



HAL
open science

Women In The French Resistance

Claire Andrieu

► **To cite this version:**

Claire Andrieu. Women In The French Resistance: Revisiting the Historical Record. French Politics, Culture & Society, 2000, 18 (1), pp.13 - 27. 10.3167/153763700782378238 . hal-03618407

HAL Id: hal-03618407

<https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-03618407>

Submitted on 24 Mar 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

WOMEN IN THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

Revisiting the Historical Record

Claire Andrieu

Université de Paris-I, Institut d'études politiques

If the Resistance as a whole is part of French identity, the different types of resistance, among them that of women, do not benefit from the same status. On the contrary, official commemorations of the Resistance are based upon two implicit statements: that the Resistance and the nation are somewhat equivalent—the Resistance being viewed as the uprising of the whole nation—and that to differentiate among the resisters would go against the very principles of the Resistance, its universalism, its refusal to make any distinction in race or origin. The assimilationism that is part of the ideology of the French Republic hinders the recognition of particularisms, whether regional, cultural or gendered. The Resistance has two national heroes, General de Gaulle since 1940, and Jean Moulin since 1964, both male and French. But no group has yet demanded the implementation of an affirmative action policy for the process of heroization. The French fear of multiculturalism—or any recognition of particularisms—could be sufficient to explain the slow development of women's studies in France, and indeed, the history of women resisters has not yet been studied as much as that of the Resistance as a whole. There were other factors that prevented it from developing. After reviewing the available bibliography, I propose some new directions of research which—as elementary and unsophisticated as they are—may break down some stereotypes and allow us to glimpse some aspects of the Resistance that traditional history has neglected.

Histories of the Resistance, for the most part, fall into two categories. The first history was rich in anecdotal evidence but lacked sufficient data to form sociological conclusions. The newest history is the statistical monograph which, although methodologically rigorous, fails to communicate individual experience. Thus, the Resistance poses a specific problem to the historian who wishes to work scientifically and go beyond the mere transcription of individ-

ual life stories, but nevertheless searches to transmit the actual experience of resisters. How to include in his or her methodical analysis the horizon of sufferings, of horror and death that surrounded the resisters? Because of such an analytical predicament, the Resistance cannot be treated like just any social movement. The usual categories of sociology or political science offer little means for grasping hunger, pain, fear, and deep trauma due to attacks on human dignity. For instance, how can one insert into a scientific discourse the story of "Odette" who was arrested with her son? While the Germans tortured him in her presence, the boy shouted to his mother, between his screams of pain, "don't talk, Mom, don't talk." She did not talk. He was executed; she was deported to Ravensbrück's concentration camp in February 1944, where she died.¹ Or the story of Claude Virlogeux, a high school teacher in Clermont-Ferrand, who was arrested with her family in February 1944. Her husband, after being tortured terribly, killed himself by slashing his wrists with his broken glasses. He left a message saying he would rather die than take the risk of talking in the next torture session. Their son, aged sixteen, was tortured, too, and shown to his mother lying unconscious in the prison yard, covered with blood, so that she would talk, which she did not. She was sent to Ravensbrück, where she died.² Faced with such facts, almost commonplace, historians still have to find how to measure and how to write about them.

Thus, the recent history of the Resistance is deficient. Twenty years ago, it was revived when many more archives were opened and historians began using a more quantitative approach. But researchers have focused on the political and social history of the underground organizations and treated the repression little or not at all.³ Only one book, written by a sociologist, *Unarmed against Hitler*, has a chapter that sketches the interaction between the Resistance and its repression.⁴ Otherwise, in the rare cases where the question is touched on, it is treated by briefly reporting statistics of deaths and imprisonments.⁵ Yet figures do not speak for themselves, and the Resistance did not stop at the prison door. The resisters continued to struggle in prisons and camps, even though it was another type of struggle. This second period of their action, which lasted often longer than the first one, is generally ignored. By leaving aside the Resistance's tragic dimension, one misses the specificity of civil resistance to a barbarous tyranny. From this point of view, the new history of the Resistance is not much better than the former one. The previous history—incarnated by the collection "Spirit of the Resistance," published by the Presses universitaires de France in the fifties and the sixties—was less quantitative and more narrative, and more often based on testimonies of resisters: emotion was not disposed of.⁶

In neither histories is women's experience studied. Its formal study began in the mid-sixties, and remains, allowing for partial exceptions, essentially narrative. For instance, Margaret Collins Weitz's last book, *Sisters in the Resistance*, published in 1995, is strong on narrative but does not contain elaborate sociological analysis.⁷ Thus, the history of women in the Resistance belongs to the first category of books, that of the narration of events and adventures. As

the history of women resisters has not moved yet towards a more rigorous approach, it is both late to develop, but early, too, since it retains a focus on emotion and actual experience, the very dimension historians need to reintegrate into our understanding.

