DE LA DOULEUR À L’IVRESSE:
VISIONS OF WAR AND RESISTANCE

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (French).

Chapel Hill
2007

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ABSTRACT

CORINA DUEÑAS: De la douleur à l’ivresse: Visions of War and Resistance
(Under the direction of Dominique Fisher)

This dissertation explores the notion of gendered resistance acts and writing through close readings of the personal narratives of three French women who experienced life in France during the Second World War. The works of Claire Chevrillon (Code Name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance), Marguerite Duras (La Douleur), and Lucie Aubrac (Ils partiront dans l’ivresse) challenge traditional definitions of resistance, as well as the notion that war, resistance and the writing of such can be systematically categorized according to the male/female dichotomy. These authors depict the day-to-day struggle of ordinary people caught in war, their daily resistance, and their ordinary as well as extraordinary heroism. In doing so, they debunk the stereotypes of war, resistance and heroism that are based on traditional military models of masculinity. Their narratives offer a more comprehensive view of wartime France than was previously depicted by Charles de Gaulle and post-war historians, thereby adding to the present debate of what constitutes history and historiography.

Recent critical works on women and the Second World War have done much to document women’s resistance. Yet, these studies tend to highlight the distinctly feminine nature of women’s wartime resistance and narratives, ultimately reinforcing the established dichotomies based on gender difference. This dissertation suggests that women’s wartime narratives do not necessarily point to a feminization of war, resistance, history, and writing,
but rather, to a more personalized representation of historical events based on individual experience, but which is still part of the historical discourse.
To the memory of Lucie Aubrac

1912 – 2007
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my appreciation to my dissertation advisor, Dominique Fisher, for her guidance and patience. I would also like to thank my committee members, Martine Antle, Hassan Melehy, José M. Polo de Bernabé, and Donald Reid, for their thoughtful comments and support. My heartfelt appreciation also goes out to the many friends, family members, and colleagues who offered their practical assistance and encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank Lucie Aubrac for inspiring this project and for the time that she shared with me.
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INTRODUCTION

The silence of the sea. A silence that hides something, a silence charged with an undisclosed intensity; an energy in reserve awaiting release, wanting to surface. (Brown and Stokes 26)

Such was the silence of women in the historiography of the Second World War and the Resistance. It seems that with the men having left them out of the official history of the War and Resistance, women initially contributed to their own self-effacement from this period through their silence. But what was this silence hiding, to borrow from Brown and Stoke’s introduction to Vercor’s *Le silence de la mer?* Women’s post-war silence was hiding the immense and intense participation of women in the French Resistance.

The three female authors in this study, Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras, and Lucie Aubrac all participated in the Resistance in different capacities and from different locations.¹ Each woman had her own timeline, means and motivations for joining an organized resistance movement; yet each one also resisted individually in non-conventional ways that did not conform to the standard rules of warfare which were originally dictated by men’s military model.

In his clandestine novella, through his young female character’s silence towards the German soldier whom she is forced to lodge, Vercors acknowledged the power of women to resist, and that the slightest refusal to accept the Occupation constituted resistance. Yet, traditional definitions of resistance failed to see these individual acts. Only those actions

¹ See the Appendix for a brief biographical overview of the authors.
carried out through an organized group were counted. This is ironic since, at first, resistance was not organized, but rather, individual, subtle, and spontaneous. Established definitions were also limited to leadership roles and armed combat—actions such as fighting with the maquis or sabotage.\(^2\) Regarding female participation, the official history of the Resistance only recognized the few women who stood out in these male-dominated areas of leadership and the battlefield: women such as Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, who took over the Alliance Network when its leader was arrested, and Berty Albrecht,\(^3\) head of Combat’s Social Services and assistant to the movement’s leader, Henri Frenay. Lucie Aubrac is another such women occasionally mentioned in post-war history, since she distinguished herself in terms of action and received military recognition that men understood as resistance. But in reality, the Occupation brought the Second World War to people’s doorsteps and into their homes. While WWI was fought from real trenches on a battlefield, there was no trench warfare during WWII, since actual fighting was brief. The war, then, was the Occupation, which pitted the German soldier against the common person in the streets of France. The “trenches” were everywhere, every day, all day long. Today, to be “in the trenches” means to be at work in the daily grind of everyday life. This daily resistance, depicted by many female authors in their personal narratives, has, until recently, been overlooked by historians.

In the nineteenth century, historiography adhered strictly to academic or archival history. Over time, it moved towards the acceptance of other forms of historical documentation from more personal sources. During the nineteenth century, history was

\(^2\) The maquis were the militant resistance groups that set up camp in the mountains. They were largely made up of young men who, after November 1942, opted to join these fighter groups instead of being deported to Germany as forced laborers under the STO (Service du Travail Obligatoire) (Paxton 292-3).

\(^3\) References can be found under the following variations of the spelling of her first name: Berty, Berthy, Bertie and Berthie. I will use the first spelling, which is the one used by her daughter, Mireille Albrecht, in the 1986 biography titled Berty.
dominated by the scientific approach, “a methodology stressing a disembodied, well-trained
observer, and a set of practices scrutinizing state documents” (Smith 197). Historiography
rooted in archival research was considered an objective, fact-based dissection of documents
concerning only the political events of nations. Adhering to Hegel’s theories of rationality, it
was not to be influenced by ideologies stemming from social factors such as gender, race, or
religion.⁴

In the first half of the twentieth century, historians such as Marc Bloch, Lucien
Febvre, Paul Lacombe and Henri Berr began to open up to other disciplines such as
geography, economics, and sociology. These historians no longer focused on isolated events,
but rather saw them in relation to other disciplines: “Henri Berr proposed a new kind of
history, one based on the extra effort of generalizing or synthesizing. . . . The historian had to
integrate sociology, psychology, and economics, and even see himself as an artist as well as a
scientist” (Smith 218). This evolution gave female historians, such as the American Lucy
Maynard Salmon, the opportunity to assert themselves in the field. Until then, their work had
been marginalized as superficial for its context of social, domestic, and women’s issues.⁵

Since the Second World War, historiography has continued in its transformation
towards an interdisciplinary, contextualized field. This shift has coincided with a growing
interest in related fields such as social history, cultural history and women’s history.

Historians, and especially women’s historians such as Joan W. Scott, Hanna Diamond, Sarah
Fishman, and Dominique Veillon understand that history does not occur as isolated events,

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⁴ In Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants, Jean-François Lyotard argues that Hegelian rational thought
collapsed with Auschwitz. Ever since this senseless event, the modern subject, who could once organize events
into a rational historical grand narrative, can no longer do so, for history can no longer be understood as rational
(52-5).

⁵ See Bonnie G. Smith’s The Gender of History. This book presents the evolution of historiography during the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also explores the gendered nature of this development. See also the works
of Joan W. Scott and Natalie Zemon Davis.
but rather, is intertwined with people’s daily lives, men and women alike. The effects of 
these “events” on—as well as the events as seen from the perspective of—societies, 
communities, and individuals are all part of history. Moreover, as Gallagher has pointed out, 
“Much of [the] recent work on gender and war has made clear that the wartime experiences 
of noncombatants provide important material for understanding war and for exploring the 
intersecting ideologies of war and gender” (3).

The traditional scientific work of professional historians has also been hindered by 
conditions of war. Many official archives remained sealed for decades after the events took 
place. Furthermore, many documents either never came to exist, disappeared, or were 
intentionally destroyed. Specifically, the history of the French Resistance cannot easily be 
pieced together from official documentation, and German and Vichy government documents 
are unreliable for their blatantly biased documentation. These have had to be supplemented 
by the testimonies of resistance leaders and participants. In the preface to Resistance in 
Vichy France (1978), H. R. Kedward stressed this “dearth of official documentation” (vi) and 
the fact that official archives for the Occupation period were still sealed at the time of his 
research. Those that were available, “constitute[d] an unsatisfactory source and [were not] 
used in this study” (vi, n3). Instead, Kedward relied extensively on memoirs, oral 
testimonies, and the clandestine newspapers of the Resistance, all of which “implicitly or 
explicitly . . . document the political and social sources of Resistance” (vii).

6 The current delay is sixty years. This delay was established by Article One of Decree number 79-1038 of the 
December 3, 1979 law regarding the release of certain public documents. The full decree with a list of all 
documents affected by this law can be accessed via the National Archives website: <http:// 
www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr> or directly through <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr> (under link to 
other legislative and regulatory texts). See bibliography for full reference.
For ten years after the war, the Comité d’histoire de la Guerre, directed by Lucien Febvre and Henri Michel, collected documents and 1,500 testimonies from résistants all over France. But rather than leave these sources to objective future historians, as early as 1955, the Comité encouraged academic historians—who had themselves participated in the Resistance—to produce professional historical work from these sources (Leroux).

Similarly, to avoid a lack of historical documentation of the Congolese conflict of 1959-65, historian B. Verhaegen began the practice of collecting “immediate history”—that of gathering up as many contemporary documents as possible just after the events so that they would not disappear in the aftermath. He published the documentation along with his interpretation, and “[t]he convincing quality of his work established the academic validity of this approach” (Vansina 135). According to Jan Vansina, Bogumil Jewsiewicki, another historian of the Congo, later extended Verhaegen’s concept of immediate history to include the collection of oral histories and the experience of daily life (135).

As of the post-war era in France, organizations and institutions have been created to collect and study this immediate or contemporary history. These organizations include the Comité d’Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale and the Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent (IHTP), founded in the 1980s by Henry Rousso. Since the 1980s, many historians have also found value in history extracted from the actions and observations of civilians, often ordinary people, in their daily lives. In this genre of history, the people’s personal

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7 Throughout this study, I will use the French terms résistant and résistante to designate male and female resistance fighters, respectively. I prefer the original French term to the English “resister” or “woman resister.”

8 See Laurent Douzou’s La Résistance française : une histoire périlleuse for an in-depth historiography of the Second World War including extensive information on these organizations.

9 Among other sources and original documents, Henri Noguères used 170 testimonies to complete his five-volume Histoire de la Résistance en France (1967-1981). He also published two books on daily life: La vie
documents and accounts—autobiographies, memoirs, journals, letters, oral histories, photographs, etc.—become source documents. Their stories, often of the private life, complement the official history pieced together from public documents. They offer insight as to what life was really like during a particular time and event in history. These alternate sources greatly serve the official history, especially when official records are inexistent or inaccessible. But their acceptance also demonstrates that modern historians desire to bring history to life by letting it be written by its actors rather than by distant, future historians:

C’est Febvre, chef de file de l’École des Annales, qui incite les acteurs et les témoins de l’occupation à prendre la plume, pour ‘donner leur version des événements’, se méfiant par avance d’une histoire qui serait élaborée uniquement à froid par les générations futures ! Et de fait, force est de constater que les témoignages recueillis par le Comité [d’histoire de la Guerre] continuent d’être une source irremplaçable pour les études les plus récentes sur la Résistance. (Leroux, par. 6)

Specifically regarding times of war, these unofficial sources also shed light on the abundant, everyday, non-combat resistance activities carried out through people’s private lives. These acts might otherwise have gone unrecognized. Throughout this work, I will refer to them as “daily resistance.”

In the last thirty years, attempts by revisionist historians such as Paul Rassinier and Robert Faurisson to negate the Holocaust,¹⁰ coupled with a growing national amnesia or silence on the subject, debates on Vichy collaboration sparked by Rousso’s Le Syndrome de Vichy, and claims, such as Robert Paxton’s, that a very small fraction of the French actually resisted,¹¹ all led to an explosion of personal testimonies by former résistants and Holocaust

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¹⁰ See Donald Reid’s “Germaine Tillion and Resistance to the Vichy Syndrome” for more information on the revisionist, or negationist, trend in history.

¹¹ We will come back to Paxton’s claim more extensively in Chapter 1.
survivors. Among these were a great number of memoirs by those women who had lived through the Occupation and carried out some form of resistance, but who had remained silent for decades following the war. It sometimes took thirty to forty years for even those women who stood out to write about their experiences.

When the men resumed their roles in society, the women accepted their own subordinate roles in all areas including politics and historiography. They also accepted and internalized the traditional views of resistance as combat, and history as event-based. Most women believed that they had not done anything extraordinary and worthy of being documented. They often downplayed their part in the Resistance, insisting that they simply did what they had to do, and what anybody would have done in their situation. But with the new focus on Vichy in the 1970s and 80s, the women of the Resistance broke their silence mainly to refute the attacks on the memory of the Resistance by revisionists and those being brought to trial.12 Marie Madeleine Fourcade, who took command of a resistance network of thousands, did not publish the account of her experience until 1975. Neither did Jeanne Bohec, the explosives expert who trained men in sabotage. Lucie Aubrac might never have written her story if not for the defamation of the Resistance resulting from the debates on Vichy in the 1980s. Her account was also a direct rebuttal to the attacks launched by Klaus Barbie’s defense team against the Resistance and against the Aubracs themselves. What is unique about Lucie Aubrac’s story is that it not only recounts the daring prison breaks that she carried out with her militant group, but it also centers on her private life in occupied France. Personal narratives of this nature, which also focused on the individual, everyday struggle, continued to surface through the 1990s. Célia Bertin’s Femmes sous l’Occupation

12 I will return to the issue of women’s self-effacement in more detail in Chapter 1. For a brief overview see pages 27-28 in Claire Gorrara’s Women’s Representations in Post-’68 France.
(1993), detailed women’s daily life and resistance, not only from the perspective of a historian and biographer, but also from her own personal experience as a participant in the Resistance.\(^\text{13}\)

By sharing what they experienced and witnessed as individuals, former résistantes have corroborated the official events in even greater detail, suggesting, in the process, that official statistics and the official history had been skewed because they were taken only from official documents such as military records and award registries which excluded the contribution of women. These records did not mention the fact that everyday acts of survival and disobedience in times of occupation, as well as support services for those who fought more traditionally, were indeed resistance:

> The daily struggle to survive . . . constitutes a different kind of fight on a different sort of battlefield, one that [women’s] diaries can portray in vivid, daily detail. The record of conflict they create is specifically a woman’s, and a civilian’s, record of war; they are ‘war diaries’ that take into account the fact that participants in the war are not always combatants. (McNeill 97)

Thus, with their “war diaries” women set out to clarify and complete the previously one-sided portrayal of WWII and the Resistance.\(^\text{14}\)

Since the 1990s, there has been growing interest in the intersection between women’s private lives, war, history, and writing. Besides Célia Bertin’s, notable contributions in this area have been made by historians such as Margaret L. Rossiter, Sarah Fishman and Dominique Veillon. Many literary scholars—Margaret Collins Weitz, Margaret Higonnet and Claire Gorrara, among others—have also turned their focus to the study of women and

\[^{13}\text{These texts and more are mentioned in a brief overview of the historiography of women and war in Chapter 1.}\]

\[^{14}\text{I address the question of genre more extensively in Chapter 1. As we will see, classifications of genre are problematic. It is particularly difficult to distinguish between the different sub-categories of autobiographical writings, as well as between history and literature. We will see from the differences between the three authors of this study that there are many possible treatments of the “journal” genre.}\]
war. Their studies and interviews have uncovered a great deal of additional information that is not found in historical archives, but is quite useful in understanding the war years.

With this recent illumination of women’s wartime activity, historians, and particularly women’s historians, have called for a broader definition of resistance. The re-definition of resistance includes other, non-conventional forms of combat, such as the market protests often organized by women, the support services, and sheltering and assisting résistants in various ways. In short, any action against the Occupier, no matter how slight, would be considered resistance under this broader definition. Yet, it follows that women’s writings have also been judged along gender lines, much of it being labeled “feminine” writing.

This study examines the notion of gendered resistance acts and writing and proposes that it is impossible to systematically categorize these according to the standard male/female dichotomy. The texts selected, three similar yet quite diverse personal narratives that offer insight into the history of the Second World War and the Resistance, also illustrate the fluidity between genres and disciplines. Again, in a time where genres and disciplines are more and more intertwined, it is virtually impossible to categorize these narratives. These texts are thus examined from new perspectives. Although an integral part of the Resistance, like so many others who have gone relatively unnoticed, Claire Chevrillon never attained the level of fame that Duras achieved as a writer and Aubrac as a national heroine. Chevrillon’s narrative continues to be overlooked as the focus of an in-depth study, literary or historical. Lucie Aubrac’s text has mostly been read from a historical perspective, and Marguerite Duras’ *La Douleur*, just the opposite, for its literary value more so than for the insights it offers on the War and the Resistance.
Chapter 1 reveals how historical interpretations of resistance and resistance tasks themselves have been defined by classic gendered stereotypes. This chapter also presents the historical, genre-related, critical, and individual backgrounds surrounding the mid-1980s writing and/or publication of the personal wartime narratives of Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively examine each woman’s representation of her unique wartime experience and personal struggle, as well as her connection to established public historical events such as the Liberation of Paris, the Holocaust and Jean Moulin’s arrest and execution.

In Chapter 2, I examine how Claire Chevrillon uses a description of everyday life to record ordinary people’s resistance and heroism against the Occupier. Through Code Name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance, she also witnesses and comments the Nazi persecution of Jews and openly denounces Pétain and Vichy for their collaboration. Her criticism of Vichy is one of many which surfaced in the 1980s, a period that, according to Rousso, was one of French obsession on the topic.

Chapter 3 focuses on Part I of La Douleur, published in 1985, when Duras finally broke the silence about her own personal wartime experiences. La Douleur is a collection of fiction and autobiographical accounts depicting Paris at the end of the war in 1944-45. Part I is very distinctive, for Duras recounts the interminable wait for her husband to return from German concentration camps, and their struggle to survive the war and the Holocaust. She forces readers to face the horrors of the concentration camps and the Holocaust—realities

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15 In order to limit the scope of this study, I examine only literary representations of resistance by French women in wartime France. Of course, the Resistance in France had a much wider participation, including foreigners and Jewish groups, such as the Union des Femmes Juives. Furthermore, this study does not examine the relationship between resistance and other factors such as class or regional differences.
that negationists were trying to hide at the time of publication, and that, for his own reasons, de Gaulle had tried to keep out of the post-war historical discourse.

Chapter 4 reevaluates Lucie Aubrac’s response to Klaus Barbie’s defamation of the Resistance, which in part was fueled by the Vichy debates of the 1980s. Lucie Aubrac’s Ils partiront dans l’ivresse upholds the “résistancialiste” image of a fighting France consistent with the traditional definition of resistance and its portrayal in the official history of the war. Yet, her 1984 account of the events offers quite a different perspective of her role in the Resistance and of resistance itself. In fact, all three texts, written or published within a year of each other, share similarities in format and content. The accounts of the events and personal experiences told in their journals challenge the past treatments of resistance and historiography. Their personal narratives illustrate how women’s everyday actions from traditional female spaces constitute resistance activity. As Paula Schwartz noted, “[e]ven relationships within the biological family . . . must be seen as ‘political’. Providing for loved ones, protecting children, running a household: these ordinary peacetime actions became politicized in a new context” (“Women” 6-7).

While the works of Schwartz, Gorrara, Weitz and many others who study women and war have done much to document women’s resistance, their studies tend to examine women’s wartime narratives precisely for their distinctly feminine nature. These scholars are often interested in discovering or isolating those qualities that make women’s resistance actions and narratives uniquely feminine. Their findings tend to reinforce the established dichotomies based on gender difference. All three texts in this study illustrate how war becomes entangled with women’s private lives, and how resistance is as much a personal

16 While the term “résistancialiste” is commonly used to describe narratives that portray the Resistance in a positive light, I borrow the term from Claire Gorrara (Women’s Representation 43).
reaction to this encroachment as it is a patriotic choice. However, while there may be certain patterns discernable in women’s narratives, since each person’s experience is unique, there are also significant differences between these texts. Lucie Aubrac’s account is particularly different in that it does not conform to either gendered norm. One cannot read *Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* as a strictly “feminine” text. In fact, while personal accounts written by women naturally shed light on women’s vast participation in the Resistance, they should not automatically be categorized as exclusively feminine writing. Such gendered readings of any writing—by men or women—are limiting in that they ignore the individual, often multi-dimensional, human perspective from which these texts are written.
CHAPTER 1

STYLES OF RESISTANCE/STYLUS OF RESISTANCE: WOMEN’S WARTIME ACTIVITY AND WRITING

I. Styles of Resistance: How women participated in the French Resistance

It’s a man’s war! Historians and critics agree that war and resistance have traditionally been considered man’s business. In fact, as Miriam Cooke points out in her article, “Wo-man, Retelling the War Myth,” it is only as of the 1980s that the crossroads between war and gender have started to be the object of a new focus. For the most part, before the 1980s, women’s involvement in wartime activities was either completely overlooked, mentioned incidentally, or presented as cases of extraordinary heroic (and man-like) participation. Up until this time, war and resistance were generally defined along gender lines and labeled as masculine. While Cooke refers specifically to the Middle East, her comments about the war myth also apply to post-WWII France: for forty years, the dominant discourse, which included French national history, upheld the war myth that the men bravely fought and died at the war front to protect the women back home.17 Historians and critics who focus on the study of women and the Second World War, such as Paula Schwartz, Dominique Veillon, Margaret Collins Weitz, and Claire Gorrara, corroborate Cooke’s

17 While in reality the war front and the war myth were destroyed by the crushing defeat of the French in 1940, the cessation of actual fighting between armies, and the ensuing occupation, their ideal and original intent remained intact and carried forward into the Resistance. The term “war front,” then, will refer to the scene of all combat and associated military-type action and events during conventional warfare (1939-40), during the internal and external Resistance (1940-44), and after the Liberation of France, when the French troops continued into Germany alongside the Allies. These combatant acts include the following: skirmishes, group fighting or violence against the Occupier, sabotage, individual attacks on German soldiers, strategizing/planning, conspiracy, and espionage—all male-dominated areas.
argument. Through their work, they have documented the fact that women did participate, both at the war front and by drawing the battle lines at their doorsteps.

Women were undeniably present at all levels of the French Resistance. As résistante Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier notes in her foreword to Coudert’s *Elles La Résistance*, “les femmes ont pris part à toute l’action de la Résistance : sans leur participation, rien n’aurait pu se réaliser” (13). Indeed, women played a part at every level of activity, and all the way up the chain of command. In the beginning, acts of resistance were not necessarily organized. Women, like all individuals, performed small and random acts of resistance: giving bad directions to German soldiers, for example, or doing anything which might show their refusal to accept the Occupation—a situation which was, to them, intolerable and unacceptable. In “L’entrée en résistance,” historian Laurent Douzou explains how resistance movements got started: “Ce qui caractérise l’entrée en résistance des tout débuts, c’est le souci d’agir ou, pour mieux dire, de réagir à un état de fait inacceptable et, au sens littéral du terme, insupportable” (11). Eventually, out of a common need, actions became coordinated and networks and movements began to take shape. Ultimately, these various movements united as an Internal Resistance and joined de Gaulle’s and the Allies’ External Resistance in the military fight for liberation. Within a few years, however, despite the fact that women’s immense participation was crucial to its operation and survival, the Resistance took on a masculine, military façade. As a result, women were generally not counted in the post-war statistics, since they were rarely part of the military divisions of the Resistance such as the maquis: “S’il n’y a pas eu autant de femmes que d’hommes dans la Résistance, . . . Tout d’abord [c’est parce que] le nombre—surtout à partir de 1943—a été assuré par les maquis,
or le maquis, comme le service militaire, était essentiellement une affaire d’hommes” (Noguères 73).

We now know that the Resistance was not strictly “une affaire d’hommes,” but in rediscovering women’s resistance activities, we have also learned to what extent resistance tasks were gendered. In their 1980s books on the Resistance, male historians such as Kedward and Noguères at least acknowledged women’s resistance activity; yet, this mention was still brief and lacked detail. Noguères used his scant three-page section on women in the Resistance more to criticize their undeserved absence from the historiography of the war than to affirm their presence in the Resistance. He further noted that, unjust as it was, their participation was based on sexual discrimination: “Et là jouait, indiscutablement, la discrimination fondée . . . sur une notion d’inégalité entre les sexes aussi ancienne que notre civilisation et aussi solidement implantée dans la Résistance” (74).

Women were only recruited for certain support tasks, such as administrative work, because of their secretarial skills and their access to office resources. Other roles that were specifically suited to women, because they drew less attention than men, were those of liaison (arranging meetings, transporting intelligence, equipment, arms, etc.), of cover to an agent (by pretending to be the girlfriend, since a couple was less suspect), and of convoyeuse (Coudert 13). The latter secretly organized escape routes for Jews, escaped prisoners, underground résistants, and eventually, Allied parachutists and downed pilots. 18 In Femmes sous l’Occupation, Célia Bertin describes how she and other young women her age accompanied the fugitives to safety, at an immense risk to themselves. Yet, dangerous as this

18 Escape routes by land extended across occupied France to Spain. Some routes crossed the demarcation line separating the Occupied Zone from the Unoccupied Zone, ended in headquarter cities such as Marseilles, and then extended westward to the Pyrenees. Thousands of women organized the routes and escorted the escapers, and many became heads of these escape organizations (Rossiter 23-24). See Margaret L. Rossiter’s references to escape lines for more details, statistics and names of female organizers.
work was, it was still considered support work and inferior to men’s military activities such as sabotage and combat.

This large trafficking of clandestine people soon necessitated the creation of organized social services to shelter, feed, and provide them with false identity papers, as well as a system of communication. Women played the lead role in providing these services: “During the occupation, ordinary peacetime professions became vehicles for activities subversive to the regime. A corps of teachers, concierges, clerks, and nurses resisted by exploiting the resources available to them on the job” (Schwartz, “Redefining Resistance” 144). One social service section unique to the resistance movement Combat, the Service Social, was entirely operated and directed by women.

By the end of 1940, the clandestine newspapers began to appear, inciting opposition and providing alternative news to that reported by the official media, which was controlled by the Nazis and the Vichy government. Again, women had their hand in every part of the process, from providing the paper and materials with which to print the newspapers to running the presses and distributing them, often at work. As in Lucie Aubrac’s case, teachers commonly left tracts anonymously in their colleague’s mailboxes. Not only did they produce and distribute the tracts, many women also wrote politically charged articles, although government and politics were traditionally man’s domain and French women would not officially have their say in these areas until after the war. In fact, there were several papers published exclusively by women, such as Voix des femmes, La patriote parisienne, and Le cri des femmes. The larger resistance movements also had their separate women’s papers: Les femmes patriotes (from the Mouvements Unis de la Résistance) and Les mariennes (from

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19 See Claude Chabrol’s 1993 documentary L’Oeil de Vichy for examples of this. We will also come back to the status of the press in Chapter 2.
the southern movement, Francs Tireurs et Partisans) (Westerfield 153). According to Kedward’s study of resistance in the southern zone, in December 1940, L’Humanité de la femme was the first publication to “register hunger and shortage of provision, holding the Vichy regime responsible for the dearth of potatoes and other staple foods. Two issues called for militant actions by housewives, in the form of demonstrations at the local préfecture” (92).

Housewives did indeed rally to protest hunger, scarcity and economic hardship under the oppressive regime. These protests on daily, domestic issues were yet another area of resistance reserved for women (Douzou, “L’entrée” 16). This mostly anonymous activity by ordinary women such as housewives and POW wives is a major reason why women were underrepresented in post-war statistics on the Resistance.20 By mid-1942, the demonstrations had grown and spread throughout the country, and they later expanded to include issues such as deportation and the STO (Service du Travail Obligatoire), the forced labor program of 1943.

Women formed committees to mobilize other women into protest. The French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français, or PCF) was a key player in organizing these women’s committees. The PCF thus became one of the most important organizations to allow women to play a major role in the Resistance through separate women’s venues.21

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20 Based on a statistical sampling of resistance movements and networks, Claire Andrieu puts women’s participation in these groups at an average of 12% of their populations (75).

21 When Hitler and Stalin made their pact in 1939, the Daladier government reacted by outlawing the PCF and initiating a wave of arrests. Many of its male leaders went into hiding, and the women were left to rebuild the party. As a result, the PCF was the first organization to establish an underground network and to provide women the opportunity to resist from the very beginning of the war. Again, it has been difficult to establish the large number and the identities of the women activists because they did not formally register with the PCF. In the earlier years of the party, women “belonged” by extension, through their relationships with male members of the party; during the war years, record-keeping became nearly impossible, and many more names were lost (Schwartz, “Women” 3).
From the beginning of the war, the communist women’s committees were assigned the task of leading women in public protests related to basic needs such as food, healthcare, and prisoners’ rights, all of which were considered “women’s issues” since they revolved around the family and the household. Danielle Casanova is a name that stands out as a leader in rallying women to these causes. In the winter of 1940, the wives of POWs staged the earliest mass demonstrations in front of the Maison du Prisonnier in Paris to demand the return of their husbands, the right to send them care packages, and an increase in their military stipend (Coudert 14). They also marched for more food ration tickets for their POW husbands, and especially for their starving children. Women’s public protests soon became a more common occurrence and were indeed quite effective. In 1941, they spread from Paris to other cities, and by 1942, they had become a major source of opposition to the authorities.

In the Occupied Zone, one of the most well-known and often-cited demonstrations was the one staged by the PCF in front of a local food shop on the rue de Buci, in Paris, in May of 1942. Paula Schwartz examines the uniquely feminine nature of certain resistance tasks organized by the PCF and devotes an entire chapter to the rue de Buci protest, since “from its very inception in the minds of its organizers, the demonstration was intended as a woman’s affair” (“Women” 114). Contrary to Bourdieu, who identifies the marketplace in Kabylie as a masculine space of exchange, Schwartz defines the French marketplace as a female space for shopping and the exchange of information. Women activists thus took the lead in this particular type of resistance activity, especially since they were less conspicuous

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22 Danielle Casanova was arrested in 1942 and deported to Auschwitz on January 24, 1943, among 230 women, most of them political prisoners. One of the 49 survivors, Charlotte Delbo, published a book honoring the women of the now famous “convoi du 24 janvier.” According to Margaret Collins Weitz, Casanova, who died in the camp from typhus, has virtually been canonized by the French Resistance (Combatantes 334).

23 Bourdieu’s Masculine Domination examines relation and power structures in both Kabyle and Western contexts. In his study, Bourdieu explains that while masculine domination is more obvious in Kabyle societies, the same patterns apply to Western societies.
in this predominantly feminine environment. Yet, many communist women interviewed by
Schwartz confided that a major reason why they were assigned public protest work was
because men considered such protests women’s work and beneath them. This is also the case
for the other “feminine” tasks of the Resistance, such as the social services and secretarial
work: “il semblait normal de leur voir accomplir . . . toutes les tâches qui sont, selon les
canons de notre civilisation, indignes des hommes (Noguères 75). The men did play a role in
the market protests: they provided armed security for the women in case there was trouble.
Once again, this upheld the classic gendered division of labor, as well as the war myth of the
armed male protecting the female. Nevertheless, these protests served as a means for women
to break through into the public sphere and allowed them significant advances in political
activism.

The rue de Buci protest was considered a model of feminine resistance for all women
to follow. That same month, the PCF took another large step towards “militarizing”
motherhood into resistance, when on Mother’s Day, it declared “that ‘l’amour maternelle est
une lutte’ and exhorted mothers to take action to fight against state-imposed hunger”
(Schwartz, “Women” 124). According to Kedward, similar declarations inciting mothers to
protest were made in the southern zone throughout the summer of 1942. The clandestine
papers calling for these demonstrations, such as Rouge-Midi in Marseilles and Femmes de
Provence, “made it clear that it was Pétain’s collaboration with the Germans which was at the
root of the economic distress” (Kedward, “Resistance” 222). Given the success of the
protests for food and basic provisions, the PCF eventually expanded its causes, urging wives
and mothers to physically block railways and attack police stations holding deportees in
order to prevent their husbands and sons from being deported.
Women’s “invisibility” in the marketplace and in the public sphere was thus short-lived, for these spaces soon became highly-charged political arenas which drew the attention of the government. In the summer of 1942, a top organizer and protester of the rue de Buci, Madeleine Marzin, was captured but managed a daring escape. These related incidents led the authorities to take women’s protests more seriously and to even see them as a threat. At the same time, the clandestine press used the arrests of activists to generate even more opposition to the government and the Occupation: “To each Press report of a women’s demonstration were added figures of those arrested and . . . these arrests gave new reason for protest even if some economic satisfaction had been gained” (Kedward, “Resistance” 223). Thus, the women’s protests and clandestine press worked together to counteract Vichy’s propaganda and to expose the reality of the Occupation.

On the one hand, the PCF acknowledged women’s usefulness to the Resistance by providing them with structured venues through which to resist (the committees, the protests, the press, etc.). Yet, these venues still constituted a separate women’s resistance, one which was still lower on the hierarchy of resistance activity (armed combat being the highest) and reinforced the gendered nature of resistance and the domination of masculine over feminine tasks.

In some instances, women ventured into what was traditionally considered men’s territory. Many women served in the army as nurses and ambulance drivers; others went on scouting missions for potential parachute drop sites, gathered intelligence, and joined in armed combat with the maquis or guerilla groups specialized in sabotage and attacks on German soldiers.24 Jeanne Bohec, a chemical engineer, was called upon to instruct resistance

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24 Madeleine Riffaud led a guerilla group in the twentieth arrondissement of Paris. She was captured, tortured and loaded onto a train for deportation for having killed a German officer. Miraculously, she survived when two
members in acts of sabotage. Some women, such as Lucie Aubrac and Berty Albrecht, helped to establish resistance movements and rose to high-ranking positions. Finally, there were other rare cases, such as that of Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, in which women led entire networks. These women risked equally than the men and some ultimately sacrificed their lives for the cause. All of these instances, however, were viewed more as the exceptional case of a heroic female acting like a man and doing a man’s job rather than men and women being equal partners in resistance work of an indistinct gendered nature. Even within the realm of the man’s world, women were usually assigned the support tasks—reconnaissance, planning, instructing, transporting weapons, etc.—everything leading up to, but short of, the actual combat. Ironically, female liaison agents carried weapons to and from resistance attacks, but were not allowed to carry them for self-protection. During a Colloquium on women in the Resistance held in Paris in 1975, Jeanne Bohec confirmed a similar instance of gendered discrimination. She recalled that whenever she encountered uniformed soldiers from the regular army, such as parachutists from the Free French Forces, they would not let her take up arms and fight with them, even when under German attack:

Le 18 juin 1944, nous fûmes attaqués par les Allemands. Sans vouloir rivaliser avec les paras, il est certain que je connaissais mieux que la plupart des F.F.I. présents, le maniement des armes, ayant reçu un entraînement approprié en Angleterre. Malgré cela, il me fut interdit par les paras de toucher à une arme et de me battre avec eux. (Les Femmes 38)

So, it is not that women did not participate in the Resistance; quite the contrary, the loss of over two million Frenchmen to prisons and to labor camps in Germany necessitated their involvement. Yet women’s contributions to the war and resistance efforts were consistently overlooked and left out of the official war story. Despite their high presence at

unknown women pushed her out of the wagon. She honored them in her memoir, Madeleine Riffaud : on l’appelait Rainier, published in 1994 during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Liberation (Weitz, Combattantes 89, 383 n.12).
all levels, the role of women in the Resistance remains to this day relatively invisible. Two factors contribute to this omission of women from the historiography of the War and Resistance: the overly-restrictive definition of resistance as military combat all but erased women’s activities from the history books, and women contributed to their own self-effacement through their silence and submission. Scholars who focus on gender and war, such as Paula Schwartz, Margaret Higonnet, Margaret Collins Weitz, Claire Gorrara and Mary Jean Green argue that the lack of recognition given to women for their resistance efforts lies in the problematic definition of resistance itself. This traditional definition emphasizes combat (considered masculine), and dismisses most of the support activity that takes place in the home and workplace (considered feminine). These activities included feeding, sheltering, providing false papers and protecting other résistants. In addition, many of women’s public demonstrations—for the return of their POW husbands and for increased food rations for their children—were deemed feminine issues. All of these “domestic” activities, however, were no less militant, politicized and dangerous, especially when done under the watchful eye of the Occupier and the collaborating police force. With such a vast and important contribution by women to the war effort, how could they have allowed themselves to be forgotten during the writing of the national memory of the War and Resistance? Besides endorsing the narrow definition of a resistance limited to combat, it seems that women contributed to their own oubli, or forgetting, with their tendency towards self-effacement. In their article, “The Double Helix,” Margaret and Patrice Higonnet explain this best with the concept of the double helix. By double helix, these critics mean that during

25 In *Women’s Representations of the Occupation in Post- ’68 France*, Gorrara reiterates Green’s position that “[w]omen’s experience of war has left few traces in the canon of twentieth-century French literature” (Green 223), adding that “[b]y women’s experience of war, Green is referring to the marginalized perspective of women on the ‘home front’ and their response to the hardships of war” (16).
the war, women had to step up into the roles of the absent men (as heads of families, at work, etc.), but when the men returned home after the war, the women slid back down into their traditional female roles. Indeed, men and women occupy separate branches of a double helix, and thus advance and regress on their respective rungs simultaneously, such that the woman’s position is always subordinate to that of the man’s. By stepping back into their old support roles, women translated their participation in the Resistance in the same manner, and internalized the patriarchal discourse. In fact, as Bourdieu observed in *Masculine Domination*, women reapplied to themselves the schemes of domination, perpetuating the symbolic violence to them. Many women, even great heroines such as Lucie Aubrac, humbly said that they had not done so much, that they were merely supporting their husbands or brothers. In the eyes of men and women alike, the “home front” and the marketplace were still not seen as legitimate spaces of political and militant action. Even the women who risked their lives alongside the soldiers fighting at the “war fronts,” such as the nurses and ambulance drivers, were seen as having subordinate roles as caregivers.

