire to remain in service to their country in this manner, but who did not necessarily see the Vichy government as the deserving object of their patriotism. Their ideas of nationalism and good citizenship were focused on France in the abstract sense, not to a particular government. And even if they agreed with Vichy, they still believed that their membership in these groups was a demonstration of their patriotism. Having been created by Vichy does not automatically mean the Chantiers were a collaborative organization because the men involved expressed their good citizenship for different reasons.

If there was one militaristic organization that was widely reviled by the French even prior to Liberation, it was the Milice. In the early years of the Occupation and the Vichy government, the formation of resistance groups called the Maquis in the hills, woods, and mountains around towns and cities led to social upheaval. Worsening food conditions meant that the Maquis had to resort to thievery in order to survive, and a desire not to take more from poor peasants led to “requisition[ing] goods from peasants known to be Vichy sympathizers or steal[ing] money to

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24 Bloch, 89.
25 Sweets, 62.
Resistance was a disruptive force, and Maquis activities created an outlaw culture, so Vichy decided to bring in civilians and enable them to serve as an extralegal form of the police. The Milice was thus created in January of 1943 to respond to attacks on French food supplies by the Maquis and to promote Vichy ideology. Who were the men who joined the Milice, and why? Robert Paxton believes that over 45,000 men volunteered for the Milice in 1944 “to escape from labor service, partly for fanaticism, but at least in part to help defend “law and order”. Almost every Frenchman wanted to be out from under Germany, but not at the price of revolution.”

We see here, as with the Chantiers, an interpretation of patriotism that echoes Marc Bloch’s strong desire not to be directly under the jack-boots of the Nazis, because to be in such a position would infringe upon what men felt was acceptable to their nationalistic sensibilities. To the Milice, the Maquis were a danger to society—especially when their activities resulted in severe reprisals against the rest of the French population. This created two clashing views on what actions defined good citizenship: order and obeisance to Vichy, and nationalism that sought a free and sovereign France. Vichy directly supported the Milice monetarily, but had trouble securing arms for them because the German occupational authorities were reluctant to allow a sizable number of Frenchmen to possess arms that could potentially be used against them.

By the end of 1943, however, the German Armistice Commission decided that the Milice had proved “its fidelity to collaboration and that it made little sense to deny arms to the one organization in France prepared to fight civil unrest and Allied invasion.” The ascension of Joseph Darnand and Philippe Henriot, leaders of the Milice, to the Vichy government meant that the Milice could then carry out more far-ranging military operations against the Maquis. They engaged in actions such as robberies, deportations, torture, rape, and brutalities against French people who, more often than not, had little to do with the Resistance. But in their pursuit for law and order, the members of the Milice found themselves becoming increasingly connected to the Germans, especially in people’s minds. They essentially bought the security of their own

27 Paxton, 294.
29 Sweets, 95.
members at the price of the interests of France. Members of the Milice found themselves the object of assassinations, ostracism, and the frequent bombings of their offices, stores, and private homes. The later isolation of the Milice from the French communities and their treatment as traitors was a bitter irony, since many had joined because they considered themselves “superpatriots pledged to save France from ruin.”

In *Strange Defeat*, Marc Bloch himself had difficulty comprehending that those whom he perceived as collaborating with the Germans were the same people who had been so vociferously anti-German prior to the defeat: “The ‘Right-Wing’ parties did seem, for a moment, to have complicated matters by identifying patriotism with militarism. But that the same men should, turn and turn about, have manifested the most fanatical anti-Germanism and a willingness to enter the continental system of Germany in the guise of vassals…does call for thought.” We can explain what Bloch could not understand: patriotism and collaboration are not limited to resistance versus collaboration or acquiescence, and the men in the Milice had sought to escape those same conditions that Marc Bloch had rebelled against that day near Rennes. The Milice provided Frenchmen with an avenue to direct their patriotism and their desire for power and order in the new society. It doesn’t mean that the actions the Milice took were not cruel, but it does indicate that motivation should play a role in examining terms like “collaboration”.

Militaristic organizations grew out of the masculine ideal of patriotism that had been blocked after the defeat and while some of them were seen as collaborative because of their close ties with Vichy or the Nazis, the men involved believed all the while they were being good citizens of France.

In his analysis of the defeat, Bloch focuses on the political and military contributions to the breakdown of the French army in 1940, limiting himself to what he knew from his service in the Army and his knowledge of the political conflicts of the Third Republic. Bloch identifies in Marshal Pétain an outdated symbol of masculinity: “For a great many journalists and for a considerable number of “patriotic” authors, any general is by definition, a great general. It is not the Pétain of Verdun or the Weygand of Rethondes whom France to-day has promoted and

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30 Ibid, 97.
31 Bloch, 150.
accepted...uniforms bristling with badges of rank and smothered in decorations.” The media in France after the defeat played up Pétain’s militarism in countless newsreels played before films. These newsreels contained shot after shot of the French Army, militaristic organizations, phrases that informed the people that France still had a military and therefore still had honor. Pétain was oft depicted as the “Hero of Verdun”, informing his people that they were still “on active duty.” Pétain solicited these images on purpose because he had seen the danger of a country that lacked enough loyalty to the state in 1917, and through the dissemination of certain images, militaristic ones, he wanted to provide a moral leadership to his people.

To Marc Bloch, the defeat can be attributed to the older generation of generals and politicians that put outdated military strategies and class ideologies above providing true leadership to the men. Bloch believes that most of the young soldiers would have continued to fight if they hadn’t been ordered to disband after the armistice was signed. “Capitulation—a word that no true national leader would ever have brought himself to utter. Nor would any true leader have spoken, as did a Marshal of France, on 17 June, of ‘asking for a cessation of hostilities’ well before he even knew the terms on which such a request would be granted.” Bloch all but outright accuses Pétain of being unpatriotic—to Bloch, patriotism is singularly defined as resistance. Quite a few politicians, military leaders, and intellectuals left France following the debacle of 1940, hoping to avoid arrest or death. Some escaped with the sole purpose of continuing the fight from abroad. De Gaulle’s radio address of 18 June effectively established him as the enemy of Vichy and the figurehead of the French resistance abroad—even if many other exiles weren’t inclined to support him because they saw him as “too clerical, military, and nationalist for comfort.” That De Gaulle was residing in England made many people automatically distrust him because the British were portrayed as the enemy—a perception that became deeply personal following the attack on the French naval fleet at Mers-el-Kebir on 3 July that cost over 1,200 Frenchmen their lives. The Vichy government and the German Occupational authorities feared De Gaulle’s nationalistic pleas, after all, they could trigger insurrection amongst the people. Vichy preferred to exploit the French people’s nationalism to

34 Bloch, 111.
35 Paxton, 42.
encourage loyalty to Vichy and support of the collaboration policy, hence why Vichy created the Chantiers de la Jeunesse as well as the Milice (before they wore out their welcome amongst the population).

A number of prominent French ideologues left French society in this more extreme manner: exile. Robert Paxton writes that “Having to leave French soil was a serious obstacle. Vichy’s successful control of most of the empire was a major victory, for it meant that one could join de Gaulle only through the total rupture of normal life, through flight and exile.” 36 Those who chose to leave France found themselves branded, not necessarily as traitors, but as unpatriotic because they were emigrating to “enemy” countries or not sharing in the suffering that French citizens went through in their daily lives. 37 To be in exile was to not be a part of a critical experience. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was a pilot who served in the 1940 war and was avowedly against the armistice; he later chose to exile himself rather than be subject to the ambiguous life of a French citizen under the armistice terms. He explains: “I stole a transport plane in Bordeaux to convey forty young pilots to North Africa in a vain attempt to continue the war there, only to discover that the armistice extended to North Africa as well.”38 He was nominated for a position on the Vichy National Council but this conflicted with his sense of patriotism and he refused to work with Vichy.