The State of the History of Women in the Resistance

The works that treat the subject of women in the Resistance are few, essentially descriptive and mostly based upon oral history. In the library of Sciences Po, which has the best social sciences collection in Paris next to the Bibliothèque nationale's, only 2 percent of all the books on the Resistance published between 1944 and 1995, focus on female resisters.⁸ That is the same proportion as that of books treating Jews in the Resistance. The other social categories are even less represented: 1 percent of books about foreigners, fewer than 1 percent about Communists, Socialists, Catholics, workers, peasants or intellectuals. This shows how far behind the social history of the Resistance is, a situation underlined by a 1997 issue of *Le Mouvement social* entitled "For a Social History of the Resistance."⁹ Until now, the predominant history has focused on the organizations of the Resistance, the *réseaux* (the intelligence networks), the groups, the "maquis," the making of Free France and the military campaigns. The Resistance has been studied for itself, but its connections with society and the way social history influenced it have not been sufficiently examined. It is, therefore, not surprising that women remain a secondary subject matter, since the Resistance was not a feminist cause, and since the underground organizations were deliberately made up of both sexes.

As for the existing books about women in the Resistance, they are of three sorts. I will set aside the women's memoirs, which represent two thirds of the whole. The authors rarely call into question their relationship with their male comrades, nor do they always view their experience as particularly female.¹⁰ There are only three cases in the memoirs of women resisters where they focus self-consciously on women. Either the author was deported, enrolled in the women's Free French Forces, or a member of the Women's Committees set up by the Communist Party. In these books, attention was drawn to women through state or partisan traditions bearing no relation to the Resistance. A second series of books offers portrait galleries in which women are often presented in alphabetical order. They were conceived as works of fidelity and memory. As eyewitnesses, the resisters felt they had a duty to commemorate those who disappeared in prisons and camps. These writings constitute what historians somewhat contemptuously call hagiography, forgetting that these works were war memorials.¹¹ In France, the names of the civil resisters are not systematically inscribed on the war memorials that almost every town or village built after the First World War. And women's names are still rarer on these monuments. The third sort of book classifies types of resistance activity, such as res-

cue-escape lines, groups, networks and “maquis,” or such supposedly female activities as women at arms, support services, and room and board.¹² These books are descriptive. They are moving and entertaining, but do not inspire much reflection about the condition of women in that time, or about what the Resistance changed or left intact in the gendered division of roles. Nor do they scientifically examine the social change that the war may have caused.

Another feature of the current history of women resisters is related to sources. It is based largely on memories or interviews. This is not the place to speak about the pros and cons of oral history. Everyone agrees on the necessity to juxtapose and compare sources whatever they are, but it is not always done in these books. It may be the case, nevertheless, that oral history remains the only way to acquire the information when archives have disappeared. Such was the situation of the former deportees of Ravensbrück in 1965, when they published the first book on the camp. They crosschecked their own memories before writing a collective and reliable book.¹³ As a work of history, it was even more reliable than an academic work published three years later, which asserted wrongly and contrary to their testimonies, that there was no gas chamber in Ravensbrück.¹⁴

If the history of women in the Resistance has developed slowly, it is not only because women’s studies in France were delayed by the prevailing universalism. It is due to another factor : women themselves subscribed to what seems to us a conservative vision. Indeed, no clandestine paper ever protested against Vichy’s family policy, its pronatalism, and its patriarchal ideology. In the underground movement, the Communist Party was the only group that tried to organize women in separate committees. But communist women’s propaganda was based on a traditional conception of women. The case of the writer Edith Thomas is emblematic. She was an archivist in the National Archives when she entered the Communist resistance. She was a founding member of the National Committee of Writers (CNE) that the Communists set up in 1942, and she accepted the risk of holding the committee meetings in her apartment. In her memoirs, written in 1952, she recounts: “When I had managed to find enough chairs (which often gave me a lot of trouble; the youngest sat on the floor), I sat and kept quiet in my corner.”¹⁵ Thus, a progressive woman with an important job behaved like a chair attendant in the presence of men.