The women also ceded the writing of the War and Resistance to the men. After having successfully refused the occupation of their country by the Germans, they accepted the occupation of the writing of the official war history by their own men! Since war was defined as military action or combat, a war novel or narrative had to reflect action and battle. Any writing about the home front was irrelevant and uninteresting, and it was generally believed that women who were not near the skirmishes could not accurately depict war from

26 According to Bourdieu, *la violence symbolique* is the process by which the dominated group consents to and internalizes its subordinate position, thereby legitimizing and perpetuating the existing order or power structure in which it is dominated. In this case, Bourdieu refers to the domination of women by men, but he also applies the concept to cultural, economic, and other forms of domination. In fact, this concept of symbolic violence is the basis for many of his theories of domination. He defines *violence symbolique* as “tout pouvoir qui parvient à imposer des significations et à les imposer comme légitimes en dissimulant les rapports de force qui sont au fondement de sa force” (Bourdieu and Passeron 18), or more simply put, “cette forme de violence qui s’exerce sur un agent social avec sa complicité” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 142).
their imaginations. Even those women who were embroiled in battle and tried to write about their experience were restricted because the language of war was not considered appropriate for women. Thus, the men monopolized the writing of the war and created a national war myth based on masculine, unmitigated heroic valor and victory. Their victory was fought and won through military-type organization and armed conflict, and was one in which women, naturally, played no part. The greatest contributor to this constructed legend was Charles de Gaulle. For decades, his war memoirs were accepted as the “master narrative” of the war years (Green 224), and they were imitated by other men in their writings because de Gaulle’s version was accepted as the official history:

L’histoire de la France Libre toute remplie de coups de génie—et d’abord celui de son chef en juin 1940—d’actes de bravoure, d’actions d’éclat, etc. ne pouvait pas après la guerre qu’être magnifiée par ceux qui, en ayant été les héros, allaient entreprendre de la raconter. Avec le temps, cependant, les faits vont être embellis, ce qui va donner naissance à une légende, laquelle, aujourd’hui, tend à se confondre avec l’histoire officielle.27

For a long time, women were left out of the official history of France’s wartime experience. But finally, beginning in the 1970s with the women’s movement, and especially in the 1980s with changing perceptions on historical discourse, women have begun to revisit their wartime experience and claim their part in the Resistance. This recent attention to women’s involvement in war has sparked a wave of new scholarship on the subject as well. Often, this study of gender and war leads to conclusions such as those of Cooke, Schwartz, and M. Higonnet. These critics consistently point to this existing gendered definition of war and resistance as an explanation for two major findings on women, war, and writing. They concur that: (1) women have been left out of the official writing of the War and Resistance,

27 This quote is an excerpt from a critic’s review of Pierre Chandelier’s De Gaulle 1939-1946: Entre légende et réalité, which appears on the book’s back cover. The critic (and author of the quote) is not identified anywhere in the book.
both as agents and as authors, and (2) when women do write about war, their writings are also judged along the masculine/feminine criteria, and for the most part are deemed feminine writing.
II. Stylus of Resistance: Writing about the War and Resistance

In the years immediately following the war, only a few books and pamphlets spoke of women’s involvement in the Resistance. Édith Thomas, for example, published a non-fiction work on the Liberation in 1945, as well as a tribute to female resisters in 1947. She also published a piece of fiction in 1945, a collection of short stories entitled *Contes d’Auxois*. That same year, two other works of fiction which highlighted women’s resistance activity were also published by established female writers: Elsa Triolet’s short stories, *Le premier accroc coûte deux cents francs*, and Simone de Beauvoir’s novel *Le sang des autres*. In 1945, Lucie Aubrac, who held a history degree, published *La Résistance: naissance et organisation*. This brief historical analysis of the war years, which included no personal stories, specifically traced the history of the Resistance from its origins and the organization of underground movements to the creation of the National Council of the Resistance, the clandestine government of occupied France. In the process, she illuminated the vast contribution of women who “were essential as underground workers, creating the infrastructure subsequent historians have examined as central to resistance success” (Gorrara, *Women’s Representations* 35). Another example of a book written by a woman and

28 For a more comprehensive study of the historiography of women and war, see pages 7-18 of Paula Schwartz’ dissertation as well as chapter 1 (pp. 9-24) in Claire Gorrara’s *Women’s Representations of the Occupation in Post-’68 France*. For the literary context, see Germaine Brée and George Bernauer’s anthology, *Defeat and Beyond: An Anthology of French Wartime Writing, 1940-1945*, and Margaret Atack’s *Literature and the French Resistance: Cultural Politics and Narrative Forms 1940-1950*. These latter two texts reveal the preponderance of writing by men during and immediately following the war.


dedicated to honoring women’s sacrifice and heroism is Élisabeth Terrenoire’s *Combattantes sans uniforme*, published in 1946. In this survey of women’s resistance activities, she briefly discusses the origins of resistance activity and then details women’s participation. Whereas the ultimate aim of Lucie Aubrac’s text was to trace the organization of the entire Resistance, and thus included the men who were its founders and leaders, Élisabeth Terrenoire concentrated specifically on the women involved at all levels of activity. Her chapters are divided by type of resistance work—civil and political, military, social—and she cites examples of tasks and names of women in each section. There is also a section dedicated to the camps, detailing the inhumane treatment of women by the Nazis, and how these women still managed to resist even in the most extreme of circumstances. Terrenoire also attempts to explain what it generally felt like to be a woman living with a husband or a son in the Resistance: the woman’s sacrifice upon accepting his engagement, her anguish when he promised to be home early and had still not shown up by nightfall, the pain of losing them to prison, execution, or deportation. Terrenoire’s book is, in part, a historical overview of the Resistance, but with a focus on the women, which was unique for the time. It is also largely a tribute to these everyday heroines, martyrs, and all women of the Resistance. *Combattantes sans uniforme* is one of the earlier texts that documents women’s daily resistance long before historians acknowledged the importance of daily life to historiography.

31 Another early example is Agnès Humbert, *Notre guerre* (Paris: Emile-Paul Frères, 1946), who wrote about her experience as secretary of the Paris resistance network Musée de l’Homme. This group used the museum’s resources to print one of the earliest clandestine newspapers, *Résistance*, as of December 1940 (Weitz, *Combattantes* 82). Ten members of the group were tried by the Nazis in 1941 and condemned to death. The seven men were shot, but the sentence for the three women was commuted to life in a labor camp. The three women, including Humbert, returned from Germany after the war (Weitz, *Combattantes* 277).

32 In fact, upon their return from Ravensbrück, a number of female deportees wrote accounts of resistance in the concentration camp. “Proportionate to the number of deportees, women sent to Ravensbrück were among the most productive memoir writers among French deportees in the first years after the war,” perhaps because they were better able to handle the confrontation with the humiliation (Reid, “From Ravensbrück” 4).
In 1951, the French Communist Party’s women’s organization, the Union des Femmes Françaises (UFF), published commemorative brochures honoring women. These earlier works about women focused on celebrating their heroism, which was equaled to that of men. But even this recognition of women was short-lived, for publications such as these were overshadowed by men’s writings. As mentioned earlier, men soon took over the writing of History and immediately set off to create the legend of the Resistance as a military, fighting organization—of men. Claire Gorrara identifies this male archetype which would be the prevailing image for decades: “Immediate post-war images of the Resistance tended to centre on the figure of the male resistance fighter, liberating France as part of an armed struggle” (Women’s Representations 25).

In 1960, a couple of the more well-known women writers began to break their silence about the war. That year, Simone de Beauvoir published the volume of her memoirs covering the war years, La force de l’âge. She relied heavily on her wartime journals to recollect her experience and included many excerpts from them. Also in 1960, Marguerite Duras wrote the screenplay for Hiroshima mon amour. A few years later, Clara Malraux would begin publishing her six-volume memoir, but she would not reach the war years until the last two volumes, published in 1976 and 1979. Still, these works were either part of a greater reflection by these “famous” women on their lives or a more philosophical statement on war in general.

In the 1970s, the women’s movement proved pivotal in launching the discussion about the role of women in the Resistance. The UFF held a colloquium in 1975, where many

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33 According to Paula Schwartz, the UFF published a five-volume set called the Livre d’or dédié aux femmes héroïques mortes pour que vive la France (Paris: Imprimerie Centrale Commerciale, 1951).

résistantes gathered, after thirty years, to reopen this discussion of women’s participation in the Resistance and to share their own stories. Lucie Aubrac, Jeanne Bohec, and Elisabeth Terrenoire all participated in this conference. Furthermore, historical accounts such as Ania Francos’ Il était des femmes dans la Résistance (1978) demanded acknowledgement of the fact that women had indeed participated in the Resistance, and in great number. Still, most of these texts were profiles of some of the better-known “heroines” such as Berty Albrecht, and many of the women included had been an important part of an organized Resistance movement. While this was a good start to rediscovering women’s participation, these texts did not shed light on the even greater participation by the “so-called ‘ordinary’ women . . . the mass of female activists . . . identified as schoolteachers and office workers, teenage couriers and protesting housewives” (Schwartz, “Women” 12). The collective power of the smaller acts of daily resistance had not yet been fully appreciated. Yet, something unique about Francos’ text was that it was heavily based on women’s oral testimony. She included many direct quotes from her interviews with résistantes such as Lucie Aubrac, or from their surviving children, as in the case of Berty Albrecht. Up until this time, personal testimony had not been valued as a historical source, and very few first-person accounts had been published. Some rare examples had been Agnès Humbert’s Notre guerre (1946), L’Arche de Nöé (1968) by Marie Madeleine Fourcade, and Jeanne Bohec’s La plastiqueuse à bicyclette (1975).

As of the 1970s, important changes had also occurred in the field of history. Modernists moved away from following rationality and Hegel’s principles of strict objective reasoning and professional distance towards a more diversified approach that relied on a variety of disciplines and sources, such as the political and social sciences. This trend opened
the field up to a certain subjectivity, for attachments to the political left or right, political convictions and philosophical approaches now entered into historians’ interpretations: “In the social sciences, ‘modernism’ is said to include an understanding that subjectivity and the perceptual situation of the scientist play an important role in analysis” (Smith 213). Given the wave of revisionist or negationist history in the 1980s, which attempted to rewrite the history of the Second World War such that it erased the Holocaust, historians were forced to acknowledge that history is not always objective because it depends on the perspective, the method, and the ideology of the historian who analyzes the document. As Michel de Certeau has shown in L’écriture de l’histoire, most historians cannot help but be influenced by their ideological perspective:

On a montré que toute interprétation historique dépend d’un système de référence; que ce système demeure une ‘philosophie’ implicite particulière; que, s’infiltrant dans le travail d’analyse, l’organisant à son insu, il renvoie à la ‘subjectivité’ de l’auteur. (65)

As a result, many historians became more receptive to alternate sources, even those which had previously been considered too subjective to be relied on for historical information. Historians thus shifted from a reliance on strictly formal documents, which were in some cases inaccessible or insufficient,35 towards a more comprehensive field of documentation which included personal testimony that could attest to the historical events. In fact, they now needed the testimony of camp survivors to refute the claims of the Holocaust negationists such as Paul Rassinier and Robert Faurisson. Regarding life in Occupied France and the Resistance, these private sources actually enriched the official, public history, for they depicted what everyday life was like for the people during that historical moment. H. R. Kedward found memoirs and the clandestine press a suitable substitute for the lacking

35 Government archives in France are sometimes sealed for 30 to 100 years after an event, depending on the nature/sensitivity of the documents.
official documentation on the Occupation, since, in his opinion, all documentation is equally susceptible to bias: “like documents themselves which have their own inadequacies and bias, [memoirs and the clandestine press] are sufficient to fuel the hypotheses and arguments of historians indefinitely” (Resistance vii). A bibliographic note in Henri Noguères’ La vie quotidienne des résistants further supports the blurring of history and fiction. While he limits his sources to those classified as history (including memoirs and oral testimonies), Noguères admits that he considers some historical novels to be just as authentic and relevant:

Je me suis volontairement limité à des textes qui tous ont été écrits pour servir l’Histoire. C’est donc à dessein que je n’ai pas fait figurer dans cette rubrique des témoignages parfois tout aussi directs et tous aussi importants, mais que leurs auteurs ont délibérément classés dans la catégorie des romans: c’est aussi vrai pour Les Pavés de l’Enfer de Dominique Ponchardier que pour Les Montagnards de la nuit de Frison-Roche, ou L’Armée de l’ombre de Joseph Kessel. (260-1)

Noguères and Kedward both acknowledge women’s contribution to the resistance; but still, their references to women and use of women’s memoirs are limited and insufficient. Again, their studies tend to cite only those leaders and “heroines” of the Resistance that stand out, such as Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, Berty Albrecht, Agnès Humbert and Lucie Aubrac. Yet, it is the testimonies of women that provide countless examples of everyday resistance, and abundant details about the non-combatant support services and underground activities that were the true foundation and sustenance of the Resistance. This opening up to the place of daily life in history was a major breakthrough in the study of WWII France as well as the subsequent colonial war in Algeria. Historians such as Benjamin Stora, Djamila Amrane and Souad Mokdad were now inclined to use not only testimony in the form of memoirs and journals, but even fiction, including novels and short stories, that relied on the historical real to expose true situations. Stora has charted women’s participation in the Algerian wars
thanks to women’s literature of all types including novels, poetry, and personal stories. But again, the bulk of these have been written after the 1970s, with only Assia Djebar and Zohra Drif representing Algerian women before then (Stora 83). Further on in this chapter, I will examine the shift in historical perceptions and return to the related questions of genre and the importance of daily life in history.

Given these changing perceptions in history, revelations of women’s resistance activity continued into the 1980s, with a slight difference: now women were beginning to shed light on the more “ordinary” tasks of their daily lives under the Occupation as well as on their heroic feats. By now, historiographers had become more interested in the depiction of daily life as a source of historical information. Another great change is that women writers began to be recognized and more visible, and they began to write their own stories. As of the 1980s, then, there was a surge in women’s writings on the war, and many took the form of the first-person personal narrative. We may argue that these women felt that they were nearing the end of their lives, and they needed to document their stories for two reasons: 1) as a family record, and 2) to complete and correct the national record which had basically forgotten them, and which had dismissed everyday life and small acts of resistance as historically irrelevant. But the sociopolitical climate in France in the 1980s and 1990s, which left some historians willing to revise not only their notions of what was acceptable as historical record, but also the official history itself, undoubtedly sparked much of this writing as well. During these decades, women began to find readers receptive to their version and their vision of the events, which they captured in their memoirs and their diaries. I will now briefly explore the historical context that served as background and catalyst for these women’s writings.
Historical Context

There was an important component to the war myth propagated by de Gaulle that would lead to controversy decades after the war. In his portrayal of the Resistance, he created a “résistancialiste” version of the Occupation years; that is, the image of a unified, resistant, fighting France. Collaboration had no part in this picture and was seen as an isolated instance which was dealt with quickly right after the war. Thus, after the initial trials to “purge” the more obvious collaborators such as Pétain, Laval, and other Vichy officials and sympathizers, de Gaulle silenced the issue of collaboration for some time. Furthermore, if there was to be no more talk of collaboration, then there could be no more talk of the concentration camps, for the latter would certainly reveal the cooperation of the French in the deportations. Thus, out of the general public’s desire to put the war years behind and move on, as well as their incomprehension of what went on in the concentration camps, these topics were silenced to the point where, years later, they were almost forgotten by the nation. In de Gaulle’s post-war image of a résistancialiste France, there would only be Frenchmen united in their fight for liberation, which was ultimately achieved through a glorious military victory.

In The Vichy Syndrome, Henry Rousso points to the 1950s as being a turning point in reopening the discussion of Vichy’s collaboration. Rousso cites the example of the 1954 trial of Karl Oberg and Helmut Knocken, commander and adjunct of the SS in France from 1942 to 1944 (61). Testimony from this trial brought to light the cooperation of the French police in the massive arrests of Jews in the summer of 1942, which included the Vél d’Hiv roundup in which approximately 12,000 mostly foreign men, women, and children were arrested, held and eventually deported to the extermination camps. Rousso also points to a 1958 scandal in
the Académie Française, in which members who had been part of the Resistance became outraged at the idea that writer Paul Morand, a known collaborator, would seek election to the Academy (64). Yet, these incidents did not manage to overturn de Gaulle’s efforts of quieting all talk of Vichy. In fact, in an effort to divert attention from Vichy France, “between 1954 and 1958, he returned to an earlier interpretation [of the Occupation], one that he had first tried out in 1944 and now resurrected in the sixth chapter of his Mémoires de guerre: that the history of France from 1940 to 1944 had been made in London and Algiers” (72). De Gaulle, who retired from government under the Fourth Republic, returned as President of the Fifth Republic in 1958, during the height of the Algerian conflict. After years of bitter division during what has been called the guerre franco-française,\textsuperscript{36} one in which old wounds from WWII were reopened, de Gaulle forged a definitive version of the Occupation, which placated most French people. This image was again one of a unified nation resisting its invaders.

In the early 1960s, “[t]he Resistance became a common theme of films, novels and historical treatises, while Vichy and collaboration fell under a taboo that was rarely violated” (Rousso, \textit{Vichy Syndrome} 83). But sparked by the May, 1968 sociopolitical revolt begun by students, the younger generation of novelists and filmmakers began to break this taboo by revisiting the issues of French collaboration and questioning the “collective amnesia Gaullist France fostered in relation to the nation’s recent anti-Semitic past” (Scullion, “Perec” 110). Most historians reiterate Rousso’s position that 1968 marked the decisive and definitive

\textsuperscript{36} The guerre franco-française began in the 1930’s with the internal division in France between the political left and the right. This division, which evolved into clear oppositions in the 1940s—the Resistance/the Collaboration and the Popular Front/Vichy—was the beginning of what Rousso considers a French civil war. The internal strife, which in the postwar years centered around Vichy, quieted down from 1954 to 1971, except for the period from 1958 to 1962, during the Algerian War for independence (\textit{Vichy Syndrome} 8-10). Rousso refers to the Algerian conflict as the new guerre franco-française (75), for it pitted the French against one another regarding their support for this war. Ironically, this time, the leftists were comparing de Gaulle and his government to Pétain and Vichy based on issues of torture and assumption of power (75).
turning point in “unraveling the Gaullist fiction of occupied France’s steadfast and unequivo
cal resistance to German Nazism” (Scullion, “Unforgettable” 15). Rosemarie Scullion and Claire Gorrara agree that Patrick Modiano’s novel, La Place de l’étoile (1968), and Marcel Ophüls’ documentary, Le Chagrin et la pitié (1969), were crucial in shattering the existing collective French memory of the Occupation years and freeing from it realities about collaboration and the deplorable treatment of Jewish people. By surrounding his protagonist with real people who were known anti-Semites, Modiano exposed the anti-Semitic sentiment that already existed in France in the pre-war years, especially among certain intellectuals. Given this, it is no surprise that the Nazi campaign spread so quickly and easily in 1940s France, that Vichy had its hand in the persecution of Jews, and that many ordinary citizens accepted it. Ophüls’ documentary provided yet more “evidence of France’s deep complicity in the genocidal campaign Hitler had waged against Jews in the 1940s (Scullion, “Unforgettable” 15). This renewed debate would not be silenced and would rage for decades.

In 1972, American historian Robert Paxton fueled the debate with his inflammatory study of Vichy France entitled Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944. He incensed many people in France with his declaration:

One major misapprehension remains to be corrected. The National Revolution was not Hitler’s project. It was not ‘imported on German tanks’ in any direct sense. After the war, Vichy participants tried to shift the blame for their domestic programs to German pressures, as it was expedient to do in 1945 [. . . But the] archives of the German occupation contradicted it. (142)

Furthermore, Paxton estimated that the total number of French in the Resistance, at its peak activity, was only 2% of the population (294-5). While Paxton’s figure was more than likely underrepresented because it overlooked any non-official involvement, was based on a skewed definition of resistance, and was taken from official post-war recognition (from
awards distributions, for example), it offered a stark contrast to the previous image of a largely resistant France. Paxton argued that while most French citizens wanted to be rid of the German occupiers, they did nothing. His book was met with mixed reviews in France, and those who were outraged by it attributed this “attack” to the hostilities of a foreigner. Yet, Paxton had based his research on archived German documents previously unavailable to researchers, and in them, “he found no evidence that the Reich had put any pressure on Vichy to implement an anti-Semitic programme; rather, Berlin had been surprised at the speed with which the French had passed their own measures” (Atkin 52). The evidence was hard to ignore, and in the years that followed, novelists, filmmakers and historians continued to dig deeper into the repressed memory of the French society.

By the 1980s, the debate had shifted to a focus on the specific Jewish experience, in part as a reaction to revisionist historians’ efforts in denying that the Holocaust ever existed. Claude Lanzmann’s 1985 documentary, Shoah, is hailed for its use of eye-witness testimony to document the events of the Holocaust. It was in 1987 that French historian, Henry Rousso, charted this evolution of post-war memory in Le Syndrome de Vichy. As we have just seen, Rousso summarized these shifts in perspective, beginning with the 1950s and ‘60s’ heroic myths of the French Resistance, continuing with the 1970s’ questioning of wartime collaboration, and leading to the 1980s’ focus on Jewish memory of persecution and the extermination camps.

Also occurring in the 1980s were the high-profile trials of several Nazis or French collaborators. In particular, the 1984 trial of Klaus Barbie, also known as the Butcher of Lyon for his reputation as a torturer, stirred great controversy. He and his defense lawyer, Jacques Vergès, tried to capitalize on the ongoing debate about collaboration to portray
France not as a resistant force, but as one equally guilty in the crimes for which he was being accused. Barbie also published a memoir in which he continued the accusations and suggested that several résistants, namely, the Aubracs, had been working for him and were the ones that betrayed Jean Moulin. Barbie’s assault on the memory of the Resistance outraged many former résistants, who, in turn, wrote their own accounts in an attempt to defend the name of the Resistance. The first of these to directly counter Barbie’s slanderous testimony was Lucie Aubrac.

By undoing the myth revered in the first two post-war decades, these controversial studies, documentaries, and testimonies also weakened the position of the Resistance. As a result, many former résistants reacted strongly, not necessarily because they did not believe that the Vichy government had collaborated (in fact, many were, themselves, victims of the persecution), but more so because they felt that their honor and sacrifice were being diminished. For example, Germaine Tillion criticized both Ophüls’ film and the later Syndrome de Vichy as denigrating to the image of France.37 Thus, while some résistants actually contributed to the anti-“résistancialiste” version of the Occupation years, others fought to reinstate the image of a mostly resistant France. Since her participation in the 1975 colloquium sponsored by the UFF, Lucie Aubrac has worked to restore the glory of the Resistance. But instead of repeating the old strict image, she adjusted the portrait of the Resistance to include groups such as women and farmers. For one, she countered, the low number of résistants had to do with not counting the massive participation of women. She reasoned that, since the men who had gone off to fight the war ended up in German camps as POWs or forced laborers, only women were left, and it was they who resisted. Others whose

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contributions were not recorded after the war were the simple country people who assisted resisters. Another résistante, Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier, suggested that not only women, but also the small tasks were overlooked and, consequently, many actual résistants went unrecognized. Vaillant-Couturier defended the existence of a widespread resistance in the foreword to a 1983 book dedicated to women in the Resistance: “Il est de bon ton chez certains aujourd’hui de prétendre que les résistants étaient une poignée de héros dans une mer d’indifférence et de collaboration. La vérité est que si la Résistance clandestine et organisée était peu nombreuse au début, d’année en année elle s’est développée” (Coudert 16-7). She also directly addressed the accusations of the prior years: “S’il y a eu des Français trompés par Pétain, d’autres qui avaient peur, même des dénonciateurs et des traîtres, il n’en reste pas moins vrai que sans tous ceux et toutes celles, innombrables, qui lui apportèrent leur aide— ne serait-ce qu’une fois—jamais la Résistance n’aurait pu atteindre l’ampleur qu’elle a fini par avoir” (Coudert 17).

Women, many of whom had remained uncounted in the official tallies of the Resistance, began to write about their own or other women’s participation, and began to reveal these abundant small acts of resistance referred to by Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier. Among the earlier works by résistantes, are the personal narratives of Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras, and Lucie Aubrac. In each of these cases, the author sought to complete and clarify the previous picture of the Resistance and the Occupation, although not necessarily in the same way. Duras offered up her wartime diary to the “Vichy Syndrome” debate. She wanted to draw attention to the cause of deportees, and finally bring to the forefront the concentration camps that de Gaulle had swept under the carpet in the post-war years. For Lucie Aubrac, writing her story was about revealing the widespread resistance in
France, by women and by everyday citizens, in order to defend the honor of the Resistance from the previous decade’s debate, as well as from the recent slanderous attacks. Claire Chevrillon and Lucie Aubrac, both teachers during the war years, clearly wanted to set the historical record straight as to what everyday life was like for a woman in the Resistance and during the Occupation. In her translator’s note to Chevrillon’s book, Jane Kielty Stott adds: “Claire wasn’t interested in answers [to philosophical questions] or in using her memoir as a vehicle to judge or dramatize; she considers her memoir testimony. ‘My goal was to set forward the facts,’ she told me” (xi). The detailed facts set forward by these three women about their daily lives as wives, mothers, teachers, and résistantes during the Occupation, have indeed helped to paint a clearer picture of the Resistance, one that acknowledges women’s immense participation and accepts an evolved definition of what constitutes acts of resistance.

Women’s experience, when contrasted with official pronouncements on the meaning of war, provides insight not only into the discrepancy between domestic, private history and official, national history, but also (and more important) a means of analyzing how and by whom national memory is constructed. The private-public distinction - families as compared to the nation, mothers’ needs versus the needs of the state, individual death as opposed to national survival - is critical in the formulation of nationalist or patriotic ideologies. (Gorrara, Women’s Representations 28)

As mentioned earlier, a large number of women’s writings on their wartime experience took the form of a personal narrative, yet their narratives emphasize the private-public distinction that Claire Gorrara insists on. In particular, Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac used this more informal and personal form to contrast the official, national history that had been written previously by men.

New readings of History and historical discourses introduced by Paxton and Rousso, for example, have led historians to take into account alternative sources of historical
discourse. These sources include biographies, memoirs, written and oral testimonies, and diaries, all of which highlight the importance of the place of daily life in history.

**History and Genre**

The discussion of genre surrounding the texts in this study can be quite complicated, for they lie at the intersection of two disciplines (history and literature), portray both private and public life, and, especially in the case of Marguerite Duras, inspire debates as to whether they are non-fiction or fiction. This discussion is further complicated by the mixing of genres in at least one of the texts, as well as their dates of production and publication. All three texts were written and/or published in the mid-1980s, at a time when the status of the traditional, factual historical discourse was being questioned, and History was opening up to new forms of documentation. By this time, many historians had acknowledged that, given the possibility of being tainted by ideological bias, some so-called historical texts could lean towards fiction. Similarly, they acknowledged that different forms of literature, such as personal narratives, testimonial literature, and even some forms of fiction, provided a wealth of social and historical information. These three texts resemble each other enough in form and content to narrow the discussion down to the broad category of personal narratives. From there, do we need to further assign them a literary genre? If so, which one—autobiographical fiction? autobiography? memoir? journal?—and what is the historical relevance of this genre, and thus, of these texts? In other words, to what extent can they be read as documents?

In *Le pacte autobiographique*, Philippe Lejeune defines an autobiography as a “[r]écit rétrospectif en prose qu’une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu’elle met l’accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l’histoire de sa personnalité” (14). He then breaks his definition down by area: language form (prose narrative), the subject matter
(personal life, the history of a personality), the author’s situation [author (a real person) = narrator], the narrator’s position (narrator = protagonist; retrospective perspective). Next, Lejeune lists the other “neighboring” genres, including memoir and journal, and the conditions above that each does not fulfill. For example, the memoir does not meet the condition of subject matter; its focus is more on history and the events than on the person. An autobiography can have elements of history and politics, asserts Lejeune, only the deciding factor in whether or not it is an autobiography will be the proportion of these to that of the individual’s life. The priority, of course, must fall with the latter (15). As for the journal, it does not meet the requirement of being a retrospective account, for it is written at the time of the events that it is narrating. We can already see, much like Gérard Genette concluded in his studies on genre, that genres cannot be clearly defined. In this particular case, all of these genres within the personal narrative family are, to some extent, inscribed in history or in the events that they narrate, and thus belong to historical representation.

Because they are written in retrospect, memoirs and autobiographies tend to be more organized and coherent in form and content. This is undoubtedly because the writer has had the time to order his/her thoughts, or even construct them around the image of the events and of him/herself that he/she is consciously trying to portray to a public readership. For his Mémoires de Guerre (1954), Charles de Gaulle was able to organize his thoughts and produce an eloquent, flowing, uninterrupted narrative that evoked a positive image of France’s resistance during the war. In contrast, the diarist writes in the moment, about a very recent past, without the advantage of hindsight that is afforded the autobiography and memoir: “Le journal appartient au mode du discontinu. La mémoire n’y joue pas ce rôle organique, organisateur qui caractérise le rythme de l’autobiographie” (Didier 9). The

38 See Gérard Genette’s Introduction à l’architexte and Seuils.
diarist’s discourse coincides and mingles with the lived experience, and as a result of this relative spontaneity, the journal can be hesitant and repetitive. While these characteristics may prevent the reader from drawing a smooth overview of historical events, he or she can certainly glean a better understanding of the day-to-day realities in the place and time observed from the close-up snapshots provided by the journal.

Claire Chevrillon and Lucie Aubrac undisputedly wrote their accounts of the war years retrospectively—they reconstructed their stories forty years later, in the 1980s, at a time when the rewriting of history was beginning. Are their texts memoirs? This is a question that is not easily answered. For example, Lucie Aubrac deliberately chose a diary format for her account and even narrated in the present tense, eliminating any hint of retrospection, and drawing the reader into the events narrated. Claire Chevrillon’s text, while not exactly a diary, comes quite close in format and content. As for Duras, Part I of La Douleur, which bears the same name as the entire collection of texts, resembles a journal, despite the fact that several entries are not well delineated and specifically dated. Some critics such as Leslie Hill and Gabriel Jacobs consider this part of La Douleur fictionalized, or “autofiction;” and the issue of whether it is her “real” journal from 1945 or whether she, too, actually wrote it in retrospect is yet a different question that is highly debated and to which we will return. Nevertheless, even these critics, who discredit its authenticity, occasionally refer to this section of the text as a diary or journal, since this is the term used by Duras herself.

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39 Throughout this study, I will refer to the entire collection of texts (journal and stories) as La Douleur (underlined and capitalized), and to Part I (just the journal) as “La douleur” (quotation marks and not capitalized). However, whenever citing a critic, I will leave the title as it appears in his/her work.

40 Many critics, whether or not they believe the first part of La Douleur to be an authentic journal, still use the term “diary” or “journal” to identify the first text of the collection: “It begins as a diary” (Hill, Marguerite Duras 7), “the diary” (Jacobs 50), “the narrator’s journal” (McCarthur 17), “diary” (Gorrara, Women’s Representations 14), “the journal” (Green 233). A few of these critics use the term “memoir” in addition to diary/journal (Hill, Green). Often, critics avoid any such identification by simply referring to the text as the first
For these reasons, and due to the important role of the journal in light of the growing acceptance of the place of daily experience as historically relevant, the journal/diary genre deserves a closer look.41

Thomas Mallon makes a slight distinction between the terms journal and diary—that because the term “journal” also pertains to journalism and “diary” is associated with “dear diary,” the diary may be considered more intimate than the journal. He points out that the French confuse the issue somewhat by using the same word, journal, for journalistic writing and for personal writing; only, they add the word intime after the latter. Béatrice Didier agrees that the intime qualifier is problematic. First, there is the fact that many diaries chronicle the public events of their time and do not so much reflect the intimacies of the writer. And, secondly, there is the issue of reception; a (potential) reader is almost always likely to prompt the author to modify his or her writing. We have seen this paradox in action throughout history, as many diaries have been published, some diarists even preparing their own for publication (ie: Gide). Didier seems to think that the intime qualifier came about only to distinguish everything and everyone involved in journal-keeping from journalism, since there is only one word in French: “il semble que le mot ‘intime’ n’ait guère été conservé que pour écarté toute équivoque avec le journalisme” (8), and at one point she

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41 In A Book of One’s Own: People and Their Diaries, Thomas Mallon studies a sampling of diaries written across geography and time. His study is not a history of diarists and diaries, but more so a “sampler” collected according to his taste, or as he calls it, a “brief tour” of some of the diaries that have moved him in some way or another (xviii). Before beginning this tour, Mallon first wrestles with the question of terminology. He states, “The first thing we should try to get straight is what to call them. ‘What’s the difference between a diary and a journal?’ is one of the questions people interested in these books ask” (1). His response: “The two terms are in fact hopelessly muddled. They’re both rooted in the idea of dailiness” (1). True. Webster’s dictionary defines a journal as “a personal daily record of experiences and observations: diary” (381), and a diary as “a daily record, [especially] a personal record of events, experiences and observations: journal” (196). A diary or a journal, then, is generally perceived as a personal, daily record of events, experiences and observations.
suggests “journal externe” as a more appropriate term. In *Le journal intime*, Françoise Simonet-Tenant also observes that journals are not always introspective or intimate writing. For this reason, she says, some experts on the subject have adopted the term “journal personnel,” and she agrees that it is a more pertinent expression. Fortunately, these nuances do not present a problem in English, and since “diary” and “journal” may be used interchangeably, I will do so in this study.

There is a consensus among critics regarding the defining characteristics of a journal, or diary. In her article on Scandinavian women’s diaries, “From Family Notes to Diary: the Development of a Genre,” Christina Sjöblad contends that the “first real full-scale diary” was Metta Lillie’s diary, written between 1737 and 1750. She then defines a “real” diary as “a text written in the first person, with dated passages in chronological order, where the writing subject speaks not only of events in her surroundings, but also about her feelings and thoughts concerning these events.” Indeed, journals can easily be identified by their physical format—dated, chronological passages or entries—and as such, they are fragmented, in form and in content. In an article on the diary novel, Gerald Prince examines the narrative structure of the diary, whether it be real or fictitious. According to him, the narration of the diary is fragmented, as the narrator does not tell his/her whole story in one sitting. Furthermore, the different entries of the various narrative moments do not usually pick up the thread of the previous entry. That is, they do not continue the story begun in the preceding entry, but rather narrate what has happened since that time.