Once again, we see the common denominator with the other French men who sought to serve their country without sacrificing what they defined as their nationalistic principles. He also refused to join the Free French fighting under De Gaulle because he couldn’t bring himself to fight against other Frenchmen. So, in 1940 he went into exile in America, yet continued to write about the war and the agony of France’s occupation. He had viewed his military service as the one way he can carry out his patriotic duty despite attempts by his acquaintances to get him out: “Why was it that their reasoning never convinced me, even though I had no argument with which to defeat it? It is not a post or a subsidy I am asking for, but my dispatch to the front—to a

36 Ibid, 43.
37 A colorful example of this would be the newsreel video of Mickey bombing France: “Mickey Bombing France” from Youtube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4Ok-RKgCHg De Gaulle, the figurative Resistance leader is closely linked to the Allies bombing good French citizens
fighting unit. This service is vital to me…I must play my part in this religious war.”39 He could not bring himself to leave, in spite of the danger, because his masculine identity was wrapped up in the military service. Just as young Hubert Pericand, just as Marc Bloch, just as the many men who took part in the Maquis, the Chantiers, and even the Milice, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry felt a sense of national duty in joining the military or volunteering to fight as the Germans advanced through France. In early June of 1940, Saint-Exupéry’s commanding officer wrote of him that “On May 22, 1940, violently attacked by intense anti-aircraft fire, did not break off his mission until his plane was severely damaged. A model of devotion to duty and self-sacrifice for the other members of the unit.”40 Actions such as these are the tales that legends are made of, and these tales are disseminated throughout society as the ultimate symbol of masculine patriotism. Because Armed services were closed to women, and because the discourse often focused on men as being the singular sex that could carry out this duty, militarism becomes a particularly masculine form of patriotism. Where men and militarism are concerned, patriotism is truly not a singularly defined concept and cannot be left out of the analysis of those organizations that were defined as collaborative during the Occupation.

40 Ibid, 51.
Chapter 2: Troublesome Femmes and Their Roles in Society

Prior to the outbreak of war, Senator Louis Linyeur wrote a treatise on the work that would be required of women during the war. He made a special effort to remind women that “in wartime, as in peacetime, women of France should remember that our civilization has reserved them an important role to play, but they will not be able to play this role unless they remain first and foremost women…above all during the hostilities, they will not be able to behave as true French women unless they remember that their most important role is as a mother and a wife.”

It was expected that, due to the nation’s labor force fighting in the military, women would have to take up jobs that effectively put them outside their traditional domestic sphere. This, of course, created a fair amount of anxiety amongst the architects of French society that in doing so, women could get notions that would lead to the complete disruption of the fabric of society that could never be mended. Senator Linyeur indicates that whatever work women are given should be looked upon as a public service role, not a new career path that will remain open to them after the war—the watchword here is “exceptional”.

The disruption of women’s traditional roles would be an exception to a strictly enforced rule. As is often the case after a chaotic disruption of social order, France had been besieged by panic of moral and national decline for decades, particularly after 1870, and often attributed to different causes yet the solution was almost exclusively focused upon women. It was women who failed to provide enough male children after 1918 to supply the French army with the necessary tank fodder to repeal the German army at the start of WWI.

The discourse of the Third Republic had emphasized difference between the genders, with females being a “troubling exception”. As Irigarary pointed out earlier, men had been the universal placeholder in society, and thus as the “other”, women had the potential to disrupt the traditional organization of society if their roles changed. By emphasizing women’s roles in the family and the home, the State could then rely on mutual surveillance within the bonds of the middle and upper classes to maintain gender roles. The lower classes, however, whose women worked outside the home at a higher proportion than in the upper classes, caused the State a great deal of alarm. Women’s

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41 Diamond, 19. (Mar/April 1940)
42 Schafer, 172-3.
43 Diamond, 64-65.
44 Ibid, 175.
roles became an important indicator of the condition of French society, especially when they were desperate to avoid chaos and retain some semblance of order, as they did when war broke out in May 1940, and even more after the armistice in June, when the nation was still deprived of much of its male labor force. The impact of a more widespread female employment will be analyzed in more depth in the next chapter.

What I want to focus on in this chapter is how women’s roles in society dictated how they would be classified by the State or society as either good patriotic Frenchwomen or as collaborators. Feminine patriotism was often directed towards Vichy, and it entailed feminine submission to the directives of the male-dominated State. Once again, good female citizenship is defined as obeisance to the State. It is worth examining the impact women’s roles had on the gendering of patriotism and collaboration because women’s roles were often at the root of their relationship with Vichy, and this establishes the subjectivity of their experiences later in this chapter as well as the next. Much of this had to do with that inescapable fact: biology. Vichy was by nature a more ideologically conservative government. Marshal Pétain’s National Revolution sought to emphasize Travaille, Patritie, Famille, and where women were concerned, the first and the last principles would contradict one other. Work was a masculine domain, and the family was centered on women.

Through the National Revolution, Vichy sought to establish a framework through which women could express their patriotism via the traditional roles of wife and mother. The problem was, many of the men necessary to equip the women to fulfill both requirements of citizenship (wife and mother) were either dead, too young, too old, or prisoners/laborers in Germany. The second problem was that Vichy, as well as the businesses and factories in the Occupied north needed women to fill the men’s jobs, which meant they could not remain in the home. Vichy made a great effort to institutionalize reproduction—the creation of a Ministry of the Family (Secrétariat à la Famille) in July of 1940 demonstrates the priority given in policy to the issue of women’s roles. Vichy deployed experts to the front lines of Family policy in order to regulate marriage and reproduction. Hygiene was particularly important in ensuring that marriages started healthy—women had to secure a premarriage certificate that proved she was free of venereal disease before she could get married. In April of 1942, a law was passed making it impossible to divorce during the first three years of marriage and adultery was no longer
sufficient grounds for marital dissolution. Women were fined for adultery if they were the wives of prisoners-of-war, and abandonment of the family was severely punished.

Plenty of propaganda was deployed to educate Frenchwomen about their patriotic duty: “Marry young! Have children young, they will be more beautiful, stronger, and healthier.”

One of the first initiatives of the new Vichy government was to establish directives ordering the dismissal of women from their jobs and to officially equate abortion with high treason. The government wanted to provide support to mothers, even single mothers, to encourage them to have children. Criminal sentences to punish abortion had been increased in 1939, with the onset of war with Germany, from 5 to 10 years in prison and fines from 5,000 to 20,000 francs. When Vichy made abortion a treasonous crime, a special tribunal was established to try these cases and the punishment had increased to 15-20 years of forced labor and fines between 60,000 and 120,000 francs—eleven people were tried between October 1942 and August 1943 and several were imprisoned for life and two were executed. Marie-Louise Giraud, one of the executed, had performed 27 abortions and was especially reviled by Vichy because she had blatantly violated her feminine role in society. She had worked as an abortionist in her own home, where her own children also lived, and had rented out rooms to prostitutes, and had made a fair amount of money off of her job. Feminine patriotism was based upon the biological facts of their sex—women were the ones who could reproduce, and this creates a separate definition of patriotism as well as a specifically feminine aspect to the relationship between the French people and their State.

While Vichy passed laws and issued directives that legally defined women’s roles, people living in the Occupied zone relied on propaganda in magazines that sought to shape public opinion and provide a guide for how women should continue to conduct themselves in an Occupied society. One of the major players in the circle of Paris collaborators, Jean Luchaire produced a magazine, Tout la vie, as the feminine auxiliary to the widely read Les Temps

45 Ibid, 64.
47 Diamond, 65. (Note: Diamond points out that 22 of these abortions predated the law)
48 Note: Historians tend to make a distinction between “collaborator” and “collaborationist”, the latter involving ideological collaboration rather than economic or political, but Bertram Gordon argues that this theory fails in practice. For this reason, I do not use “collaborationist” to describe Luchaire even though historians do.
nouveaux. The purpose of the legitimate (German sanctioned) newspapers and media in the Occupied zone was to disseminate the ideals of the National Revolution and magazines like Tout la vie, Marie Claire, and La Femme au travail were centered around the female sphere. If there is one recurring theme in women’s experiences of the war and the occupation, it is their insistence that there was a lack of politics in their lives. The German Ambassador in Paris, Otto Abetz, viewed this as a general principle in France: “in reality, the vast majority of the French people… [was] apolitical.”

Explicitly addressing politics could lead to conflict and displeasure amongst the French who would have interpreted it as blatant German propaganda. Leaving out political jargon would allow readers to enjoy the leisure activity of reading while comforting themselves that they were not being reminded of the unpalatable situation they found themselves in. It made it all the more difficult, as Paxton and Kedward contend, to see their actions as anything unpatriotic. If anything, magazines such as Jean Luchaire’s adopted the discourse of nationalism and patriotism and sought to recast normal feminine activities as the highest forms of citizenship that women could offer France. Examining the content of Luchaire’s magazine demonstrates this.