Women resisters were not feminists. In the seventies, the movement for women’s liberation viewed the sharing of domestic tasks and the job market as the way to emancipation for women, whereas most women in the thirties, forties and fifties devoted themselves to being housewives and mothers.¹⁶ That is why feminists could not identify with women resisters. Many of them wrote about the feminist militants of the nineteenth century, like Flora Tristan, Louise Michel or Madeleine Pelletier, but they could not take on women resisters.¹⁷ There is a sort of miscasting, a ruse of History, in the fact that the first national liberation movement that included women was not a women’s liberation movement. This is not the only example in history. And today, some ultra-

feminists could possibly view women resisters as collaborators, that is to say serving men's power. As for the prewar feminists, they divided in 1940, like the rest of the nation, into petainists, wait-and-seers, and resisters.¹⁸ Resistance and feminism were not connected.

This time-lag between the liberation of a nation and the women's liberation movement has certainly prevented the Resistance from becoming an inspiration to feminists. But this gap also aggravates the specific difficulties that occur with any work on an underground movement. The absence of archives—since security demanded they be destroyed as soon as possible—handicaps the research. Moreover, women themselves often were uninterested in social recognition, and practiced deliberate social self-effacement. Even now, in the nineties, women do not ask for a decoration on the grounds of their activity in the Resistance. In the Resistance generation, only men ask for titles.¹⁹ When contacted by the ministry, women would answer: "I only did my duty." In women's particular relationship to politics, moral standards took the place of politics. The result is a major under-representation of women in the current census of resisters.

One could venture a comparison with an aspect of American history. The "underground railroad" which helped the slaves to escape from the Southern States in the nineteenth century did not leave much archival material. For instance, we know of a clergyman who was burnt with his house for harboring fugitives, but what about his wife? And what about all the women who sheltered runaway slaves, hid them in the cellar, and provided them with food? The same question can be posed about the women who offered hospitality to clandestine resisters, escaped prisoners, downed Allied aviators, and Jews. Paula Schwartz has already underlined the role of this type of resistance and suggested that we "redefine Resistance" in order to include it.²⁰ If the Resistance was the army of the shadows, how can we tell the story of the shadows of the shadows, the housewives? Under the Occupation, unlike during the First World War, the battlefield was not distinct from the home front. The cellar, the kitchen, the bedroom, wherever the fugitive stayed, was the front. This enabled many women to serve their motherland without transgressing the gendered division of roles. This Resistance at home probably reinforced the legitimacy of the housewife's status after the war, delaying, therefore, the expansion of the current feminism.

What may have also delayed women's claims, and slackened the pressure in favor of women's studies, is the respect French male resisters have always expressed towards their female companions in arms. This might be an aspect of French identity, as the historian Mona Ozouf describes it in *Women's Words. Essay on the French Singularity*.²¹ She makes the assumption that French universalism, while dulling women's will to form their own pressure groups, also limits men's particularism and facilitates to some extent the integration of women into male space. Indeed, men's attitude towards the memory of the women's Resistance seems to vary considerably from one country to another.

In the Italian case, for example, the historian Anna Bravo speaks of a dispute between women's history and the Resistance's historiography. According to her, Italian women resisters underwent an "exclusion" from the resisting space, whereas, on the contrary, the Resistance was a moment in which public and private spheres merged together. The image of the Italian male-armed partisan seems to have masked that of the female civil resister.²² Likewise, according to the historian Tassoula Vervenioti, the Greek Resistance fighters have had a hard time accepting that the ELAS (the communist resistance army) could not have survived without women's work.²³ This erasure of the women's part corresponds to a strong gendered division of roles. For instance, the severe code of honor which prevailed at that time in Greece led to private conversations between men and women being forbidden in the ELAS. One woman who infringed the rule was disarmed and committed suicide. Another, considered to be too beautiful, was dismissed from her squad on the grounds that she might attract the "bourgeois" who joined the ELAS. These scenarios were hardly conceivable in France.

There is a sort of litany in France in the men resisters' discourse about women resisters: that nothing would have been possible without them, and that women were more courageous than men. Nevertheless, men have been at loss to speak about women behaving like men. Since their culture could not integrate the fact that a woman could act in the public sphere like a man, they felt ill at ease when having to describe women as women. They could consider a woman, even if obviously pregnant, to be a man. That is what happened to Lucie Aubrac in 1943, when she was sheltered with her husband and her three-year old boy. Favier, the host, knew she had just freed her husband from prison with an armed commando. Lucie Aubrac writes:

Suddenly Jean-Pierre [her son] exclaims: "Peepee!"
"Hey you women," Favier calls out, "Look after the little one...."
I stand up obediently.
"Not you ! [Favier says] I was speaking to my women. You are a man you know. You fight like a man. You stay with us."²⁴

Here, two representations of gender entered into conflict: for Favier, the masculine gender is a club in which women who behave like men are admitted, while for Lucie, the feminine gender is purely biological, culturally neutral, bi-gendered as it were. For both of them, nevertheless, the frontier between genders could be overstepped.