Getting back to the first point, that the diary is written in the first person, we already know from Lejeune’s definition that the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be one and the same (although, in this unity, there is still the possibility of a fragmented subject).

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42 Simonet-Tenant cites Philippe Lejeune and Jacques Lecarme as having adopted this expression.
Grammatically, this is most often achieved by the use of the first person singular. Yet Lejeune explains how this relationship can still be maintained through other voices. Lejeune gives more detail about the use of the third person, a technique used to create distance between the narrator and the character. Often, in these cases, the narrators are either historical figures who use this technique to distinguish themselves or religious figures who do so to humble themselves: “Parler de soi à la troisième personne peut impliquer soit un immense orgueil (c’est le cas des Commentaires de César ou de tels textes du général de Gaulle), soit une certaine forme d’humilité . . . Dans les deux cas le narrateur assume vis-à-vis du personnage qu’il a été soit la distance du regard de l’histoire, soit celle de Dieu” (Lejeune, Le pacte 16). We will see in Chapter 3 that the use of the third person in the first part of La Douleur is quite different, as it is linked to a traumatic experience. Again, Lejeune’s examples pertain more to autobiographies and memoirs. However, since it is difficult to clearly separate these genres that fall under the general category of personal narratives (autobiography, memoir, journal), and due to the hybridity of genres in general, we can apply this rule to the journal as well. In the diary, the third person may also simply be used as a diversion tactic, to disguise the identity of the narrator/protagonist in case there is an unauthorized reader. Finally, the narrator may use direct address (the “you”/“tu”) to address either him/herself, the diary as a confidant, or an outside reader.

In the diary, the writing subject/narrator records events from daily life, as well as his/her own thoughts and reactions to these events. But the latter was not always the case. According to Sjöblad, Swedish women in the seventeenth century began using their family record books as journals, slowly allowing their personal voice to break through the usual formal tone. At the time, noblewomen were charged with keeping family notes, recording
important family events such as births, deaths and marriages. They also kept inventory books for managing the household’s finances. Sjöblad seems to think that “the fact of having pen and paper available and the habit of writing” enabled women to begin jotting down notes of a more personal nature (519). The first journals, concludes Sjöblad, are characterized by very short entries dealing with everyday facts; but by the eighteenth century, “a personal voice breaks the enumeration of happenings” (517). Still, Sjöblad credits the birth of the truly subjective diary to Metta Lillie (1709-1788), whose writing suddenly exploded all over the pages of her family record book with her personal feelings about the death of her father in 1738. Her writing literally spills over the margins which had previously constrained her:

The main text, which has been kept within the margins, then flows all over the page—and at this moment, the diary genre is born. Metta Lillie discovers the possibility of giving vent to her feelings and experiences the release that this expression provides. From this date, her text becomes a dated, subjective diary, relating her thoughts and feelings. (Sjöblad 519)

This first person narrator, then, comments on external events or introspection, acting as a prism which refracts actions, observations, thoughts and sentiments (Simonet-Tenant 11).

In Metta Lillie’s case, since this type of personal journal-keeping developed spontaneously, it is safe to assume that she wrote only for herself. But as journal-keeping has become a practice, and even an art, we must now raise the issue of readership: for whose benefit does the diarist record his/her observations and comments? Is the journal really only written for oneself? In a study on the well-known, twentieth-century diarist, Catherine Pozzi,43 Françoise Simonet-Tenant emphasizes the contradiction that the journal is an “écriture à soi-même en quête inavouée du destinataire” (36). In other words, while the diary is supposed to be honest writing of the self for the self, whether subconsciously or not, the

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43 Catherine Pozzi was a diarist in her own right, but also the mother of Resistance leader Claude Bourdet, who also documented his resistance experience in a personal narrative, L’aventure incertaine.
writer is actually writing for an audience or is at least secretly seeking or desiring one, which influences the writing. Hence, paradoxically, the most personal and intimate genre struggles with issues of audience and of future or potential discovery and publication. This issue is especially relevant to the journals dealing with WWII, and even more so to those written as of the 1980s. The authors of that decade were aware of the shift in perspective among historians, one that made them more receptive to this type of literature and document on the war years. In other words, these writers knew they had an audience.

The 1880s was a big decade for the publication of journals in France (Amiel, Goncourt, Bashkirtseff), followed by reproductions of diaries such as Georges Sand’s in the first half of the twentieth century (Simonet-Tenant 65). This obviously influenced writers of the time, such as André Gide, whose journal was actually published during his lifetime, under his supervision. Sartre kept a journal while he was a soldier; it would later be published as Carnets de la drôle de guerre (1983). During this time, he asked Simone de Beauvoir to furnish him with reading material. Among his selections were the journals of Stendhal, Goncourt, Amiel, Gide, Guérin, and Pepys. Simonet-Tenant maintains that Sartre was no doubt trying to write a well-constructed and informed journal which also served as a critique of the genre (89). Thus, he was fully aware that his diaries would one day have a large, public audience. Simone de Beauvoir, on the other hand, opted to use her journals for writing her memoirs, and she has been cited as saying that she had no intention of publishing them. However, they were published posthumously in 1990. The same occurred with Edith Thomas’ wartime journal, which was published in 1995. In all of these twentieth-century cases, at least, either the writing was affected or changed from the very beginning by

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44 See Ursula Tidd’s article, “Contingent Selves and Necessary Fictions: Simone de Beauvoir’s Use of the ‘Journal Intime’.”
projected audience expectations, and/or the audience expectations and reception changed with the changes in History and its representations.

As we have already seen, the use of the second person in narration hints at the possibility of an outside reader. Simonet-Tenant identifies the possible readers of a journal. First there is the self, who might go back and reread the journal later in life. Then there are the authorized readers: a group of close friends and loved ones (for Sartre, this was de Beauvoir and a few from their intimate circle). The third possible type of reader is the intruder or the unauthorized reader. These are the ones who read the diary either posthumously or sneak peeks at it. To avoid the latter, some diarists write in code or keep a parallel journal, one with the truth and the other for the intruder. Finally, some journals are written for a wide audience, with publication already in mind. In their texts, these journals attempt to represent history, society, and ideological issues.

So what label, if any, can or should we put on the three texts in this study? The answer should be clear for Claire Chevrillon and Lucie Aubrac, at least. We know that they wrote their texts in the 1980s, thus in retrospect, from a time in which the understanding of WWII had changed. The element of retrospection should immediately rule out the journal, according to Philippe Lejeune. We also know that they wrote for other readers, either their own family or the general public. Finally, their texts concentrate on the war years as opposed to their entire life’s story. Based on these observations, they should be considered memoirs. Yet, the format of Ils partiront dans l’ivresse is clearly that of a journal. And at first glance, Claire Chevrillon’s text is also far from what a memoir is perceived as, and what de Gaulle left as a model. While it may not exactly be a journal, it certainly resembles one. As for Part I of Duras’ La Douleur, which is the section entitled “La douleur,” this should clearly be
considered a journal; yet it is not necessarily, for the circumstances surrounding its publication complicate the choice. These circumstances involve the forty years between the date on the journal and the date of publication. Another complication is Duras’ tendency towards autobiographical fiction. It does not help here that the journal is followed by short stories, some true and others fictitious, according to Duras. Again, in his studies on narrative and genre, Genette has shown us how it is virtually impossible to classify genres as cleanly as we would like. Nor can we so easily separate fact from fiction. This difficulty arises because all genres always possess a certain degree of hybridity and because what is considered to be “truth” is often a matter of representation as Foucault and de Certeau have demonstrated. Generic classification is never an easy task, for each text has its own particularities, and resists classification. Yet, the texts I am focusing on all present another perception and a new understanding of the war.

Claire Chevrillon

Code Name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance is a series of dated, chronological passages describing life during the Occupation, with the insertion of excerpts from letters, actual journal entries, and photographs. It has endnotes detailing historical information, appendices, an epilogue with entries of follow-up information, and an index. Although the author does refer to her text as “my memoir” in the preface addressed to her grand-nieces and nephews (xvii), it is a hybrid text.

In the preface, we learn Claire Chevrillon’s motives for writing her story. The children had often asked her to record her experience, but it was not until 1985, at age 78, and perhaps feeling that she was nearing the end of her life, that her memories often returned

45 See Foucault’s “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” and de Certeau’s L’écriture de l’histoire.

46 The preface is signed C.C. and dated August 1985.
to the war years as an important time in her life. She finally decided to write down for posterity her story as testament to their family’s wartime experience. She also felt that the younger generation could learn something from this past experience and apply it to the present and the future. Those are her stated reasons, but we must also remember the context that she was writing in—the 1980s, a time influenced by the trial of Klaus Barbie and the debate about Vichy and its collaboration. Lucie Aubrac’s and Marguerite Duras’ stories had also just been published. In her preface, however, Claire Chevrillon does not address a wider public and makes no reference to publication. She promotes her manuscript simply as a document for family record, although it contains relevant information on the daily life of women during WWII. Despite its historical relevance and timeliness, she, herself, did not seek to publish the memoir that year.

According to the cataloging data on the copyright page, this English version published in 1995 was the translation of the unpublished manuscript. In her Translator’s Note, Jane Kielty Stott recounts how she met the author in the 1960s and they stayed in touch over the years. When Kielty Stott went to see her in Paris in 1987, “[Chevrillon] gave [her] a copy of a memoir she’d just finished writing about the Second World War that she was privately circulating among family and friends” (ix). Claire Chevrillon based this manuscript on the notes she had compiled in 1944 for the speeches that she was asked to make in London on the subject of the Occupation and the Resistance.

The narrative is undoubtedly written in retrospect, for the author uses language that reminds the reader that she is recollecting, language such as “I remember . . . ” (8, 14), “those

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47 There is no stated reason for the eight years’ delay until publication. One possible explanation is that it took until the 1990s for historians to fully appreciate the value in the accounts of non-“historic” figures such as Claire Chevrillon, who document the daily life of ordinary people under the Occupation. The narrative was published in French, in 1999, as part of a collection called “Collection Résistance, Liberté-Mémoire.” The French title is Une résistance ordinaire, Septembre 1939—Août 1944.
days . . . are very confused in my memory” (82), and in another instance, “I don’t personally remember the great roundup at Vél d’Hiv, as it has come to be called” (59). This last example shows that Claire Chevrillon’s narrative benefits from time and the historical record. She can now name events with their official names: “Incidentally, . . . I don’t remember hearing the term ‘the Resistance’ until after the Liberation” (51). The author is also obviously informed about the facts by the time of her writing. For example, in the passage about the Vel d’Hiv roundup of Jews, she cites rather exact numbers: “The police rounded up 12,844 people, of whom 4,051 were children” (59). Endnotes and an epilogue provide the real names and stories of resistance colleagues and others mentioned throughout the narrative.

While Claire Chevrillon’s text is technically a memoir, and despite the retrospection, the physical layout and the content of the text make it appear more like a journal. Although her memoir is divided into chapters with thematic titles, its overall format resembles more the journal than the smoothly flowing, coherent narrative generally attributed to memoirs. De Gaulle’s memoir, for example, while chronological, is divided into chapters by theme, as opposed to a series of dated entries. One lengthy chapter flows elegantly into the next. Often, references to dates are general, such as “by September.” Only the dates of particular battles or those of his radio broadcasts are mentioned specifically. Claire’s narrative, on the other hand, embodies the discontinuous journal; it is a series of dated passages, with the title of the chapter simply being what occurred during those dates. The flow is chronological instead of thematic, and often, themes are revisited as they come up again in time. While some chapters which refer more globally to just the month and year are uninterrupted and flow for pages at a time, others consist of excerpts from letters and diaries referencing specific dates. These entries vary in length, some being but a paragraph, others only a sentence. At times, months
pass between entries; other times, they are of sequential days. This is actually common among diarists: “le rythme d’écriture des diaristes n’est pas nécessairement régulier, et certains peuvent s’interrompre pendant de longues périodes de temps” (Simonet-Tenant 11).

The element of retrospection aside, if we recall Christina Sjöblad’s definition of a “real” diary, *Code Name Christiane Clouet* meets all of the requirements. First, it is a “text written in the first person” (Sjöblad 517). Secondly, the table of contents illustrates clearly the sequence of “dated passages in chronological order” (Sjöblad 517). While all of the chapters have some form of title describing their contents, the organizing factor is the chronology. In fact, not all have a true “thematic” title, but all do have dates. For some, just the place and time serve as the title, such as “Paris, Fall 1940.” This could very well be the heading of a journal entry. Also, this heading appears twice in a row (chapters 4 and 5), the second one indicated by “—Continued,” almost as if the narrative moment had been interrupted, as in a journal. “Paris, Fall 1940” comes up yet a third time, three chapters later (chapter 8), because, evidently, “Two Incidents Concerning My Parents, Port-Blanc, Fall 1940” (chapter 6) occurred before the events in chapter 8. Another example of time and not theme dictating the narrative flow concerns the persecution of the Jews. This theme is covered in two separate chapters (7 and 12). Again, while she does not literally write a daily record, for sometimes a passage spans years, Claire Chevrillon does seem to be narrating events as they happen, as she would in a diary. Finally, the content meets the criteria of Sjöblad’s definition as well: “the writing subject speaks not only of events in her surroundings, but also about her feelings and thoughts concerning these events” (517). Granted, many of her reactions will have external considerations regarding the various aspects of the Resistance, the role of women during WWII, and particularly, how she places
herself as a subject of history. Still, since she is capturing everything chronologically, as she would in a journal, there are day-to-day events, mixed in with the historic ones. Chevrillon allocates the same amount of journal space and narrative intensity to daily family events, such as the ceremonious burial of a child’s parakeet, as to historical events like the retreat of the French government to Bordeaux. Thus, the structure and content of Claire Chevrillon’s text give it the look and feel of a diary.

Marguerite Duras—“Toute une vie j’ai écrit.” (C’est Tout 38)

The ambiguity of this statement exemplifies the debate surrounding La Douleur. Does Duras mean that she wrote her whole life long, that she wrote her whole life down or that she wrote her whole life up? Critics raise the same questions about La Douleur: did she faithfully record her wartime experience or did she fabricate at least part of it? Part I, entitled “La douleur,” is the diary that she supposedly kept in April of 1945 while she waited for her husband, Robert Antelme, to return from a concentration camp in Germany. But Duras’ own words in a preface added for publication in 1985 fuel the debate, for even she seems unsure of when she wrote it. She claims to have found the forgotten journal in an armoire many years after the war, when asked for a piece of her earliest writing. Still, while the journal is dated April, 1945, in the preface, she, herself, opens up the possibility of having written it at a later time:

Je n’ai aucun souvenir de l’avoir écrit. Je sais que je l’ai fait . . . je reconnais mon écriture et le détail de ce que je raconte . . . mais je ne me vois pas écrivant ce Journal. Quand l’aurais-je écrit, en quelle année, à quelles heures du jour, dans quelle maison? Je ne sais plus rien. (10)

On a literal level, she is saying that she does not remember and cannot imagine having written it under wartime conditions and given her constant state of stress and anxiety

48 In the text, she refers to him as Robert L., after his Resistance name, Robert Leroy.
during the month depicted. This amnesia is typical of a trauma narrative.\textsuperscript{49} She must have
written it later, she says, especially considering the calm, even handwriting she finds in the
notebooks. But while others might think that the whole text was rewritten for dramatic effect,
I believe it is the preface that was added for effect and is not to be taken too literally. She
questions how she could have found the words back then, in the midst of the war and her
personal trauma, to describe the horrors which, to this day, she still cannot utter: “Comment
ai-je pu écrire cette chose que je ne sais pas encore nommer” (10). What her preface really
suggests is that her experience was so traumatic that she blocked everything out from that
period, including this journal. It also speaks of the very impossibility of speaking of war. I
will come back to the importance of trauma narrative in more detail in the chapter on Duras.

“A text written how? written when? rewritten, retranscribed, edited? We do not
know” (Brée, “Singular Adventure” 9). Really, nobody will ever know the truth behind this
enigma that has inspired many conflicting points of view among literary critics. In “A
Singular Adventure: the Writings of Marguerite Duras,” Germaine Brée supports the position
that “La douleur” is Duras’ real wartime journal. Regarding the entire work, she declares La
Douleur “a book so stark, so startling, so uncompromisingly true to an experience at once
personal and collective” (8). Brée even concludes that the three supposedly non-fictional
stories accompanying the journal are also true. In the preface to “Albert des Capitales,”
Duras states, “Thérèse c’est moi” (Douleur 134). Many critics have likened this to Flaubert’s
“Madame Bovary, c’est moi,” but according to Brée, “[Duras] means it literally” (9). Brée
does admit, however, that given the strength of Duras’ imagination, one might be tempted to

\textsuperscript{49} See Cathy Caruth’s study of trauma and writing, which is based on Freud’s theories. One fundamental
principle of trauma is that of repression and latency: the victim usually experiences a period of forgetting, but
the traumatic experience resurfaces in an often overwhelming, uncontrolled and repeated appearance of the
original event.
classify these stories as fiction, had President Mitterrand not corroborated them. Overall, Germaine Brée, for one, seems inclined to believe that *La Douleur* is a faithful account of Duras’ wartime experience, although she remains a bit skeptical that these notebooks were conveniently found in time for the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war.

Another literary critic who classifies “La douleur” as a real journal written during the war years is Jacqueline Sudaka-Benazeraf, who published an in-depth study guide of *La Douleur* and *Hiroshima mon amour*. Apparently taking Duras at her word, she states, “En 1985, elle découvre au fond d’un tiroir le journal écrit par elle pendant la guerre; elle l’intitule *La Douleur* et le fait publier” (15). This statement makes it sound like Duras did not even rework the text, but merely added a title and sent it off to the publisher’s. While my interpretation of this comment may be an exaggeration, Sudaka-Benazeraf nevertheless supports the notion that “La douleur” is a journal. The critic prefaces her close analysis of *La Douleur* (which in fact she limits to the journal) with a section entitled “*La Douleur*: journal et autobiographie.” Sudaka-Benazeraf begins this section by reminding us of the rules of autobiography, and showing us how Duras’ text complies. She concludes by stating her position clearly: “*La Douleur* est un journal—parfois même un journal intime—une relation quotidienne des faits, des sentiments vécus et ressentis par l’auteur, qui écrit pour lui-même” (22).

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51 Sudaka-Benazeraf does not distinguish through typeface between the journal and the entire collection (ie: no quotation marks to denote Part I as the journal versus italics for the entire work; all references are to *La Douleur*.) Yet, her study, *La Douleur / Hiroshima mon amour*, is limited to the journal. The short stories are not analyzed, and are only mentioned briefly at the very end of this half of her study (52).
Duras states in her 1985 preface that she did not dare touch the pages of her journal. Yet, her well-known biographer, Laure Adler, counters that “La douleur” is not her journal transcribed as is. “C’est une recomposition littéraire” (187). Adler does acknowledge, however, the existence of an original version from 1945, but she also cites evidence that the author reworked it for a second version in 1975, and finally, touched it up again for its third and final version published in La Douleur in 1985: “Une autre [version], retravaillée, fut rédigée en 1975. Une dernière version fut ‘recouturée’. Ajouts, reprises, surfilages abondent comme en couture” (187). In fact, several critics have compared this earlier 1975 draft to Part I of La Douleur, and have pointed out their differences.52

When questioned about the extract published in Sorcières, Duras responded “Ici [1985 publication] c’est la version totale, celle des cahiers de la guerre” (Les yeux verts 236).53 This comment suggests that the notebooks were edited and abbreviated by necessity for inclusion in the magazine, but that Part I of La Douleur faithfully reverts back to the original wartime journal. Yet, in an exchange with her actors during rehearsals for La Musica Deuxième (1985), she stated, “je viens de finir . . . j’ai écrit pendant trois mois, j’ai ré-écrit, j’ai remis sur pied, le journal de la guerre, le journal de l’attente d’un déporté politique. Robert L.” (Fernandes 157). This comment, which reveals a rewriting, perhaps negates Duras’ confession of not having touched the journal, unless she is referring specifically to the

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52 Excerpts were published anonymously in the first two numbers of the feminist magazine, Sorcières, in January and March, 1976 (pages 43-4 and 53-4, respectively). The first was reprinted—with numerous minor changes, according to Leslie Hill—in Duras’ Outside (1981). For identification of the passages that appear in the earlier publications, see note 5, pp. 174-175, in Leslie Hill’s Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic Desires. See also Gabriel Jacobs’ article, “Spectres of Remorse, Duras’ War-time Autobiography.” Jacobs points out discrepancies in what he considers the essential facts of Duras’ accounts, especially those of the story, “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier.”

53 This 1987 publication reprinted all of Duras’ texts from the June, 1980 number of Cahiers du Cinéma plus later texts and interviews. This is part of an interview entitled “Dans les jardins d’Israël il ne faisait jamais nuit” which first appeared in the July-August, 1985 number.
short stories, which she admittedly wrote just before publication in 1985. If this is the case, then it appears Duras considered the entire work to be her journal, even when fictionalized. Moreover, she based the stories from notes written in the same notebooks as the journal. Regardless, her statement does not contradict that the journal was originally written in 1945, a recording of true events and experiences during the war. Adler does not refute these points either. She concedes, “Et pourtant, il s’agit d’une histoire vraie” (186). 54

Being a writer by profession, Duras could have easily composed “La douleur” after the fact, making it a reconstructed diary, like the others’. But she was equally capable of having truly written it during the war, perhaps automatically, even, without realizing. As a writer, she probably would have needed to write in order to keep—or attempt to keep—her sanity in the face of the uncertainty of her husband’s fate. Maybe writing in a journal is what kept her alive in April of 1945. Regardless of when it was written, “La douleur,” especially when surrounded by the other texts in La Douleur, stands in the margin of fictional and factual narratives, a line which is often hazy according to Genette. True, Duras’ journal could be fictional narrative that incorporates the historical real, but likewise, historical narratives can incorporate fictional elements, and yet they become part of the historian’s system of beliefs.

The argument surrounding the date written is both important and irrelevant: important because it implies that Duras created the diary, but irrelevant because the information she relates in it is largely true and has been corroborated by others, such as Dionys Mascolo, who lived the experience with her, and François Mitterrand, her resistance leader and future president of France. Granted, the conversations in L’Autre Journal reveal that some details of

54 With this comment, Adler is specifically referring to the story “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” but it applies to the journal as well.
their accounts differ, but this could genuinely be due to the effects of time on memory. And who is to say that it is her account which is inaccurate? There may also be discrepancies among her own different versions of the journal, but all in all, the life that she portrays therein is undoubtedly her daily life during WWII.

If, on the other hand, we accept that it was her real diary, this, too, becomes irrelevant in light of the forty-year delay to publication, which gave her ample time to edit it. In a similar vein, with the aid of a historian, Peggy Abkhazi\textsuperscript{55} edited her original diary significantly for publishing forty years later, “rearranging and combining material, and inserting new passages . . . Most significantly, Abkhazi invented an epistolary framework for the diary, writing an introductory passage for the published diary . . . and inserting references to ‘these letters’ . . . throughout the diary” (McNeill 90). Still, when literary critics discuss her diary, they treat it as such—her real, war diary. To take a more famous example, Anne Frank’s diary went through two revisions: the better-known one by her father for publication, and a first, by her own hand. Apparently, she had begun to recopy and edit her original diary, but never finished before the family was discovered in hiding.\textsuperscript{56} While a comparison shows a clear difference in her own versions, and some critics consider her father’s amendments—not to mention all the subsequent representations of it—deformations,\textsuperscript{57} is Anne Frank’s diary still not Anne Frank’s diary?

\textsuperscript{55} During WWII, Princess Peggy Abkhazi of Victoria, British Columbia, spent over two years in a Japanese internment camp for Allied civilians in China. Her diary, \textit{A Curious Cage}, was first published in 1981 and then reissued in 2002.

\textsuperscript{56} According to Lynn Bloom, in “I Write for Myself and Strangers,” a 1989 Critical Edition of the Diary displays both drafts in parallel.

\textsuperscript{57} See Hanno Loewy’s “Saving the Child: the ‘Universalisation’ of Anne Frank,” regarding this comment on deformations.
Regardless of when Duras wrote “La douleur,” and the degree of editing for publication, what is clear is that it is a journal of her daily experiences during the war. If one can refer to her novels as autobiographical, and even to *L’amant* as her autobiography, one must certainly concede that “La douleur” is autobiographical. Even if placed within the realm of fiction, I would qualify that it can be read for its historical value. But I am further inclined to categorize it as non-fiction. Because of its diary format and content, and despite the relative traces of fiction that are always found in writing, whether autobiographical or historical, I will consider Duras’ “La douleur” a wartime journal, albeit possibly one that was reworked.

**Lucie Aubrac**

In the preface to *Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* (published September, 1984), Lucie Aubrac tells us that she reconstructed her wartime experience from memory, with the aid of any documentation that was available, as well as from the testimonies of her husband, friends, and resistance comrades (11). In the epilogue, she informs us why: she wanted to refute the slanderous testimony that Klaus Barbie and his defense lawyer had stirred up against the memory of the Resistance, in 1983-4, in preparation for his trial for crimes against humanity (251). Lucie Aubrac managed to save her husband, Raymond, from execution at the hand of Barbie. Thus, in 1984, to defend the honor of the Resistance against Barbie’s insults, Lucie Aubrac countered with her own description of the events of 1943-1944.

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58 See, for example, Valérie Baisnée’s *Gendered Resistance: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Janet Frame, and Marguerite Duras*. The author studies Simone de Beauvoir’s *Mémoires d’une jeune fille rangée* (1958), Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), Janet Frame’s *To the Island* (1982), and Marguerite Duras’ *L’amant* (1984). She clearly refers to these texts as “their autobiographies” (11) or at least as a “first volume of their respective autobiographies” (11), yet she acknowledges their novelistic form: “these autobiographies fall into the genre of the Bildungsroman or novel of formation” as defined by Esther K. Labovitz (11-12).
Yet, Lucie Aubrac did not write another typical resistance memoir tracing the history of her movement; she had already written that text in 1945. *Ils partiront dans l’ivresse*, clearly in diary format, recounts her very personal experience from May, 1943 to February, 1944, which includes the time of her dealings with Barbie. Sometimes the entries are daily; other times, dates are skipped or they summarize a block of days. But every month from mid-May, 1943 until mid-February, 1944 is accounted for sequentially. In these entries, the author/narrator gives a first-person account of her daily activities—from teaching, to taking care of her son, to resistance activity. Written in the present tense, there is no hint of retrospect, although we know that the writing benefited from such hindsight. Lucie Aubrac leaves us no doubt that her story is meant to be read as a diary, for she states it herself in the preface: “Engagée comme je l’étais, il n’était pas question de tenir un véritable journal intime. C’est pourtant la forme que j’ai voulu donner à ce récit” (10).

Regardless of what genre they technically fall under, or what terminology we use to discuss them, the texts of Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac all have several points in common: they are all autobiographical narratives written or published in the mid-1980s, at a time when historical discourse on WWII in France had taken a new turn; they are all written by women and depict a woman’s daily life in wartime France; and they all take the diary format. One is a reconstructed quasi-diary, another is a possibly reworked diary, and the third is definitely a reconstructed diary. The important question is why each one of these women chose to write in this format or keep it as such.

But first, a key to answering this question lies in the issue of readership. Recalling Françoise Simonet-Tenant’s readership definitions, there are four possible readers of a diary: the diarist, an authorized reader, an unauthorized reader, and the general public. We learn
from the Translator’s Note and from the preface, that Claire Chevrillon originally wrote for a limited authorized readership—her family, and in particular, her nine grand-nieces and nephews. She addresses her original 1985 preface directly to them, and every now and then throughout the narrative, speaks to them directly. For example, at one moment she writes: “There is one more person I want to tell you about at Fresnes [prison], though I never saw her there” (97). One reason for finally writing down her story for the next generation, she tells them, is the hope “that you won’t ever slip into this kind of careless, cowardly attitude” of “private and public unconcern” that Europe slid into in the late 1930s (xvii). Evidently, the translator thought that the general public could benefit from her insight as well and encouraged her to publish it.

Duras’ text is supposedly a true diary. In theory, she would be her only audience; or at most, her husband and lover would be readers as well, either authorized or unauthorized. But in reality, with her beginning to establish herself as a writer, she must have suspected that this diary would one day be read by the public, published either by her or posthumously by some unauthorized reader. One can only assume that even then, in 1945, Duras was writing with a larger public in mind. Is this why, in the text, she refers to herself in the third person—to stand out as a great figure, like de Gaulle? This requires a closer analysis of the text, but it would seem that in Duras’ case, the use of the third person is more to separate herself from a situation so painful that she cannot embody it herself.

Lucie Aubrac’s intention from the very beginning was to write for the general public. But in strict keeping with the diary format, she does not acknowledge this outside reader in the narrative itself. Although she, too, uses direct address in the diary, in her case, she is actually talking to herself. At one point, for example, she gives herself a pep talk: “Ma fille,
tu as trente et un ans, tu as déjà fait face à des situations graves . . .” (98). Only the preface and the epilogue, which are separate from the diary, acknowledge an external reader.

Whether it was from the time of writing or by nature of publication, each of these women knew that her narrative would have a public readership. Why, then, did each one favor the diary format over a more formal, retrospective account such as the memoir? Each woman’s diary, full of observations and comments on both private and public affairs, offers her readers a unique vision of the war years.

Let us come back at this point to Mallon’s argument. The first diary in his study, appearing in a chapter entitled “Chroniclers,” is that of the Englishman Samuel Pepys.59 Mallon informs us that “Pepys passes the 1660s in the Navy Office, and is just close enough to great events to make his diary a part of history” (2). While some scholars have cited Philippe Lejeune as saying that, due to its subjectivity, autobiography would be worthless as a historical document,60 Mallon believes that the diary can be a reliable witness of history. In fact, he cites the cataloguer of English diaries, Arthur Ponsonby, as having written the following about diaries: “‘they are better than novels, more accurate than histories, and even at times more dramatic than plays’” (xviii).

While the role of diaries as chronicles of public history is still problematic for some historians, others have begun to appreciate their value as historical record. Specifically regarding women and the two world wars, historians such as Dominique Veillon, Célia

59 Mallon credits Pepys as the person “to have invented the [diary] form as we now think of it” (1-2). Most of the other scholars consulted for this section on genre hold the same opinion regarding Pepys (Sjöblad, Raoul, Simonet-Tenant, Didier, Bloom, Lejeune).

60 See Rachel Langford and Russell West’s introduction to Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms, for example. Actually, Lejeune is commenting on another person’s study: “La démonstration de Brunetiè re a deux aspects: comme document, historique ou psychologique, l’autobiographie ne vaut rien (aveuglement des gens sur eux-mêmes, insincérités, orgueil...)” (Autobiographie 15).
Bertin, Sarah Fishman and Hanna Diamond have shifted their focus from the traditional, factual discourse of history to one that accepts the documentation—or at least the corroboration—of historical events from non-traditional and subjective private sources such as diaries, memoirs, letters, personal photographs, and oral testimony. In fact, as evidence that these documents can provide vital information, upon her liberation in March, 1945, the “U.S. Army Intelligence commandeered [Natalie Crouter’s] diary for its possible informational value for military strategy or as evidence in war crimes trials” (Bloom, “Diary” 798).61 These same historians have begun to accept the idea that the daily life described in these sources holds as much interest and importance as the great events: “[Personal documents] have absolute value in themselves as historical voices that tell us what life was like in a certain place and time” (Bolsterli 44).

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, women’s historians worldwide such as Joan Scott, Paula Schwartz, Hanna Diamond and Dominique Veillon have fought to have women’s daily lives included in this redefinition of history. In “Dusting the Mirror: Researching Women’s History,” Marge Grevatt asserts that “the everyday, undistinguished lives of women have a historical significance in their own right” (75) and she cites a colleague as saying, “‘our methodology [must put] daily life at the center of history’” (75). 62 Even if the diary focuses on the private life of the individual, the diarist does not live in a void and thus cannot avoid commenting on society and on the events of the time. Now, if this is true for the everyday lives of women under “normal” conditions, imagine their significance

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61 Natalie Crouter was an American whose entire family spent 3 ½ years in a Japanese internment camp for civilians in the Philippines.

62 Michele Russell comments from a regional conference, “Project on Teaching Women’s Literature from a Regional Perspective,” Case-Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 22 April 1977 (Grevatt 82).
under “historic” conditions, such as times of war. In an article entitled, “Women’s Writing between Two Algerian Wars,” Benjamin Stora discusses the research of women’s historian, Djamila Amrane. In her book on the militant struggle for Algerian independence, she offers “triple documentation,” taking information not only from the Algerian Ministry’s files and from the Algerian newspapers of the time, but also from the oral testimonies of eighty-eight women (Stora 88-89). Stora reiterates that the inclusion of these women’s testimonies, along with the more traditional archival sources, emphasizes that women’s real life stories “bear witness to the quotidian in war and to its memories, inextricably bound together” (89). Women’s wartime testimonies not only speak about the external events and the impact on their daily lives, but they also reveal how this daily life becomes implicated in the general struggle (meaning, how women wage war through their daily activities) and how daily life becomes a war in itself.

Thus, historians are becoming increasingly interested in women’s personal narratives. To cite a more relevant example, while Claire Chevrillon’s text is not a history book, and although it has not specifically been the subject of any scholarly work, several historians interested in the question of women’s involvement in the Second World War have cited it in their bibliographies or notes. Claire Chevrillon might not be as well-known as writers such as Duras or de Beauvoir, or even some of her fellow résistantes. She also offers quite a

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63 See Margaret Collins Weitz’ Les combattantes de l’ombre, Paula Schwartz’ “Women, Resistance, and Communism in France 1939-1945,” and also chapter 7 in Hanna Diamond’s Women and the Second World War in France 1938-1948. Claire Chevrillon also has an entry in Shaaron and Victoria Cosner’s reference book. Furthermore, an internet search of her name through Google provides approximately 300 results, most of which are links to sites selling her book, a sign that it is still in circulation today. The same internet search reveals that her book has been read in history courses in North American universities. It is one of the main texts assigned in History 333 at the University of Calgary and History 181JA at Tufts University, and it appears with La Douleur on the required textbook list for History 304, a seminar entitled “Fascist Italy and Vichy France” at Holy Cross College. Jean-Paul Sartre’s war diaries and Simone de Beauvoir’s La force de l’âge appear as materials on reserve for this course.
contrasting view of the war to de Gaulle’s account of military and political organization and strategizing, for example. Nevertheless, Claire Chevrillon skillfully takes us into the heart of wartime France and shows us what life was like for ordinary people at the time. If not an indication of her literary importance, her inclusion in these texts and courses at least confirms the historical importance of Claire Chevrillon’s eyewitness account of daily life during the Occupation.

As for Duras, La Douleur is also read in history courses, and Jacqueline Sudaka-Benazeraf refers to “La douleur,” as “cette chronique d’avril 1945” (28). She contends that Duras’ journal offers a privileged and valuable view of the events and political climate in Paris towards the end of the war (23). While the first couple of days’ entries focus on the private story of Robert L., by the third day, Duras is reporting public events, much like a journalist. Every day, Duras goes to the Gare d’Orsay and documents the return of POWs and deportees from the German concentration camps. She also editorializes de Gaulle’s handling of the situation. We will see that Claire Chevrillon and Lucie Aubrac do this as well; that is, they interrupt their personal narratives to comment on the news that they witness and hear about. The diarist in general, then, “[acts], to an extent, as an historian, just as he [does] when he interprets conversations, events, his own or others’ motives, or when he reinterprets hearsay or others’ analyses” (Bloom, “Diary” 795).