Tout la vie offered a mix of topics such as fashion, cooking, leisure articles, and gender issues. What we know about Tout la vie has much to do with one person who was central to its ideology: Luchaire’s daughter Corinne. Corinne reflected the magazine’s social milieu and its ideology outlined her social choices. She later wrote an autobiography about her life during the war in which she expresses her lack of understanding about why her family was so reviled after Liberation—for a magazine with a large readership that strived to be “apolitical” by focusing on the personal leisure of women, it made quite the political statement. The magazine’s headlines often sarcastically used military terminology: “To the Order of Elegance,” “Nachas Pacha Want to Liberate Egypt,” and “Women’s Mobilization.” This is reflected in her autobiography, where such titles as “My Plot with Flandrin against England” refers to a tennis match. The reduction of war and suffering to a banal level created a distance between the media of leisure

49 Martine Guyot-Bender, “Seducing Corinne: The Official Popular Press during the Occupation,” in Gender and Fascism in Modern France, Melanie Hawthorne and Richard J. Goslan, eds. (Hanover: University Press, 1997), 72. (Note: Somewhat predictably, given the level of controversy surrounding her connections to the “Paris collaborators”, her autobiography seems to have faded into obscurity and is not widely available.)

50 Ibid, 73.
and what constituted real life for the men who had served at the front lines. Nationalism is reduced, for women, to a fashion statement.

Corinne Luchaire, by virtue of her father’s close role with the “Paris collaborators” and the German occupiers, interacted with Germans on a fairly regular basis. She did not view her friendliness with the German officers as unpatriotic mainly because, as Paxton and Kedward argued, she had not been ripped from the comforts of her everyday life. Her participation in balls and parties and other social interactions with the German officials “gave her the illusion of being transported back to the cheerful life of the prewar era [and] had, in her eyes, no political implications.”51 Another reason, I argue, is that the traditional female identity that she so enjoyed was respected by the German soldiers. Shortly after the occupation begun, she was anxious about the presence of Germans in her hotel, but “upon hearing Pétain’s announcement of the Armistice on the radio, the German officers who were staying in her hotel calmed her apprehension by their noticeable demonstration of respect as they stood up and saluted.”52 The Germans strove not to encroach on her womanhood, especially in her social position, and helped to shape her positive image of them. As Otto Abetz had concluded, Corinne Luchaire did not connect her actions to any form of political expression, or even question whether she was behaving like a patriot. In her opinion, she was simply being a good French woman.

The maintained integrity of traditional womanhood was reflected in Tout la vie, whose vision of women’s role in French society was solely that of helpers to men. Thus, adhering to traditional women’s roles was equated with a gendered expression of patriotism. The magazine also created ideals of masculinity that instructed its female readers what they should look for in men. Where the Nazis had been described as barbaric before and during the war, upon Occupation, the tables were turned and the insult was leveled at the Allies, particularly the Soviet men. And what made the Soviet men particularly barbaric? One edition of Tout la vie stated in disgust that they were “the only people among all others, who do not hesitate to mobilize young women to fight on the front.”53 Focusing on how contrary to nature the Soviet women’s roles were, how the traditional gender roles were not respected (as the Germans had respected Corinne Luchaire’s), elicited a horrified reaction from readers. In contrast, the Germans were polite and

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51 Ibid, 74.
52 Ibid, 74.
53 Ibid, 79.
well mannered and respected women. By reinforcing the natural hierarchies, men could also re-establish their masculinity after the recent humiliating defeat. The logic in this was that as long as women’s roles remained normal, men’s could be recovered.

*Tout la vie* encouraged women to be faithful to the “true nature of femininity” by not being anywhere but in a family. One article commented: “She may well be a jurist, physician, lawyer or worker, but all these are still only activities on the side…I feel sorry for women who do not have babies.”

For those who were not able, adoption was the next best avenue for feminine patriotism and national service, and one woman adopted twenty-six young girls, thereby sacrificing herself in devotion to her nation. There was no limit to what could be constructed as a feminine act of patriotism or national duty—even fashion: “And, for us Parisians, after completing our duty, as mothers or in our profession, our role was to put on the costume, the adorable and ridiculous hat covered with flowers, birds, ribbons and feathers whose panache was indispensable to us.”

The feminine performances inherent in women’s roles were thus acquired and redefined as female nationalism. Even while they avoided explicit political discourse and did not view their leisure activities as particularly political except through devotion to the social order imposed by the state (states, rather, since the magazines were influenced both by Vichy and by the Nazi occupational authorities). But the personal also became political because after Liberation, the post-war arbiters of justice deemed it thus on gendered grounds. This analysis of women’s roles indicates that patriotism was not a solely political activity. But, owing to the contentious categories of patriotism and collaboration, that does not mean that there were no feminine expressions of the two that could be described as political. There were ways in which women could exercise a measure of political power.

Social construction of gender roles was not limited to the top-down process of the state or the media. There was a very powerful agent of social control that ran rampant in a time where asserting individual patriotism was necessary in order to maintain one’s lifestyle, an agent that was also classified as a specifically feminine form of collaboration after Liberation: délation. In *Le Corbeau*, a French film released in 1943, a small town is ripped apart by the actions of a social blackmailer who reveals deeply personal and damning secrets about people in town. The

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54 Ibid, 78.
55 Ibid, 78.
film deals with délation in a negative way, since retaining a sense of social cohesion and normalcy was one of the most prominent goals of the Occupation and Vichy era. However, délation, or the sending of letters of denunciation, was a common phenomenon both during the Occupation and after Liberation. It is also a social mythology that only women participated in denunciation, but evidence suggests that more women than men wrote the letters of condemnation. One of the main reasons for women to write accusatory letters was their greater awareness of what occurred in the private lives of their neighbors, and the belief that divulging such information was the patriotic thing to do and that their lives could improve because of it.

Madeleine Henrey describes in her memoir a personal experience with délation. While Henrey and her family had joined the exodus from their village home to escape the German advance, several women had exploited Henrey’s British nationality as a justification for ransacking her home.\textsuperscript{56} Hanna Diamond argues that the state of scarcity brought on by the war and then the subsequent occupation caused the boundaries between private and public lives to become more ambiguous, and because women already occupied “unfavorable social categories,” denunciation was then one of the few political weapons of the weak.\textsuperscript{57} One neighbor of Henrey’s in particular, referred to as ‘La Goguette’, has an unpleasant relationship with her husband and by obtaining by whatever artifice items from her neighbor’s home, Goguette sought to improve her material fortune. She later resorted to denunciation to remove the one barrier that still oppressed her: her husband. Instead of writing a letter, however, she sends her son Roger to the German authorities that oversaw the nearby villages to denounce his father, and as a result, Goguette’s husband was sent to a prison camp where he eventually died. The end result was the same for Goguette: she was arrested shortly after the Liberation and had to stand trial for her role in the whole sordid tale. Henrey’s relation of this particular anecdote reflects the desire of some women, often in weak positions in society by virtue of their sex, to denounce neighbors or even family members in order to gain a measure of power. Writing letters of denunciation was not a state-sponsored form of citizenship for women during WWII, yet women felt they were important tools to weed out people who were not helping the French government function during these perilous times.

\textsuperscript{57} Diamond, 89-90.
And what were the actual letters of denunciation about? Oftentimes they implied that the accused belonged to a vilified group of “others”, such as communists, Jews, and foreigners. The letters were often accusing people of participation in black market activities—in times of scarcity, to illegally obtain items that your neighbors want for was liable to make you a target. But while citizens believed that dél众人 could improve their communities (sometimes ostensibly by removing personal enemies), local government officials such as mayors and police found it disruptive, as the accusations seldom led to evidence of any real crimes. One regional prefect wrote in 1942 to the mayors in the Auvergne region that “these practices create an unacceptable environment of suspicion and risk to sow discord among French people at a moment when the country needs to preserve intact all its moral forces to ensure its recovery.”

It is difficult to know what proportion of the letters came from women, as many were unsigned, and it is also difficult to ascertain how many of the denunciation cases that were tried after Liberation came from the same communities trying to use dél众人 to demonstrate that they had been pro-Resistance the entire time or as a tool to gain revenge on certain female busybodies. Out of the denunciation cases that went to trial, women were over-represented as defendants—in the Eure, for example, out of 225 cases, seventy-five percent were women. This disproportionate representation in trials demonstrates the dominant perception in the Liberation-era justice system that this form of collaboration was explicitly linked to women’s role in society.

That’s not to say that men did not make use of dél众人 as a social tool, but what is interesting is the position of the men in society that made a presumed feminine action also a male weapon of choice. John Sweets points out that men in the Legion Française des Combattants, for example, sent letters to the police denouncing citizens for activities such as listening to the BBC in their homes. The Legion was successful at causing the deportations of countless people suspected of being Jewish, Gaullist, Communist, Socialist, and other “antinational activities.” A local arm of the government’s National Revolution which sought to bring a New Order to France, the Legion does not appear to have had the legitimacy to take direct action like even the Milice. They seem to have been rather ineffectual: “It was occasionally the instrument of petty village rivalries, of electoral revenge, indeed even of false accusations.”