Gender distinctions were partly abolished in the underground struggle. After the war, some men had difficulty adapting to this past. This was particularly clear when a departmental chief of the "FFI" took refuge in a language of devotion in order to pay homage to women. The confusion that a traditionally minded man may have felt speaking of women's Resistance clearly emerges from these lines written shortly after the war:

They were admirable....

And, although I am uncomfortable, thinking their modesty and their delicacy will suffer, I feel obliged to pay here a special homage to some of them who distinguished themselves among so many others.

[Then follows a description of women playing the same roles and undergoing the same ordeals as men, but the author concludes in a form of prayer, in an invocation of the woman resister as an icon, an incarnation of the motherland.]

Women and young girls of the Orne, who sacrificed much sweetness and tenderness for the cause of the Resistance, you are in our eyes the face and the soul of the MOTHERLAND.²⁵ [capital letters]

It is as if this Frenchman had to break a taboo in order to speak about women's action in the public sphere. He forced himself and found a solution to the dilemma in the canonization of women's Resistance. Yet this example, which may present an extreme case, shows that even in a socially conservative milieu, men acknowledged the Resistance of women. This type of memory does not erase women from history. On the contrary, it gives them a paradoxical place, eminent and marginal at the same time. It seems that the universalism of the French Republic and the refusal to differentiate between individuals counterbalanced the conception of woman as dedicated to the familial sphere. Gendered division of roles neither made them a minority nor excluded them from the neutral human gender. Men and women had to cope with the double image of female beings assigned to one sphere of activity, the private one, but at the same time liable to become men by acting publicly.

For a Social History of Women Resisters

Our knowledge of many aspects of the Resistance is deficient, so that we can only suggest hypotheses on the basis of incomplete information. With these reservations, one can try a sociological and quantitative approach, reviewing the usual categories of analysis.

How many women resisters were there? The few available statistics suggest that they were about 12 percent of the resisters.²⁶ This is contradictory to the men's idea that women played an essential role in the Resistance, and that the Resistance was a civil struggle led from the homefront. The subjective reasons for the under-representation of women have already been brought up. If one were to hypothesize that women resisted as much as men with their own means, it would appear that they declared their resistance after the war four times less than men. Women's tendency to consider civic behavior as "natural" explains the gap in the statistics. Declaration of acts of Resistance was not mandatory, although it was necessary to get pensions or decorations. In a time when fewer than half of the women worked, it is not surprising that they tended to "naturalize" their social activities instead of giving them a social status.

Be that as it may, the figure of 12 percent of women in the Resistance movement is a high percentage. It represents a mass commitment, perhaps the largest ever seen until then, if one takes as a point of comparison the female percentage in the prewar political parties. Women were one out of a thousand members of the Radical Party, a center-left party, and three out of a hundred in the Socialist Party. After the war, in 1946, the Communist Party's membership were only 11 percent women.²⁷ However, this comparison is of limited value, first because women were not allowed to vote until 1944, and above all because the Resistance was not party politics. One cannot equate civic subversive commitment, in which life and liberty are at stake, with participation in elections or political debate. The confusion was shared, though, by a Swiss relative of Berty Albrecht, a woman resister and chief of the Social Service of the group *Combat*, who was arrested and executed in May 1943. Her daughter, aged eighteen, had managed to escape and to find refuge in Switzerland with her Swiss uncle. When announcing to the young woman her mother's death, the man told her: "If your mother had not been in politics, that would not have happened."²⁸ It was a complete misinterpretation of the Resistance. To appraise a unique phenomenon like the Resistance, it would be better to have statistics about gender in civic voluntary associations. But they do not exist for that period.

What was the familial status of the women resisters? Were they archetypal young single women, like those presented in some films? The few available statistics show, on the contrary, that for women, a commitment to the Resistance had little to do with age or marital status.²⁹ In the department of Ille-et-Vilaine, the proportion of women resisters is almost the same from age 20 to 40. In the January 24, 1943 convoy of 230 women sent to Auschwitz, most of whom being communist resisters or close to the Communist Party, 58 percent were married, and 30 percent had left behind one or several children under the age of 16.³⁰ These figures contradict the stereotype of the young woman resister without familial responsibility. This finding leads us to the theme of women's courage. When entering the Resistance, a mother had to transcend her maternal feelings. One can suppose that this personal trial, on top of her more general commitment, if overcome, made her stronger and more passionate than men. A Parisian policeman noted in 1941: "Women are more Communist than men."³¹