Lucie Aubrac’s book, Ils partiront dans l’ivresse, has perhaps sparked the most controversy among historians, since many of them see her as a historian and thus read her personal narrative as a history book—and then question its factual accuracy. In the spring of 1997, Gérard Chauvy published a book entitled Aubrac, Lyon 1943, in which he presented his case against the Aubracs’ version of the events. The Aubracs, feeling the need to defend

64 In fact, Duras had begun a newspaper called Libres in September, 1944.
their name once again, arranged a round table discussion with eight reputable French historians. This discussion took place in a conference room at the offices of Libération, and the minutes were published in the newspaper. At the opening, each historian presented his/her reasons for being there, and often, his/her position on the “Aubrac Affair.” In the end, while they unanimously dismissed the accusations of treason against the Aubracs, the historians turned the round table into a trial of Lucie Aubrac’s text, as they debated its accuracy. When it was her turn to speak, Lucie Aubrac defended her position by defining historical discourse at the limit of fact and fiction:

J'ai passé les mêmes examens que vous, mais je ne suis pas une historienne qui étudie une période, je suis une historienne qui enseigne. Pour enseigner, je me suis servi de ces études très formelles que vous avez faites sur le XIXe siècle et sur l'Antiquité. Puis j'ai brodé autour avec les monographies, les biographies qui entouraient cela, parce que la pédagogie nécessite qu'on rende les choses vivantes.

On m'accuse maintenant d'avoir commis des erreurs de dates dans un bouquin que j'ai dicté en quatre mois, que les élèves des collèges et des lycées lisent et commentent. Il faut rappeler pourquoi j'ai fait ce petit bouquin. C'est parce que Jacques Vergès commençait à nous attaquer. Bien sûr, je n'ai pas fait un travail d'historienne mais un travail de professeur, de pédagogue. Ma vie de professeur est une vie de militante, ce n'est pas une vie qui s'accroche à chercher l'heure, le prénom et la date.

She clearly states that she does not consider herself officially as a historian, but rather a teacher who must bring history to life for her students. She thus places more emphasis on the

65 The first time was after Barbie’s lawyer, Vergès, published Barbie’s Testament, which claimed, among other things, that Raymond Aubrac was the double agent who betrayed Jean Moulin. Actually, it is said that Vergès wrote the memoir himself, although Barbie signed his name to it. The Aubracs’ first response was Lucie Aubrac’s book.

66 The round table discussion took place on May 17, 1997; the minutes from the event and a series of reaction articles written by the Aubracs and the attending historians were published in Libération from July 9-13, 1997 as special supplements called “Les Aubrac et les historiens.” These articles were also available to the public online for some time at <http://www.liberation.fr/aubrac> but the internet page no longer exists, and the articles must now be ordered online through the newspaper’s archives.

67 This citation comes from the part of the series, “Les Aubrac et les historiens: Chapitre premier : préliminaires pour un débat. L’histoire et ses acteurs.”
narrative and the structure of the story than on the accuracy of details such as names and dates. We must remember, then, that personal narratives are indeed personal and subjective; they do not purport to be history books in the fact-based, event-oriented traditional sense of the history of events. The events per se are less important than the conditions under which they happened. Still, they are a rich source for historians, as ultimately, people’s private and public worlds become inevitably woven together. The public events infringe on and impact these women’s personal and daily lives, and in turn, their private spaces eventually become politicized and even forums of public action.

The diary inscribes the daily lives of women into history, all the while commenting on the greater events. The diary format allows for a relatively precise account of the events observed as they unfold, and certain elements of precision and immediacy add credibility to the narrative. Already, in her preface, each one of these authors vows to deliver the truth. Marguerite Duras swears, “je n’ai pas osé toucher [au journal]” (10); Lucie Aubrac pledges, “J’ai essayé de faire un récit aussi exact que possible dans le temps et dans les faits” (11); and Claire Chevrillon promises, “what I tell here did in fact happen” (xvii). The diary format, however, cements this “pacte référentiel,” as Lejeune calls it, which is the author’s oath to tell the truth (Le pacte 36). To begin with, there is the attention to certain detail, which suggests a faithful re-creation. But actually, it is no longer a re-creation, for the immediacy of the diary brings readers closer to the events narrated, putting them in the middle of the action, so to speak, allowing them to actually witness these historical events with their own eyes, or rather, through the narrator’s. This was undoubtedly Lucie Aubrac’s way of fulfilling her pedagogical mission of bringing history to life for students.
Based on Didier’s distinction between the journal, autobiography, and memoir, the
texts by Claire Chevrillon and Lucie Aubrac could be considered memoirs because they
focus on historical events and they were written a long time after these events. After all, they
were written forty years after the events they describe, and they focus on a very specific
period of great historical importance—life in Occupied France. And yet, both women chose
the diary format for their narratives. With the same forty-year gap between writing her
journal and publishing it, Marguerite Duras had plenty of time to use the content of her
notebooks to construct a more formal memoir; and yet, she, too, decided to keep the format
of the journal.

Why was it so important to these women to guide readers through their private affairs
of forty years ago? They used the diary format to fulfill a dual purpose: on a basic, personal
level, they simply wanted to record their own family’s story for the next generation;68 and on
a public level, they wished to complete—or correct—the prevailing image of wartime
experience, and in particular, women’s wartime experience.

While some may argue that the diary form is too subjective to accomplish this public
goal, others uphold that the detail and immediacy of a diary render it more credible and
useful as a document, as it invites the reader to step into the narrated moment and witness the
events firsthand. Indeed, whatever we call these texts—diaries, journals, memoirs,
autobiographical writings, or personal narratives—these three texts and all those in their
genre(s) serve a powerful purpose: recording and relating history, both at a personal and
public level.

68 See also Lucie Aubrac’s La Résistance expliquée à mes petits-enfants (Paris: Seuil, 2000).
**Genre and Gender**

There is perhaps yet another reason why Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac chose to inscribe their experience of the War and Resistance into history through this format: the diary has been called inherently feminine. In fact, until the middle of the twentieth century, all autobiographical writing was considered to be marginal and generically inferior, traits often associated with women’s writing. In *Le journal intime*, Béatrice Didier applies this observation specifically to the diary, discussing the presumed natural femininity of the diarist from the nineteenth century until about 1950. To begin with, she points out, a large number of women kept journals. Furthermore, for a long time, letters, novels and journals were the only forms of women’s writings. Didier also hints at homosexual tendencies in male diarists such as Gide and Jouhandeau, putting their diaries in the realm of the feminine as well.

By the middle of the twentieth century, even when autobiography became more accepted as a genre, the diary continued to be marginalized. It was still considered women’s writing for its less serious and more sentimental content, not to mention the generically inferior form which was simplistic and fragmented, and which followed no rules of esthetics. In her article, “Contingent Selves and Necessary Fictions: Simone de Beauvoir’s Use of the ‘Journal Intime,’” Ursula Tidd cites the example of Sartre’s *La Nausée*, in which the protagonist, Roquentin, “refers to diary-writing pejoratively as ‘a little girl’s activity’” (145). Even Simone de Beauvoir supposedly showed ambivalent attitudes towards the journal. Tidd reasons, “She may have inherited some of the prejudices of that peer group who perceived diary-writing as a predominantly female writing activity which was superficial and limited in scope” (145).

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In “Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre,” Valerie Raoul agrees that the diary is a specifically feminine form, considering it more so than even the novel, which has long been called a woman’s genre. First and simply, Raoul points out, “[m]ore girls than boys have kept diaries” (58); and secondly, “the conditions necessary for diary-writing [make it] apparently suitable for women” (61). These conditions include the ability to keep a journal irregularly, at any place and at any time; the variation in length and subject matter of its entries; and the absence of any rules that must be followed. But Raoul also suggests a conscious re-appropriation of the genre by modern women writers for its value as a specifically feminine means of expression. Claire Gorrara confirms that “[w]omen historians and feminist critics have also come to re-evaluate the diary form, believing it well suited to expressing women’s experiences of alienation and exclusion at times of political and personal crisis” (Women’s Representations 53). Thus, in a way, by electing the diary format to tell their stories, women doubly inscribe the feminine experience into history.

Even if the diary genre cannot categorically be labeled as feminine, there are still certain themes and characteristics that supposedly distinguish women’s diaries from men’s. This seems quite logical if we recall, for example, Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of the classic division of labor and space based on sexual difference. The “feminine” qualities can be observed as far back as tenth-century Japan. In “Gender and Genre: Modern Literary Histories and Women’s Diary Literature,” Tomi Suzuki points out that in Japanese literature, there existed a women’s diary tradition as early as the tenth century, although it did not receive serious scholarly attention until the twentieth century (71). Suzuki explains that women’s diary literature was originally seen as graceful and gentle, and was, at one time, accepted as a national literature. Yet this genre was soon dismissed for missing a certain
“magnificence or heroic grandeur” (79). The need for such a national portrayal was especially great during times of war, such as during the Japanese-Russian wars. For this reason, the feminine writing was subsequently replaced with a “representation of national character [that was] masculine, as marked by ‘military spirit’ . . . and ‘loyalty and brave courage’” (Suzuki 79). Thus, even in this other culture, masculine writing is characterized by heroic action while the feminine world is one of gentleness and one in which action, especially military, is absent.

Action, or at least activity, seems to have always been central to masculine diaries, as opposed to a passivity associated with the feminine. Simonet-Tenant cites the nineteenth-century French male diarist, Amiel, as once having accused himself of writing like a woman in his diary. In the particular entry that she cites he has apparently reread a previous passage and found it to contain too much reverie and sentiment, and not enough work and action: “une vie où le travail et l’action ne tiennent pas leur place légitime, une vie de femme plutôt que d’homme, employée à égrener des émotions, à parfiler des sentiments . . . et non à poursuivre un but défini” (54).

A more contemporary example is that of Peggie Abkhazi’s wartime diary. Assuming that the typical reader associates the war novel or war diary with military action, Laurie McNeill observes, “as a record of life in war, Abkhazi’s diary . . . offers little to readers looking for drama or suspense, or for an eyewitness account of military action” (89). Perhaps this has more to do with the fact that the diary relates an internment experience and not so much that it was written by a woman, but many female wartime diaries disappoint for this same lack of “action.”

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A review of autobiographical writings revealed that “a binary opposition recurred that associated the female with personal and intimate concerns, the male with professional achievements—a replication, it seemed, of the private/public, inner/outer dichotomies that mark genderic differences in our symbolic system” (Stanton 11). In this case, whereas the masculine diary focuses on action that takes place in a very public and professional arena, the “action” of women’s diaries takes place in a more intimate setting, often the home. Women’s diaries, then, often focus first and foremost on family and the domestic scene. Bridget Brereton notes the importance of “feminine” themes, such as the focus on the home and family, that she specifically found in Caribbean women’s diaries; yet we will see how they are present in—and central to—the diaries of Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras, and Lucie Aubrac as well. First, personal relationships, especially those of the family, are central to women’s lives. For this reason, their preoccupations with the health and well-being of their children, husbands, family and friends will be reflected in their diaries. Next on women’s list of domestic priorities is the household management, especially those tasks related to caring for the family, such as providing meals. We will see further how references to food and meals can be abundant and bordering on the repetitive in women’s diaries. Women’s wartime diaries will almost obsess about food because of the very lack of it. There will be as much mention of what was not available as detail about what was obtained with which ration tickets. Passages about family members and mundane household tasks also abound in women’s diaries, almost to the point where they become uninteresting from a canonic point of view, since they record too closely the banalities of everyday life (Raoul 61).

What is often the focal point of a woman’s diary is normally considered insignificant in a man’s world, and thus too trivial to write about. In her article on the diaries kept by a
Chinese immigrant man in 1870s America, Susie Lan Cassel points out that one reason why his diaries are considered masculine, especially when compared to the feminine conventions of the American diary, is that he leaves out the universal feminine topics of family and home: “Although he occasionally tells us about an outing with his family, the sickness of a child, or a fight with his wife (about drinking, for instance) there is a noticeable absence of much commentary concerning family and domestic affairs, particularly considering the fact that he had so much family” (Cassel 203-4). Instead, he writes about more public, social—and male—activities, such as visiting friends, playing Chinese checkers, borrowing and lending money, and going to prostitute houses. Bourdieu believes that through the basic sexual division of activities, men monopolize those that belong to the public domain. These “official, public activities, of representation, and in particular of all exchanges of honor—exchanges of words . . . exchanges of gifts, exchanges of women” (Bourdieu 47)—are the ones that men predominantly feature in their diaries. Far from the selfless and self-effacing inclinations of women, men seize the public domains, and portray themselves as the center of their own diaries, involved in such activities which promote their honor and virility.

According to experts on the genre, such as Didier, Simonet-Tenant and Verena von der Hayden-Rynsch, who conducted a study of thirty-two women diarists, the male diary has historically been self-centered while the female diary self-effacing and focused on others. Simonet-Tenant speaks of this self-effacing tendency in women’s diaries, and she offers three early examples: Germaine Necker (Mme de Staël), who wrote about her father’s heroism, and Eugénie de Guérin and Dorothy Wordsworth, who wrote primarily about their brothers. Valerie Raoul agrees that “the female Self is defined in terms of a dominant other.
The self preoccupation of the ‘intimiste’ may seem to contradict the self-effacement or absence of autonomy expected of the feminine role” (59).

This self-effacing tendency of women diarists leads to a fragmentation of the female identity, which is also reflected in the style of the narration. Some of the critics contend that the fragmented nature of the writing is not a distinguishing feminine trait because it is characteristic of diary writing itself. For example, Didier cites other critics before her, such as Georges Gusdorf, Jean Rousset, and Gérard Genette, as attributing the fragmentation, intermittence, and sometimes incoherence to the genre of journal writing and not to a masculine/feminine distinction. Raoul agrees that this fragmentation is not characteristic of women’s diaries but symptomatic of all diaries:

This style is usually depicted by the generous use of suspension marks to suggest hesitation, rhetorical questions, exclamations, parentheses, very short or meandering sentences, abrupt cut-offs due to interruptions, and gaps attributed to erasures or torn-out pages. It is a style not actually typical of writing by women, but associated with diary-writing, whatever the sex of the diarist. (62)

Yet, despite the nature of diary writing itself, other critics have found women’s diaries to be more fragmented and less coherent than men’s.

Indeed, the fundamental differences between men’s and women’s diaries begin with the level and type of action. Men recount heroic deeds and stress action, while women’s accounts are seen as more passive and sentimental. The self-centered masculine diary usually places the narrator and this action in public spaces. The emphasis is on his professional life and accomplishments. By contrast, women’s self-effacing gaze focuses on the more intimate parts of her life: her family and her home. As such, the women’s diary may contain more details of everyday routines. Finally, even if the diary is, itself, a fragmented and discontinuous literary form, women’s diaries have been said to reflect this fragmentation and
even incoherence more so than men’s. Claire Gorrara believes that women have appropriated
the diary genre as a new voice in women’s writings, since its fragmented, open form—which
is outside of the literary canon—“[defies] accepted structures of narrative coherence and
[develops] a form which expresses the different rhythms and concerns of [women’s] lives”
(Women’s Representations 54).

These oppositions in men’s and women’s diaries have also been cited as
distinguishing features of men’s and women’s personal war narratives. Like the resistance
acts themselves, women’s writings on war have also been judged along gender lines. As a
result, much of it has been found to have many characteristic traits in common, for which it
has been labeled “feminine” writing. Let us clarify, then, what is meant by “masculine” or
“feminine” writing. The scholars cited in this study seem to uphold the classic distinction
between masculine and feminine writing based on sexual difference. Simply put, masculine
writing is writing by men, and it exhibits certain themes and qualities common to men.
Likewise, feminine writing is writing by women, which in turn has its common
characteristics. While I will not enter into the French feminist discussion of the 1970s and
’80s on l’écriture féminine, I will point out that Hélène Cixous warns against the pitfalls of
using the terms “masculine” and “feminine” in this overly simplistic opposition based on the
sex of the author. Cixous has repeatedly stated in seminars and in conversations with other
feminist scholars that she does not like to use these terms, which have become overused and
distorted in society today, largely due to the ease and convenience of reducing it to such an
opposition. 71 Additionally, in one conversation with Verena Conley, she reminds us of her
personal view on the matter, “I do not equate ‘feminine’ with woman and ‘masculine’ with
man” (154). Cixous has tried to come up with alternatives to these absolute terms. For

71 See Sellers, Conley and the Cixous interview with Joanan.
example, in a 1984 interview published in *Fabula*, she tells Pierre Joanon, “D’abord, je ne dis
pas ‘écriture féminine’. Je parle de féminité dans l’écriture, ou bien j’emploie des tas de
guillemets, je parle de l’écriture ‘dite féminine’” (155). In her article, “The Search for an
Authentic Voice: Hélène Cixous and Marguerite Duras,” Barbara Wiedemann sums up
Cixous’ position as follows: “Cixous objects to describing writing as masculine or feminine.
These terms create opposition or duality . . . But she finds no alternatives to the terms, and
her compromise is to shift the phrasing slightly so instead of feminine writing the phrase she
prefers is ‘writing said to be feminine’” (1). But in the end, even Cixous admits that we all
inevitably need to use terms as qualifiers: “and the ones we use are, once again, in spite of
everything, ‘féminine’ and ‘masculine’” (Conley 130). So, for many, it is easy to fall into the
trap of equating “writing said to be feminine,” or “feminine writing,” to writing by women,
and the same for masculine writing and men. Such is the case here: masculine war narratives
have been interpreted as those written by men, from their masculine or male perspective.
Conversely, feminine war narratives are those written by women, exhibiting certain female or
feminine tendencies.

**Gender and War Narratives**

In her article, “Writing War in the Feminine: de Beauvoir and Duras,” Mary Jean
Green identifies the master war narrative as General de Gaulle’s wartime memoirs. As we
have seen, this narrative constructed an official French myth which “portray[ed] France as a
victorious power, temporarily defeated in early battle yet . . . fully engaged in her own
liberation and in the defeat of Nazi Germany” (S. Hoffmann 48). However, Green reiterates
historian Joan Scott’s position that “largely absent from the public rhetoric of heroism and
victory, are the private realities of death and deprivation, which [are] characteristic of
women’s accounts of war” (225). Green’s article studies two women writers in particular—Marguerite Duras and Simone de Beauvoir—whom she identifies as having given war literature a uniquely feminine voice. She looks to their texts to provide new insight into the experience of women during the war and to examine how they subvert de Gaulle’s master narrative of history.

Many women’s accounts focus on their personal stories and their daily struggles to survive and refuse the Occupation. According to Dominique Veillon in “Résister au féminin,” since women were first and foremost wives and mothers, they wrote from that perspective, documenting in their journals and memoirs the daily battles of family life during the war years. These battles began with fighting the basest enemies of hunger and cold in an attempt to meet the basic daily needs of feeding the children and keeping them warm. Thus, women’s writings contrasted greatly with the masculine narratives that had been published before, which seemed to ignore the everyday needs in favor of the loftier ideals of heroic action and combat against the Enemy. By simply writing their everyday stories, the women naturally shed light on the abundance of women’s resistance activity, ranging from the mundane yet harsh preoccupations of finding food and shelter—in great part for fellow résistants—to the more exciting but dangerous exploits of being a liaison agent, for example.

Yet this daily war waged at home has been left out of men’s accounts, as if it had no consequence on the outcome of the war and thus on history. In her introduction to Mémoire et oubli, Margaret Collins Weitz affirms, “Men seldom speak of daily events, perhaps not judging them fit for History. [But to] privilege the grand gestures—the heroic, the adventurous, the romantic—and neglect the quotidian is to distort the historical record” (6). Men’s narratives depicting the Resistance tend to document the daily as an agenda of
meetings with politicians and other résistants, for the sake of organizing and coordinating combatant action. In “Résister au féminin,” Veillon agrees that what she calls “le réel du quotidien,” is lacking from men’s accounts, which chart mostly the big militant events and the organization of the Resistance.72 Men’s narratives, with their focus on the political or the military, seem to be less realistic for their lack of such details of ordinary life, which, naturally, did not cease to exist during the war. She offers the example of Henri Frenay, the leader of Combat, one of the largest resistance movements: “à aucun moment, le récit qu’il donne ne s’écarte de l’histoire du mouvement, bien au contraire il se confond avec elle. Son histoire à lui est inséparable de celle de ‘Combat’” (87). And of Combat’s second in command, Claude Bourdet, Veillon adds:

mais l’on cherche en vain des détails qui enracineraient cette épopée dans le réel quotidien. (À peine apprend-on que l’auteur est marié, père de famille !) ... tout ce qui fait la quotidienneté de la vie est banni du récit comme n’ayant aucun intérêt historique. (88)

While this does not necessarily suggest that masculine war narratives are not realistic, it does prove that, in the least, they are incomplete.

One of the daily realities faced by everyone in a war is that of death and destruction. Yet, these aspects of war, when narrated by men in their memoirs, are somehow portrayed more positively, given that they already know the final outcome of the war. Death is portrayed as glorious sacrifice for the ultimate victory, instead of painful loss:

à aucun moment ces hommes ne perdent de vue qu’ils sont des chefs de la Résistance, ni n’escamotent les lendemains de la guerre et leur devenir existentiel. Tout ceci donne à leur mémoire une coloration particulière, expliquant par exemple le rapport à l’événement, envisagé sous l’angle

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72 “Le réel du quotidien” is Dominique Veillon’s term for the realistic depiction of wartime by including scenes of everyday, ordinary life and stressing the material struggle as well as the physical, military battle. This element of daily reality is predominant in resistance narratives by women (88).
This hindsight, political angle, and existential pondering are perhaps what enable some men to write about death and destruction in a way that attempts to make sense of them and does not dwell on their horror. In short, the masculine war narrative, is full of heroic and victorious images, whereas, death and deprivation tend to haunt the woman’s story.

Everything in the masculine war narrative, including death, must be defined in terms of heroism instead of what it truly is—a horrible, lonely loss. The masculine hero is never alone or frightened, for he knows that he has the backing of the Nation. Women, on the other hand, are not reluctant to admit their fear and distress. For example, in her book, Femmes sous l’Occupation, Célia Bertin claims that she cried for days, “sans cesse” after the French defeat in 1940 and during the ensuing mass exodus of residents from Paris and the north. Her story of women’s involvement in the Resistance, narrated through a “rideau de larmes,” shows her constant state of fear and anguish (22).

Another daily reality faced by everyone is that of the chaos and confusion of war, yet the tendency to expose this chaos is said to be a feminine characteristic. In their memoirs, men have tended to gloss over everything that goes against the image of a well-organized military machine. Common to women’s accounts are a description of the chaos that ensued in France after the defeat of the French army in 1940: the flight of the government as well as the mass exodus of civilians from Paris. Granted, it might be only natural for a woman to recount this, as the exodus was mostly of women, children, and elderly people since the men had been away fighting; yet, some of these women’s accounts will show a glimpse of deserting French soldiers in the midst of this exodus. This cowardly image of the soldier would be
sacrilegious in a masculine account. While the realities of death, desertion, and the chaos of war had been depicted in war novels, these themes generally did not receive much attention in men’s post-war memoirs of the Resistance, since these authors were more concerned with maintaining the virile “résistantialiste” war myth constructed by de Gaulle of a united, organized resistance engaged in armed battle against the enemy.

Collaboration has also been portrayed as feminine and is largely represented by les tontes des femmes that took place mostly after the Liberation; that is, the public sheering of the hair of women who collaborated. This act also allowed men to reaffirm the masculinity and authority lost at the time of the defeat. This topic does not appear in the three works of this study. Two of the texts (by Chevrillon and Aubrac) end with the Liberation of Paris or before. In La Douleur, Duras refers to the disdainful treatment of the women who volunteered to work in Germany, but does not witness this particular act of repudiation. Rather, it is included in Hiroshima mon amour. For more on the topic of les tontes des femmes, see Fabrice Virgili’s La France virile: des femmes tondues à la Libération (2000).
CHAPTER 2

CLAIRE CHEVRILLON: AN ORDINARY RESISTANCE

“What a battlefield!” (7). These were the words of a doctor when he laid eyes on the scene before him one icy night in Normandy, in January of 1940. Earlier that night, Claire Chevrillon had been awakened by gravel thrown at her window. The school’s phone lines were out, so she had run to the town hall to ring a doctor for help. One doctor had refused to come due to the treacherous conditions, and then another was delayed by lack of transport. By the time a third doctor arrived, the fight was over. He reached the scene only in time to clean up the mess and the remains. What was the emergency? The birth of Claire’s new nephew! In Code Name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance, Claire Chevrillon recounts this personal and intimate moment with the same intensity and drama of a historic event. Interestingly, she uses war terminology such as “a battlefield” to describe a uniquely feminine act—childbirth.

While these were actually the words of the male doctor, and not Chevrillon’s own, they made quite an impression on her: “I can still hear his first words on entering the room” (7). Perhaps at the time, hearing this masculine, military vocabulary applied to such a private, personal event, they made quite an impression on her: “I can still hear his first words on entering the room” (7). Perhaps at the time, hearing this masculine, military vocabulary applied to such a private,

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74 For all quotes, I cite the English version, Code Name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance (1995), since it was the first published edition.

75 When war broke out, Claire Chevrillon was teaching English at two private girls’ schools in Paris. She spent the first winter of the war in Normandy, with one of the schools, which had relocated there. In the fall of 1940, Claire returned to teach at the other school, the prestigious Collège Sévigné, which had reopened in Paris.

76 Since the texts of all three authors in this study are autobiographical and written in the first person, the historical figure, the author, the narrator and the subject are all the same within each work. As such, I may refer to the historical figure, the author, and the narrating subject in each text using their full name, last name, or first name, interchangeably.
feminine context shocked her. But later, while writing her narrative, Chevrillon used his words to her advantage for the purpose of associating and equating the private, female space to the public, masculine battleground. The passage actually begins with an update on news from the war front: “The Phony War dragged on. Every night the radio said the same thing: nothing was happening at the front” (5). From the very beginning, however, Chevrillon makes it clear that very important things are happening at the home front, and that during wartimes, this front is a battlefield, just like any other.

In another reversal of the traditional male war image, on this particular night, the hero is a farm woman. After searching all over town for a doctor, to no avail, Claire is convinced that her sister and the baby, delivered all alone, will not survive. She returns home to find that a local farm woman, recommended for being “a great expert in birthing calves,” has come to reassure them (6).

Finally, as a result of jurisdiction and licensing issues, all three of the doctors solicited during the night of the birth refuse to provide follow-up care for Claire’s sister and the baby: “Antoinette and her baby, Francis, had to take care of themselves” (7). Whether intentionally or not, Claire Chevrillon manages to highlight the irony that just months before, the French government had adopted a Family Code designed to reverse the low birthrate, and to return women to the home with the objective of rebuilding the traditional, moral family (Fishman, We Will Wait 19-20). This Code promised to protect maternity, and instead, many women were left to fend for themselves.78

77 The Phony War, or “drôle de guerre,” lasted from the declaration of war in September 1939 until May 1940. During this time, the enemy armies faced off at their fortified Maginot and Siegfried lines along the Franco-German frontier; however, there was very little fighting. They mostly sat motionless and watched each other (Chevrillon 203).

78 In Chapter 3, we will see that Marguerite Duras actually lost a child under similar circumstances.
Claire Chevrillon often juxtaposes a traditional war image with that of the domestic front: “On April 9 the German army invaded Denmark and Norway” (7); but then Chevrillon’s focus returns to the school and its own crisis. Here, she appropriates war terminology—the word “invasion”—to describe another household situation. The invasion she refers to in this case is that of lice: “But shame and horror! The Geoffroys arrived in the midst of an invasion of a particularly ignominious sort: lice” (8). Claire Chevrillon also uses the description of this visit by family friends to once again reverse the stereotypical heroic role. This time, she portrays the 60-year-old M. Geoffroy-Dechaume, a First World War veteran with a wooden leg, as a cheerful and energetic family man who climbs trees to pick the fruit (7). Thus, in this narrative, where “daily events abut significant events” (Gillikin 130), Claire Chevrillon establishes right away that her account will center on daily life in both the domestic and the public realms, each with its own struggles, risks, and importance. She will portray ordinary people in a heroic light and established heroes as ordinary human beings.

Chevrillon’s narrative sets the tone for a feminine experience of war. After all, during wartime France, the woman’s responsibilities began with the children and the home. Whereas the man’s job was to provide economically for the family, the woman’s role was to manage these resources to feed, clothe, care for, educate and nurture the children, as well as to protect the family home and hearth. An excess of Vichy propaganda portrayed the model French family in which, “[w]omen remained within the domestic sphere of the family, marriage, and children. If the husband was the head, the wife and mother was the heart of the family” (Fishman, We Will Wait 126). In her study on the wives of prisoners of war, Sarah Fishman
cites civics manuals of the time aimed at instructing the woman, wife and mother of her duties:

To her belonged the following tasks: ‘control of the home, housekeeping, organizing of daily life, education of the children and little ones, especially in its detail, accomplishing and directing all those activities which make a home intimate, warm, attractive, loved, clean, modestly comfortable, peaceffully and gently ordered and disciplined.’ The wife filled the role of the ‘guardian of the family’. (We Will Wait 126) 79

The Vichy government and the politics of the family, with its “Travail, Famille, Patrie” ideology and its enforcement of the Family Code, claimed to support the wife in these endeavors. It portrayed itself as especially sympathetic to, and even responsible for, the families of France’s heroic POWs. 80 Vichy at first increased allowances for the children of POWs, and gave the wives subsidies for the sending of care packages to their husbands. But the reality was that the economic hardship far outweighed any aid they received. The war had disrupted this traditional family structure, forcing many women back to work, and putting a tremendous strain on them as head of household and sole provider. The Vichy government controlled everything—from the nourishment to the education of the family—but offered very little in return. Especially in the cities, supplies were short, and the best was confiscated for the Germans. Mothers had to resort to taking from their children’s rations to send to their husbands, and taking to the illegal black market to feed their children. Not only was it financially taxing, but buying on the black market was especially dangerous. Claire Chevrillon’s account of the war years, then, gets at the heart of women’s issues and exposes

79 Sarah Fishman cites Père Villain, “La Famille,” Manuel d’éducation civique, Chef de l’état, AN, AG2: 27, 36; Sauvons nos foyers! 8; La famille que nous voulons 58; Gardienne du foyer, aux jeunes filles.

80 See the film, l’Oeil de Vichy. In this documentary on Vichy collaboration, which uses actual Vichy propaganda, we see how Vichy portrayed Pétain as a caring father figure, and the government as providing for the children of POWs and of laborers. Several clips from news reels show Georges Scapini, a war veteran serving as liaison between Pétain and Hitler on issues of POWs, giving “touching” speeches to the children of POWs.
the risks that they took for the basic survival of the family during a time when nothing was available and support was offered in name only.

The primordial responsibility in caring for children is feeding them; so naturally, the preoccupation with food is dominant in many women’s stories. In accounts of the Occupation, this is even more evident, since the situation was exacerbated by the lack of food. What might prove a difficult enough task under ordinary conditions—running the household on a tight budget—became almost impossible during the war years. Even for families that were well off, such as the Chevrillons, finding food was a challenge because of the blatant lack of products and the rationing of what little there was available to the French. The black market was a desperate and dangerous alternative. But even there, supplies were limited, quality was questionable, prices were exorbitant, and the risk was constant, for this food had to be circulated and stored secretly by both seller and buyer.

Although Claire Chevrillon was close to her sister’s three children, she had none of her own. In her narrative, she admits, “food was no real problem . . . I don’t even remember standing in line for food during the war” (37). Then she corrects herself, “However, I now recall benefiting from the kindness of a friend who lived next door. She stood in line for her family and often got things for us as well” (37). Although Chevrillon does not recall spending much time in the food lines herself, like most women’s accounts, hers is full of details about food and rationing during the war. This is only logical since, first, it was the woman’s duty to do the shopping, and secondly, given the shortages that ensued with the Occupation, “food seemed to be the main topic of conversation in Paris in 1940” (23). It was this way in all occupied cities of France. The infamous ration lines were indeed women’s number one point of attack and first source of distress. Indeed, a woman’s agenda dating
from October of 1942 shows to what extent the search for food occupied a woman’s day and tormented her. It was impossible to obtain all of the necessary goods for a meal in one day:

7h30—Chez le boulanger. Achat du pain. Il y aura des biscottes à 11 heures.
9 heures—Jour de viande. Le boucher prévient qu’elle ne sera pas distribuée que samedi.
9h30—Chez le crémier. Il ne recevra le fromage qu’à 17 heures.
10 heures—Chez le tripier. Mon numéro 32 passera à 16 heures.
10h30—Chez l’épicier, il y aura des légumes à 17 heures.
11 heures—Retour chez le boulanger. Il n’y a plus de biscottes.81

One can easily imagine the total frustration—and even desperation—that women felt on a daily basis, and the stress and anguish that this process caused them. Dominique Veillon refers to this nerve-wracking condition as “la psychose des queues” (“La vie” 635). In this particular instance, the woman’s day began at 7:30 in the morning, and all she had to show for four hours’ worth of “shopping” was a loaf of bread, a handful of deferrals to further food lines, and a bunch of empty promises. Her “hunt” for food was perpetuated—probably well past the last deferred appointment of 5 p.m.—into a literal scavenger hunt, as she went around in circles, revisiting the same places, only to scrounge up a few items in the end. This cruel process was repeated on a daily basis, yet as seen in L’Oeil de Vichy, Vichy contrasted this reality with images of happy women and children waiting in free food distribution lines sponsored by the generous Occupier. News reels used in the film also show that in 1940, Pétain opened “Le Restaurant de l’Entre’Aide pour les familles d’ouvriers” in Paris. The scene displays plentiful food (including a juicy roast) at low prices, and captures a woman happily enjoying her meal.

Claire Chevrillon’s narrative documents the contrasting reality of the rationing process. Chevrillon begins with a list of what items had to be rationed, and the explanation that imported luxuries never made it as far as Paris. She then names five of the eight

81 According to Dominique Veillon, this agenda originally appeared in an article titled “La vie en France” in the February 15, 1943 edition of Les Documents français; it is quoted in Veillon’s “La vie quotidienne des femmes” (631-2).
categories of ration tickets, and points out that milk was only available to children up to the age of six. She describes the lines, first to receive the ration tickets, and then to buy the food. However, “a ration ticket didn’t mean there was food to be bought. Often you’d spend a half-hour in line only to hear, ‘Finished! There’s nothing left!’ And the line would then break up in silence” (23). Chevrillon reminds us that many families had to resort to the black market and connections in the country to supplement their rations just to survive. Still, many went hungry, and even in families like hers which was well off and had a home in the country, everyone lost an unhealthy amount of weight.  

Food and rationing are the subject of many of the letters from friends and family reproduced in Code Name Christiane Clouet. The young friend of the family who helps to take care of Antoinette’s children writes about her search for ingredients with which to bake a birthday cake for the youngest child: “It appears that those with J3 cards have the right to nuts. I will try to find some! We have three eggs a week for the children. No fruit. And we are running short of bread” (58). And this was in the countryside, where villagers were able, to some limited degree, to supplement the rationed products with home-grown food and farm animals. Often, families in the country also helped to sustain their city-dwelling relatives with these resources.

In a later chapter (“Port-Blanc, September, 1943—July, 1944”), Claire Chevrillon reprints excerpts from a series of letters from her sister to prove that Antoinette’s life as an isolated, single parent was far from easy, and in fact, increasingly stressful as the war progressed:

She had to make all decisions alone without any family to rely on; she had the care of children, age seven, four, and three, who were often sick, sometimes

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82 After only one year of war, her father had lost 36 pounds and her mother had dropped to 84 pounds (23).