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58 Sweets, 23.
59 Diamond, 89.
60 Sweets, 75.
not have the power to legally prosecute these people either: they had to resort to denouncing them to the police. This reveals an impotence that was dealt with through a stereotypically feminine action. The Legion was formed to give men an avenue of sociopolitical activity and to actively bring change to local communities, but lacking the authority to investigate what went on in people’s private lives, the Legion resorted to one of the few avenues open to those who lacked sufficient power. Women were usually the instigators of délation, but those who wrote accusatory letters certainly were often in socially weak positions. As will be explicated in chapter five, female collaboration was often defined in sexual terms, and if, as Hanna Diamond contends, délation was the weapon of the weak, then women’s relative positions in WWII French society made délation a particularly feminine—and political—form of patriotism. We must remember here, that labeling délation as collaboration is retroactively problematic because collaboration did not take on its current negative connotation until the Liberation most denunciators linked their actions to patriotic duty to weed social malignants out and thereby prove their own patriotism (perhaps believing if they did so they could be regarded favorably by the Germans and either gain materially or obtain safety from arrests). This is precisely why attempting to create a singular definition of “patriotism” and “collaboration” during WWII in France is so problematic and inhibiting.

What about women who lived somewhat outside of the traditional female roles? Women who participated in resistance groups often did so while performing tasks normally allocated to women. In some ways, this is understandable because women could form a normal cover for fighters via maintaining a traditional domestic front. Hanna Diamond points out that women’s decision to join resistance groups was more dangerous than a man’s because in doing so she often risked implicating her parents and children, whereas a man was not as concerned with those issues in his decision.

Perhaps this was because men were not so worried about the repercussions the choices they made might have on members of the family. It seems more fair to assume that men were more used to making decisions which affected themselves alone, whereas women had no experience of this, and were more socialized into seeing any decisions they made about their own lives in tandem with those of their children.61

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61 Diamond, 118.
In other words, gender roles played a part in how women and men in resistance groups defined their roles. In Lucie Aubrac’s memoir of the Occupation, she recalls how she was satisfied to provide the male resistance fighters with a cover for their discussions by accompanying them with her child: “A mother with her child, what could be more transparently innocent in a public park on a Sunday afternoon?” She would also use her ration cards to procure items such as condensed milk for people in the Resistance, so they would have more supplies. Aubrac clearly is relegated to a feminine role in supporting the men, such as her husband, in their activities. Yet, when her husband is taken prisoner by the Gestapo, she takes part in rescuing him (while being several months pregnant).

Her husband had written to her that she must not allow herself to be counted out by the other men in the resistance group, or to let them see her as a weak woman. After helping them rescue her husband, the other men changed how they addressed her: “Not you! I was speaking to my women. You’re a man, you know. You fight like a man. You stay with us.” When Aubrac diverged from the traditional feminine role, men defined her act of patriotism differently. I emphasize this: even though Lucie Aubrac participated in a raid and rescue in which she was shot at while pregnant, the men still could not consider her actions as something feminine—no, she was now a man. Resistance groups may not have subscribed to Vichy ideology, but they still maintained some semblance of traditional gender roles. This chapter has, in some ways, echoed the previous chapters on masculine experiences. Women’s traditional roles form a common denominator to their own gendered definitions of patriotism and collaboration—and this is present even in the Resistance, as Aubrac’s memoir shows. While Vichy cultivated apolitical loyalty in women through their submission, women sought in some instances to change their relatively weak position in society through the political action of denunciation and resistance, also. But women’s roles are also the target of this analysis of the various experiences of women, and it is crucial to also examine how diverging from those traditional roles affected how women’s activities could be labeled as patriotic or not. For that, we must turn to the next chapter.

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62 Lucie Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 64.
63 Ibid, 195.
Chapter 3: Daily Life and Work

While there are significant aspects of French people’s daily lives that were gendered experiences, which were limited to the roles that society had ascribed them (military and the domestic sphere), both men and women experienced changes in their daily lives and both had to confront the issues of patriotism and collaboration in the workplace. Yet even though both men and women were present in this category, they still had rather gendered experiences. The military was not the sole avenue through which French men could demonstrate their patriotism or their loyalty to France, if not Vichy. Being a servant of the state, a part of the civil service, was also lauded by Vichy as the duty of good male citizens. After Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, communists were once again seen as threats to the state, and in order to assure neighbors and the government that one was not a communist, the French state was the only acceptable direction in which a Frenchman could “wave a flag”.64 Jobs with the police and as one of the myriad other civil servants would continue to preserve the French governmental system through the Occupation and ostensibly whatever came after the Occupation was lifted. What engendered loyalty, or rather acceptance, of Marshal Pétain and the Vichy regime? In her memoir, Madeleine Gex Le Verrier recalls that a number of civilians had been listening to the BBC, and they believed that De Gaulle and Pétain were in cahoots to eventually strike back at the Germans: “the fact that the Marshal had confirmed that he had only signed an honorable armistice reassured the inhabitants of S. and the legend circulated: The general De Gaulle and the Marshal had agreed to “roll back” the Germans. The Marshal had given us his life, he had also given us his honor.”65 Le Verrier herself believed in the same principles as De Gaulle—that France should have fought on.

While this was not necessarily a widespread belief, many people did buy into the “shield theory” that Marshal Pétain was biding his time before striking back at the Germans and freeing France from the Occupation. The policy of attentisme (“wait and see”) became the watchword and many French people sometimes engaged in passive resistance, or demonstrated their negative views on the current situation, but did not go against Vichy’s cooperation with the Germans. In Jean Bruller’s (alias Vercours) Le Silence de la Mer, the French man and his niece

64 Paxton, 57.
house a German officer, but never speak to him out of a sense of nationalism and patriotism—their way of expressing outrage towards the circumstances. This short story, clandestinely published in 1942 and made into a film postwar, was celebrated by many French as an example of widespread resistance of regular citizens for that reason. However, it has also been attacked for its endorsement of attentisme—which is described as analogous to passivity to German occupation. The uncle, at one point, expresses his admiration for the German officer because “he never tried to shake off our inexorable silence by any violent expression.” While the uncle and the niece chose not to speak around their enemy inhabitant out of a sense of patriotism, the courteous manner in which they were treated by him appears to have precluded any further acts of defiance. This interpretation of Le Silence de la Mer, more than the popular symbol of resistance, seems to be a more accurate description of the actions of French citizens during wartime. Attentisme is a prime example of the common belief that good citizenship was based upon obeying Vichy policies and decrees. The reason for the muddled definition many scholars of wartime France have of whether actions can be categorized as collaboration or resistance lies, as Kedward stated, in their meaning.

As with Le Silence de la Mer, adopting attentisme into their everyday lives allowed ordinary French people to view their actions as a form of citizenship and even patriotism, and as support for the French government in its Vichyist and Pétainist incarnation. Paxton states that “personal faith in Marshal Pétain, fear of war and revolution, enthusiasm for the National Revolution…Even those who grumbled at the regime without doubting its basic legality or doing anything positive against it helped swell the tide of acquiescence.” It isn’t too far-fetched to imagine that many men did not see a problem working for the government, even one that was operating on a policy of collaboration with the Germans. A decisive reason prompting men to work for Vichy was an inherent commitment to public order as the highest good: “Public servants continued to obey the state. Even more, as the state came under challenge by Resistance vigilantism, a commitment to the ongoing functioning of the state reinforced the weight of routine.” Here, French men’s masculinity and the perception of their actions as patriotic were

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67 Paxton, 235.
68 Ibid, 286.
dependent upon preserving a degree of France’s sovereignty and not being completely subservient to the Germans.

Until 1943, Vichy worked hard to maintain the illusion of independence and legitimacy. However, the German Occupational authorities exerted greater control over French administration affairs as time went on. The Germans required that Frenchmen serve as guards for German barracks, plowing fields, digging trenches, and making improvements in civil defense facilities; they also became involved in matters such as film censorship, permits to take photographs, and the regulation of prostitution. \(^{69}\) Paul Baudouin served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1941. In his trial post-Liberation, he denied that he actively pursued collaboration with Germany, such as relaying peace inquiries after midnight on June 16-17 to the German military. \(^{70}\) Baudouin strove to portray himself as a mere civil servant who accepted his post in order to preserve France from a potential “suicide”. \(^{71}\) In Baudouin’s memoir, he states: “I told the President that my only ambition was to serve my country and the Marshal, but without the Marshal, no government was possible.” \(^{72}\) Baudouin worked as a civil servant because he felt it was his patriotic duty, and that Marshal Pétain would preserve France’s sovereignty. Therefore, Baudouin could retain his own masculinity through his position as the Foreign minister.