What about their socioprofessional status? Were housewives alienated and passive, and working women dynamic resisters? Such an assumption, which after the seventies could be a clichéd feminist description of the women's Resistance, does not hold. The percentage of housewives in the Resistance was in fact the same as in the general population. In the forties, about 50 percent of French women were housewives. One finds the same percentage in the fragmented statistics of women resisters.³² For instance, in Geneviève de Gaulle's convoy to Ravensbrück, composed of 958 women, half of them were housewives.³³ The Resistance did not create a cleavage between

housewives and working women. This may be the result of two opposing movements. A housewife was not trapped in a network of social and professional interdependencies, and her political judgements relied on morals rather than expertise. These two factors might have made her able to think more independently. On the margins of politics, she could easily think outside the limits of the law. But she was isolated, and she missed the network and the professional skills necessary to start a collective action. These assets were the strong point of working women.

Working women's jobs in the Resistance were distributed according to a demarcation line drawn between Communist organizations and the others. In non-Communist organizations, white-collar jobs were clearly over-represented, whereas in Communist ones, the working class (industrial workers and clerks) were slightly over-represented. In the convoy of the 230 women to Auschwitz, 69 percent were workers and clerks. For the whole female working population in France, the same percentage was 66 percent, not including peasants.³⁴ Thus, the social composition of these communist deportees reflected that of the French people as a whole. In the other groups, the proportion was the opposite. The percentage of white-collar workers was 64 percent, which was twice as high as the national average, not including farmers. These contrasts match other figures concerning the Resistance as a whole: they are not specific to women. Once again, the assumption that social composition differed by gender does not hold. The Communist Resistance was a popular movement, whereas the other organizations were bourgeois. From this point of view, there were two "Resistances." They happened to meet, thanks to the clandestine institutions created by General de Gaulle, and thanks to the Germans who threw them together in prison. The mixing of the different milieux left deep traces in memories and is part of the memory of the Resistance.

Women farmers's presence in the registered Resistance is almost nil, like that of men farmers. At that time, about 30 percent of the French worked in agriculture. My hypothesis is that the quasi-absence of farmers in the statistical record is due to rural isolation, under-education and, as far as women were concerned, to an imposing patriarchal system. But the maquis would not have lasted for such a long time without the help of the women farmers, and downed airmen would not have been rescued, hidden, escorted, and finally sent back to freedom. Using American military archives, Margaret Rossiter has shown this clearly.³⁵ Apart from this socio-geographical factor of massive under-representation, the other obstacle to women acknowledging themselves as resisters was the traditional conception of womanhood.

The repertoire of action of women resisters is often described. Two opposite strategies were at their disposal, either building on the social codes or subverting them: that is, Resistance at home and the instrumentalization of the feminine role. The Resistance at home can be analyzed as an intrusion of the public sphere into the private one. It remained a private affair, however strong patriotic feelings might have been. The memoirs of Christian Pineau, one of

the leaders of the Resistance and the founder of the group "Libération-nord," are a perfect illustration of this Resistance at home which did not need public recognition. In 1943, when he was a fugitive, he used to stay with the Goyet family when he came to Lyon.³⁶

[A]t my friends', the Goyets' home, the atmosphere is gentle and calming. After a trip, once again in their little kitchen with the radio set near Thérèse who's sewing, I feel all danger has been removed, that nothing outside can trouble the tranquility of this family life. On the second floor, in the room next to mine, Claudette, the Goyet's daughter, sleeps. She is the age of my fourth son, but her child's face is graver. She participates in the war, which she has trouble grasping, and in the Resistance, which she hardly even imagines. When her resolutely optimistic mother, announces to her, once a week, in the spirit of wishful thinking, the taking of Smolensk by the Russians, she claps her hands. Smolensk must be quite near, since her parents are so glad.

Thérèse takes charge of my food, my clothes, my laundry, with touching care.

One night, going downstairs into the kitchen for a glass of water, I find her ironing my boxershorts.

I gently scold her:

—Thérèse, you'll get tired, you should not still be still working after two a.m.

She answers simply:

—It's for France.

One is forced to consider Thérèse's domestic tasks as a Resistance activity, so close the link is between the fugitive who gets his physical and moral strength from a substitute family, and the hostess who serves her country while playing her traditional social role. No doubt Thérèse did not consider herself a resister. She was only "doing her duty," although she could have been arrested and deported for sheltering a "terrorist."