83 The J3 category was for adolescents (L. Aubrac, Ivresse 30). Since Antoinette had younger children, the intention was probably to barter for the ration, as was common practice.
seriously; she had the worry of her imprisoned husband and aging parents; and she had the constant responsibility of providing food for all these people and indeed for others. (142)

Chevrillon actually edits out all the references to food, in order to spare the reader the seemingly repetitive and unimportant details. Yet the very fact that she prefaces this section by specifying, “I have taken out all mention of the packages of food—butter, potatoes, beans, eggs, and chickens—[Antoinette] sent to our parents and me and to my friends in prison” (143), reminds us of how important, how constant and how omnipresent the preoccupation with food really was during the war years. In her article, “The Diary as Popular History,” Lynn Z. Bloom recounts her experience in editing the diary of Natalie Crouter, an American woman held for over three years during the war in a Japanese internment camp in the Philippines. To cut the diary down to readable length, Bloom had to “[eliminate] many of the repetitive references to food; understandably, Natalie had recorded every scrap consumed (even garbage) during the entire incarceration” (798). Bloom notes that Crouter had recorded 3,785 meals (806). Of course, Natalie Crouter’s situation of confinement heightened the obsessive focus on food, but the topic of meals and food is central to most women’s personal war narratives. The camps represented an extreme situation in which one of the only ways to resist was simply to survive. As such, food became an absolute obsession and people were reduced to an animal state, eating garbage, as in Natalie Crouter’s case, or fighting over scraps and stealing. If women in occupied France were not reduced to this extreme, they were still driven to desperate measures in their daily struggle to find food for their family’s survival. We have already seen the exasperating effect of food lines on women, as well as the cost and danger of the black market.
For prisoner of war wives such as Antoinette, having their men in prison compounded
the problem. “Their husband’s absence intensified the difficulties for prisoners’ wives,
generally reducing their income and halving the number of adult family members available to
cope with difficult circumstances” (Fishman, We Will Wait 63). The women now had to
worry about sending their men the allowed monthly care packages of food and clothing,
without which, they might not endure their prison stay. In essence, the women lost the
provider and gained another child.

Food, then, was even more of a concern for those families who had relatives in
prison. In the chapter dedicated to her brother-in-law Paul’s detention, Chevrillon again
mentions food, as its availability and quality, or rather, lacks thereof, were central to prison
life. According to him, the food was sufficient, “which in Paul’s terms meant it was pitiful. A
frequent dish was pellets of flour and bits of potato” (39). Luckily, Paul and his cellmates
were able to receive monthly five-kilo care packages to supplement their nutrition. These
care packages to the prisoners, of course, meant less food for the family back home, as there
were no special allotments for prisoners, and the cost of sending these packages far
outweighed the 60-franc supplement that POW wives received from the Vichy government
for this purpose (Fishman, We Will Wait 59).84 Thus, providing for someone in prison
pushed the already heavily-burdened family deeper into that extreme state where food, the
most basic component of daily life, became an obsessive part of the daily struggle for
survival, as well as a tool in daily resistance.

84 Sarah Fishman discusses this issue of care packages at length, including a detailed price analysis, in Chapter
4 of We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940—1945. According to her research and interviews,
the Vichy government gave POW wives 2 francs per day for these packages, but the extra 60 francs per month
barely helped, with packages usually costing at least 250 francs.
Food was not always allowed to prisoners; in fact, a letter from a friend reveals that it was often withheld as a form of punishment: “Nov. 16. A package, but all food returned to senders as general punishment” (121). In these instances, woman’s resistance was two-fold: the basic struggle to provide the food and its illicit transfer into the Nazi-controlled prisons. One dangerous scenario was the illicit exchange of goods and information to and from prisoners during supervised visits:

This was accomplished under, or more often on, the long table in the visiting room, the prisoners on one side, the visitors on the other. The table was so wide you couldn’t pass things under it easily. Instead, you had to push or roll your gift across the table, like a billiard ball, when the guards turned their backs. While doing this, you spoke loudly enough to cover the sound. When eight or ten people did this at the same time, you can imagine the hullabaloo. (28-29)

If prison visits were not allowed, women had to resort to the desperate and risky tactic of bribing the French prison guards, as Claire Chevrillon did successfully on one occasion for her Jewish cousins at the Drancy deportation camp. Given the German control of the prison system and the collaboration of the French police, attempting to bribe guards was quite risky, whether done for a family member or a resistance comrade. Still, women undertook this tactic very often, not knowing if the bribe would be accepted or if, instead, they would be detained, questioned, or worse. There was also always the possibility that the bribe would be accepted without the package ever being delivered.

Helping to nourish prisoners was a tremendous hardship on women. They were worn from the endless and repeated process of waiting in ration lines, scavenging for food, and making frequent, long, difficult trips to the prisons on scarce transportation. Women often put themselves in risky or even dangerous situations for this, having to sneak in food and/or
bribe prison guards. These were just some of the hardships and risks—including the risk of losing their lives—that women ran in their daily resistance.

In the case of prisoner of war wives, while they did not make trips to the prisons camps, which were in Germany, finding the food and resources for their care packages was no less a strain and required great sacrifice. Often, they had to take from their own rations, and those of the children, since, in essence, the prisoner was one more child to feed and keep warm. Vichy and women’s magazines tried to portray these care packages for POWs as a redeeming sacrifice. According to Sarah Fishman, “Prisoners’ wives fulfilled the traditional female roles of nurturing and self-sacrifice by sending their husbands care packages of food and clothing. Such packages represented more than just food. With every package, a woman also sent ‘a piece of her heart’” (We Will Wait 128). In fact, women’s narration shows that the man’s absence drained the woman, physically and mentally. Paul’s incarceration affected all of the women in his life, and they were figuratively and literally consumed by the need to provide for him. We learn that Paul’s mother spent her days obsessing to find food to send him. Claire Chevrillon privileges the reader with Mme Fabre’s innermost thoughts: “[Paul] was constantly on her mind, I know, though she spoke of many other things. Her hope was to see him again before she died” (23). Sadly, she did not, for she died as a result of standing in the food lines in the cold winter of 1940. Dominique Veillon points to the fact that the climate was deadly that winter: “les files d’attente s’allongent au cours de l’hiver 1940 sous un froid glacial et deviennent vite un cauchemar, en particulier pour les personnes âgées” (“La vie” 631). Paul’s elderly mother, then, made the ultimate sacrifice for her POW son.
As Veillon puts it, documenting their daily battles as wives and mothers was one of the characteristics that distinguished feminine war narratives from their masculine counterparts:

A côté de ces récits [masculins] dominés par l’action et la lutte, des femmes avant tout épouses et mères ont retracé les difficultés voire les drames d’une famille durant la guerre. Leur évocation va des problèmes matériels comme le ravitaillement, les guerres, le froid aux angoisses éprouvées devant les risques courus par l’engagement du mari et des enfants. (“Résister” 89)

For POW wives, this was a time of terrible hardship, both physical and emotional. It was a period marked by economic difficulty, physical and mental exhaustion, isolation, loneliness and unbearable waiting. Officers’ wives received a military stipend, and in the case of civil jobs, the husband’s non-military salary as well. Yet, despite the subsidies, the money was not enough, given wartime prices and shortages. Most women were forced to work outside of the home, many taking over their husbands’ farms, businesses, or even jobs, as employers asked them to fill in for the missing men. The cities were short on food and heating resources, whereas on the farm, while they might have more food, they were often down 50% in manpower. In addition, the German requisitions of farm equipment and animals depleted their resources. Whether in the city or in rural locations, prisoners’ wives were overworked, overextended and undernourished, like most French people during the Occupation. In “La vie quotidienne des femmes,” Veillon insists on the irony of women’s condition during wartime: “Suroccupées, elles sont plus que jamais confinées dans les soins du foyer, partagées entre les courses, la cuisine, la couture et l’éducation des enfants” (631). Like Veillon, many contemporary historians now include the documentation of women’s
daily lives in their history books, for they acknowledge that war indeed affects all areas and all members of society.  

Claire Chevrillon’s narrative includes extracts from twenty-six of her sister’s letters as first-hand testimony on the harsh effects of war on a POW wife. Along with details about the difficulty in raising her children alone, Antoinette relates the devastating effects of war on the entire town: illnesses, tragic deaths of children, and the townspeople’s difficulty in coping with these losses. Apparent in all of her letters are the constant hardship, stress, anxiety and isolation that she suffers: “I’m swamped—swamped with things to do, and trying to make order out of disorder . . . My dear Mother, what is going on now in Paris? I’m always afraid you’re being bombed” (144-5). By May 1944, Antoinette witnesses military combat in the area and must choose between evacuation and hiding in a trench that she and the children have built (149). Although she does not work outside of the home, and has the support of her family and friends, Antoinette struggles nonetheless to raise and protect her three children in a time of war while suffering the additional constant strain and worry of having her husband in a German POW camp.

On the masculine battlefield, once a victory marks the end of a battle, it remains a victory (a dead enemy remains dead); however, a woman’s victory does not endure in the same way. A woman’s success in feeding and defending the family one day does not continue into the next. Thus, the woman’s fight to sustain her family is a constant, repetitive,

85 This article by Veillon appears in a book with other articles on daily life in Vichy France, edited by Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida. In France, it is especially Dominique Veillon who has, in the last two decades, shifted the focus of her research to women’s daily life, publishing such books as La mode sous l’Occupation, débrouillardise et coquetterie pendant la guerre (Paris: Payot, 1990) and Vivre et survivre en France 1939-1947 (Paris: Payot, 1995). Non-French publications on the topic include those by Hanna Diamond and Sarah Fishman.

86 These letters, dating from September 1943 through July 1944, document daily life in the small town of Port-Blanc, Brittany, in the 11 months just prior to its liberation.
and daily battle which has no decisive end, and no temporary respite. Through the extensive and detailed descriptions of this constant, daily struggle against the Occupation, women’s writings commonly reflect the day-to-day reality which, deemed unnoteworthy and uninteresting, is largely absent from men’s accounts.

In the foreword to *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, John F. Sweets highlights this difference between men’s and women’s resistance narratives: “unlike so many highly romanticized thrill-a-minute Resistance tales, this author [Chevrillon] reminds her readers that many aspects of ‘life as usual’ continued throughout the occupation era” (xv). Claire Chevrillon’s account is indeed full of details about the daily life of a French family during the Occupation. Through the depiction of everyday life, she represent her own—and Woman’s—wartime struggle and resistance. In fact, it seems that in many women’s accounts, “the ideological and patriotic furor, the dangerous and lethal missions are always accompanied by daily banalities” (Stora 87). According to Benjamin Stora, women’s stories reveal that acts considered resistance based on the traditional definition of action and combat are carried out in women’s lives alongside the daily, common acts that are now recognized as part of an ordinary, daily resistance. In this evolved definition of war and resistance, action and combat take on a different meaning: even small gestures are acts of resistance. While Stora comments specifically on Algerian women’s wartime writings, his observation applies not only to the colonial war, but to all wars. One could conclude that Woman’s wartime world is a place where every space is a possible battlefield, everyday people are the combatants, and the everyday struggle to survive is heroic combat.

Despite its emphasis on the daily struggle for survival and resistance against the Occupier, Claire Chevrillon’s text does not just reflect the apparent strain on life caused by
the Occupation. Realistically speaking, in a span of four years, there were bound to be some lighter moments mixed in with the overall bleakness of the times. Reinforcing the notion of the “réel du quotidien” in women’s writing (Veillon, “Résister” 88), and in keeping with the factual and detail-oriented quality of diaries, Claire Chevrillon’s account of everyday life describes the good moments as well as the bad. One such moment comes amidst the chaos of the Exodus. On her way out of Paris, Chevrilon meets up with her brother, Pierre, who is on military duty in a village near her route. When she finds him, he is enjoying a rare, peaceful moment in the countryside:

There he was in a field, all alone, dressed in a Zouave uniform, his sleeves rolled up, his fez lying next to him on the grass. He was sitting under an apple tree, eating paté on a baguette . . . How marvelous! He was enjoying a favorite pastime, an afternoon in the countryside in beautiful weather—a thousand miles from the disaster of war. (12)

This faithful transcription of a pleasant, peaceful scene has quite a subversive effect: the idyllic vision of her brother in a pastoral setting subdues the image of the fierce, heroic Zouave soldier that his uniform is meant to project. In the same vein, descriptions of Paris contrast the city’s beauty during times of war and times of peace: “What struck me most about the Paris I returned to was its beauty and strange emptiness. Except for the great boulevards which teemed with military vehicles and tourist buses carrying Germans in uniform, the city seemed to have fallen under a spell” (22). Ironically, in this scene, Chevrillon’s realistic portrait reveals that Paris is no longer the capital city that it once was, but rather an occupied, military zone.

87 The Zouaves originated from a tribe living in Algeria and Morocco who lent its service to the French colonial armies in 1830. This unit of the Army was eventually comprised of all native Frenchmen, but it kept the original uniform typical of North-African dress. During the nineteenth century, this fighting unit became legendary worldwide. The Zouave soldier had a reputation for being a ferocious fighter, of unparalleled valor; in essence, the ideal soldier. See “Zouaves” entry in bibliography for full reference on source website.
Through scenes of beauty and nature which evoke all of the senses, Claire Chevrillon offers a more complete vision of wartime France, one in which picturesque scenes realistically co-existed in a war-torn France, just as daily resistance co-mingled with daily life:

When I asked [my friend] whether he’d help with the parachute drops, he didn’t hesitate an instant . . . But for now we’d come to his old thatched cottage covered with climbing roses, isolated and primitive. For me these were days of total relaxation; I could be oblivious to the rest of the world. All around were great sloping moors, a forest of autumn colors, streams running through gorges, springs and moss, ferns and mushrooms. If you wanted delicious chestnuts, you had only to pick them up from the ground and put them in the embers of the fireplace. A few minutes before mealtime someone would gather a basket of flap mushrooms for an omelette tasting of the woods around us. (70)

Male writers such as Zola have been known to use descriptive passages of nature in their war narratives for the symbolic purpose of contrasting nature’s peace with war’s destruction. Chevrillon’s narrative, on the other hand, reveals a continuity between daily resistance and daily life. Her matter-of-fact, detailed observation is consistent with the diary genre. Its value is that it describes daily life at a given place and time, filling in the details left out of the traditional, factual historical discourse. In her introduction to Mémoire et Oubli, Margaret Collins Weitz suggests that passages like these and the other detailed, descriptive accounts of everyday life during the Occupation are typical of feminine narratives. In contrast, men’s narratives leave out the daily events when writing about history, whereas “[w]omen, on the other hand, describe conditions, settings, and provide many details about their everyday lives that give texture and life to history, in the broader sense” (6).

Indeed, while Claire Chevrillon’s narrative is often a detailed account of daily life and private affairs that paints a more complete picture of what life was like for the average
French citizen during the Occupation, it also records public historical events and becomes a valuable document as well. Chevrillon continually updates the reader on the War and Occupation by weaving into her personal stories news of the public events, as they happen and as she hears them. Most often, these updates come to her by word of mouth or in radio addresses. For example, she includes news on the general mobilization that reached them, as well as the radio’s reports on the lack of military action during the Phony War (3, 5). She also points to the violence of the public notices posted on the walls of Paris: “These signs were usually printed on red paper, bordered in black, with the text in both German and French: NOTICE: Shot for terrorist acts against German troops . . . NOTICE: Three Communists have been guillotined” (51-2). Claude Chabrol’s montage of Vichy propaganda and news reels in L’Oeil de Vichy demonstrates that news was distorted during the war. Claire Chevrillon seems fully aware of this, stating how she keeps from reading the newspapers out of her disgust over the blatant collaboration of the media. As she itemizes some of the statutes passed against the Jews, she points to the fact that many people remained unaware or indifferent to them: “[m]any of these anti-Jewish measures were passed without our noticing them because we were absorbed in our own problems and responsibilities, and because, as I’ve noted, we didn’t read the papers” (34). Thus, Claire Chevrillon supplements her limited information from the time with additional facts learned later, as the history of WWII was pieced together and written. She also uses footnotes to clarify and to provide more thorough information and definitions, such as an explanation of the Phony War. She methodically records military action: “On April 9 the German army invaded Denmark and Norway. Almost as quickly an Anglo-French force landed in Norway, at Narvik” (7). Yet, when Chevrillon narrates the progression of the German troops into French territory and the
defeat of the Anglo-French counter-offensive, she contrasts her own eyewitness account with that of the official news: “As things turned out, the Germans didn’t get to the Bourg-Dun area until later. Instead of continuing their drive southwest, they turned north at Abbeville to cut off British and French troops” (9). She also demystifies the common misconception that France was only divided into two zones, free and occupied. Indeed, the armistice left France divided into seven zones. She delineates these seven zones and describes each one briefly (26). Chevrillon’s narrative relates historical facts in a way that is at once subjective and objective. It is objective in that she cites facts and events accurately, and it works as a document. John F. Sweets points out: “This account of life in occupied France is also very accurate; most aspects of the story correspond to the conclusions of the best historians of the era” (xv). Even if some historians were to disagree with her on the facts, no one can deny that “Claire’s memoirs are an excellent guide to the sentiments shared by many French people of the time, to what was ‘believed to be true,’ whether or not this was in fact the case” (xv). Chevrillon’s narrative is not only a historical document; it also gives a measure of public awareness and opinion. It finally points to the limits of propaganda’s reach through the media. Yet, Claire Chevrillon’s historical reference is subjective in that it is limited mostly to local events, and highlights those that touched her and her family:

our family’s experience of the war was limited and local, and therefore my account of it is necessarily subjective. And, of course, you won’t find on these pages a great deal of what happened elsewhere in France because we heard

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88 The Bourg-Dun area is the area in Normandy to which the Parisian school had relocated for the 1939-1940 school year. Claire’s sister and children were living at the school with her at the time.

89 Even Robert Paxton seems to reduce France into two zones. Although he briefly mentions the closed zone in the northeast and the annexed Alsace and Lorraine (55), more often, he refers to “the two zones of France, occupied and unoccupied” (235), or “both zones of France” (237), again implying that there were only two.

90 A map (not included in the first publication in English) is also included in her 1999 French publication, Une résistance ordinaire (52). Similar maps in Jean-Pierre Azéma’s From Munich to the Liberation (47) and Serge Ravanel’s L’Esprit de Résistance (418) corroborate the division of France into seven zones.
nothing about those things. But what I tell here did in fact happen. I have changed only a few names. (xvii)

Still, this account of daily life and its dangers also stand as a historical document.

Chevrillon’s discussion of historical events and the evolution of resistance activity are grounded in detail and privilege ordinary people and ordinary acts of resistance. They also focus on the “feminine” support services without which the “masculine” political and military machine could not have operated and succeeded.

Claire Chevrillon documents—with the same detail—the subtle emergence of resistance activity as she witnessed and heard about it. She writes about the first collective and public act of resistance in Paris. On November 11, 1940, a group of students defied a German ban and paraded down to the Arc of Triumph to commemorate the Allied Victory in the First World War. The students marched in two columns, with the student at the head of each column carrying a fishing pole. In French, the “deux gaules” (two fishing poles) were an obvious reference to the General whom they had heard was urging them from afar to continue the fight. This act of defiance against the Germans and deference to de Gaulle also makes it into his war memoirs, but as a one-sentence example of positive morale. Focusing more on the heroic aspect, “The students’ demonstration in Paris . . . sounded a moving and encouraging note” (De Gaulle, Call to Honour 155). While de Gaulle does mention that the demonstration was broken up by machine-gun fire, Claire Chevrillon demystifies the scene by being more graphic in her description of the clash: “They were greeted by machine guns. Blood was shed, and several students were arrested” (36). Nevertheless, she agrees with de Gaulle regarding the issue of morale, asserting that “their courage shook up the general despondency” (36).
A chapter entitled “The Spirit of Resistance Grows” spans from the summer of 1940 to June 1942. Here, Claire Chevrillon explains that she was unaware of any organized resistance, that she did not even hear the term until after the Liberation. In the early years of the Occupation, most people “knew nothing about any form of collective action against the Germans. Those who resisted did so on their own” (52). People expressed their hostility towards the Occupiers with silence and through individual, subtle acts of defiance. Writers protested by refusing to write for German-controlled publishing companies. French citizens tore down propaganda posters; they hummed tunes from the BBC in food lines to suggest French solidarity and offer hope to the crowd. Chevrillon admits to knowing of a few clandestine newspapers that already existed in the summer of 1940, but such newspapers were still rare and not generally heard of until later. Although networks were being organized in both the Occupied and the Free zones, many people would not know of their existence for at least another year. In the meantime, “we ordinary French citizens who opposed Pétain’s regime were aware of signs of rebellion and knew there were sources of information that contradicted the Vichy line” (51). In other words, resistance was present from the beginning of the Occupation and at all levels, whether in day-to-day activity or in armed combat.

Resistance activity eventually became organized and armed factions began to form. Chevrillon cites the Communist group of paramilitary snipers, Les Francs-Tireurs-Partisans, which was soon killing as many German officers as possible. The goal was to demoralize the Germans as well as to increase tensions between the Germans and French so as to push the French into action. By October 1941, the Germans were retaliating in numbers of uneven proportion: approximately fifty so-called French “hostages” executed for every one German officer.
After this brief general overview of the beginnings of resistance activity, the narrative once again turns personal, as Chevrillon offers examples of individual acts of resistance that she knew of firsthand. In 1940, her Jewish cousin hid a large group of refugees on his farm while also being forced to shelter 150 German soldiers. Decorated WWI veteran, Charles Geoffroy-Dechaume, wrote letters to Pétain denouncing Hitler and Vichy’s collaboration, and praising the Allies.91 He also asked Claire Chevrillon to translate the British book, Why Britain Is at War (1939) and later wrote a song to inspire the maquisards. The Geoffroy-Dechaume family took more practical action as well, when in July 1943, they hid British airmen for several days. This service eventually became part of an organized resistance effort, but these earlier, individual acts of resistance functioned on their own and did not need to be organized to be effective.

Claire Chevrillon’s narrative bears witness to a range of resistance acts, from feeding and sheltering the Allies, and spreading their counter-propaganda, to providing support for its military functions. While traditional definitions would single out the military activity as the only true resistance, Claire Chevrillon shows us that all actions are necessarily intermingled and continuous in the ongoing, daily fight. The military action could not have taken place if not for the foundation of support services. All acts of resistance, whatever form they take, whether armed or not, could therefore be considered combat. In “Les résistantes, perspectives de recherche,” Claire Andrieu cites Christian Pineau’s anecdote of a French woman who shelters him. 92 When Pineau finds the woman up at two in the morning, ironing his underwear, she proudly declares that she is doing it for France. “[Cette anecdote] montre

91 One letter appears as Appendix A, “Charles Geoffroy-DeChaume’s letter to Dr. Bernard Ménétrel, Advisor to Marshal Pétain, Premier, Vichy [1940],” (197-8).

92 Christian Pineau was a resistance network leader. Andrieu cites from his memoir: Christian Pineau, La simple vérité (Paris: Phalanx, 1983) 293.
l’impossibilité de séparer une forme de résistance d’une autre . . . La solidarité des civiles de ‘l’arrière’, pourrait-on dire, peut difficilement être dissociée du combat général quand le risque est le même ou presque” (Andrieu 86). In fact, as it has been suggested many times, the common person who sheltered résistants or hid arms and supplies, was in more danger than the combatant because it was constant for him/her. The résistant moved from place to place, but the shelter, and thus the danger, was permanent.

Claire Chevrillon’s own entry into resistance was a subtle one which evolved over time. Her initial acts were humanitarian, helping British civilians. Even simple complicity with the British was unacceptable to the Germans and thus another form of resistance. At first, her job provided a subtle way to resist. Being an English teacher was the perfect cover and excuse to “speak freely of England, the English, and English literature without ever alluding to the war” (28). Chevrillon adds, “Despite my caution, I couldn’t help catching sight of the occasional smile of complicity on a student’s face” (28). Teaching in France during the war, in a system that was controlled by the collaborating government, was, itself, yet another struggle. The resistant teacher had to maintain the balance of disseminating truthful information to the students, to counter the Nazi propaganda, all the while keeping up appearances and playing by the rules of the administration. We will see more specific examples of this in the chapter on Lucie Aubrac. As for Claire Chevrillon, she subtly recruited her students into resistance activity, first by getting them involved with helping a British internee at the Saint-Denis barracks for British civilians. Her two best students of English also helped to translate the British book on the war, and eventually, one of her students became a code clerk under her direction. But first, while still acting independently, Claire Chevrillon began to do more daring things to help the British civilians. Her first
example of active resistance—although still not for an organized network—came in 1942, when, through personal connections, she tried to arrange passage to the Free Zone for a sixteen-year-old English boy who had escaped from the Saint-Denis barracks. So, while she was not yet part of an organized resistance movement, Claire Chevrillon supported the Allies in every way she could. In a way, she began her own resistance network among her students without even realizing it.

Claire Chevrillon first suspected that there was an organized resistance movement in December 1941, when a friend visiting from Lyon assured her that not everyone was passive (67). From this comment, she inferred that her friend was working with others against the Germans. While she longed to go to Lyon to find out more, Claire Chevrillon was unable to go to the Free Zone until October 1942. In Lyon, she met with her friend, Anne-Marie Bauer, who was part of the Libération-Sud movement. She also put Anne-Marie in touch with a friend in Corrèze so that the two friends could coordinate parachute drops. Ironically, once again, without officially being affiliated with a resistance movement, Claire Chevrillon naturally fell into resistance work. In this case, she had already acted as the liaison agent that she would soon become.

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93 The boy ultimately grew impatient, followed his own lead, and was re-arrested by the German police.

94 Travelers needed an Ausweis, a pass issued by the Germans, for entry into the Free Zone. Claire Chevrillon was able to pass for a friend who had just been given one.

95 This is the same organization that Lucie Aubrac helped to found and of which she was an active member.

96 Several typed statements from Anne-Marie Bauer are included in the post-war testimony which is on file at the Library of the Institut de l’Histoire du Temps Présent. Bauer corroborates Claire Chevrillon’s story on pages 8-9 of her testimony, although with a couple of slight variations.
Anne-Marie Bauer put Claire Chevrillon in contact with her future boss in the Resistance, Robert Gautier. Chevrillon recalls her joy and excitement at being asked to help him organize parachute drops in the Occupied Zone for the BOA, the Air Corps of the BCRA, the Intelligence division of the Free French Forces. This reaction, which was typical of people new to the Resistance, was a combination of several things: the exhilaration of doing something daring, the pride of being asked to become part of a national response, and most importantly, the satisfaction of conscience that one was doing something meaningful to reclaim one’s country and freedom: “I now possessed a secret joy that was constant and intense. . . . At last I was part of a great network, unknown but long suspected, of those who fought the Enemy” (74). In her usual detail, Claire Chevrillon records in her narrative everything Gautier told her about his military and intelligence training in England, as well as details about this mission from Jean Moulin to receive anything parachuted into the Occupied Zone: arms, explosives, radios, money, and other BCRA agents (73-4).

Claire Chevrillon was to act as Gautier’s “mailbox,” receiving all communications for him in Paris. She took pride in being asked to support the Resistance, however great or small the task: “I had accepted, but what had I accepted? I didn’t know. All I knew was that I wanted

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97 According to the endnotes of Code Name Christiane Clouet, this was a false identity; his real name was Jean Ayral (205), and his BCRA code name was Pal (206).

98 BCRA stands for Bureau Central de Renseignement et d’Action, the Intelligence Service for the FFL, the Forces Françaises Libres. BOA was the Bureau des Opérations Aériennes, which was the BCRA’s Air Operations in France.

99 Gautier was also working directly with Jean Moulin in trying to unify all of the Resistance movements under what would soon be the National Council of the Resistance. Le Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR) was formed in May, 1943, uniting leaders of several important northern and southern resistance movements, as well as three pre-war political parties. Jean Moulin acted as both president of the CNR and de Gaulle’s representative. His goal was to unify the Internal Resistance behind de Gaulle so that the Allies would acknowledge only one External Resistance, that of de Gaulle. De Gaulle needed to prove the support of the Internal Resistance for credibility with the Allies. The CNR’s backing indeed worked to consolidate de Gaulle’s position, for he was invited to Algiers by General Giraud to create a centralized French power under their joint direction. Together, they formed the CFLN, the Comité Français de Libération Nationale on June 3, 1943. (Ravanel 10-14).
to be a good mailbox!” (72). She immediately invented a cover story and arranged his housing with her host family on the rue de Grenelle. By January 1943, Claire Chevrillon and a friend/fellow boarder, Jacqueline d’Alincourt, were coding Gautier’s messages that were destined for London.

Claire Chevrillon’s narrative abounds with descriptions of her resistance activity. Some of the activities described are day-to-day tasks while others are not so ordinary; yet her descriptions all share the same attention to detail. One passage outlines, step by step, how she and Jacqueline broke into Gautier’s studio after it had been searched and sealed off by the Gestapo, in order to recover any compromising or useful items he might have left behind. A man might have included a brief mention of similar activity in his resistance narrative, but without the details, since there was no exciting action or confrontation in the scene worthy of repeating. Claire Chevrillon, on the other hand, consistent with feminine narration, records exactly how things were done. The minute details of her every action and observation act as a photograph, much like Duras’ almost-scientific transcription of her every movement and her husband’s every change in physical appearance during his recovery in Part I of La Douleur.

To complete the picture, Chevrillon also describes her every thought and feeling while carrying out the task:

Crossing the courtyard I thought: ‘One or two men are going to spring out at us[...]’ . . . What a marvelous relief to find the door still sealed: it meant no one was inside. The seals themselves were not wax, as I had thought, but two small pieces of paper displaying the German eagle, and they were merely pasted to the door jambs! The game now was to peel them half off without tearing them, and open the door with our key—which we did without much trouble. We went through the room, taking our time, finding everything we were looking for, and cramming our suitcase. We locked the door and restuck the seals on it. Once again across the courtyard and then up the staircase, this time full of jubilation. (82)
Even if there is no “action” in this scene, its details and tone resonate with the violence and the imminent danger that are ever-present in resistance work of any nature. Records like those of Chevrillon and Duras, while seemingly uneventful, provide accurate documentation of the everyday lives and resistance of private citizens. Having initially been left out of official accounts of the Resistance, they now help to complete its history.

As of 1942, as participation in the Resistance grew, so did the arrests. The men—especially the leaders of resistance movements—tended to confound their stories so much with their movement’s history, that when writing their memoirs, they glossed over their prison experience along with anything else personal. To them, these aspects of their resistance experience were secondary to the overall development of their resistance story. They only saw the time spent in prison as a setback or an interruption to the progress of the movement and the Resistance. In “Résister au féminin,” Dominique Veillon points out how well Claude Bourdet, for example, fused his own story with that of Combat—so much so, that he summed up his personal situation in only a few lines: “[il évoque] en quelques lignes sa vie clandestine jusqu’à son arrestation” (88). In the first hundred pages of his narrative, he only mentions in passing his arrest and deportation, and it is then that we learn he had a wife and children who went into hiding. He does devote a 25-page chapter towards the end of his 450-page book to his experience at Fresnes and the camp; however, he still manages to give only a few accounts of his internment and keep a certain distance from his experience, to allow reflection and explanation of how things worked. For example, he discusses the interrogations, but does not get into the details of the brutalities. He mentions the baignoire used for torture, but only to tell us how he avoided it. 100 He explains the two strategies that

100 During interrogations, prisoners were plunged repeatedly in freezing water for hours on end. This and other torture techniques were not solely used by the Nazis. During the Algerian war for Liberation, the French
résistants used during these interrogations: either to say nothing at all (and this is the route that led to the baignoire), or to say so much of nothing that they gave away no secrets but still satisfied the Gestapo with the semblance of a response by the sheer volume of information spilled (he chose this option) (328). He also mentions that the Gestapo used the threat of holding his wife and children against him, but then quickly dismisses this as just a threat. He then dedicates a couple of pages to filling us in on how his wife strongly stood up to her own day-long interrogation in her home in the south of France, and how eventually, she got away from the Gestapo.

Many of the arrested were women, and they were subjected to the same torture and hardships as the men. When writing their stories, however, women tend to leave in rather than edit out their prison experience. For Claire Chevrillon to have left out her arrest and incarceration at Fresnes would have meant leaving out the harsh realities of her resistance experience. Claire Chevrillon spent approximately two months in Fresnes (April—June 1943) after being betrayed by a young man in her group who had been arrested and released by the Nazis in exchange for his continued cooperation. Consistent with the detail found in women’s accounts, and in her own, Chevrillon describes her prison experience from beginning to end. On her way to Fresnes, she notes the condition of the people in the paddy wagon with her: “Faces were haggard, unshaven; clothes were wrinkled and soiled. There were no ties, belts, or laces on shoes” (89). This last observation shows how the police prevented people from taking their own lives. Obviously, the Gestapo wanted prisoners alive

became the torturers. See Daniel Zimmermann’s and Bernard Sigg’s discussions of the effects of this torture on both the victims and the perpetrators. Franz Fanon has also written extensively on the topic of torture and the violence of colonization in L’an V de la révolution algérienne (1959) and Les damnés de la terre (1961). He, too, provides psychological case studies which reveal the traumatic effects of torture: indeed the tortured and the torturer cannot speak about this experience and are haunted by it. Finally, current news reports continue to expose the ongoing use of torture worldwide.
for questioning, but it also had to do with its desire to control everything, including the moment in which a prisoner died; indeed, “guards understood full well that to choose the moment and the means of one’s death is to affirm one’s freedom” (Todorov 63). Of her arrival at the prison, Chevrillon can only remember endless, dark, subterranean corridors and the feeling of being in a nightmare (89). She then gives a detailed inventory of the bare fixtures, filth and revolting lack of hygiene in her holding cells. The graffiti on the walls in solitary confinement heightens her despair to the point where she wonders if the cell is for prisoners condemned to death: “‘I am dying at 19.’ ‘I am dying at 45.’ ‘I am going to die tomorrow.’” (90). Finally, Chevrillon describes down to the last minutia her permanent cell in the women’s building. In keeping with the typical focus of women’s writings on the home, food, daily routines and family, Claire Chevrillon captures these same details about her prison. In essence, the prison becomes her home and the cellmates her family. Chevrillon provides faithful portraits of the women in her cell, and she journals the details of her daily routine, the meals served, and the lack of hygiene, complete with showering schedule and flea infestation problem.

Men, on the other hand, while faced with the same basic issues of lack of food and hygiene, dismiss these seemingly unimportant details from their accounts. Such is the case of Claude Bourdet, who makes few references to his cell at Fresnes. In the couple of paragraphs dedicated to his cell, he actually discusses a variety of other themes, including how it served as a respite from the long days of interrogation at Gestapo headquarters. In these paragraphs, he also mentions the fact that he was arbitrarily allowed to receive a few care packages, but he does not detail any of the contents, as does Chevrillon. His purpose in mentioning the packages is to point out that his wife is safe, and not in the hands of the Gestapo, as they have

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101 Todorov refers specifically to prison camp guards, but the philosophy is the same for all Nazi guards.
threatened. The only detail that we learn about the cells from Bourdet is that most prisoners dislodged a square from the window in order to communicate with each other, spread news, and keep up their spirits. Claire Chevrillon also discusses, at length, the illicit means of communication that prisoners devised for the purpose of resistance and also to find fellowship in the terrifying and isolating world of prisons.

Usually, women document the abuse that they received or witnessed in prison and during interrogations; however, Claire Chevrillon cannot, for she was fortunate enough not to experience any abuse. Upon her arrest, she was first interrogated by two officials at the rue de Saussaies Gestapo headquarters; “the tone was polite” (88). Later, a third, higher-ranking official entered the room and “turned toward [her] with a furious look. A battery of questions [ensued]” (88). Chevrillon simply played along, pretending to try to remember, and giving them vague information such as common first names: “Mentioning only first names had a way of exasperating them” (88). The Gestapo agents never physically harmed her, and were in fact quite civil, but this was also part of their propaganda, to make themselves appear fair and humane. The interrogation resumed hours later with the same questions, “but the tone was no longer menacing” (89). Once in Fresnes, Claire Chevrillon was not interrogated again until the day before her release. During her prison stay, she was not mistreated beyond the abuse inherent in the prison system. She describes the violating and humiliating surprise strip searches and cell searches during which the cell was turned upside down and the guards confiscated their hidden treasures, such as books and pencils. But again, Claire Chevrillon acknowledges her good fortune in not having been tortured or even bullied (89).