Under Article 3 of the armistice, the German occupational authorities had to recognize French sovereignty over all France except the parts that fell under the rights of the Occupying power. Baudouin proposed to Hitler and Abetz that the government that formed under the Marshal be allowed to return to Paris and govern from the traditional seat of power. \(^{73}\) But Hitler had only allowed France to maintain as much autonomy as was necessary to maintain internal order. Pétain saw the men who served in his government and in the various offices of civil service as the defenders of France: “To deprive France of her natural defenders in a period of general disorder is to deliver her to the enemy…We must expect French revival much more from the soul of our country, which we will preserve by staying in place, than by the reconquest of our

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\(^{69}\) Sweets, 184.
\(^{70}\) Paxton, 10
\(^{72}\) Ibid, 229.
\(^{73}\) Ibid, 238.
 territory by allied cannon…” We see a connection here between serving the state and the theme of the previous chapter: militarism. I explained earlier that Pétain utilized the discourse of militarism in order to curry loyalty and the belief in his own potency as a leader because as long as there was an avenue to masculine patriotism open, French people could maintain the illusion that the Occupation was acceptable. In describing civil servants with this militaristic discourse, Pétain confers masculine patriotic value to the role. Yet after the Liberation, servants to the state such as Rene Bousquet, former prefect of the Marne, were put on trial for collaboration. According to Paxton, Bousquet asserted that “he didn’t touch politics…in a typical civil servant’s denial that administration is support of a policy. Insisting that it was “not heroic to flee,” he argued that it was necessary to work with the Germans to restore the necessary order for survival. He praised the loyalty of the prefects of 1940, not one of whom resigned.” Civil servants such as Bousquet helped to preserve the sham of French sovereignty and interpreted their actions as doing their national duty, but the closer ties they had to the Vichy government’s policy of collaboration did not mean in their minds that they were being unpatriotic in upholding the armistice policies. They were simply being good Frenchmen.

Outright oppression may not have come until after November of 1942, with the Allied landings in North Africa, but that does not mean that daily life for the French was easy. Paying the Occupation costs to Germany, coupled with the loss of a significant number of the nation’s workforce to prisoner-of-war camps or work organizations in Germany, meant that scarcity skyrocketed. Very few studies have scrutinized the realities of daily lives as an object of examination, rather focusing on their use as a context for political and ideological studies—but seemingly insignificant things like food and work were actually both a personal and political issue during the Occupation. While food and labor played a major role in the daily lives of French people, I have chosen to focus more specifically on French women’s experiences.

Physical survival was a very gendered experience:

Few were able, like one female member of the Resistance group Defense de la France, to reject the idea of queuing and rely on others to do it for them. The oral and documentary sources indicate unequivocally that most women, unless they were lucky enough to have somebody else who was prepared to do it for them, were involved in these activities at least to some extent.

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74 Paxton, 16.
75 Ibid, 16.
76 Fogg, 2.
degree—in any case more so than the men, who, if they were present, almost always had women around who did this kind of work for them.  

It was virtually impossible for large numbers of women to join the traditionally masculine domain of active Resistance because so much of their time and energies were taken up by the necessity of finding food and queuing for food. Lucie Aubrac’s personal experiences reflect this in some ways: she takes on the task of procuring food for her family and for the Resistance, and her husband’s job allowed her to be able to take on a larger role with the group because she was not forced to seek employment herself.

As was required as a part of the terms of the armistice signed by Marshal Pétain, coastal regions—which supplied the nation’s coal, steel, textiles, cereals, milk, sugar, and meat—were occupied by the Germans, and as a result of the shortages, only 25% of the population had sufficient amounts of food. According to the League of Nations, the average adult required 2,400 to 2,800 calories a day, but in 1942 most adults were subsisting on 1,700 calories a day, and sometimes as low as 900. What do politics and abstract ideas of patriotism matter when you are starving—when your children are starving? When people are reduced to obsessing over when and where their next meal will be, their willingness to participate in the war machine or support the state becomes meaningless. The men in the French government and in the Nazi Occupational forces knew this: scarcity had nearly brought the French army to outright mutiny in 1918, in that same war it had made women workers and men in the military unwilling to participate in the German war machine, and it even brought down the Russian Tsar, as well. The personal had become political in revolutionary ways in the last war, there was no telling what the repercussions would be if it happened now.

Irene Némirovsky describes the life of one woman in town who had to endure scarcity on her own, with a husband as a prisoner-of-war: “She was a tall, thin countrywoman, modest, reserved, who never complained. When people asked her, “How are you going to manage, Louise, with no man at home, with all the work, no one to help you and four children?” Her eyes would be sad and cold, but she would smile faintly and reply, “I have no choice…”” When people experience scarcity for long enough, deep enough, dramatic changes to the relationship

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77 Diamond, 49.
78 Fogg, 5
79 Némirovsky, 203.
between a state and its people can occur. Belinda J. Davis argues that studying scarcity can demonstrate the political nature of everyday lives and that previous studies contain “still-dominant assumptions regarding the nature of politics itself as representing a narrow terrain of activity, largely separated from the rest of everyday life, practiced only at particular moments and often by limited segments of society.”  

In short, the personal is also political, and in examining the gendered experiences of women as they worked in what was formerly men’s jobs and struggled to feed themselves and their families, we can see just how their experiences influenced their ideas of patriotism and collaboration. We also begin to see a national tale of victimhood, one that is reflected in the types of memoirs from this time period. Those that are not Resistance or collaboration apologists are common French people describing how they suffered during the war. Victimhood implies that consent has been taken away, and therefore a person is absolved of any responsibility or blame—or collaboration.

With electricity and fuel being rationed, the traditional methods of cooking had to be abandoned, and housewives had to ration what little fats they had to stretch them further and “find alternatives to the normal habits of frying food. They were called upon to be inventive, to come up with new recipes for the bland vegetables or the tasteless ersatz or artificial foods.”

Women’s magazines jumped on the creativity bandwagon, engaging women in focusing on mastering their daily lives. By gaining a sense of control over worsening conditions, the governmental influences of the magazines hoped to maintain women’s loyalty to Vichy and their passive acceptance of the German occupation. The belief in women’s importance and the impact of their daily lives on their participation in the state was echoed in other magazines, even communist ones. One communist publication, L’humanité, addressed its articles on supplies directly to women and blamed the shortages on Vichy and the Germans. The magazine, and the communists, assumed that “women held the primary responsibility for providing for their families with food and thus focused on the women,” even as the Resistance remained a largely male activity.

Despite historians’ myopia where the political importance of women’s daily lives in Occupied France were concerned, we can see that people who lived in France during that

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81 Diamond, 61.
82 Fogg, 48.
time period recognized the political impact that women could make as a result of their experiences.

Women were actually rather limited in their ability to protest the scarcity and the necessity of queuing. Those who did not queue would receive nothing. One woman made the decision to refuse to queue as a part of her political protest and as a demonstration of her commitment to the Resistance, and nearly starved to death. The memory of women queuing has been described as one of the most pervasive from the war—and it’s not difficult to see why. Queuing was a very visual phenomenon, and for a society used to the separation of genders into a public and a private sphere, the sight of many women, even pregnant ones, out in the public sphere would have driven home just how abnormal their lives had become since the Occupation started. Women would be lined up from five or six in the morning and even after several hours of waiting in line, they could come away with nothing. This obviously created added stress on women who were working, since they had less time to queue. However, as a result of their wage and their job, they could receive items from their bosses—such as some wine—to barter for food. The act of queuing was not explicitly political, but the stress of it illustrated Vichy’s inability to provide enough food for its people (as was explicated in Chapter 3) and this undermined the willingness of French women to be personal supporters of Vichy. This forced women into a number of situations such as employment and queuing which moved them beyond their normal gender roles, and to Vichy this threatened to undermine the foundations that the social structure rested upon—in this manner, the changes wrought in women’s lives as a result of the Occupation, having to work and queue, gave their daily lives political implications.