All the literature describes the way femininity was used as an arm to beguile the Vichy police and the Germans. The most extraordinary example of subversion of social codes in favor of the Resistance is certainly that of Lucie Aubrac. After the arrest of her husband, she succeeded in making the Germans believe that their prisoner was her lover and that he had made her pregnant, which she visibly was. As she pretended to be an aristocrat, she demanded to be married to the condemned man before he was executed, in order to escape dishonor. During the negotiations, she prepared her husband's escape. And the very day she was "married," she directed the commando which freed her husband.³⁷ She had played both the female and the male part of the affair. Not all women were able—or were allowed by men—to play both roles: they were few in the armed Resistance and numerous in the social services and among liaison agents. This is not a surprise. What would be more interesting would be to know whether the division of work in the Resistance changed or merely reproduced the prewar gender division.

But our knowledge is insufficient to answer these questions. What about the hierarchical place of women? Has the traditional inequality between men and women been attenuated by participation in the Resistance? It seems likely.

The difficulty is to find a population of reference, since the organization of the Resistance was very peculiar. Yet, neither the underground National Council of the Resistance nor de Gaulle's government ever included a woman. Whereas Blum had appointed three women ministers in 1936, the National Council of the Resistance did not even dare to pronounce itself in favor of women's suffrage. Perhaps rather than saluting women resisters, de Gaulle, in giving women the right to vote in April 1944, was putting an end to the recurrent debates of the interwar years—the favorable votes of the representatives (the “députés”), which had been voted down by the Senate.

On the whole, nevertheless, the Liberation was a favorable moment to women. The resisters nominated 8 percent of women to the Departmental Committees of the Liberation, and 6 percent were elected representatives in 1945. In comparison, the same departmental and national percentages for the local and parliamentary representatives went down until the sixties to less than 2 percent.³⁸ As far as the intellectuals are concerned, the Resistance also looks less misogynous. The clandestine National Committee of Writers included four women out of fifty-three members, whereas the French Academy did not receive a woman until 1980. These examples show that the hypothesis of women's emancipation through the Resistance needs further investigation, and that it must be studied on a two-fold basis, in the short term as well as in the long run.

To Conclude

The study of women's Resistance highlights the gap between social facts and systems of representations. It is possible that the role of women in the Resistance was even greater than has been realized. It would be worth scrutinizing the early days, the Resistance of the pioneers, when there was no hope, no future and no existing underground organizations. In that first year, 1940-1941, who were the inventors of the Resistance, the few personalities who acted blindly and without a model? In those times of confusion, psychology played a more important role than sociology. And women, thanks to their double culture, their double position in and out of the public sphere, may have been better armed to decide, act and innovate against the established society. This was the case, for instance, of Germaine Tillion, an ethnologist who was among the founders of the network of the Musée de l'Homme; for Lucie Aubrac, a history teacher who started the group that became Libération-sud; for Hélène Viannay, a student who set up a group that was to become Défense de la France; and for Micheline Eude who mobilized her university comrades and contributed to the creation of Franc-Tireur. Yet all these women innovators later effaced themselves and let men take over the organizations. It would be interesting to compare the charts of the organizations in 1941 and 1944 and to analyze the mechanism of the transfer of power. Hélène Viannay, for instance, recently explained that as long as her Resistance activity was

craft work, and consisted mostly of home-made underground leaflets, she wrote the text, but as soon as a real paper was launched with a clandestine printing machine, she felt this was no longer a woman's affair, and spontaneously let her male comrades write the articles.³⁹

After the war, the way men and women saw themselves played a role in the apparent absence of interest in the women's Resistance. Generally, the line between genders was not drawn between men and women, but between men and "male women" on one side, and "pure women" on the other side. A woman was able to become a man, if she acted publicly. We saw how Lucie Aubrac was considered spontaneously to be a man by her host. Before the war, while most women students took the *agrégation féminine* to become a teacher, Lucie Aubrac presented herself and passed the *agrégation masculine*. In March 1944, Edith Thomas wrote an article in an underground paper, saying that "the reasons why men and women commit themselves to the Resistance are not different depending on whether they are men or women."⁴⁰ Likewise, Annie Guéhenno, a woman resister, evoked her and her comrades' Resistance as embarking "on our man's life."⁴¹ These women resisters are a good illustration of the "French singularity" that Mona Ozouf has described. Their universalism had the edge over their potential feminism, notably because to a certain extent they could cross the line between genders.