Claire Chevrillon’s second and last interrogation again exposes the Nazi propaganda strategy. In this case, the Gestapo agent proceeded to lecture her on the evils of terrorism and
communism, against which the Germans were protecting the West. He asked for her cooperation, should she be released any time soon. Again, Chevrillon played her role, pretending to need more convincing, but already having decided to promise anything they wanted. More indoctrination followed, and then she rather quickly saw his point: “I doubt he was fooled. Each of us was playing out a charade for the other” (99). Claude Bourdet also attests to this type of interrogator, who demonstrated a higher level of civility and culture. These were the agents that often interrogated the resistance leaders, for the Gestapo soon learned that mere brute force was not the tactic that would get them the information they needed: “la brutalité et le sadisme d’un Barbie avaient fait perdre aux nazis non seulement l’otage que constituait Moulin, mais la source de renseignements qu’on espérait faire de lui” (Bourdet 328-9). Bourdet also recalls his interrogator’s penchant for ideological conversations: “il aurait pu aussitôt en venir aux coups, comme d’autres, mais préférait discuter avec moi en me présentant l’image d’un nazisme idéal” (330). In Chevrillon’s case, the officer was playing the role of public relations agent. He was more concerned with sending her back into the French population unharmed, so that she could attest to their decent treatment of her: “‘You haven’t been mistreated, have you?’ he said. ‘If you’re released, you’ll please say the rumors about us are false.’” (99). She was released the very next day (in June 1943), with all of her belongings restored.

Upon her release, Claire Chevrillon was at first cut off from her resistance group. Still, she managed to do some work until there was a second wave of arrests in September 1943. At that point, she decided to become completely clandestine: “I had to ‘take the plunge’: change my name, address, and whole way of life; I had to disappear. I chose the code name Christiane Clouet, looked for lodging in a far-off corner of the city, and resigned
my job at Collège Sévigné” (115). To protect both her network and her loved ones, Chevrillon cut herself off entirely from friends and family. She made new contacts, received some expert training in coding, and was soon coding the important messages passing between de Gaulle’s government, now in Algiers, and the Delegation, his representative body in France. Unbeknownst to her, Claire Chevrillon reported to very high-ranking leaders of the Resistance.102 Undoubtedly, she was involved in a critical process of the Resistance in the time leading up to the Liberation. Yet, her evolution as a résistante was an individual process, a natural progression from spontaneous, individual acts to organized, engaged resistance that came about through a chain of events and contacts.

Regarding the code work itself, Chevrillon describes the job as one that became rather easy with practice, but one in which “a meticulous attention to detail” was crucial (120). It is logical that Claire Chevrillon should write extensively about the code service since it was her experience, and thus, what she was most capable of witnessing. It also seems logical that she should write in detail about services that were inherently detailed in nature. But detail and language were also inherent to the Resistance. In fact, poetry was used as a technical tool in resistance. The deciphering key was based on lines of well-known poems. Originally, the codes were written alphabetically on paper, but later the coding switched to a numerical format printed on silk handkerchiefs:

Small silk handkerchiefs were parachuted in for us, tucked inside ordinary items such as tubes of toothpaste and cigarette packs. These pieces of silk were as fine as they were tough. Each had 120 rows of tiny numbers, and each row of numbers was the key to encoding or decoding one telegram. After

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102 In Paris, Chevrillon reported to Alexandre Parodi (code name Quartus), “de Gaulle’s personal representative in France, the number one man in the Delegation” (Chevrillon 161). The directives from Algiers came from Emmanuel d’Astier de la Vigerie (code name Merlin), “the CFLN’s Minister of the Interior and founder of Libération, one of the first and most important Resistance movements in France” (Chevrillon 119). Of course, she only learned their real identities, and importance, after the war.
using a row, I would take a scissors and snip it off. Then I would burn it. (125-126)

Code work was the keystone to the communication between resistance forces, and it came with the same dangers as any other type of work. The last comment shows the precautions taken by code clerks, for there was great risk, both personal and for the Resistance, in having the keys to the messages written on material objects that could be lost, stolen, or discovered by the Gestapo. Also for security reasons, code clerks were isolated much of the time. Until she became head of the Code Service, Claire Chevrillon worked by herself, only making contact with the couriers twice daily. Ironically, at a point where she finally might have had the opportunity to witness and recount an action-packed occasion, she could not. She spent much of the insurrection and Liberation of Paris “shut inside, coding” (156). While Claire Chevrillon played an integral part in the Liberation of Paris, her role in the Resistance and the type of information that her narrative provides are not those which are typically found in the history books or even popularized, for they are considered insignificant and uninteresting. Like many women in the support roles, she did not seek recognition; Claire Chevrillon knew that “[she] was a small cog in a big machine and that was knowledge enough” (79).

In the closing chapters of her book, Claire Chevrillon cites examples of some of the telegrams that passed through her hands. Many concerned the future government, and others spoke of the deaths or disappearances of resistance leaders. The last telegrams conveyed the urgency of the situation in Paris and pleaded for Allied intervention. Chevrillon reprints the last fifteen messages that she coded, which she kept despite standing orders to destroy them. They document the chaos, desperation, and bloodshed of the Paris insurrection. One August 18th telegram reports of “many bloody incidents” at various public locations: “Shots fired at
German troops on Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle; latter burned house... and café... All those trying to flee were machine-gunned” (158). While these messages seem graphic enough, Chevrillon draws the reader’s attention to the chaos, destruction, and loss of life caused by war. She warns, “you will need to use your imagination to appreciate the exaltation and anguish, the bloodshed and death, that lie beneath their telegraphic brevity” (157).

This tendency to highlight the death and destruction of war are normally associated with feminine writings on war: “Examinations of women’s experiences in war . . . are remarkable for their emphasis on death and deprivation. They contrast dramatically with the official emphasis on heroism and valor aimed at mobilizing national support” (Scott, “Rewriting History” 28). This could not be truer than with the heavy civilian losses resulting from the German reprisals for killing their soldiers. According to Chevrillon, “These reprisals made [the French] feel even more powerless” (52), while de Gaulle saw the same incidents differently: “the death of the Frenchmen who served as victims to Germanic vengeance threw our soul into mourning, but not into despair, for it was equivalent to the sacrifice of our soldiers on the battlefields” (Call to Honour 263). In de Gaulle’s master war narrative, violent death and defeat are constantly equated to glorious heroism for the soldiers and victory for France. Regarding a three-day battle at Mont Caubert in 1940, during the six weeks of actual fighting between the German and French armies which ended disastrously for the French, de Gaulle writes, “there were a great many dead from both sides on the field . . . but all the same an atmosphere of victory hung over the battlefield. Everyone held his head high. The wounded were smiling. The guns fired gaily. Before us, in a pitched battle, the
Germans had retired” (Call to Honour 46). In all of these instances, the masculine gaze is blinded by the cult of the hero.103

Instead of depicting heroic sacrifice for the Nation, Claire Chevrillon focuses on the total destruction of towns and exposes personal loss—that of property, but more importantly, of a family’s heart and soul: “Our cousin Michele Cavalier had gotten word that her house had been obliterated by German air power during the systematic bombing of Beauvais [in 1940]. The whole city was destroyed . . . The Cavaliers lost everything. It’s hard to imagine what it means to lose everything: clothes, books, furniture, letters, photographs, all the tokens of one’s past . . . there was nothing left” (17). In this case, the domestic space literally becomes the war zone. Claire Chevrillon also witnessed the total devastation of towns firsthand, such as Rennes, in March 1943, the day after an Allied bombing. Between her own observations and those of eyewitnesses to the bombings, she captures the overall chaos:

I could see the chaos in the streets leading out of Rennes . . . According to people on the train with me, flying fortresses in broad daylight were set upon by fighters and jettisoned their bombs anywhere, trying to get away. One bomb fell in front of the railroad station as travelers were coming out . . . another on a public laundry where women were washing, etc. The talk is of 250 to 300 dead. (80) 104

Code Name Christiane Clouet concedes an important place to the chaos of war, something which male authors are more reluctant to include in their accounts.105 Following

103 See André Rauch’s Le premier sexe: mutations et crise de l’identité masculine. In this study of the cult of masculinity and heroism that began with Napoleon’s army, Rauch offers similar examples of soldiers who bravely carry on despite grave injuries. This was the epitome of heroism and honor.

104 This scene appears in L’Oeil de Vichy. The visual images shown by Vichy focus on the line of coffins of the victims, while the Archbishop denounces the American Air Force as monsters who have rained death and destruction down on their town. Chevrillon’s eyewitness account and the information obtained from fellow passengers seem in line with the “news,” as this attack occurred at 2 p.m., and there were 262 dead.

105 The chaos of war has been depicted in male fiction. In the nineteenth century, Zola and five other authors joined their stories in the collection entitled Les soirées de Médan (1880). These stories comment on the war of 1870. Henri Barbusse’s Le Feu (1916), Ernest Hemingway’s For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), and Vercor’s stories faithfully document the chaos and brutality of WWI, the Spanish Civil War, and WWII, respectively.
the pattern of de Gaulle’s master narrative, and writing for History, with History in mind, men’s representations of the War and Resistance stress the organization of resistance movements, important missions, and spectacular military action, all on the clear path to victory. In contrast, women highlight the reality of the chaos of war, elements such as confusion, surrender, collaboration and treason. Just nine pages into her story, Claire Chevrillon begins documenting the chaos of war, citing the time of the Exodus and the armistice negotiation as a period of intense disorder and confusion. She narrates the events from the center of this chaos, since in June of 1940, she became part of the Exodus:

[It was] an unbelievable sight, a long, slow, jostling river of trucks and wagons . . . all piled high with furniture and cherished possessions, from a bird cage to a grandfather clock to a statue of the Virgin Mary. There were stalled cars surrounded by distraught families, cars turned over in ditches. There were soldiers who had thrown away their weapons as they trudged along, gray with fatigue and dust. (11)

This scene not only documents the chaos on the evacuation route and the distress of the civilians; it also demystifies heroism by showing deserting soldiers retreating in defeat. Chevrillon plays the dual role of witness and journalist, interviewing the people she meets on the road: “We had time to talk to the people near us. They had been in bomb attacks and seen terrible slaughter. German Stukas would dive down, their sirens shrieking, drop their bombs, and disappear” (11). She also explains the Germans’ tactics for adding to the confusion:

the ‘fifth column’ added greatly to the pandemonium. These were Germans in civilian dress or in French or Belgian military uniforms who mixed with the refugees, spreading rumors and panic. Their tactic was to scare people into

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106 See the memoirs of Claude Bourdet and Henri Frenay, from Combat, and Serge Ravanel, from Libération-Sud, for example.

107 The Exodus was the “mass flight of people, maybe some 8 million in total, who deserted their homes in Belgium and northern France, [and fled south] to escape the German onrush” (Atkin 42).
fleeing the North of France in order to clutter the roads and prevent the French army from moving its troops. (11-12)

The people’s fear, pain and suffering became a taboo subject. As soon as de Gaulle marched into Paris declaring victory, he insisted that they put it behind them, and it was left out of the master narrative. Claire Chevrillon, on the other hand, rather than show the Exodus as a mass of people, as is often done, humanizes the event by individualizing the people, making their pain all the more visible, poignant and real.

In June 1940, Chevrillon also personally witnessed the government’s retreat to Bordeaux amidst total confusion: “[there was] tremendous confusion in the capital, with almost everyone trying to leave . . . Paris wasn’t going to be defended. . . . the social services, everything was folding up. The government was moving south, burning most of its records and taking the rest with them” (10). Chevrillon’s observation of government administrators fleeing the capital city and abandoning the general public to fend for itself can be confirmed in history books, such as Nicholas Atkin’s The French at War, 1939-1944 (44).

In Bordeaux, Chevrillon was able to gauge the people’s shocked reaction to Pétain’s request for an armistice and the idea that France would not be defended: “Until mid-June of 1940, no one—not even the most pessimistic person—thought that the whole of France would surrender” (11). Whereas in his memoirs de Gaulle tells stories of men flocking to join his army, Chevrillon’s narrative shows another side of history—the reality of desertion—by offering examples of men who abandoned their uniform to avoid capture. According to Chevrillon, many of those who did not desert, such as her brother-in-law, later admitted that they were angry and ashamed of having followed orders and allowed themselves to be captured (16). Claire Chevrillon also exposes the senseless loss of life in the days prior to the armistice negotiated by Pétain: “Our soldiers were getting themselves killed or captured for
nothing. How could they still fight on, knowing that an armistice was about to be signed? I remember the anguish—it lasted seven days—while the terms of the armistice were being worked out” (13). Chevrillon’s account of the week of the armistice negotiation also offers a different perspective from those of de Gaulle and historians due to its close up, ground-level look at details, which emphasizes the duration of those seven days of chaos and senseless fighting, as well as the human consequences. In keeping with a more factual historical style, historians do not offer much detail of the week-long wait between the time the armistice was requested and that which it was issued. Instead, they only mention these two key dates, leaving out everything in between:

on 16 June Reynaud resigned and advised president Lebrun to call for the marshal who immediately sued for an armistice. In a deliberate snub to the French, this was signed on 22 June in the same railway carriage at Rethondes where Foch had accepted the German surrender in 1918. (Atkin 36)108

Historian Jean-Pierre Azéma at least makes a brief reference to the week’s delay, pointing to the French government’s deliberations for and against the armistice, as well the fact that it was the Germans who stalled in drawing up the terms. But again, these historians’ discussions focus on the politics that take place at the governmental level. Chevrillon’s narrative on the armistice contrasts theirs by offering a unique view of the week of negotiations from an individual and human perspective, and from the point of view of a spectator/affected party placed at the center of the experience.

Claire Chevrillon rounds out this realistic picture of early military loss with news briefs of tragic events. One such unfortunate event was that of the July 3, 1940 Mers-el-Kebir

108 In a separate section on documents, Atkin reprints what he believes to be the more important articles of the Armistice. He prefices this list with the statement: “Comprising 24 articles, the Franco-German Armistice was a relatively brief document, betraying the speed with which it had been drawn up” (107). If the short length of the document indeed reveals the speed in which it was written, this only proves Claire Chevrillon’s point that the fighting was allowed to continue senselessly.
affair (18). In this tragedy, the British, in order to keep the Germans from taking over the French fleet anchored at sea near Algeria, actually sank the ships, killing 1,300 French sailors. Apparently, the British had issued an ultimatum—with options—to the commanding officer, Admiral Gensoul. He was either to sail to a British port, sail to a distant French port, surrender to the British, or face being sunk. The Admiral, following orders from Vichy, refused all of the options, leaving the British no choice but to sink it. French people would hear this version of the incident some days later through the BBC, but as evident in the news reels shown in L’Oeil de Vichy, the Germans and Pétain seized this opportunity to begin their campaign against the British as the enemy aggressor of the innocent French people. This was the news officially diffused to all of France, and that reached the Chevrillon family in Brittany.

We were horrified . . . French radio and newspapers spoke of nothing else. Throughout France the shock and bitterness were intense, and nowhere more so than in Brittany, because the majority of those unfortunate sailors were Breton. (18)

The Chevrillons were grateful to hear an alternate version of the events from the BBC some days later.

Through her discussion of the Mers-el-Kebir tragedy, Claire Chevrillon exposes Vichy’s manipulation and fictionalization of the news into propaganda, and its rewriting of history. At the beginning of l’Oeil de Vichy, Chabrol reminds viewers that what they are about to see is not history as it truly was, or as the people believed it to be, but as Vichy wanted them to see it. After the armistice of June 1940, in a joint effort with the Germans, but also independently, Vichy “resorted on an unprecedented scale to the myths of anglophobia in expositions of their policy and propaganda” (Cornick 65). Unfortunately, the
tragedy of the Mers-el-Kebir incident played right into the hands of the Vichy government, which exploited it in a timely fashion:

   deliberately timed to coincide with the meeting of Pétain and Hitler at Montoire, on 23 October 1940 the cinema newsreel Actualités mondiales devoted 200 metres of film to the incident as though to justify the steps being taken towards Franco-German collaboration. (Cornick 73)

   For a couple of years, England would be the primary target of Vichy, who claimed three things: that France had been defeated because of the lack of British support, that the British were treacherous, and that England had its own designs on France. L’Oeil de Vichy shows the progression of this campaign which began by opposing the trustworthy German soldier to the treasonous British soldier. Claire Chevrillon describes one such billboard which demonizes the British:

   [It] showed a ragged French soldier and a woman clasping a baby, standing among the ruins of a home, with the silhouette of a smirking British officer, arms akimbo, looming over them. The caption: ‘The English have done this to us!’ (25)

   Yet, her added comments and tone show her disgust over this Nazi propaganda; she makes it clear that she and many French people knew that Vichy and the Nazis were truly responsible for the French misery.

   From the news reels in l’Oeil de Vichy, we see that the perfidious British soldier later evolved into the Anglo-American Enemy. Pétain seized every opportunity to portray himself as the sympathetic leader who visited the victims of the Anglo-American bombings.

   Everywhere he went, the news captured how crowds of people flocked to greet him. The commentator of one segment even made it a point to say that Pétain’s visits were unannounced, and yet the people “spontaneously” gathered to show their appreciation and support for him. Paxton confirms that Pétain was still able to draw crowds well into 1944, for
some people still had faith in the “WWI victor” and “wise father . . . long after all [of the regime’s] other members had been widely discredited” (236). Yet, Chevrillon’s narrative reveals the limits of propaganda by showing how much of the population was not fooled by it, in large part, thanks to the BBC’s counter-propaganda and the relationship that it nurtured with the listening French public.¹⁰⁹

Still, one can no longer deny that part of the population blindly supported Pétain and, by extension, the Vichy government. Claire Chevrillon, like Chabrol, Paxton, and Rousso, does not avoid the controversial and sensitive topic of collaboration, which was left out of the official history for decades after the war.¹¹⁰ In her contribution to French Cultural Studies, Margaret Atack reminds us, “The official story or received opinion did not deny the fact of collaboration, but saw it as an isolated phenomenon, atypical of the national response, and whose few famous names were quickly dealt with as traitors” (90). Only after the 1960s was this previously-quieted issue raised and the “myths” questioned. Paxton’s 1970s text exposed not only the Vichy government’s collaboration, but the initiative it took in seeking Franco-German collaboration and later in passing anti-Semitic laws:

Collaboration was not a German demand to which some Frenchmen acceded, through sympathy or guile. Collaboration was a French proposal that Hitler ultimately rejected. . . . It was from the Pétain regime, however, that a stream of overtures came for a genuine working together: for a broad Franco-German settlement, for voluntary association as a neutral with Hitler’s efforts to keep the Allies out of Europe and the empire and eventually for full partnership in the new European order. (51)

¹⁰⁹ See pages 77-84 of Martyn Cornick’s “Fighting Myth with Reality: The Fall of France, Anglophobia and the BBC.”

¹¹⁰ During the war, Jean Bruller (alias Vercors) wrote and published clandestinely through his Éditions de Minuit several stories including “L’Imprimerie de Verdun.” The protagonist of this story is a veteran of Verdun, and a staunch supporter of Pétain, who, for a long time, refuses to believe that Pétain is complicit in the Jewish persecution. Once again, wartime fiction comes closer to the truth than the official history.
According to Paxton, beyond those that remained faithful to the Marshal since WWI, there was a mass support of Pétain and his regime which did not really stem from actual support, but rather, from apathy and lethargy on the part of the population: “Political apathy born of gloom and disgust left the way clear for a controlled press and radio to manufacture support out of what was much more often simply public lethargy” (237). Of course, this attitude was mostly due to the people’s need to focus on their physical living conditions, which “declined from austerity in 1940 to severe want in 1944” (Paxton 237). One cannot really say that the population was indifferent; it was simply distracted or preoccupied with the basic struggle for physical survival, as Claire Chevrillon has documented. Rousso’s 1980s text charted the shifts in post-war perceptions and discourse, culminating in what he saw as an “obsession with Vichy” (168). Writing in the 1980s, then, Chevrillon exposes the Pétainists. She lists several reasons for their acceptance of Pétain’s acquiescence to the Germans, including fear of reprisal against the POWs, and even the idea that Pétain was secretly working for the British: “I remember hearing a man who considered himself very wise say, ‘The Marshal is our shield; de Gaulle, our spear’” (27). Yet, it is evident from her tone and her language that Claire Chevrillon did not consider this man, and others like him, very wise. She was quite aware of the illusion of “sovereignty and ‘honor’ (one of the marshal’s favorite words)” that Pétain constructed for the French people (27). There were even Pétainists among Chevrillon’s family and friends. An aunt and uncle, an elderly couple who had both served voluntarily during WWI, were the very type of supporters that Paxton referenced:

Quite naturally, then, they put their confidence in Pétain. In the general collapse of 1940 he became for them the symbol of all those values on which they’d built their lives: patriotism, Christian acceptance of suffering, morality tied to work and discipline, dislike of anything revolutionary or disorderly.
Out of loyalty, they continued to believe in him. It was only at the time of the great roundups of the Jews in spring, 1942, that they began to see Vichy for what it really was. Yet even then they in no way blamed Pétain. (Chevrillon 123)

While Claire Chevrillon writes about her aunt and uncle respectfully, she points out the conflicts between them and her immediate family, and their clearly opposite stance: “They thought it went without saying that all good French citizens were Pétainists. For us, the reverse was true” (123). Through her own example, Claire Chevrillon documents the division of the French people over Pétain and Vichy, even within families.

Claire Chevrillon despised most the anti-Semitic propaganda and Vichy’s subsequent hand in the genocide: “The most repulsive billboards were the caricatures of Jews shown as greedy debauchees trailing blood and bags of money and weaving international plots” (25-26). She also makes no attempt to hide her disgust with the press, who contributed by publishing articles against the Jews: “Frankly, I can’t say much more about the French press. Its vileness and toadyism were so nauseating to me that I did my best not to read it” (25). Fortunately, propaganda reached its saturation point with the French people, and they soon learned to ignore it as just “noise.” But the media was indeed vile, as L’Oeil de Vichy reveals.

From the very beginning of the Occupation, Vichy did everything that it could administratively to reign in the Jews. In 1940, the new government established, in Paris, the Institut d’Etudes des Questions Juives to study “the Jewish problem,” and in March 1941, the Commissariat-Général aux Questions Juives to pass the Jewish Statutes. In the first of two chapters on the persecution of Jews, covering Fall 1940 to June 1942, Claire Chevrillon establishes the Vichy government’s part in this persecution: “I wish I could say the Germans alone were responsible for it, but unfortunately this was not so. The Vichy regime persecuted
Jews in stages, no doubt hoping to avoid a public outcry” (33). She refers to the statute of October 3, 1940, which defined a Jew as anyone having “three Jewish grandparents or two Jewish grandparents and a Jewish spouse” (33). By this definition, Claire Chevrillon’s mother was certainly Jewish, although she and her siblings were not.

Xavier Vallat, commissioner-general for Jewish affairs, then passed a series of laws and decrees beginning in June of 1941, restricting Jews in the Occupied Zone from certain professions, in commerce and in schools.111 They were also excluded from positions of influence and the media: “They were not permitted to teach school or have anything to do with publishing, radio, films, or theater” (33). Again, to show the real impact of these laws, Chevrillon lists five people that she knew personally, and how they were affected. Included in this list were her cousin, Jacques Ferdinand-Dreyfus, one of the founders of the Social Security system; Julien Cain, the general director of the Bibliothèque Nationale, who was fired in July 1940; and the headmistress of the Collège Sévigné, who was forced to resign, but continued to live hidden in the building until the Liberation. Chevrillon includes herself in this list, for as a member of the Philharmonic Choir of Paris, she was asked to sign a declaration that she did not have three Jewish grandparents (33).

After this list, Claire Chevrillon discusses the second stage of persecution, beginning with the statute of June 2, 1941, which expanded the earlier definition of a Jewish person to include anyone with only two Jewish grandparents or a Jewish parent, and who had not been raised Catholic or Protestant. Since the Chevrillon siblings had been raised Protestant, they

111 See Paxton (178-9) for quotas set in various professions and schools from June 1941 - June 1942. Limits of 2% were set for lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, midwives, dentists, and architects. Paxton gives the concrete example that 108 Jewish doctors were allowed to practice in Paris, in comparison to the 5,410 non-Jewish doctors. The June 1941 decree expanded the list of forbidden jobs (originally in civil service, education and cultural affairs) to banking and financial industries. By June 1942, Jews were completely shut out of the arts as well (stage, film, music). Finally, Jewish students were limited to 3% of the population in secondary schools and universities.
were still not considered Jewish. This was the same law that required Jews to register as such with their local police stations. Chevrillon cites some of the same quotas as Paxton, such as the percentage of Jewish students allowed in lycées and universities (3%) and the number of Jewish doctors allowed to practice in any given district in France (2% of the total number of doctors). She also discusses the legislation passed by the General Commission on Jewish Affairs regarding Jewish businesses in order to “eliminate all Jewish influence in the national economy” (34). These measures were undertaken by Pétain and his administration independently of the Germans, and in anticipation of German requirements, without yet having been mandated to do so. According to Paxton, when passing its own Jewish laws, Vichy requested that the Germans withdraw their ordinances in the Occupied Zone (178). Yet, as Chevrillon notes, the Germans still added their own “even more humiliating” laws to those of Vichy (35). She lists another nine laws that had a huge impact on the daily lives of Jews, such as the imposition of an 8 P.M. curfew; exclusion from public places including cafés, certain metro cars, and even public park benches; and the use of special food cards marked “Jew,” which were impossible to obtain without “endless harassment” (35). The most impacting laws required Jewish people to identify themselves as such by a stamp on their identity card, and, as of the Ordinance of June 6, 1942, by wearing the yellow star on their clothes. For Claire Chevrillon, everything else seemed “trivial compared with what was to follow because the wearing of the Yellow Star was the beginning of the selection for death” (35).

The second chapter on the persecution of Jews spans from July to October 1942, during the height of the implementation of the “Final Solution.” Chevrillon’s narrative

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112 The study for a “Final Solution” began in July 1941 and was definitively adopted during the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942. The solution called for the extermination of all European Jews, and was to be
documents the painful deportation of her own cousins,\textsuperscript{113} as well as what happened at the Vél d’Hiv.\textsuperscript{114} While not an actual eyewitness to the event, since she was not in Paris at the time, Claire Chevrillon still manages to comment on the cruelty of this act. As with the week of the armistice negotiation, her account relates the prolonged suffering and agony of the people, of which, she points out, over 4,000 were children. After describing at length how these people were rounded up in the middle of the night by the French police, she insists on the fact that they were held in the indoor bicycle track “for six days in terrible conditions, without bedding or sanitary facilities, almost without food and water” (59), before being transferred and later deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. We find a similar description of the Vél d’Hiv in Rosemarie Scullion’s “Georges Perec, W, and the Memory of Vichy France”:

\begin{quote}
The movements of panicked, dazed prisoners stirred up the dust that blanketed the arena, making it at moments virtually impossible to breath. Prisoners were deprived of food, water, milk for the children, and most demeaning of all, of adequate sanitary facilities. (121)\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

achieved by the deportation of all Jews from France, Belgium and the Netherlands to extermination camps in the east (Azéma, \textit{From Munich} 111). On March 27, 1942, the first French Jews were sent to Auschwitz, and on July 16-17, 1942, some 13,000 Jews, mostly foreign and including 4,000 children, were rounded up at the Vélodrome d’Hiver for deportation. This was the first massive deportation from France (Atkin xvii-xviii, 128-9).

\textsuperscript{113} Brothers Jacques and Charles Ferdinand-Dreyfus were arrested, shuffled between prisons in France, and then deported. Claire Chevrillon documents their horrible experience more directly by reproducing 23 passages (from August to October 1942) from the diary of Jacques’ fourteen-year-old daughter, Renée.

\textsuperscript{114} On July 16-17, 1942, the French Police rounded up approximately 13,000 mostly foreign Jews, a third of them children, and bused them to the Vélodrome d’Hiver, an indoor bicycle track in Paris. Half of them spent one week there in horrible conditions, before being transferred to transit camps such as Drancy, and eventually deported to Auschwitz (Paxton 181; Atkin 67-8; Scullion, “Georges Perec” 121-2). Some details vary: Paxton cites “some 13,000 Jews;” Atkin gives the exact figures of 13,152 Jews, 4,115 of them children; Scullion does not cite the number of children, and her total is 12,000, of whom 7,000 spent the full week in the arena. Claire Chevrillon’s figures are 12,844 people, of whom 4,051 were children, and according to her, they were transferred to the internment camps of Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande (59).

Claire Chevrillon’s second reference to the Vél d’Hiv comes from the diary of fourteen-year-old Renée Ferdinand-Dreyfus:

August 1 [1942]:
There was a terrible persecution of foreign Jews two weeks ago. Men, women, children, sick people, people with tuberculosis, were all arrested and interned at the Vélodrome d’Hiver. The Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and a third welfare service did what they could. Now all those people are in Poland. (60)

Chevrillon explains how these foreign Jews had fled to France after Hitler invaded their homelands; but as early as October 1940, the Vichy government hunted them down, held them in camps, and turned them over to the Nazis for deportation to the “death camps” in the east in increments of hundreds or thousands at a time (34). In June 1942, Himmler had set massive quotas for deportation from the western countries—100,000 from France—and Laval tried to bargain by sending first the foreign Jews (Paxton 181-2). Renée’s August 1, 1942 diary entry makes reference to Laval’s use of foreign Jews to placate the Nazis, but also reveals the danger imminent to all Jews: “they say in Paris that the Germans first demanded the arrest of all Jews in the Occupied Zone. Laval refused to hand over French Jews but, in return, had to give up the foreigners living in the Free Zone” (60). The majority of Renée’s diary entries are more personal in nature, dealing mainly with her father and uncle’s final months in France before deportation.

The chapter on the persecution of Jews closes with Chevrillon’s eyewitness account of a deportation from the Drancy-le-Bourget train station where she had gone in an attempt to find her cousin. She notes how guards with dogs closely monitored the prisoners and threatened anyone who loitered, making it impossible to approach the train (66). “Panicked” and “completely demoralized,” Claire had no choice but to leave (66).
While the facts of Vichy’s collaboration with the Germans on anti-Semitic measures are no longer new information, for a long time they were counter to history. What is new, then, is the uninhibited way in which Claire Chevrillon openly accuses the Vichy government and refuses to turn a blind eye to its collaboration. Many earlier accounts of the war years had left out the world of concentration camps and deportation. First, those who wrote the history, such as de Gaulle, wanted to turn the page and cast aside this disparaging image of France, since it conflicted with his portrayal of victory through unified resistance. Secondly, many writers who attempted to portray these horrific scenes were unable to do so because of the pain and trauma of the experience and/or the lack of language to express it. In his autobiographical fiction, *W ou le souvenir d’enfance* (1975), Georges Perec vaguely represents the Vél d’Hiv through an athletic stadium competition in his fictional world of a remote community in search of athletic supremacy. Yet, according to Rosemarie Scullion, having lost both of his foreign-born Jewish parents to these horrors, he is unable to fully represent the war and the camps, or rather, the link between them:

How is it that . . . Perec’s *W or the Memory of Childhood* elides all memory and erases all knowledge of the crucial contributions French wartime institutions made to the deportation and liquidation of some 75,000 Jews, a good many of whom were, much like Perec’s mother Cécile, foreign-born, stateless, and after July 1942, entirely at the mercy of a collaborationist Vichy regime only too eager to serve the genocidal ends of their German overlords? (109)

This is where Chevrillon’s narrative differs from texts like Perec’s. She does not avoid the topic of collaboration, nor does she couch the pain of its effects on her family with omissions or a fictionalized account. Instead, she confronts the issues head on and exposes their realities, however painful.
Besides the truth of collaboration, another reality often left out of masculine resistance narratives and history books is that of betrayal and its ugly consequences. Historian Jean-Pierre Azéma only briefly broaches the subject of “treachery” in From Munich to the Liberation, reducing his discussion of the topic to a couple of generalized paragraphs, one of which is on the well-known case of Jean Moulin (105). Such brief sketches do not adequately represent the number of ordinary résistants who suffered the consequences of betrayal, some by their own team members, and others by French citizens fearing reprisals for even being suspected of helping them. Claire Chevrillon’s personal narrative offers honest insight into this side of the Resistance. She includes several graphic examples of the brutal violence resulting from denunciations, such as the mass public hanging of a hundred maquis members. Her story of a twenty-one-year-old boy illustrates how assisting the Resistance in any way, no matter how slight or indirectly, was equally dangerous. This boy, while home in Brittany on vacation from school, decided to help his childhood friends by baking them bread. Since his friends were part of a maquis, “when the Gestapo came to the door[,] Louis and his two associates were tortured, then thrown into the oven. Their screams were heard for a very long time” (152). He was, according to Chevrillon, the most innocent person betrayed.

By exposing denunciations, Claire Chevrillon confronts yet another taboo subject: to prevent further denunciations, arrests, and tragedies, resistance members sometimes had to do the unthinkable—execute one of their own. This difficult task was complicated by the fact that, often, the person was an acquaintance or even a friend. Such was the fate of Gilbert, the young man who betrayed Chevrillon’s team and was responsible for eight arrests including hers.
The résistant who informed was not always a collaborator; he or she might have succumbed to torture. To prevent themselves from talking under torture, résistants sometimes took their own lives. On this topic, Chevrillon’s narrative seems once again more complete than some of the history books and resistance narratives written by men. In the example of Pierre Brossolette, Claire Chevrillon offers details of his suicide, whereas all references to him by former leaders of the Resistance, Claude Bourdet, Henri Frenay and Serge Ravanel are related to his politics and missions for London. Only Bourdet acknowledges Brossolette’s arrest, but merely to signal that it was a tragic end to his resistance activity (257). Jean-Pierre Azéma is more candid, mentioning the suicide as part of a one-page summary on torture. But his coverage of these topics is brief, claiming that “it would be pointless to go into details” (From Munich 106). Rather, in keeping with the traditional masculine definition of resistance based on action and combat, Azéma’s focus turns to examples of agents who escaped torture through daring escapes and rescues. He concludes that few agents betrayed their comrades, and most managed to withstand the torture or bluff their way through interrogations.

Claire Chevrillon was able to bluff her way through interrogations; however, many of her resistance comrades were not so fortunate. Jacqueline d’Alincourt and Anne-Marie Bauer did not escape the brutal physical and psychological torture of the Gestapo. Their stories are detailed in Chevrillon’s narrative, in part as a tribute to their strength in standing up to the abuse without compromising the Resistance, as well as to document the real risks that

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116 Brossolette was a high-ranking resistance leader who worked directly with Charles de Gaulle, but Claire Chevrillon includes him in her narrative because of personal ties to him. She knew him from the Collège Sévigné, where he taught history, and he was also connected to Chevrillon’s resistance team, working with Gautier and the BCRA, although she did not know this at the time. To keep himself from divulging secrets while in Gestapo custody, Brossolette threw himself from a sixth-story window (Chevrillon 127).
accompanied all resistance work on a daily basis. According to several résistantes, women withstood torture better than men, perhaps being preconditioned for pain by childbirth: “La différence entre les sexes réapparaît devant la torture. La femme y résiste mieux si l’on en croit Marie-Madeleine Fourcade. Aucune de ses subordonnées—contrairement à leurs collègues masculins—n’a cédé aux mauvais traitements” (Weitz, Combattantes 343). Germaine Tillion and the Soviet Communist imprisoned for twenty years, Eugenia Ginzburg, shared this same opinion in their memoirs (Todorov 77-8). According to these women, not only do women seem predisposed to withstand torture but they also talk about it more openly than men. Even as early as 1946, Élisabeth Terrenoire had included in her book on women’s resistance a couple of pages on the interrogation process, detailing some examples of torture procedures. She begins with the experience of a young woman from Lille, who was subjected to a non-stop “succession de tourments” (93), ranging from beating to electric shock to mental torture, all within a couple of hours. Terrenoire also details the procedure of the baignoire over two paragraphs; apparently, this was the torture method most used on women. But the cruelest type of torture was having to watch or hear others tortured: “[l]eurs cris de bêtes blessées martèlent vos oreilles, leurs dos sanglants blessent votre vue’, dit Claire Davinroy” (Terrenoire 92). Terrenoire praises one woman’s courage and loyalty to the Resistance when tortured in front of her mother: “la fille s’écria, au milieu de ses souffrances: ‘Maman, si tu parles, je ne te reverrai jamais!’” (93). In Combattantes sans uniforme, Terrenoire sympathetically highlights the pain and suffering endured by women, and concludes: “Jamais la France ne pourra être trop reconnaissante aux

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117 Jacqueline d’Alincourt spent six months in Fresnes and Anne-Marie Bauer spent six months in a Lyon prison, subject to the torture of Klaus Barbie. Bauer also describes the excruciating torture process in detail in her post-war testimony. Both women were deported to Ravensbrück, and survived.
héroïnes qui se sont tues sous la menace et la torture, sauvant ainsi leurs camarades et les organismes de la Résistance” (94).