Being lulled into a false sense of French sovereignty was dependent upon the benefits that the state received from collaboration. Laval, ever the politician trying to gain from the armistice, pressured statesmen to leverage French obedience against the release of the prisoners-of-war. As only half of the prisoners-of-war were released in subsequent years, the French State’s ability to get results was limited. Andre Gidé speculated on what would have happened had Hitler been more willing to provide France with more food and arms as well as control over her territories: “If German dominance meant abundance…nine-tenths of Frenchmen would

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83 Diamond, 53.
84 Paxton, 77.
accept it, three-fourths of them with a smile.” The lack of sufficient food and fuel only magnified the failure of those civil servants to provide for their people. Pétain gave a speech denouncing those who subverted Vichy’s efforts to negotiate for increased control over supplies: “Focusing on the need for national solidarity in the face of the “second winter of armistice and misery,” Petain claimed it was his duty to consider black market traffickers as “adversaries” to French unity. Black marketers were essentially traitors, but Vichy had to accept these minor infractions on the law and acknowledge that the state had failed to provide for its people. This was emasculating for civil servants who had based their patriotic identities upon preserving the well-being of the French people even though it entailed collaboration—without the context of treason—and it proved that they did not have the power necessary to convince themselves that they had preserved their own masculinity in the process.

A number of mitigating events resulted in the loss of the illusion of French sovereignty, removing Vichy’s base of acceptance, and threatening men’s idea of their own masculinity relative to the State. The rise of Resistance terrorism after June of 1941, proved to Hitler the failure of the French State to stem tide of violence, so German SS were sent in to take over hunt for the “terrorists”. After the Allied landings in 1942, all of France was subject to total occupation, and Vichy lost its base of acceptance because they were no longer legitimate rulers. They were effectively castrated. Their attempts to maintain masculine power only served to align them closely with the Germans, as Vichy had anxiously supplied the German military with French state assistance and militaristic organizations like the Milice to terrorize society. Pétain had intended to act as a shield protecting the French people from the Occupation, but in striving to save the Vichy state, they sacrificed the nation. For those men like Paul Baudouin, who served the state out of a desire to be good citizens, their expressions of patriotism cannot be judged as completely synonymous with collaboration. There is subjectivity inherent in the masculine experience of patriotism and collaboration during WWII in France, just like there was for women.

The one factor that had the most impact on the subjectivity of women’s experiences of the war was the presence of men. If a woman’s husband was still present, her lifestyle

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85 Ibid, 135.
86 Fogg, 36.
87 Paxton 223-4.
experienced relatively little change; in fact, sometimes the presence of a husband insulated a woman from the difficulties of the war. But for women whose husbands were absent, circumstances forced them to take on what were considered to be traditionally male roles, which brought them into contact with the system that determined their very survival. Despite Vichy’s encouragement for women not to work, it became increasingly necessary in order to replace the labor that had been lost with prisoners of war and the German Occupational authorities’ requisitioning of French workers. For those women who had lost their husbands as prisoners-of-war, they qualified as being in a “difficult” position and the government provided military benefits, but those were not enough and women had to find supplemental income.

After the Armistice, there were 1,850,000 French prisoners of war, half of whom did not return home, and this had a significant impact not only on labor markets but on the households. In October of 1941, a factory worker could expect to earn 1,200 to 1,800 francs a month; a wife with one child would only receive 630 francs a month (and 200 francs more for subsequent children). If, according to Vichy’s National Revolution propaganda, the best way for a woman to be a good citizen was to have a lot of babies, it would be a very expensive social policy indeed. Some government officials had to resort to playing upon fears of female sexuality and masculinity by implying that due to the lack of sufficient income, wives of prisoners-of-war were resorting to prostitution. In 1941, a law was passed called the “single wage benefit” (allocation de la mère au foyer), which paid women not to take paid employment. This only applied to urban areas and not in rural communes where “it was felt that the women’s work already took place in the home.”

Vichy ideology often clashed with women’s need for survival and its definition of feminine patriotism was challenged by the ways in which reality reshaped women’s roles and their relationship with the State. But many women did work outside the home between 1939 and 1945. How then did the visible exodus of women from the domestic sphere affect Vichy’s interpretation of a woman’s patriotic duty?

The armistice had resulted in a rise in unemployment as the war material factories were shut down by the Germans, but over the coming months, the Relève scheme and the compulsory labor draft created new need for women to re-enter the work force. Vichy’s policies towards

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88 Diamond, 69.
89 Diamond, 22.
90 Diamond, 25.
women were echoed in other countries, and in Italy under Mussolini, women workers saw their salaries slashed in half to protect the male workers and to encourage the women to return to the home.\textsuperscript{91} It had been seen as patriotic for a French woman to ‘take over’ her husband’s job in order to keep the country going, but the Armistice and the establishment of Vichy brought a new set of criterion for how women could provide state loyalty, and that was by abiding to their traditional roles. The Married Women’s Work Act of October 1940 forbade the employment of women in the public sector whose husbands were able to provide for them.\textsuperscript{92} However, because the Germans tightly controlled movement between the Occupied zone and the Vichy zone, accessing male workers from the South was difficult, and women had to fill in the gaps. Vichy’s inability to impose its policies on French people in the Occupied zone adversely affected the degree to which traditional female roles could be enforced.

When it was not necessary, Vichy defined female patriotism through gendered activities, but the realities of the Occupation created a controversy among historians on the question of the degree to which working for the Germans entailed collaboration. In Madeleine Henrey’s memoir, she recalls meeting a Lorrainer woman after Liberation who was working for the Allied switchboard, after having worked in a similar job for the Germans during the war. The telephone operator is very cavalier about her previous employers despite the atmosphere of the Liberation: “She took up her knitting again and added: ‘Their organization was wonderful but they never prevented British intelligence officers, dressed as Germans, dining in the mess…’ She talked as fast as she worked.”\textsuperscript{93} What the telephonist says is not as important as the manner in which she says it. Henrey recalls being surprised by the casual admission of having worked for the Germans, and the ease with which the woman imparted what had been confidential information. If this was widespread, it would indicate that prior to the Liberation, working for the Germans was not conferred with political meaning, and therefore to women employment did not equate being unpatriotic.

There were a variety of opinions about being employed by the Germans, but day-to-day reality was: the Germans paid better salaries. A cleaner, for example, could earn 5 francs an

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\textsuperscript{92} Diamond, 35.
\textsuperscript{93} Henrey, 283.
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hour from the French authorities, but 7 francs an hour from the German authorities. Because the German occupational authorities depended on a measure of cooperation from the French and strove to maintain the peace so as not to have to send a large contingent of soldiers into France instead of to other fronts of the war, they depended upon French workers to carry out the tasks of the everyday occupation. Evidence suggests that women who went to work for the Germans between 1940 and 1942 did so voluntarily: “women who worked as typists, telephonists, and translators certainly benefited materially from this work and might often be more implicated in terms of collaboration.”\textsuperscript{94} Not only did women who worked for the Germans have higher wages, they also had access to goods that were otherwise scarce, entailing them to escape from some of the conditions being endured by large sectors of the population. Hanna Diamond contends that “most people knew when a factory came under German control because soldiers would be present in the premises. Women who worked in these factories were therefore aware that they were directly contributing to the German war effort, but for them it was a means to make a living, sometimes the only means open to them.”\textsuperscript{95} Women’s daily lives had huge political implications for them because those women who worked for the Germans, even if it was a means to survival, were labeled as collaborators after Liberation. But we cannot overlook the perspectives of those who actually did the work yet, like the female telephone operator who Madeleine Henrey met, did not view their actions as making themselves collaborators. This suggests that two conditions were prevalent: one, that women like the telephonist from Lorraine did not view German employment as collaboration or antipatriotic; two, that even if they understood that their work was aiding the Germans, they still did not label themselves as collaborators because they only did so apolitically, out of a desire for food, money, and survival. Motivation, then, becomes a defining factor in one’s sense of good citizenship. Many reasoned that if they did not work for the Germans with intent to collaborate, just to survive, therefore they did not engage in collaboration.

One of the more flagrant contraventions of traditional women’s roles was sexual in nature, and became the symbol of another form of collaboration that was specifically feminine. Little about it was meant to be political, and very few women, if any, viewed sexual collaboration as anything approaching patriotic. Lucile Angellier is one of the main female

\textsuperscript{94} Diamond, 39.
\textsuperscript{95} Diamond, 38.
characters in Irene Némirovsky’s *Suite Francaise*, a woman whose husband is a prisoner-of-war, and who is living with a mother-in-law that does not approve of her behavior, particularly towards the German officer who inhabits their home: “Lucile’s tone was never what it should be…Surely her duty as a Frenchwoman, as a wife, was to bear separation courageously, as she, Madame Angellier, had done between 1914 and 1918…” The Angelliers bear the presence of the German officer in their home with silent intolerance, much like in *The Silence of the Sea*. Némirovsky emphasizes in her novel how women’s activities during the Occupation, particularly in regards to “their” collaboration, were viewed as sexual in nature.