This a-symmetrical conception of genders—women could become men but the inverse was not true—was not new. It had taken root during the interwar years. As Siân Reynolds has shown in *France Between the Wars*, the French Third Republic was "no longer an all-male space." "Public life was infiltrated by (women) outsiders." The Resistance was a continuation of this prewar "permeability of the political arena."⁴² Thus defined, gender boundaries were well rooted and did not change much until the sixties. Contrary to after World War I, the postwar world of the forties did not prove to be transformative. The character of the "garçonne," or the "flapper" of the twenties, did not reappear, and Simone de Beauvoir was but an anomaly. These particular frontiers between mixed men on one side, and pure women on the other, were not blurred by war. It would be hard to write, as Mary Louise Roberts did for the First World War, a book entitled "reconstructing gender in postwar France."⁴³ Nor could we write a book on "deconstructing the Vichyst anti-feminist order," because in August 1944 what was left of its legal apparatus disappeared with the reestablishment of the Republican law. The government of Vichy's attempt to redefine "men" and "women" by confining them in different social spaces and in separate functions did not succeed.⁴⁴ From a cultural point of view, 1945 was a return to 1939. The postwar cultural representation of relationships between men and women hardly integrated the lessons of the Resistance's experience. At the time, the system of representations was stronger than facts.

Notes

- * This article is a revised version of a lecture given in the context of "La Quinzaine Française," Cornell's First Annual French Festival, November 5-23, 1997, the theme of which was "Frenchness/Otherness." Princeton University's Committee for European Studies also gave me the opportunity to rethink this text for a talk given in November 1997.
1. Geneviève Anthonioz de Gaulle, "Conférence au Congrès de l'Association nationale des médaillés de la Résistance française," typed, 14 October 1988, p. 9; interview with the author, October 25, 1997.
 2. "Claude Virlogeux née Rodier, 42^e promotion scientifique 1903-1944," *A la mémoire des sévriennes mortes pour la France, 1939-1945* (Paris: 1946), p. 57-66.
 3. Renée Bédarida, *Témoignage chrétien (1941-1944)* (Paris: Les éditions ouvrières, 1977); Dominique Veillon, *Le Franc-tireur, un journal clandestin, un mouvement de résistance, 1940-1944* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977); Jacqueline Sainclivier, *La Résistance en Ille-et-Vilaine, 1940-1944* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1993); Laurent Douzou, *La Désobéissance. Histoire du mouvement Libération-Sud* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995); Olivier Wieviorka, *Une Certaine Idée de la Résistance. Défense de la France 1940-1949* (Paris: Seuil, 1995); Jacqueline Sainclivier and Christian Bougeard, eds., *La Résistance et les Français. Enjeux stratégiques et environnement social*, (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1995); Laurent Douzou, Robert Frank and Dominique Veillon, eds., *La Résistance et les Français: Villes, centres et logiques de décision* (Cachan: IHTP-CNRS, 1995); Jean-Marie Guillon and Pierre Laborie, eds., *Mémoire et Histoire: la Résistance* (Toulouse: Privat, 1995); François Marcot, ed., *La Résistance et les Français. Lutte armée et maquis* (Besançon: Annales littéraires de l'Université de Franche-Comté, 1996); Jean-Marie Guillon and Robert Mencherini, eds., *La Résistance et les européens du sud* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999).
 4. Jacques Sémelin, *Sans armes face à Hitler. La résistance civile en Europe 1939-1943* (Paris: Payot, 1989).
 5. See Veillon, *Le Franc-tireur*, p.394-400, and Sainclivier, *La Résistance en Ille-et-vilaine*, p. 262-65.
 6. Eighteen books were published from 1954 to 1968 (Paris: PUF); see also Henri Noguères, *Histoire de la Résistance en France* (5 volumes) (Paris: Laffont, 1967-1981).
 7. Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995; Transl. Paris: Albin Michel, 1997).
 8. Fourteen books out of 605 focus on the women in the French Resistance. The collection of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques is incomplete. Margaret Collins Weitz cites forty-six books published on that subject.
 9. "Pour une histoire sociale de la Résistance," Antoine Prost, ed., *Le Mouvement social* 180 (juillet-septembre 1997).
 10. Denise Dufournier, *La Maison des mortes* (Paris: Hachette, 1945); Elisabeth Terrenoire, *Combattantes sans uniforme: les femmes dans la Résistance* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1946); Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, *L'Arche de Noé* (Paris: Plon, 1968); Annie Guéhenno, *L'Épreuve, récit*, (Paris: Grasset, 1968); Lucie Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, (1984, trans., Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Lise London, *La Mégère de la rue Daguerre*, (Paris: Seuil, 1995).
 11. *À la mémoire des sévriennes mortes pour la France*; Charlotte Delbo, *Le convoi du 24 janvier 1943* (Paris: Minuit, 1965); Nicole Chatel, Boulineau Annie, *Des femmes dans la résistance*, [interviews] (Paris: Julliard, 1972); Marie-Louise Coudert, *Elles, la Résistance*, [a combination of living and dead resisters] (Paris: Messidor, 1984).
 12. Amicale de Ravensbrück and Association des déportées et internées de la Résistance, *Les Françaises à Ravensbrück* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965); Margaret L. Rossiter, *Women in*