Claire Chevrillon’s narrative shows in horrifying detail the less glorious moments, the brutal realities, risks and traumas inherent in war and resistance. It also shows that women were equally engaged in the Resistance, to the same extent and with the same loyalty as the men. Thus, when caught, they were treated no differently and spared no torture. Again, the fiction written by men during the war was much more revelatory on issues such as collaboration and torture than the autobiographical resistance narratives. In the memoirs, arrests are summarized in passing, and torture, if mentioned at all, is only evoked to highlight heroic sacrifice. Most often, however, these aspects of resistance work are glossed over, as they have nothing to do with the organization and advancement of the Resistance. For example, while Claude Bourdet acknowledges the great contribution of Berty Albrecht to the Combat movement, nowhere in the twelve references to her in his L’aventure incertaine does he mention that she was tortured and died in captivity. Her third and final arrest is just mentioned in one sentence (224), as are her previous two arrests and evasion (111). Then again, Bourdet barely even mentions his own arrest. Finally, other times it was not betrayal, but rather, mistakes that led to arrests on one’s team. Chevrillon, herself, admits to making such mistakes. And while she never betrayed anyone, she honestly admits to not knowing what she might have done if tortured: “Had I been arrested and tortured, I might—who knows—have divulged the key to coded messages between the CFLN in Algiers and its Delegation in France. To think of the consequences made one shudder” (119).

Chevrillon is not ashamed to admit the many times that she “shuddered” in fear. The reality of the sweeping feelings of anxiety, fear, and demoralization of the French people is

118 See Vercor’s “L’imprimerie de Verdun.”
yet another taboo subject that was avoided in the master narrative. Whereas men’s accounts are filled with heroic exploits accented by valor, in women’s accounts, their own heroism is often undercut with fear and anxiety: “[c]ontrairement aux hommes qui pensent souvent qu’un tel aveu est jugé inadmissible, les femmes n’éprouvent aucune répugnance à confesser qu’elles ont eu peur” (Weitz, Combattantes 342). Living with this perpetual fear and acting, nonetheless, demonstrated a common, daily heroism. This is not to say that the men did not feel fear; only, the women dared to write about it, exposing the other side of the discourse on the Resistance. Claire Chevrillon’s narrative is indeed filled with the vocabulary of fear, anguish, and overall emotion.119

Claire Chevrillon not only reveals her own distress, but also that of everyone around her. A friend’s reaction to Pétain’s request for an armistice was “disbelief on her face, then horror. Surrender!” (13). A cellmate from Fresnes “remained completely silent, horrified to her very bones at where she found herself” (96). Chevrillon even gives us a glimpse of the vulnerable, human side of resistance leaders by describing an equally nervous and emotional Gautier. In general, everyone was depressed and anxious: “poor Papa was very depressed, and Juliette couldn’t keep from crying” (21). From her young cousin’s diary, Claire reprints excerpts that illustrate how every knock on the door terrorized this Jewish family. The child echoed the common sentiment of the time when she wrote: “A terrible anxiety weighs on us all” (63). In short, Claire Chevrillon shows how throughout the war, she and her family “vacillated between anxiety and optimism” (140), and “[wavered] continually between hope and fear” (141). The underlying emotion of the Occupation was a “constant anxiety and a sadness no one could shake off” (60). While these last words describe her family’s state, they

119 Yet, fear and emotion also appear in fictionalized war narratives by men, such as Le Feu, by Henri Barbusse, and Le silence de la mer, by Vercors.
could very well apply to the whole of Occupied France, as Chevrillon’s observation of the mood in Paris suggests:

For people were depressed: there was always hunger, fatigue, lines, turnips, beets, blackout at night, subways packed with Germans . . . infrequent buses[,] . . . opulent restaurants reserved for German officers and their courtesans, censorship of the mails, yellow posters everywhere saying ‘Interdit aux Juifs’ . . .[,] and anxiety over those who were absent. (36-37)

Captured in this broad picture of French life during the Occupation are many of the themes central to women’s wartime narratives: the everyday problems of hunger, fatigue and morale; the daily struggle to provide for the family; collaboration, the persecution of the Jews, and deportation.

The men who were absent are indeed very present in Chevrillon’s narrative, be it through a chapter, an anecdote, inclusion of the letters they wrote home and/or mention in the epilogue. Chevrillon not only honors these heroes, but also the women of all generations who supported them and sacrificed for them. The war was especially hard on the older generation, and Chevrillon pays special homage to the strength and courage of women like her mother and Paul’s. Mme Fabre represents many women who selflessly gave to others during the war, eating less and less, and “standing in interminable lines—for friends or neighbors more than for [themselves]” (23). Her son was “constantly on her mind,” and she made the ultimate sacrifice, dying in May 1941 from a cold she had caught in the winter of 1940, while “probably standing in line” (23).

In Facing the Extreme, Todorov examines, in the context of concentration camps, acts of heroism and acts of ordinary virtue, such as dignity and caring. These ordinary acts, much more numerous than the traditionally heroic ones, were no less heroic. Especially in the camps, the sharing of food was the simplest and perhaps most important of these acts of
caring (72). According to Todorov, caring seems to be more a feminine virtue: “caring is the maternal attitude par excellence” (76). Since women were more practical, and since they were natural or cultivated nurturers and caregivers, they were more likely than men to care for and help others (77-80). 120 Claire Chevrillon’s idea of courage and heroism is associated with these feminine virtues of caring, nurturing and tenderness, all exemplified by these women’s selfless devotion and sacrifice.

Another group of women which Claire Chevrillon specifically honors is that of her cellmates from Fresnes, many of whom were résistantes, or rather, resisted in some way. Again, to have edited out her prison experience would have meant to erase this great gallery of heroines, not to mention the deep relationships that she forged. Many of these women probably felt that their individual actions were too insignificant to be considered resistance activity and were not worthy of writing about. Had Chevrillon also left them out of her account, it would have perpetuated the effacement of women in literature of the Resistance. Instead, she gives voice to a group of women who had been twice silenced—first, by being locked up, or worse, and secondly, by being left out of resistance writings and history for decades after the war. Chevrillon reveals again how resistance was carried out at the ground level by individuals—by women—through their everyday actions. Sometimes this was as simple as refusing to cooperate with the Occupier. As evidenced by their arrests, all of these acts carried the same risk and consequences as any other form of resistance.

120 Ordinary virtues such as caring are not generally celebrated as heroic in traditional male resistance narratives which tend to define heroism through action, combat, and models of masculinity and virility. However, in the extreme world of concentration camps, where such action is limited and self-preservation is the primary struggle, selflessly caring for another person certainly constitutes a heroic act, as much for men as for women. Todorov cites examples of acts of caring among men in the camps, such as those witnessed by Primo Levi and Robert Antelme; nevertheless, he associates this ordinary virtue predominantly with women.
Claire Chevrillon honors the courage, the strength and the diversity of the women that passed through her cell in those two months. Mme Roudier is presented as a mother-figure who “made it her business to welcome newcomers” (91). The other women that rotated through her cell during the two months included a 19-year-old Belgian girl caught smuggling gold across the border, a headmistress of a lycée who refused to give an address the Germans wanted, and a young Alsatian woman who had already been in several prisons for having helped French POWs escape Germany. The last of her cellmates was Gisèle Aillet, an anti-Semitic, collaborationist Jew, who debunked two myths at once—the Nazi caricature of the Jew and the idea that a Jewish person could not be a collaborator: “[Gisèle] was a young beauty who looked like a Scandinavian goddess with gold tresses, fair complexion, and athletic body. She was a Jew, and the most anti-Semitic person I’ve ever met” (96). 121 Once again, Claire Chevrillon reveals that wartime France was not a clear cut binary world of oppositions such as good versus evil, Nazi versus Jew, and collaborator versus résistant, for Gisèle Aillet represented all of these in one person.

Whereas men’s narratives like those of de Gaulle and Bourdet usually focus on the typical protagonists—key political players, leaders of the Resistance, members of the Secret Army and other combatants—Chevrillon’s narrative focuses on ordinary men and women she came across or learned about in her daily life. These people resisted the Occupation none the less in their own different ways, sacrificing themselves to feed, hide, protect and support others in the fight. In an epilogue, the author updates us on what became of some of the

121 According to Chevrillon, Gisèle was a strong collaborator, but had been arrested for destroying the dossier on her boyfriend, who was about to be sent to work in Germany (96). Gisèle’s is an interesting case, given that history books talk little of collaborationist Jews. As it is, discussion of the Vichy government’s collaboration was quieted for decades. Patrick Modiano was one of the first to raise the issue of collaboration in his 1968 novel, La Place de l’étoile. His novel points to the anti-Semitism and fascism that existed, well beyond Vichy and well before the war, in the heart of France’s literary and cultural circles. Another twist is that his protagonist was a self-declared anti-Semitic and collaborating Jew. While this character was exaggerated for effect, it brought to light the existence of real Jews like him.
people introduced throughout her story, including family members, fellow resistance agents (many of them women), and the women she met at Fresnes prison. She often fills in aspects of their personal stories that were unknown to her during the war and recounts what became of them after the war. Some of the personal stories are amusing, but most are heart-wrenching, and all are fascinating. For example, there is Charles Fassier, a 64-year-old who, despite suffering from a WWI injury and other personal trauma, organized and led a *maquis* group in Brittany. He went on to join the Free French Forces of Brittany, work his way up in rank, and be commended to the British War Office by his commanding officer. Nevertheless, it is this man’s personal struggle, courage and strength of character that stand out, as is the case with Claire Chevrillon’s entire gallery of heroes. Many of these people are also honored by their inclusion in the photo illustrations: Paul and Antoinette with their children, Mme Fabre, Claire’s parents, the Ferdinand-Dreyfus, Jacqueline d’Alincourt and other female resistance agents with whom Chevrillon worked. Chevrillon also represents through her photos the traditional military and political heroes of the Resistance, such as Jean Ayral (Gautier), Pierre Brossolette and Generals de Gaulle and Leclerc. The former two were probably included not because of their military or political status, but rather for her personal relationship with them. Consistent with the feminine vision of war, the majority of Claire Chevrillon’s photos focus on ordinary people in their everyday lives.

A brief comparison of Claire Chevrillon’s text to de Gaulle’s war memoirs quickly puts the masculine/feminine differences into perspective. It is not even necessary to read a single word of either work to see the difference in their focus. At first glance, it becomes obvious that the illustrations accompanying both narratives literally illustrate the contrast between de Gaulle’s heroic and even iconic narrative and Chevrillon’s more personal
account. It is noteworthy, yet not surprising, that the illustrations in de Gaulle’s memoirs are mostly all of him. There are twelve illustrations in all, one being the facsimile of a message he wrote to General Koenig during the pivotal battle of Bir Hakeim. Of the eleven photographs, de Gaulle figures in ten of them, the eleventh being of the Free French troops in battle at Bir Hakeim. In the ten photos of de Gaulle, some are portraits of him posing alone, while in others, he poses with heads of state, generals, military personnel, and political figures. Only once is there a hint to his personal life—a photo of de Gaulle and his wife seated at a table, possibly in their London residence. Still, he is dressed in his army uniform, and he is reviewing some paperwork, while she looks up at him, admiringly. This posed shot proves that the camera gaze is not neutral, for it constructs the cult of the hero.

Chevrillon’s illustrations, on the other hand, are not so narrowly focused and show a more varied picture of the War and Resistance. There are thirty illustrations in all, but only one is of Chevrillon. When compared to de Gaulle’s ratio, this lends evidence to the claim that women are self-effacing whereas their male counterparts are self-centered. While some of the photographs of public resistance figures and public street scenes come from press agencies and archival sources, more than half come from her personal collection and are of family and friends. In stark contrast to de Gaulle’s official portraits, Chevrillon’s photographs are more intimate, including those that may be posed. Children figure prominently in her photographs (eight of the thirty). In fact, the very first photo is of her students playing in the snow during the winter of 1940. Another photo shows her sister’s

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122 Chevrillon’s sources for public photos include Archives Documents Françaises (Pierre Brossolette in London, p. 137), Keystone Agence Presse (Victory parade, Champs-Élysées, p. 190 and Welcoming Americans in Rennes, p. 187), U.S.I.S. (Breton maquis assembled for U.S. army photographers, p. 186), B. H. Estampes, Collection Safara (German officers at Café de la Paix, p. 46) and Document Gamet-Rapho (German sentry, Lyon, 1942, p. 132 and title page). Some public street scenes do not give source credits, such as the photo of Generals de Gaulle and Leclerc in front of the Arc de Triomphe on August 25, 1944 (p. 191). This appears to be a candid shot, for both men are looking to their right and de Gaulle appears to be speaking to somebody out of the frame.
children at the beach in 1942. Claire Chevrillon’s photographs truly capture the daily life of her family members; they are definitely of the private life, revealing intimate moments such as her father braiding his granddaughter’s hair and her sister helping her son with his homework. The hierarchy apparent in de Gaulle’s photo with his wife does not exist in Chevrillon’s. Her photos are not staged, and they contribute to the record of real, daily life during the war. Some of them show life continuing as usual, and others capture how this daily life was used to resist. The heroes in Claire Chevrillon’s illustrations are not all political and military figures; they are also the everyday people who had a part in the liberation of France, some by their brave actions and support for the Resistance, some by the refusal to accept the Occupier, and others simply by their refusal to accept unacceptable conditions—those of missing husbands and starving children. Claire Chevrillon’s heroes are the maquis, the people who defended Paris from behind barricades during the insurrection, a brave old man who led a maquis group in Brittany, fellow résistantes in the support services, mothers, wives, and absent men who either survived the hardship and humiliation of internment or died stoically in a concentration camp, after bravely being the ones to comfort their families.

Also missing from de Gaulle’s illustrations—and hardly mentioned in his narrative—are the massive deportation of the French and the burdensome presence of the Nazi Occupier. Among her illustrations, Chevrillon includes a photo of her brother-in-law in the German prison camp where he spent all of the Occupation. She also includes three photos of German soldiers, two during occupation and one at the time of the German surrender. The one of the German sentry also appears on the title page, as if to remind us that the focus of her book is daily life as a form of resistance against the oppressive Occupation, and not so much the glory of the ultimate French military victory.
Finally, regarding the documents in the illustrations, de Gaulle chooses to include the note that he wrote to General Koenig, who was in the heat of battle, declaring him and his troops France’s pride. Chevrillon also includes a document from her line of Resistance duty—a code imprinted on a silk handkerchief. While this may not reflect an epic, heroic moment, or be as inspiring as de Gaulle’s note, it is a testament to her daily work, which, tedious as it was, was a crucial contribution to the war and resistance effort. De Gaulle himself depended on it. In short, there is certainly more diversity in the picture that Claire Chevrillon paints of the Resistance through her illustrative photographs: daily life, family, the Occupation, the detail of resistance work, and yes, soldiers (the maquis). Key leaders of the Resistance such as Pierre Brossolette, and victorious moments such as that of Generals de Gaulle and Leclerc in front of the Arc of Triumph on the day of the Liberation of Paris are not left out. As a whole, the illustrations included in Claire Chevrillon’s narrative give a more complex picture of the War and Resistance in France.

Claire Chevrillon was the head of an important unit of the Resistance and had vital work to do for it, as well as for Charles de Gaulle himself; yet, her account of the war years focuses more on her family and her daily life. It is ultimately a very private and personal story set against the backdrop of the public events of the war. Chevrillon admits this herself in the preface addressed to her grand-nieces and nephews:

Here is an account of the war as your family and I lived it. It may not be what you expected because it’s not a confessional novel or thriller; it has no romance, and no plot beyond the start and end of the war. It’s just a narrative of our daily lives seen against great events: the Fall of France, the Occupation, the Collaboration, the Resistance, and the Liberation. (xvii)

While Claire Chevrillon’s narrative is indeed subjective, it is nonetheless a document of these great events. In fact, it offers a unique version of history, one which represents
aspects of daily life in occupied France not usually present in official history books. Claire Chevrillon’s story depicts daily life and the daily resistance of the general population. It also attests to the atrocities of the Vichy collaboration, anti-Semitism and the subsequent mass deportations of foreign and French Jews. These themes of daily resistance and French collaboration had long been left out of the history written by de Gaulle and male leaders of the Resistance, because they were deemed insignificant and counterproductive to their construction of a war myth based on a unified, armed resistance against the Nazi Occupier.

In his foreword to Code Name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance, John F. Sweets supports the theory of a dichotomy between masculine and feminine representations of war and resistance based on the notion that men contrast the women’s focus on everyday life with the typical “masculine” themes of action and combat:

These memoirs have the special merit of recounting the Occupation era from the point of view of a woman. While there have been a surplus of ‘masculine’ Resistance memoirs, quite often featuring exploits of derring-do, from spying adventures to accounts of sabotage attacks or open combat with the Germans, there have been relatively few memoirs written by French women. (xiv)

Indeed, Claire Chevrillon’s narrative highlights relationships with family, children, friends, and fellow résistants. She documents people’s daily struggle for survival, and within that, their important acts of resistance, no matter how small. Claire Chevrillon challenges the reader to expand the existing definition of resistance to include daily resistance. She also demystifies the cult of the traditional war hero by offering examples of the heroism of ordinary people who demonstrated extraordinary courage and strength. With its focus on family and the detail of daily life—especially that of women—Claire Chevrillon’s personal narrative can certainly be classified as a “feminine” resistance narrative. However, her representation of the war years goes beyond the masculine/feminine classification upheld by
Sweets, for it offers an alternate source of history, or counter-history, for both men and women.
CHAPTER 3

MARGUERITE DURAS: WRITING THE WAR’S INHUMANITY

One of the most well-known written works in French on the feminine experience of WWII is Marguerite Duras’ *La Douleur*. Part I, “La douleur,” is the journal chronicling the historical and political events of April-May 1945, as witnessed from Paris. The difference, however, between this journal and that of Claire Chevrillon, is that Duras is writing from the extreme position of witness to the Holocaust. Her private journal becomes a tortured, traumatic narrative which reflects the public horror of the camps and the Holocaust.

Many critics begin their own analysis of trauma narratives with the psychoanalytic principles found in Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in which he refers to cases

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123 I distinguish the entire work from the diary by the respective titles *La Douleur* and “La douleur.” “La douleur” does not precisely follow the format of a traditional journal, which was established in Chapter 1 as being a series of dated passages in chronological order. Some of Duras’ entries are not specifically dated, nor are they clearly delineated. Yet, they are chronological, and Duras establishes a specific timeline from April 20—28, 1945 (The details of the inconsistent dating of entries are given in a later footnote in this chapter.). As noted in Chapter 1, parts of *La Douleur* are clearly autobiographical fiction, and genre classifications are virtually impossible with this text (we will soon see that the text also falls under the category of trauma narrative). Nevertheless, for consistency, I will continue to refer to “La douleur” as a journal, which is how Duras herself refers to Part I, as do most literary critics when discussing this section of the text. Some of these critics, like Sudaka-Benazeraf, are convinced that it is a true journal, while others, such as Leslie Hill and Gabriel Jacobs, are certain of the literary reworking of the text. Most critics lie somewhere in between, admitting that the events of the journal were truly experienced by Duras, but at the same time acknowledging her talent as a writer. Regardless of where they stand in the non-fiction/fiction debate, or whether they classify this text as autobiography (journal/memoir), feminine writing, trauma narrative or some combination thereof, most critics refer to Part I as a journal or diary (Brée, Green, Gorrara, Higgins, Hill, Jacobs, McArthur).

124 The Holocaust refers particularly to the mass extermination of the Jewish deportees. Millions of non-Jewish victims were also persecuted and executed. Robert Antelme and other résistants were deported as political prisoners, yet many were sent to extermination camps such as Auschwitz, and suffered horrible fates. Through the figure of Robert L., Duras addresses the horror of all the camps and the victimization of all the deportees. Nevertheless, she does refer specifically to the Jewish genocide as well.
of shell-shocked soldiers and accident victims. These critics generally agree with Cathy Caruth’s definition of trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11). According to Caruth, a traumatic event is experienced too soon and too unexpectedly to be comprehended immediately. It is thus recorded by the unconscious, and repeated, as in recurring nightmares, hallucinations and the repetitive actions of survivors, until such time that it can be consciously processed and understood (Caruth 4, 11). Naturally, the traumatic experience, as well as these repetitions, disrupt the victim’s narrative stream and challenge his/her unity of self (Lucas 30). According to Julia Kristeva, the Holocaust and Hiroshima are to date the greatest of such traumatic events.

By most definitions, the response to a traumatic event is delayed, and through the event’s psychological recurrence (which sometimes also produces physiological manifestations), the victim is trapped in the painful past experience, cannot move on, and thus cannot restore the integrity of his/her self or narrative. Yet, if we take Duras at her word, that “La douleur” is her real diary from April-May 1945, then there is no delay between the original traumatic experience and her response or attempt to narrate it. Duras is stuck in her painful present. Regardless, all the other aspects of trauma apply to her situation, and its symptoms (compulsive repetition, hallucinations) are captured in her journal.

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125 See Cathy Caruth, Brad Lucas, Julia Kristeva and Victoria Stewart.

126 Forty years later, when Duras publishes the journal and short stories as La Douleur, she is apparently still stuck—now in her painful past—for she cannot yet comprehend or narrate her traumatic experience coherently. This is evident not only from her foreword to “La douleur,” but also from the format and structure of the ensemble of La Douleur, as well as Duras’ language. This lack of coherence is also due in part to Duras’ writing style, as well as to the impossibility of adequately representing the Holocaust. We will return to these issues throughout this chapter.
Literary critics Julia Kristeva, Lawrence Kritzman, Germaine Brée and Lynn A. Higgins agree that Duras suffers a crisis of representation triggered by the trauma of the war and the Holocaust, and that this trauma is reflected in the language and silence of Duras’ writing. In this chapter, we will explore how the trauma of witnessing such terrifying events manifests itself in “La douleur” through a language that is riddled with hollow repetition and gaps in meaning, not only due to the shock, but also because of the sheer impossibility of expressing in words what one cannot even fathom. While concentration camp narratives by survivors such as Primo Levi also capture man’s extreme suffering and state of bestiality, the difference between theirs and Duras’ “journal” is that she brings the horror into her home. As Julia Kristeva observes, the public becomes private: “[p]rivate suffering absorbs political horror into the subject’s psychic microcosm” (Black Sun 234). In Duras, the horror permeates the private space of the home and the daily life of a wife of a political deportee fighting for both her husband’s and her own survival. This struggle will constitute Duras’ resistance at that particular moment in her life.

In her first entry, Duras situates us roughly on the historical timeline. We know that it is April 1945, for although she uses the same pronoun (“ils”) to identify both the Allies and the Germans, we understand that the Allies have crossed the Rhine and the Germans have retreated: “Ils ont fini par franchir le Rhin. . . . Ils ont fini par reculer” (11-12). Throughout her journal, Duras continues to cover the Allied offensive and subsequent victory in Germany, as well as the return of prisoners of war and deportees. But center stage to this historical backdrop, is her own personal and particularly feminine drama, that of her experience as a wife waiting for her husband, Robert L., to return from a German
Her battle will mostly take place in the private (feminine) space of her home. She will combat the fear, anxiety, depression, madness and hopelessness of the wait. She will struggle against physical and mental exhaustion, and even death. Finally, when Robert L. returns, she will wage war against the physical manifestation of war which has inhabited his body. The journal, then, documents a critical period in her personal history as well as that of Europe.

Recalling that the domestic scene is central to women’s diaries and to women’s wartime narratives in general, we have already seen how Claire Chevrillon alternates news from the war front with news from the home front. Duras does this as well throughout her diary, with the exception that, most of the time, there is absolutely no activity going on at home other than the waiting. In fact, the very first two lines situate her in an apparently empty and still apartment: “Face à la cheminée, le téléphone, il est à côté de moi. A droite, la porte du salon et le couloir. Au fond du couloir, la porte d’entrée” (11). It becomes obvious from these opening lines that all she is doing is staring at the phone and at the door, waiting for her husband to either call or appear. The personification of the telephone in fact augments the intensity of the waiting.

Again, if we recall Claire Chevrillon’s descriptions, her homes are always filled with family and friends. Her entries are full of activities that revolve around the family, and especially the children, since children are the center of a woman’s private world of home and hearth. Duras’ world, in contrast, is void of any activity and of all life. She lost her child at birth a few years earlier, a casualty of the war: “Moi, l’enfant que nous avons eu avec Robert

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127 Robert L. stands for Robert Leroy, which was Robert Antelme’s Resistance alias. Antelme was arrested during a Resistance meeting on June 1, 1944, along with his sister and other résistants. He was held in the Fresnes prison temporarily before being deported to Buchenwald. He was later moved to Gandersheim, and finally to Dachau.
L., il est mort à la naissance—de la guerre lui aussi—les docteurs se déplaçaient rarement la nuit pendant la guerre, ils n’avaient pas assez d’essence. Je suis donc seule” (Douleur 30-1).

According to Duras’ biographer, Laure Adler, having a child was very important to Duras; the only thing that kept her going was the thought of having another one, this time by her lover Dionys Mascolo. But this terrible loss weighed on her for the longest time. Based on a 1995 interview with the couple’s fellow résistant, Jacques Benet, Adler describes resistance meetings from 1943 in which Benet discussed politics with them all night long, and Duras spoke of her dead child. According to Benet, “elle était inconsolable” (Adler 171). Her state of mind was fragile: “Elle est assaillie de sentiments morbides. Le souvenir du petit enfant mort la taraude” (Adler 177). Yet, despite being devastated over the loss of her child, for a couple of years, Duras had her husband and resistance work to keep her going—until June 1944, when he was arrested and deported. By April 1945, Duras is on the verge of a breakdown; the memory of her child still haunts her, and she is physically and mentally overwrought with the tension and anguish of not knowing where her husband is or whether he is dead or alive. All she can do is wait and try to convince herself, unsuccessfully, that he will return. She sits motionless by the phone, obsessively debating whether or not he will return, and replaying scenes of his death. As Adler points out, she is assaulted by morbid feelings, repeatedly coming back to thoughts of her dead baby and now her (imagined) dead husband. She cannot even distract or busy herself by preparing and sending him care packages or lobbying for his release, as the POW wives had done during the Occupation. His


129 Duras’ true role in the Resistance is a highly controversial subject. I limit myself mostly to Duras’ own representation of her resistance in La Douleur, and to some comments by biographer, Laure Adler. Regardless, by the time of the journal in April 1945, Duras no longer took part in organized activity.
status as a deportee, as well as the chaos of the end of the war, make it impossible for her to even know his whereabouts. She does read the lists of returning POWs and deportees published in the newspaper, and she does go to the Gare d’Orsay transit center to document names and information by interviewing those who return, but every night, she returns to her telephone to wait: “C’est le soir, il faut que je rentre attendre au téléphone” (Doulouer 15). By April 1945, with each day that goes by and each camp that is liberated without Robert L.’s name appearing on a list, Duras becomes more and more traumatized. She can do little more than wait by the phone in a perpetual terrified and near-catatonic state: “Je vais me rasseoir sur le divan près du téléphone” (34). Duras’ action, or rather, paralysis, is precisely that which Barthes describes in Fragments d’un discours amoureux: waiting requires that one sit motionless by the phone.

According to Barthes, the definition of waiting for a loved one is synonymous with anguish. He likens the act of waiting for a loved one to a three-act drama. In this play, the initial anguish which has built up during the Prologue and has been unleashed in Act I transforms into pure anguish by Act III, after passing through a stage of anger in Act II.

Barthes’ own play takes place in a café and involves a lover waiting for the other who is late in arriving. In the Prologue, the lover waits and checks his watch repeatedly, calculating the time the other is late. This sets off “l’angoisse de l’attente” (47). Act I begins with self-questioning, replaying the initial scene to make sure there was no misunderstanding, and debating whether or not to go telephone or look elsewhere. This feeds the anguish, for if the lover leaves, even if only for a moment, the other may arrive at that

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130 While the Allies were advancing in Germany, retreating German troops were mass-executing prisoners or moving them from one camp to another.

131 Barthes defines waiting as “Attente. Tumulte d’angoisse suscité par l’attente de l’être aimé, au gré de menus retards (rendez-vous, téléphones, lettres, retours)” (47).
precise moment and, not seeing him/her, may redepart. In Act II, the lover becomes angry towards the other who does not come; but by Act III, this anger has turned into “l’angoisse toute pure” (Barthes 48). Because of the intensity of the trauma, the lover goes as far as to hallucinate and imagine the other dead.

Duras’ personal circumstances are quite different from that of Barthes. Robert L. is not simply late for a meeting in a café. His return is not within his control and Duras knows it. Still, Barthes, who claims to have no sense of proportion, does not distinguish between different degrees of waiting. There are many parallels between Barthes’ example and Duras’ waiting in “La douleur,” for in the end, all waiting elicits the same basic anguish and human response. Waiting is repetitive, obsessive, delirious, lonely and painful. According to Barthes, the one who waits sits by the phone and does nothing else but wait for the call. This person, not wishing to tie up the phone line, does not make outgoing calls and dreads receiving calls from other people. The person who waits dares not leave the room for fear of missing the call or the arrival of the loved one. Part of the anguish for the one who waits is that nobody else waits. For everyone else, life goes on as usual, and the one who waits is alone. Finally, the one who waits gets so desperate to see the loved one that he/she begins to hallucinate. At some point, however, the absence turns into death; the other is seen as dead. In “La douleur,” we find Duras at the height of Act III, the point of pure anguish. She will react in many of the ways described by Barthes.

Duras’ situation is similar to that of Claire Chevrillon’s sister, Antoinette, in that she has had a child during the war and her husband is taken prisoner. But this is as far as the similarities go, for in her case, the child has died, so there is no need to feed and care for anyone. The deported husband is missing, so there are no care packages to prepare and send.
She admits that, had her child lived, things might be different. She would have had a reason to continue the struggle for survival, for the sake of her child. Duras acknowledges: “Suzy a du courage pour son petit garçon. Moi, l’enfant que nous avons eu . . . il est mort . . . Je suis donc seule. Pourquoi économiser de la force dans mon cas. Aucune lutte ne m’est proposée” (30-1). She tells us that she has nothing left to fight for, only the visions of Robert L. in a black ditch to fight against. By April 1945, Duras is experiencing pure anguish; she is delirious and at the extreme of her waiting. All she has left is the waiting: “Toujours sur le divan près du téléphone” (45).

Waiting is an important theme in war narratives, whether fiction or non-fiction, and it apparently takes place as much for men on the war front as it does for women on the home front. Journalist Henri Barbusse wrote a novel based on his experience in the trenches during World War I. According to his realistic depiction in Le Feu, a large part of warfare is the waiting. Soldiers wait for everything: their food, the mail, daybreak, and battle. Even in battle, they wait to be hit by incoming fire. After the high of the intense battle wears off, “[e]nthusiasm is allayed, and there remains only the infinite fatigue that rises and overwhelms [the soldiers], and the infinite waiting that begins over again” (263). While it is logical to think that the waiting is a break in the action, the opposite is true according to Barbusse. In his novel, actual combat is a momentary interruption in the endless, monotonous waiting. War is not only centered on action; waiting is also part of war, waiting is also combat, but of a different kind. Waiting is followed mostly by more waiting: “We are waiting. . . . And we begin again, but not in the same way, to wait. In a state of war, one is always waiting. We have become waiting machines” (18). Duras, too, has become a waiting-machine, or robot.
For men at war, waiting is part of warfare; it is another form of combat and engagement with the enemy. For women, waiting is also a combat. As we have seen in Sarah Fishman’s studies, the waiting wife was a feminine wartime image edified by Vichy. The POW wife was to care for the children, manage the household and run things—not to mention provide for the absent soldier—all as if the man were still there. She was to reserve his place as head of household for when he ultimately returned. She was to keep him present even during his absence and focus all of her positive energy on his eventual, but certain, return. Thus, for women in wartime, as well as for men, waiting is a duty. Duras’ situation as the wife of a political deportee, is quite the opposite of Vichy propaganda. Her husband’s location is not fixed and is, in fact, uncertain. Furthermore, he has absolutely no protection from the rules of warfare, as soldiers might have. Given her circumstances and all the uncertainty, it is impossible for her to carry out her duty in the same manner. At this extreme stage in the waiting, and in her traumatized condition, Duras is engaged in a daily combat with fear and death. Thus, she presents us with quite a different image of the waiting wife.

According to Kyeong Hwangbo, “[a]long with a static, distorted conception of time, another symptom of trauma . . . is extreme somatization” (92). Not only has the waiting made Duras lose all sense of time—or rather, made time stand still for her—but her fear, anxiety and depression have taken over her body. With every day that passes and that Robert L. does not come home, Duras’ fear and doubt that he ever will increase. She has barely the strength or the courage to check the lists, fearing that, with each day, they will grow shorter and fewer and his name will not appear on them. She has no more energy for anything; all actions are mechanical. To those who call and inquire if she has had any news, she asks the same automatic question over and over: “Est-ce que je vais encore le demander? Oui. Je le
demande : . . .” (12). On the streets, she sleepwalks: “Dans la rue je dors. Les mains dans les poches, bien calées, les jambes avancent” (13). Her legs know on their own to avoid any place that might contain yet another list or an actual deportee that is not Robert L.

Sometimes, she has to force herself to speak—“Il faut que je me dise que le téléphone sert aussi à ça. Ne pas couper, répondre” (12)—or to move: “Le moment de bouger arrive. Se soulever, faire trois pas, aller à la fenêtre” (13). This kind of dissociation and mechanized action, which as we shall soon see is also reflected in Duras’ disrupted, mechanical writing, is typical of trauma narratives (Kristeva; Kritzman; Higgins). Like the wounded soldier, Duras trudges on in her own very real combat. But even when she manages to get out of the house, all she wants to do is go back and wait by the phone: “J’ai hâte de rentrer, de m’enfermer avec le téléphone” (30). Barthes attributes this obsessive behavior to the psychosis of waiting:

je m’empêche de sortir de la pièce, d’aller aux toilettes, de téléphoner même (pour ne pas occuper l’appareil); je souffre de ce qu’on me téléphone (pour la même raison); je m’affole de penser qu’à telle heure proche il faudra que je sorte, risquant ainsi de manquer l’appel bienfaisant. (48-9)

This type of passivity and defeatism is often considered feminine: “Feminine waiting, related to void and doubt, is alien to those who are full of manly conviction” (Noetinger 70). Duras’ waiting is also alien to the old Vichy image of the waiting wife. The propaganda directed at the wife of the absent man was intended to inspire her to keep the faith that her husband would return at any time. But more than just that, it was as if she controlled his return, as if wishing him back would bring him back. “Wives had to keep hoping their husbands would return and keep actively wanting them back. Ignoring the larger forces holding the POWs in captivity, many articles implied that wanting their husbands back badly enough might just bring them back” (Fishman, We Will Wait 128).
This is precisely what Duras is *trying* to do in her opening entry, although without much success. At first, we see her fighting the desire to give up hope and trying to convince herself that Robert L. will return. Much like in Barthes’ Act I of “L’attente,” Duras finds herself questioning, reasoning and second-guessing the situation with hypothetical scenarios. She tells herself that Robert L. could call from the hotel Lutetia, the Paris transit center for deportees, or even show up at their front door. She insists that there is no reason for him not to return. She figures that his survival is just as certain as the military events going on in Germany, or the fact that even she has survived the war. But she then warns herself against comparing his return to these extraordinary events. His return should be a normal occurrence, and thus more likely to occur. Duras ends this attempt at logical reasoning with an appeal to herself to be reasonable: “Il faut que je sois raisonnable : j’attends Robert L. qui doit revenir” (12).