The idea of German soldiers sleeping with French women was particularly emasculating to the French men who had to contend with their humiliation of having been defeated and having their country occupied. One character, Benoit, in *Suite Francaise* ends up murdering a German soldier who had been making romantic and sexual advances towards his wife. When Benoit demands that a high ranking officer order the soldier to stop chasing his wife, because the French men did not need the Germans running after their women now, the officer places a very effective barb against Benoit’s masculinity: “Well, you should have thought about defending your women before, my friend.” But that’s not to say that women were always seen as the victim of German attentions. The perception of sexual collaboration was the most damming of all for a Frenchwoman, and Némirovsky includes many scenes detailing the romantic and sexual relationships that occurred between German soldiers and French women:

The guard was still marching up and down in front of the *Lokal*, which it was forbidden to approach upon pain of death, but his comrades were enjoying their free time with the beautiful night. Two soldiers were singing amid a group of young women—*Trink’mal noch ein Tröpfchen! Ach! Suzanna…*—And the young woman softly hummed along. Némirovsky contrasts the seriousness and danger of the relationship between the Occupiers and the French people, and the blatant ease with which the women are able to enjoy themselves with the German soldiers. The women who spend time with the German soldiers who want to escape the positions they have been put in as occupiers and to enjoy leisure activities—and the only pretty, young women around were French. What is easily forgotten about the Occupation is that for many citizens it was not complete oppression and their daily lives were not a complete break

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96 Némirovsky, 211.
97 Ibid, 270.
98 Ibid, 265.
with the lives they had been living before. They wanted life to return to normal as soon as possible. In the South, the Vichy government organized special cinema showings at lower prices for the families of prisoners-of-war so they could still enjoy that leisure activity (and be exposed to propagandistic newsreels). 99 Not all leisure was state-sponsored—a number of clandestine balls were held regularly, especially in the rural areas of France, which were seen as scandalous at a time that so many French men were prisoners of war in Germany.

In that same scene where Némirovsky describes the drunken cavorting of German soldiers and French women, she reveals how other French people perceived these relationships:

During a moment of silence, Madame Angellier and the Viscountess heard the final notes of the song. “Who could be singing at this hour?” “They’re women with German soldiers.” “How revolting!” The Viscountess exclaimed. She made a gesture of horror and disgust. “I’d really like to know who those shameless girls are. I’d make sure the priest knew their names…Oh, ladies, this is worse than everything! Just think of it, their brothers and husbands are prisoners and they’re out having a good time with the Germans!”

French citizens, particularly women, had to tread a fine line between enjoying leisure activities and be seen as unpatriotic. Leisure activities that involved friendliness with Germans crossed the line of what was acceptable for women. The issue that lay at the core of the Viscountess’ anger is the dominant belief that the traditional female role was to be a good wife to French men, but when this was not possible with so many men gone working for the Germans or in prisoner-of-war camps. For women to be visible in a sexual manner, particularly one that endangered the potential relationship with a French man, was seen as unpatriotic. A feminine form of collaboration, just like the letters of denunciation.

Women still wanted to enjoy themselves, to laugh and flirt, and to enjoy leisure activities, even in the face of German occupation and they were hardly impervious to the charms of handsome well-behaved German soldiers. Not very many did so out of some form of political support for the Nazis. Lucile Angellier one day discovers that the dressmaker in town has been sleeping with a German soldier, and she asks the dressmaker how she could do such a (unpatriotic) thing: “So what? German or French, friend or enemy, he’s first and foremost a man and I’m a woman. He’s good to me, kind, attentive…I’m not looking for anything else. Our lives are complicated enough with all these wars and bombings. Between a man and a woman,

99 Diamond, 68
100 Némirovsky, 265.
none of that’s important.” But to many others—to the older women and whatever men were left in the towns and cities—it was important. To them, those women who cavorted with the Germans were betraying France.

Némirovsky highlights the irony and unfairness of this judgment with the character of the Viscountess de Montmort, whose husband was made mayor of the town by the occupation forces. The Viscountess was downright horrified and suffered from “wounded patriotism” when observing young French girls flirting with German officers, and yet her own “patriotism” appears somewhat artificial: “At the beginning of the war she had been passionately patriotic and anti-German, not that she particularly hated the Germans…but there was something wonderfully dramatic about patriotism and hatred of the Germans, as there was in anti-Semitism or, later, devotion to Marechal Pétain, that sent chills down her spine.” But now that her husband was mayor, the Viscountess found herself leaning “more and more towards what was called the policy of collaboration” and watered down her comments. Trying to remain a good French citizen and a good patriot during the Occupation, yet being in a strange sort of limbo where violence or outright resistance did not seem to be an acceptable option, was surely a bitter pill to swallow for many French, and any attempt to escape from the increasing harshness of their everyday lives with leisure activities could elicit judgment from their neighbors.

There was also the thorny issue of prostitution. Where there had been 300,000 to 500,000 prostitutes in 1935 with a few thousand working in 1,235 registered brothels, in 1940 that number was 100,000 prostitutes in Paris alone, two percent of that in 2,000 registered brothels. While Vichy aggressively tried to legislate prostitution by forcing them to carry identification cards and undergo twice-monthly checks for venereal diseases, some prostitutes were requisitioned by the German authorities for their use alone. Twenty-nine brothels were put aside for the use of the German troops in the Paris area. Some of the increase in numbers of prostitutes can be attributed to wives of prisoners-of-war seeking supplemental income, but the rest can be accounted for as a rise in the number of clients and the subsequent desire of other

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101 Ibid, 276.
102 Ibid, 262.
103 Ibid, 262.
104 Ibid, 39.
105 Ibid, 41.
women (single women) to provide for themselves when they lacked the networks that wives and mothers had which helped them access food.

As we see with *Suite Française*, prostitutes were not the only women who had sexual or romantic relationships with German soldiers, there are clear records that indicate the relative commonality of this occurring in France: while the German soldiers were not allowed to marry French women, roughly fifty to eighty thousand French women applied for their children to receive benefits from the German authorities as well as German nationality for their offspring. After Liberation, most of these women were labeled as prostitutes, even though they did not work in a legalized brothel and even though they likely did not set out to have sex for payment. Were sexual relationships with the Germans political? Did women do this because they believed in Nazi or Vichy ideology? One Resistance woman described a female collaborator: “She was not politically convinced, it was a question of money because the Germans, they gave away lots of money and jewels, and paid for tickets to theatre and shows and things…I don’t think that politically speaking, they played an important role.”

Here, we see a continuing mantra of “I was not political,” therefore they could not be anti-French or a collaborator.

They may not have been concerned with politics, simply a good time or love, even…but their very visible personal lives during the Occupation was perceived by many men and women as violating a certain standard of patriotism and endangering the nucleus of the French family, thus opening French society up to destruction. Their personal lives were made political whether or not the women intended for them to be so. Men did not see their service to the State as collaboration because of motivation—as Paul Baudouin argued in his memoir, when he says he only wanted to serve France. His definition of good citizenship was submission to Vichy. Women also did not define their employment in German owned factories as collaboration simply because their motivation was to survive. They labeled themselves as victims who did not really choose to work for the Germans. This would have huge implications for how French men and women were judged after Liberation in the summer of 1944. There, motivation was no longer a good reason for innocence, no matter how much those on trial claimed it was so.

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106 Diamond, 83.
107 Ibid, 84
Conclusion: Liberation and *Gallia Poenitens*

In 1871, after the end of the “bloody week” in which the Versailles Army obliterated the Paris Commune from its stronghold on top of Montmartre, an estimated twenty to twenty-five thousand Communards had been killed.\(^{108}\) In 1873, the National Assembly voted to build a Basilica on top of Montmartre to commemorate the martyrs of 1871. The Basilica was named the Sacré Coeur, the “sacred heart.” But what precisely was the Sacré Coeur to stand as a memory of? The Paris Commune had established itself by assassinating two men from the Versailles Army that were attempting to maintain order in Paris after France’s capitulation to the Prussians in 1870. These were the martyrs that the Sacré Coeur was commemorating, not the tens of thousands of male and female Communards, who were Republicans and Socialists that died because they refused to capitulate to the Germans the way the Second Empire had. The defeat of France in 1870 and the subsequent Paris Commune a year later reflected the same struggles between a Republic and an Empire that had persisted since the French Revolution and would continue to persist well into Vichy’s National Revolution policies in 1940. The Communards had resisted and caused much social disruption, and Paris became a virtual civil war battlefield between the two opposing forces seeking victory and the authority to write history. After the Sacré Coeur was constructed, it was inscribed with a commemoration in Latin, containing the phrase: *Gallia Poenitens*. France Repents.