- the Resistance* (New York: Praeger, 1985); Guylaine Guidez, *Femmes dans la guerre, 1939-1945* (Paris: Perrin, 1989); Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*.
13. Amicale de Ravensbrück and Association des déportées et internées de la Résistance, *Les Françaises à Ravensbrück*.
 14. Olga Wormser-Migot, *Le Système concentrationnaire nazi 1933-1945* (Paris: PUF, 1968).
 15. Edith Thomas, *Le Témoin compromis: Mémoires* [1952], (Paris: Viviane Hamy, 1995).
 16. Claire Andrieu, "Femmes," in Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, eds., *1938-1948, Les Années de tourmente* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995).
 17. See for instance the recent works of Gay L. Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris: Images of the Commune* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996); David Barry, *Women and Political Insurgency: France in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996); Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). These books have been reviewed in *French Politics & Society* 15, 3 (Summer 1997), and 16, 3 (Summer 1998).
 18. Christine Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 437-52.
 19. The head of the "Office des Anciens Combattants" of Meurthe-et-Moselle, interview with the author, October 25, 1997.
 20. Paula Schwartz, "Redefining Resistance: Women's Activism in Wartime France," in Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret Collins Weitz, eds., *Behind the Lines. Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 141-53.
 21. Mona Ozouf, *Les Mots des femmes. Essai sur la singularité française* (Paris: Fayard, 1995). Reviewed in *French Politics & Society* 14, 3 (Summer 1996).
 22. Anna Bravo, "Résistance civile, résistance des femmes en Italie, 1943-1945," in Guillon and Mencherini, eds., *La Résistance et les européens du sud*, p.42-45.
 23. Tassoula Vervenioti, "Les résistantes grecques et le Front national de Libération, 1941-1944" in *La Résistance et les européens du sud*, p. 68-70.
 24. Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*, p. 195.
 25. André Mazeline, *Clandestinité. La Résistance dans le département de l'Orne* (La Ferté Macé, 1947), p. 101-104; republished by Tiresias, Paris, 1994.
 26. Claire Andrieu, "Les résistantes, perspectives de recherche," *Le Mouvement social* (juillet-septembre 1997), statistical table, p. 74. The percentage of women having received the title of "Combattante Volontaire de la Résistance" (CVR) after the war goes from 10 percent to 13 percent in the departments of Ille-et-Vilaine, Calvados, Manche and Hérault. The percentage of women goes from 10 to 24 percent in the Resistance movements Franc-Tireur, Libération-sud, Défense de la France, and Témoignage chrétien.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
 28. Mireille Albrecht, *La Grande Figure féminine de la Résistance, Berty* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1986), p. 326.
 29. Andrieu, "Les résistantes, perspectives," p. 79-80.
 30. Delbo, *Le Convoi du 24 janvier 1943*.
 31. Paula Schwartz, "La répression des femmes communistes (1940-1944)," *Cahiers de l'IHTP*, "Identités féminines et violences politiques," François Rouquet et Danièle Voldman, eds. (octobre 1995), p. 25.
 32. Andrieu, "Les résistantes, perspectives," p.82-83.
 33. Anthonioz-de Gaulle, "Conférence."
 34. Figures of 1954, in Olivier Thélot and Claude Marchand, *Deux siècles de travail en France* (Paris: INSEE, 1991).
 35. Rossiter, *Women in the Resistance*.
 36. Christian Pineau, *La Simple Vérité 1940-1945* (Paris: Julliard, 1960, republished 1983), p. 293.

37. Aubrac, *Outwitting the Gestapo*.
38. Claire Andrieu, "Les résistantes, perspectives," table p. 91; and Jane Jenson and Mariette Sineau, *Mitterrand et les Françaises* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1995).
39. Hélène Viannay interviewed by Françoise Thébaud and Dominique Veillon, *Clio, Femmes, histoire, société* 1 (October 1995): 234-262.
40. Edith Thomas, article in *L'Almanach français*, March 1944. This quotation was kindly given to me by Sonia Madrona, currently writing a dissertation on Edith Thomas at the University of Orleans.
41. Guéhenno, *L'Épreuve*.
42. Sian Reynolds, *France Between the Wars : Gender and Politics* (London and New York : Routledge, 1994), p. 221, 167, 162.
43. Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without sexes. Reconstructing gender in postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).
44. See Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).