How did France repent during and shortly after the Liberation? In different ways depending on whether the people targeted for punishment or reprisals were men or women. There is a certain logic and continuity in this: if wartime experiences were gendered, and affected how people defined patriotism and collaboration, then why would punishment not be gendered as well? Hanna Diamond argues that the Liberation was a misnomer for women because “the Liberation emerges from this study as an experience which meant the removal of German domination but offered women no other kinds of liberation.”\(^{109}\) Even though women were given the vote after the Occupation was over, their lives and the traditional gender hierarchies did not change. Women were targeted by the Resistance members as collaborators for those feminine acts that had upset their traditional roles in sexual ways: flirting or having a

\(^{108}\) Horne, 417.
\(^{109}\) Diamond, 204.
visible relationship with the German soldiers. In Fabrice Virgili’s work, he argues that all female collaboration took on a sexual light even though sex hardly affected the war itself—it was symbolic.\(^{110}\) By punishing women for violating their traditional gender roles, men and women re-established their own patriotism as well as the natural structure of society, which positioned women as the weak and apolitical ones. Feminine collaboration meant that their actions were not only viewed as sexual, but they also had political implications.

These women were dragged out into the middle of towns and villages surrounded by an angry and jeering mob, and then their heads were shaved. Marguerite Duras’ memoir describes gendered experiences of the Liberation. She had worked to list names of the prisoners-of-war who had families looking for them so that information could be requested about their whereabouts. She witnessed the return of female STO volunteers (it is not clear from Duras’ memoir whether the women truly were volunteers or forced into the arrangement): “In a corner of the main hall I see about ten women sitting on the floor and being addressed by a colonel. They [women] look harassed, but listen open-mouthed to what she says. The women are very dirty and their faces look tired and shocked. Two of them have enormous bellies. I ask [a female officer] what’s going on. She looks at me, lowers her eyes, and says delicately, “STO volunteers.””\(^{111}\) Duras explains that the women had arrived back in France and were booed by the wives of prisoners-of-war, then informed by the authorities that they were considered traitors to their country. The key part of this scene is the manner in which the female STO volunteers are described: prostitutes, hands blackened by German machinery. There was no other explanation provided amongst the women Marguerite Duras was conversing with. The women had worked for the Germans, some of them were pregnant, therefore they must have been sexual collaborators. The violence performed on these ‘femmes tondues ’ in Fabrice Virgili’s monograph targeted a symbol of their femininity, their hair, and by depriving women of this symbol, the Liberation put women back in their places. De-sexed women thus “repented” for their alleged sexual collaboration.

Women were put on trial for denunciations, although punishments were relatively rare. It was easier to dismiss this form of female collaboration unlike its sexual counterpart. Whatever


form of collaboration women were accused of, they often denied that their actions were at all political: “Berthe A., for example, argued quite convincingly that she had joined [the collaborationist] group to obey the requests of the government authorities of the time and that she should not therefore be punished simply because she had done what she was told.” All she had done, in her opinion, was be a good French citizen: subservient to the government and its choices. Traditional women’s roles often provided accused female collaborators with a handy excuse to avoid criminal sentences, an excuse based upon victimhood, but many of the Liberation authorities and the judges did not see women’s collaboration as political because they limited collaboration to a political definition. However, women were still punished in specifically gendered ways such as head-shaving or having their civil rights taken away for a period of time, demonstrating that at least on some level, the arbiters of punishment viewed collaboration as a phenomenon not limited to the official definition.

Marguerite Duras compares the reception of the male STO volunteers to what she witnessed with the women’s auxiliary: “I saw some other STO volunteers arrive. Men, this time. Like the other men they were smiling when they arrived, but gradually they realized and then their faces too looked shocked.” Marguerite Duras’ memoir demonstrates how those who worked in Germany had not defined their actions as collaborative, and certainly did not expect to be reviled upon return to their home country. The men had not realized that after the Liberation, their actions took on a specific political significance. Collaborative acts such as participating in political or militaristic groups, working in Germany, or engaging in commerce with the Occupiers could carry sentences of hard labor or death. Immediately after the Liberation in early June of 1944, heavy purges were carried out by (ostensibly) Resistance fighters—then an uniform system of justice was established to properly try those accused of collaboration. However, in dispensing justice to men, France punished the political, not the personal. This is converse to how women were punished. Paxton points out that “experts, businessmen, and bureaucrats survived almost intact; intellectuals and propagandists were more heavily purged.” The Vichy leadership was removed, of course, so some civil servants were considered political, as Paul Baudouin was. By virtue of punishing the political and not the personal, where very few

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112 Diamond, 148-9
113 Duras, 18.
114 Diamond, 132.
115 Paxton, 333.
women were tried as political collaborators, the Liberation did dispense masculine forms of punishment.

There is no better way to forget the recent past than by commemorating it. Charles De Gaulle created the myth of France as a nation of resisters during WWII, an interpretation of history that glossed over the actual experiences of the majority of French men and women. It meant to provide a new discourse and definition of patriotism and collaboration for French citizens that were not based on their actual experiences. In Marcel Ophuls’ film *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, a woman named Madame Solange is interviewed about her support of Pétain: “…c’étaient pas des ennemis personnels, si vous voulez, c’était pas du même côté. Moi, j’étais pour le Maréchal, les autres étaient de l’autre côté. Voilà, c’est tout.” Madame Solange insists she was not political; therefore there was no reason why she should have been reviled in any way as a collaborator. Before this particular interview, Madame Solange had made certain she locked her front door before talking to the interviewers, because the burden of not being able to argue for her own motivations for supporting Pétain had been on her shoulders for decades. Her opinions and her motivations had been buried under a popular memory of the Occupation as a difficult time for all French people, in which they were all victims and many decided to join the Resistance to liberate France.

The popular representation of the memory of France during WWII demonstrates just how much memory changes the truth. The truth of the French Occupation is: the main reason that those who supported Vichy (and by extension the Nazis) were branded as collaborators was because they lost. Subjunctively, if the Germans had won the war and Vichy had established a new order in France in 1945, those who had resisted and supported De Gaulle would have been branded traitors in the history books. The other truth is that men and women had divergent experiences during those years that defined how they perceived what it meant to be a good citizen of France. I have emphasized that these subjective experiences mean that there is no singular definition of “patriotism” and “collaboration”, because French men and women defined it on the basis of their relationships with the French state and the German Occupiers—and those relationships were gendered. Men saw the military as the highest form of patriotism available to a man, and after the defeat, they based their masculine identity on participation in militaristic

\[\text{116 Pollard, 143.}\]
organizations. For hundreds of thousands of French men, this became a common experience of the wartime years. Civil servants based their patriotism upon their good citizenship, something attained through serving their government and making sure the State was running smoothly and protecting the French people. It provided a sense of masculine independence despite being under the control of the Germans. Separate from this, women were encouraged to maintain their traditional gender roles and obey men, as well as Vichy, so order would be preserved. Female patriotism was tied into their femininity; a fact of biology as much as gender role performances. Yet, daily lives under the Occupation forced men and especially women into different jobs, yet women found themselves attempting to find a way to feed their families by obtaining food in a very public sphere.

After the Liberation, men and women were accused of being collaborators for very different reasons. The men were punished for their political transgressions, but women were punished for their allegedly personal relationships with the Germans. Much of this was because the official definition of collaboration was limited to political collaborations, which by nature excluded women. But the defeat and Occupation had made it difficult for men to define their masculinity and their patriotism, and so reasserting this came at the expense of women. Gender differences were not isolated in a vacuum, the French people experienced conflicts in how they defined collaboration—they felt a need to punish women for defying their traditional gender roles and endangering the social hierarchy. We see that even though women did not have political motivations behind their romantic/sexual relationships, working for the Germans, or supporting Vichy in some manner, people viewed their actions as the female political equivalent, because those actions had political consequences. There is a recurring theme of motivation and victimhood as rationale that exempted people from being labeled as collaborators, while explaining why they were not actively patriotic. In this paper, men did not utilize the victimhood discourse because it infringed on their masculinity. Rather, they obeyed Vichy out of the desire to be good patriotic citizens. Nationalism is the primary motivation in French expressions of patriotism during WWII, and we cannot then say that collaboration and patriotism are mutually exclusive categories.
Bibliography


“Mickey Bombing France” from Youtube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4Ok-RKgCHg