Duras’ writing is moreover not very convincing. In the first place, the abundant and repetitive use of the conditional tense in this passage [“il pourrait” / “il téléphonerait” / “il arriverait” / “il sonnerait” (11)] suggests that this is still merely a hypothesis, but more importantly, one which she does not believe. And secondly, while the opening paragraph ends on a more positive note, the word “doit” detracts from the certainty, rendering the statement as hypothetical as the others. In fact, any hope in this opening paragraph is mitigated by all of the negativity on which her entire thought process is constructed: “Il n’est pas un cas particulier. Il n’y a pas de raison particulière pour qu’il ne revienne pas . . . ça ne serait pas extraordinaire s’il revenait” (11-12). Duras fails in her struggle to convince herself that he will return. Ultimately, she is more convinced that he will not return, “il n’y a pas de raison pour qu’il revienne” (11). Later, although she still goes through the motions and
checks the transit centers, she knows that it is in vain: “J’attends. Je sais que Robert L. n’y sera pas . . . Je sais que Robert L. n’a aucune espèce de chance d’y être” (27). Granted, in this particular case, she has already been told that the incoming group of deportees is comprised mostly of generals and prefects, but her absolute negativity shows the extreme to which she is incapable of hoping. These feelings of hopelessness are typical of waiting and trauma.

Even worse, Duras actually ends up killing her husband with her thoughts, just as Barthes does in Act III of his scenario: “je viens de passer en une seconde de l’absence à la mort; l’autre est comme mort” (Barthes 48). Since waiting leads to delirium, she cannot fight the constant impulse to believe that he is dead: “Il est mort depuis trois semaines . . . Je tiens une certitude” (14). At one point, she legitimizes his death by imagining that she has received formal notification of it from a town hall social worker. Again, in keeping with the repetitive and obsessive nature of waiting, she plays his death over and over in her mind, but rather than increase the time since his death, due to the passage of time, she actually brings his death closer and closer, renewing the death, renewing the pain, and thus making it more real to her. First, it goes from three weeks down to fifteen days. Then, in a later entry dated Sunday, April 22, 1945, she makes his death even more recent—and final: “Et tout à coup la certitude, la certitude en rafale : il est mort. Mort. Mort. Le vingt et un avril, mort le vingt et un avril” (46). By attaching an actual date to it, as well as repeating it over and over, Duras makes her husband’s death irrevocable.

As we have seen from historian Joan Scott’s study on women’s writing, images of death and deprivation are prevalent in feminine war narratives. This could not be any truer than in “La douleur.” According to a thematic index in Jacqueline Sudaka-Benazeraf’s close analysis of the text, death (actually, “morts”) has the most occurrences, with 20. Deportees
are mentioned 17 times and the camps 16. By comparison, survivors and returning
(“revenir”) are mentioned a total of 5 times (117). In Duras’ vision of the war, everything is
desperate and hopeless. Death triumphs; it invades and inhabits people’s minds and bodies,
especially those of Robert L. and herself. The brutal realities of the war overpower her
thoughts to the point where she visualizes Robert L.’s lifeless body lying abandoned in a
ditch that serves as a common grave somewhere in Germany: “Dans un fossé, la tête tournée
contre terre, les jambes repliées, les bras étendus, il se meurt. Il est mort” (14). Day and
night, she comes back to the image of her husband’s cadaver in a ditch, no longer a man, but
a broken, rotting skeleton: “A travers les squelettes de Buchenwald, le sien. . . . Sa bouche est
entrouverte” (14). “Déjà les bêtes lui courent dessus, l’habitent” (44). With these recurring
graphic descriptions of Robert L.’s rotting corpse, Duras takes the depiction of death and
deprivation to extreme abjection. As Kristeva points out, “Le cadavre . . . est le comble de
l’abjection. Il est la mort infestant la vie. Abject” (Pouvoirs 11-12). Death does indeed infest
life in Duras’ account of war. Not only are the dead lifeless, but so are the living. Beginning
with herself, Duras’ representation of those who survived the war is just as ghastly as that of
the dead.

According to the women’s magazines promoted by Vichy, caring for an absent man
was supposed to give the waiting wife strength. We already know that this was far from
being the case. In Duras’ case, it only drains her, stretching her to her physical and emotional
limit. We have already seen that she is a zombie, sleepwalking through the city and numbly
going through the motions. She is constantly cold, and she has a chronic fever. She can no
longer eat, sleep, or support her ailing body: “Je ne peux plus porter ma tête. Mes jambes et
mes bras sont lourds, mais moins lourds que ma tête. Ce n’est plus une tête, mais un abcès”
(36). She is a dying body in decay. At one point, Duras declares, “je ne peux plus rien” (17). How can she do anything when she has ceased to exist, body and mind? Like Robert L., she is a corpse: “Je suis maigre, sèche comme de la pierre” (15). She is also insane. She tells us how her colleagues from the Research Service consider her mentally ill. Dionys actually tells her, “Vous êtes une malade. Vous êtes une folle” (30). Actually, she is beyond insanity: “[D.] ne me dit plus que je suis cinglée” (15). She is also no longer recognizably human. D. tells her, “Regardez-vous, vous ne ressemblez plus à rien” (30). So, regardless of whether Robert L. lives or dies, she is already too far gone: “Je crois que de toutes façons je vais mourir. S’il revient je mourrai aussi. S’il sonnait . . . tout ce que je pourrais faire c’est ouvrir et puis mourir . . . je suis morte” (36). For this waiting wife, the constant tension, fear and anxiety of waiting are all-consuming and annihilating: “On n’existe plus à côté de cette attente” (43).

The strain also consumes Duras’ language. With regards to its structure and language, feminine writing is sometimes said to differ from that of men because it refuses to adhere to the standards of organization and coherence, which are often considered masculine qualities. Barbara Wiedemann examines Duras’ body of work in light of Cixous’ ideas on feminine writing, reiterating that feminine writing is less characterized by hierarchy, organization and rational appeal than male writing (4). According to Wiedemann, this lack of organization also exists at the basic level of women’s syntax, which is disordered and disrupted: “feminine writing appears disordered with breaks, blanks and silences. [It] disrupts the text down to the level of sentences and word usage” (4).132 Wiedemann points to Duras’ later novels as exemplary forms of feminine writing for their lack of chronology and absence of clear

132 We can undoubtedly find examples of men whose writing is disrupted. In fact, in this case, this type of writing has more to do with trauma, which does not discriminate by gender. Nevertheless, there are those in the field, like Wiedemann, who insist on this opposition between men’s and women’s writing.
boundary between fiction and autobiography, as well as for Duras’ use of breaks, silences, blanks and isolated images (4, 9). 133 Many literary critics agree that no feminine writer masters the use of breaks and silences better than Marguerite Duras, but in La Douleur, it is more a question of Duras’ traumatized response to the war and the Holocaust than a challenge to the traditional masculine discourse. 134

The discontinuity of La Douleur is immediately evident in the book’s format, with its different levels of fiction, its mixing of genres, and the overall timeline out of chronological order. 135 “La douleur,” which by nature of its genre is inherently interrupted and incongruous, is made more unclear by the vague and inconsistent dates on its entries. 136 The ideas they express sometimes lack coherence, due, in part, to the informal and spontaneous nature of journaling, as well as to Duras’ writing style. Duras records scenes and thoughts as they are observed and occur to her, without filters and organizers. But the incoherence also

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133 According to Wiedemann, this begins with Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein (1964).

134 See Germaine Brée’s “Contours, Fragments, Gaps: The World of Marguerite Duras,” and Julia Kristeva’s Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia.

135 La Douleur consists of the diary (Part I) and five short stories (Part II), all of which are organized not by chronology but by degree of fiction. Duras establishes the progression from non-fiction to fiction in the foreword of each work. La Douleur moves from the non-fiction, non-literary diary to a true story (“Monsieur X”) to autobiographical fiction (“Albert des Capitales” and “Ter le milicien”) to complete literary fiction (“L’Ortie brisée” and “Aurélia Paris”), which she states are “inventé[s]. C’est de la littérature” (Douleur 184).

136 The first two entries and the one for April 21 are only generically labeled “Avril,” but with the latter, we can establish the date by its placement between “20 avril” (23) and “Dimanche 22 avril 1945” (39), and by its content: “Demain c’est le vingt-deux avril” (37). Similarly, we can determine that “Avril—Dimanche” (45) is a second entry for Sunday, April 22, 1945. Since the genre’s spontaneous and interrupted nature allows for multiple entries on a same date and skipped dates, really, only the first two vague entries, and the second one for April 28 are unconventional. This last entry actually runs on into May 1945 and beyond. Again, based on the content, one can piece together a progression of estimated dates. Time in these passages revolves around Duras’ husband, beginning with the day in May that she receives the phone call that he has been found alive in a German concentration camp: “Je ne sais plus quel jour c’était, si c’était encore un jour d’avril, non c’était un jour de mai, un matin à onze heures” (61). Her comrades depart for Germany to bring him home on “le 12 mai, le jour de la Paix” (62). Based on the time lapse described, they return on May 14, and his seventeen days of recovery take us through to May 31, 1945. At this point, time once again becomes very vague, with only an occasional allusion to a date: mid-June, or a month since her husband’s return; “août 1945. Hiroshima” (76); and “le premier été de la paix, 1946” (77). In the end, time becomes totally confused: “ou bien c’était une autre année. Un autre été (80).
results from the narrator’s own desperate and chaotic state and her inability to process and organize scenes and thoughts rationally. On the level of sentence and word usage in the journal, it is not so much a question of the sentences being disrupted by breaks or blanks. Duras’ sentences are complete; only, they are often very short and bare. The language of the journal parallels Duras’ frayed and agitated state. Worn by the physical hardship of the Occupation, the anguish of waiting for her husband’s return, the shock of his condition, and the battle to bring him back to life, Duras does not make her sentences any longer or more eloquent. The language is also tired and traumatized. Words and sentence structures are not omitted, but repeated, as if shocked and stuttered. Julia Kristeva has demonstrated that “the speech of the depressed [is]—repetitive and monotonous” (Black Sun 33). As we have already seen, in the first entry, Duras reiterates several times that she is waiting by the phone. She tries to convince herself that her husband will return through a succession of conditional phrases. But she is soon overwhelmed with the recurring hallucination of Robert L.’s corpse in a ditch, along with the various ways to say that he is dead: “il se meurt. Il est mort” (14). Later, it is she who dies repeatedly after more hypothetical scenarios: “je vais mourir . . . je mourrai aussi . . . ouvrir et puis mourir . . . je suis morte” (36). According to Kristeva, Duras attempts to represent her pain by converting language into speech that is awkward and clumsy: “the distorted speech sounds strange, unexpected, and above all painful” (Black Sun 226). The language of “La douleur” is disordered and disrupted because it is the language of pain and trauma.

Repetitive and chaotic language also signals a crisis of representation. According to Kristeva, Hiroshima and the Holocaust are two events that changed literature forever: “[n]ever has a cataclysm been more apocalyptically outrageous; never has its representation
been assumed by so few symbolic means” (Black Sun 223). In Duras’ apocalyptic vision and narration of war, everything and everyone will cease to exist, the French and the Germans alike. In Paris, “[I]e soir est rouge. C’est la fin du monde” (15). In Germany, “Berlin flambe. Elle sera brûlée jusqu’à la racine. Entre ses ruines, le sang allemand coulera” (31). Amidst the Germans, her Robert L. will also perish: “L’Allemagne est en flammes. Il est à l’intérieur de l’Allemagne. . . . il est dans l’incendie de l’Allemagne” (52). And with this total annihilation comes a collapse of language: while her words attempt to describe scenes of death and destruction, the existing language is still insufficient to adequately express the pain and horror of war and of the concentration camps: “The psychic grief produced by the monstrous and painful experiences of the war . . . engenders a crisis of representation for the narrating subject” (Kritzman 63). The horror is so great, so new to humanity, and so inconceivable that there are no words to capture its full impact. Duras is so traumatized by what she does see, that she is left almost literally speechless. Although she cannot come up with her own words to describe the atrocities going on in Germany, she finds another way to portray them. She verbally recreates the photograph of a liberated camp which has been published in a newspaper: “Encore une photo de Belsen, une fosse très longe dans laquelle sont alignés des cadavres, des corps maigres comme encore on n’a jamais vu” (39). The atrocity is such that she cannot speak of it; all she can do is describe a photograph which she cannot bring herself to include in her text. Duras also documents the horrific murder of scores of deportees: “En deuxième page du F.N. on annonce que mille déportés ont été brûlés vifs dans une grange le treize avril au matin à côté de Magdebourg” (39). Once again, she can only cite from the newspapers and use another medium.
Duras’ narrative on the last month of war clearly shows that in the balance of life and death, death outweighs life: “Aujourd’hui les vingt mille survivants de Buchenwald saluent les cinquante et un mille morts du camp” (34). But even those who survived the camps are on the brink of death. Duras documents the inconceivable and inexpressible horror done to human beings by other human beings, when around the 20th of April, she watches the first group of deportees arrive at the Orsay station from the Weimar region. She observes as two scouts carry in the first deportee, who is barely alive, and unrecognizable as a human being: “Il est d’une étrange couleur. Il doit pleurer. On ne peut pas dire qu’il est maigre, c’est autre chose, il reste très peu de lui-même, si peu qu’on doute qu’il soit en vie” (28). Once again, Duras cannot find the right words to describe this man because no words exist. Never before has she seen anyone in his condition. There are no existing words for color and body mass that adequately match his. The war and the terrifying experience in captivity have also aged these men beyond recognition; they all look like old men: “Le second qui est entré, le vieillard, il pleure. On ne peut pas savoir s’il est aussi vieux que ça, peut-être qu’il a vingt ans, on ne peut pas savoir l’âge” (28). Duras’ shock and incredulity are again evident in her repetition. This is her first glimpse of a returning deportee. Until now, she has had no real idea of what went on in the camps. At this point, however, absolute dread must be setting in as she imagines her own husband’s condition: “[l]a narratrice comprend en le voyant [le déporté] que R. L., s’il revient, peut ressembler à cet homme. La ‘douleur’ se transforme, d’attente vague et angoissée, en désespoir” (Sudaka-Benazeraf 28).

Robert L. does survive. He is found at Dachau, on May 12, by François Mitterrand and another member of their group. Or rather, it is he who spots Mitterrand; for like the “vieillards” from the Orsay, Robert L. is unrecognizable. According to Duras’ description of the scene, the rescuers treat him like a corpse: they identify him by his teeth, wrap him in a sheet, and remove him from the section of the camp reserved for the dead or dying (61-2). D immediately sets out to bring Robert L. home, who by this point is little more than a specter: “cette forme n'[est] pas encore morte, elle [flotte] entre la vie et la mort” (66). The horror of Auschwitz now haunts the home and the daily reality of Marguerite Duras.

According to Kyeong Hwangbo, it is common for survivors to refer to themselves in a base or degraded manner. Often, Holocaust narratives “are replete with people’s testimony [of . . .] their bewilderling shock at finding themselves reduced to ‘a hungry stomach,’ a ‘burning throat’ or ‘a pounding heart’” (Hwangbo 92). “La douleur” is consistent with this aspect of Holocaust narratives: not only does Robert L. excuse himself for being “ce déchet” (Douleur 65), but Duras highlights all three of the aforementioned body parts in a description of Robert L. that she reduces to a physical inventory (67-8). She then tracks the changes in his body during his seventeen-day battle to survive.

Duras’ fight to revive her husband, while struggling to survive herself, reveals yet another tragic reality of the war and another form of resistance not often documented in traditional resistance narratives and history books. Like most surviving deportees, Robert L. returns from the camp literally skin and bones, and barely alive. He no longer resembles a

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138 At first Duras claims not to know the exact date of Mitterrand’s call, only that it was a morning in May at eleven a.m. (61). François Mitterrand, known in the Resistance as François Morland, was president of the movement representing POWs and deportees (the MNPGD). He was making rounds of liberated camps with a delegation when he discovered Robert Antelme at Dachau. According to biographer Laure Adler, there were four other men with Mitterand at Dachau—Bugeaud, Gagnaire, Benet, and Father Riquet—and the one who actually found Robert Antelme was Bugeaud (218-9). Duras refers to only one other man with Mitterand. She later pinpoints the date as the 12th of May (62), noting that D left that same day for Germany.
human being, and everything that comes from his body is unrecognizable. Nobody can bear
to look at what the war has reduced him to, and just as visitors turn their gaze from Robert L.,
readers turn away from Duras’ barely readable descriptions of his diseased body: “Il [fait]
donc cette chose gluante vert sombre qui [bouillonne], merde que personne n’[a] encore vue .
. . elle [est] inhumaine” (69). While Duras’ descriptions reflect the horror of the situation, the
reality exceeds the language and its ability to represent the wretchedness of this man, and of
the war.139 Since no one has ever witnessed an event like the Holocaust, people cannot
comprehend what they see, much less describe it—even Duras. After a seventeen-day battle
with death, Robert L.’s excrement begins to resemble something human again, and he shows
signs of hunger and life.

Hunger and the deprivation of food are a recurring theme in Duras’ journal, as it is in
most women’s wartime journals. Since hunger is a tool of warfare used by the oppressor,
women’s fight against hunger is part of their daily resistance. One difference, however, is
that Duras not only exposes the famine experienced by deportees, but also the impossible
situation upon their return. “Non, il ne pouvait pas manger sans mourir. Or il ne pouvait plus
rester encore sans manger sans en mourir” (67). Through the example of Robert L., Duras
shows us how, ironically, that which they needed most in order to live could also kill them.
With food rationed and administered in small doses for medical reasons, deportees did not
understand why they were being treated as in the camps: “[s]on visage s’était recouvert d’une
douleur intense et muette parce que la nourriture lui était encore refusée, que ça continuait
comme au camp de concentration” (66). Robert L.’s appetite soon becomes insatiable,

139 Similarly, in “Le Songe,” written by Vercors in 1943 and published in 1945, the narrator describes tortured
Holocaust victims so graphically that they fill him with disgust and leave him breathless (100-101). He, too,
must turn away from the reality of the death camps. Yet, Vercors comes close to capturing this horror, although
his story is technically fiction.
monstrous: “[Sa faim] a pris des proportions effrayantes . . . Il avale comme un gouffre” (72-73). Food becomes an obsession to the point where he forgets his own wife. Through hunger, the Enemy has reduced Robert L. to an animal state. Duras observes from a distance as he sucks bones dry, eats crumbs off the floor, and resorts to stealing. Like a child, he sobs when his next feeding does not come quickly enough or when they warn him against overeating. He tells them it is they who do not understand, for the only thing that Robert L. seems to understand instinctively is that if he does not eat, he will die.

Death and deprivation, then, manifest themselves through starvation, in both Robert L.’s recovering body and Duras’ earlier visions of the dead corpse in the ditch. In her imagination, she repeatedly fixes on the hunger that her husband has suffered before dying. Although she imagines other possible causes of death, such as his being shot, she still fixates on the fact that he died hungry: “Mort le ventre vide” (43). Duras cannot overcome her helplessness, which adds to her desperation. In her mind, she has failed in her duty to keep her husband alive: “Je voudrais pouvoir lui donner ma vie. Je ne peux pas lui donner un morceau de pain” (43). As for her, she can no longer eat, out of guilt. She feels responsible for his starvation and death, as if she were the one taking his bread. Duras is convinced that she has failed in her wifely duty to provide her husband with food and to keep him alive with positive thoughts. She has failed in her daily duty to resist against death and to survive.

According to Kristeva’s theories on the abject in Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai de l’abjection, “[Le cadavre] est un rejeté dont on ne se sépare pas . . . il nous appelle et finit par nous engloutir” (12). These ghostly images of Robert L. as a starved corpse in a ditch haunt Duras, and yet they are the only connection that she has with him during his absence, so she clings to them. She also maintains the connection by sharing the hunger, the pain, and the
death that she imagines Robert L. experiencing. Her physical state is a reflection of his: he cannot eat, she cannot eat; his body is rotting, her head is an abscess. She feels Robert L.’s death in her own beating temples: “Sa mort est en moi” (13). His ghostly image swallows her up. Day and night, she returns to that image of Robert L. in the ditch. Whenever she is out, she cannot wait to get back to him: “J’ai hâte de rentrer . . . de retrouver le fossé noir” (30). Each night, she falls asleep next to his corpse in the ditch. It is impossible for Duras to bring her absent husband home with her thoughts and wishful thinking, for she, herself, has become a ghost.

When Robert L. finally returns and recovers, Duras also comes back to life. Once again, her own physical condition parallels his: “Moi aussi, je recommence à manger, je recommence à dormir. Je reprends du poids. Nous allons vivre” (74). While the nous implies that they have become one person, this type of familial unity is far from that intended by Pétain’s propaganda.

Mary Jean Green has demonstrated that women’s sense of self “is deeply bound up with others” (232). In many cases, this is the absent man. In her study of the wartime writings of Simone de Beauvoir and Marguerite Duras, Green points out that while de Beauvoir’s journal is framed by the early war period and the fall of France, “the time covered by the journal passages corresponds almost exactly to the period during which de Beauvoir was separated from Sartre during his service at the front and subsequent internment in a German prison camp” (230). Much like La Douleur, de Beauvoir’s wartime journal focuses on the wait for her absent man, and reveals her own loss of self through complete identification with him. She, too, imagines her man dying of hunger and proclaims her own lack of existence. While she attempts to reestablish her own identity—and with it a coherent narrative—she
cannot (Green 230-1). Her fate is tied to Sartre’s much like Duras’ depends on Antelme’s. Yet, with the Holocaust, Duras takes the position of witness to horror to the extreme, and her loss of self becomes almost literally a loss of life.

Even in ordinary times, women’s self-effacement in favor of a male other is considered a trait common to women’s diaries. This loss of female self identity is also said to be a distinguishing characteristic of women’s wartime narratives. In these narratives, we often see how the women focus so much on their absent husbands, sons, brothers, etcetera, that they cease to exist in their own right. Interestingly, they lose their own identity when the image of the virile man as established by the patriarchal cults of masculinity disappears. The women often go out in search of the missing men, for example to the prisons, and when they cannot find their men and join them physically, they fantasize about it. We see here to what extreme Duras does this. She thinks of nothing else but Robert L. to the point where she neglects herself completely and becomes almost non-existent.

We have seen in Claire Chevrillon how the absent men were central to women’s lives during the war. Many of the women in her own family obsessed over her deported Jewish cousins and her POW brother-in-law, Paul. Paul’s wife and mother were figuratively and literally consumed by the quest to find food for him. In Duras, the woman’s self is also linked to the absent man, but to an even further extent, for these two are one and the same. Duras’ physical state is consumed by that of Robert L.’s: If he dies, she dies. If he lives, she lives. Her identity becomes so wrapped up in his that she loses her own self. When Robert L. recovers, she speaks as we: “Nous allons vivre” (74). Her identification with Robert L. is indeed a preclusion of her own identity and is almost psychotic: “Indeed, the narrator’s identification with the fate of Robert L. reaches the point when she is no longer able to
maintain a coherent sense of self or any meaningful understanding of the world around her” (Gorrara, Women’s Representations 58).

Another manifestation of loss of self in “La douleur” appears with the narrator’s identification with the pain. When she is not completely one with the image of Robert L., she is inhabited by a pain so great that it is all-consuming and she ceases to exist. It possesses her entire body and mind to the point that she has room for nothing else, much less herself. All of her energy goes to feeding this pain. Her pain becomes literally a “supplice,” a torment, an agony, a torture. First she tells herself to save all her strength for the suffering: “il ne faut pas trop faire de mouvements, c’est de l’énergie perdue, garder toutes ses forces pour le supplice” (12). Moreover, the pain is so intense that it is allegorized: “La douleur est telle, elle étouffe, elle n’a plus d’air. La douleur a besoin de place” (14). The narrator is so fused with it that she becomes the pain and the pain kills her: “Je ne sens plus mon coeur. L’horreur monte lentement dans une inondation, je me noie” (46).

Duras clearly refers to herself in the third person in more than one instance in her journal. This impersonal distance marked by the third person is consistent with the disjunction that we have already seen in her actions and in her writing. She has already partly detached from herself by becoming an automaton. But in this previous passage, she does begin to feel the pain and, as a result, she spins out of control. Not only has she just killed off Robert L. for the nth time, but she has just imagined her own demise, and with it, the end of waiting, something else by which she defines herself. To protect herself, she detaches once again. In her delirium, she no longer knows where he is or where she is. She does not even know who he is or who she is: “Je n’existe plus” (46), and since “je” no longer exists, she switches over to referring to herself in the third person. This other voice is clearly the mark
of distance, whereby she becomes another person, a stranger to herself, a split self. In this schizophrenic state, she is figuratively and literally beside herself, asking a series of existential questions: “Qu’est-ce qu’elle attend en vérité? . . . Qui est elle?” (46). She gradually pulls herself back to reality and her own body by invoking Dionys, who always grounds her. He will know the answers to these questions: “D. le sait. Où est D.? Elle le sait, elle peut le voir et lui demander des explications. Il faut que je le voie” (46-7). Once again “je,” she sets off to find him; and once again, she looks to a man to restore her identity. However, all he will probably manage to restore are Robert L., the wait, and the pain.

In an entry dated Tuesday, April 24, Duras experiences this trauma once again, when a returned deportee calls to report that he saw Robert L. alive two days earlier. At first, she tries to strip the phone from Dionys, but eventually, the shock and the pain overwhelm her. This time, they have a more violent, physical effect on her, knocking her unconscious. Once again, out of the need to separate herself from this pain which is so overwhelming and unbearable that it risks killing her, she detaches from herself in a sort of out-of-body experience. This time, she floats above her body and watches the scene in horror. She again switches to the third person: “Elle n’essaye plus d’arracher le téléphone. Elle est par terre, tombée . . . D. a posé l’appareil. Il dit son nom à elle : ‘Ma petite, ma petite Marguerite.’” (47). This split-self narration continues for about a page, until D. helps her collect herself yet again. As soon as Duras entertains the hope and the possibility that Robert L. is alive, she, too, lives, and switches back to the first person narration: “Il vit. Je m’habille très vite [pour aller voir les camarades de Robert L.]” (48). Traumatic wartime narratives often reveal this

140 This entry is dated precisely “Mardi 24 avril” (47), whereas the previous entry was titled only “Avril—Dimanche” (45), although we know it was a continuation of the one preceding it, “Dimanche 22 avril 1945” (39). Again, the inconsistent dating of the journal entries, and the dislocation of space and time, is yet another manifestation of Duras’ schizophrenic state, and the effect of trauma on memory and on writing.
manifestation of a split self for the sake of self-preservation in the face of a trauma and pain so great that it could kill the subject if he/she did not detach. In Duras’ case, we see how the pain is powerful enough to knock her unconscious, and her means of self-defense is to create and escape into this parallel self.

In Days and Memory, Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo labels two co-existing layers of memory which help her stay alive: “ordinary memory” and “deep-lying memory” (3). For reasons of self-preservation, the two layers of memory separate Delbo’s two selves. The present-day self who has been able to survive, function, and even discuss the trauma lives in the ordinary memory, while the traumatized self of Auschwitz remains buried, speechless, in the deep memory. The trauma is etched in this deep memory only as physical impressions that remain incomprehensible and unnarratable: “Trauma is determined by experiences that are incomprehensible, overwhelming, or otherwise beyond the limits of perception and reception” (Lucas 30). Delbo acknowledges her inability to survive without this divided self: “I live within a twofold being. The Auschwitz double doesn’t bother me, doesn’t interfere with my life. As though it weren’t I at all. Without this split I would not have been able to revive” (3). Yet the difference between Delbo and Duras is that Delbo’s present self, the one who writes, has had many years to distance herself from the other. By processing the experience over time in her ordinary memory, she is able to live again, and to think and write about the traumatic event somewhat coherently. Duras’ newly separated self,

141 All citations come from this translation of Charlotte Delbo, La mémoire et les jours (Paris: Berg, 1985).

142 Ordinary memory is the day-to-day memory that allows one to move beyond the trauma and continue living in the present. Delbo also refers to this memory as “external memory,” or “intellectual memory,” because it is associated with the thinking process, by which the survivor is able to give order to and speak about the traumatic events of the past. Conversely, deep memory is that of the traumatic moment, which in Delbo’s case is the experience of Auschwitz. This memory “is the memory of the senses” (3), for it preserves the experience as sensations and emotions rather than in words.
on the other hand, cannot. All it can do at this point is disconnect just to survive the stifling pain. Since, in theory, Duras is writing her journal in the moment of the lived experience, her present, writing self is too close to the Holocaust-witness self to be able to process the experience and relate it coherently without re-experiencing the trauma. The latter is thus still interfering with her writing self. Since the traumatic experience exists unprocessed in the deep memory of her Holocaust-witness self only as sensory impressions and not as coherent or conceivable language, she cannot yet write about the experience. Any attempt to write, as we have seen, results in unclear and disrupted language that reflects the inexpressible trauma.

This phenomenon of trauma, pain and memory has been studied in many disciplines, often referring to psychoanalytic theories based on Freud’s work. According to Brad Lucas, there is growing concern across the social sciences about how traumatic experiences are documented and communicated. As such, traumatic narrative is now being studied as a genre in itself. Lucas also demonstrates that there are different levels of memory, which he calls “ordinary-narrative memory” and “traumatic memory.” The existence of trauma, then, seems to necessitate the fragmentation described by Delbo and demonstrated by Duras’ writing, as a defense mechanism: “Traumatic memory and narrative is necessarily about the splitting or fragmentation of subjectivity, self, and consciousness” (Lucas 34). Duras’ writing is syncopated and the narrator’s self is split between “I” “she” and “we.”

143 Again, we have to assume that “La douleur” is her diary, and whether actual or recreated, it is based on the assumption that she is writing in the moment, which gives the effect of immediacy.

144 See Cathy Caruth, Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History and Julia Kristeva, Soleil Noir : Dépression et mélancholie.

145 Ordinary-narrative memory, similar to Delbo’s ordinary memory, allows events to be accessible, narrated, and thus logically communicable. Hopefully, these events can then be understood even by someone who has not lived the experience. Traumatic memory is like Delbo’s deep memory, which only lives in the body and in the perception of the one who experienced it. It cannot be organized and communicated linguistically or symbolically. It only exists in the senses.
Often, in relating women’s wartime experience, the narrating subject is incapable of reconstructing her identity and/or the experience into a coherent narrative. Since trauma cannot be accurately represented in language, the traumatic experience not only breaks up the integrity of the self of the narrating subject, but it also disrupts her narrative. Traumatic experience can disrupt the narrative by inserting “flashes” of vivid and horrific images from the original event into the present narration. Duras’ writing is overwhelmed with “repetitious and invasive ‘memories’ (which appear as the experience, rather than linguistically codified memory)” (Lucas 34). This occurs abundantly in Hiroshima mon amour (1960). In films, such as this one, it becomes easier to replay the trauma, which appears as images. For this reason, Kristeva hails the film medium as “the supreme art of the apocalypse,” for “the art of imagery excels in the raw display of monstrosity” (Black Sun 224). In this new apocalyptic rhetoric, the verbal counterpart to this abundance of images is, ironically, a lack of words.

In “La douleur,” we are also faced with a repressed traumatic memory. Although Duras is not the direct victim like Robert L., she is an entangled witness to the horror of the Holocaust. Coherent narration is equally impossible in this case. Duras’ tortured physical and mental state can only produce cryptic journal entries and broken sentences for which she is incapable of finding the words to express the horrors of the war and the pain that she feels. She is trapped in the nightmare as a witness.

Hélène Cixous considers that “[feminine texts] are not texts that delimit themselves, are not texts of territory with neat borders, with chapters, with beginnings, endings, etc.”

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146 The fact that this text is somewhere between fact and fiction does not detract from its value as historical document. The text still shows that representation collapses with trauma of such magnitude.
In extreme situations, like when faced with the horror of war and the Holocaust, the already unstable journal format takes on the added traumatic dimension. Duras’ diary clearly has no defined borders. In fact, it begins on a non-specified day in mid-April. Sometimes she forgets to date her passages, perhaps since, in her waiting, she is suspended in time, unaware of the particular date. Other days, she can pinpoint a date by taking a point of reference from the events in the newspaper. Then, after Robert L.’s return, dates become irrelevant to her. Time is measured by the details of his recovery, like a medical notebook. For years to come, time will be marked by Robert L.’s return. She specifically mentions the summer of 1946, but only because she knows that it is precisely one year and four months after his return. After this, everything is in flux. She describes vacationing with friends on the beach in Italy, but she admits, “ou bien c’était un autre jour sans vent. Ou bien c’était une autre année. Un autre été” (80). If one considers the totality of La Douleur—the mix of journal and short stories, all out of chronological order, with no clear beginning and ending—we see that the work perfectly reflects the chaotic experience of the narrator. This is quite emblematic of Duras’ work in general. Returning specifically to the journal, we have already seen examples of repetition and short, stuttered sentences, of hesitations and silences, and of incoherent, delirious passages. Some of these passages are quite fitting for a diary, for she seems to be jotting down exactly what she sees and what goes through her mind, as it happens, with no organizing filter whatsoever. In the same paragraph she mixes war events, daily life events, statistics on the casualties of war, and flashes of Robert L. in the ditch. Forty years later, the present-day self who is recopying the original text for publication cannot understand parts of the narrative written by her April 1945 self. At

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147 Actually, this comment applies to any literary genre that exploits hybridities in terms of writing and genre. It also applies to the war narratives of men such as Barbusse and Vercors.
one point, she adds a note to her readers in brackets stating that even she cannot understand
the written representation of the experience, although she is the one who experienced it (30).
This separation into two selves who coexist yet who remain independent from one another
indeed corroborates Charlotte Delbo’s theory of parallel selves and layers of memory.

Silence, or in this case, the absence of words, is always overcoded in Duras’ writings.
In “La douleur,” what she cannot express verbally—or rather, in words—is just as important
as the rest. It is perhaps her main point. The clearest manifestation of Duras’ state of
traumatic shock is her inability to speak (or write), her inability to describe the horror all
around her and within. All she can come up with is “C’est terrible” (17). Time and again, the
only way that Duras can represent the pain is with a guttural cry or scream. Often, she states,
“je crie” (17), or “Ça sort aussi en plaintes, en cris” (48). And when Robert L. returns, and
Duras sees how the war has reduced him to something inhuman, she cannot express her
horror in any other way: “J’ai hurlé que non . . . je hurlais, de cela je me souviens. La guerre
sortait dans des hurlements” (64). Obviously, language is insufficient to describe pain and
suffering of such horrific magnitudes. Duras transcribes into her journal the impossibility of
representing the horrors of war or of traumatic experience in language. As Noetinger puts it:

At the sharp end of waiting, Duras cannot represent war, she cannot write the
pain created by war because she seems aware of the fact that her writing
deVICES—somatization of writing, body fall, scream experienced as a break
with words and thought, separation, love and death discourse—hit their limits
in the context of war. (72)

In her study of de Beauvoir and Duras, Mary Jean Green argues that this very loss of
coherent narration, triggered by a loss of identity, makes their wartime autobiographical
writings uniquely feminine:

Both women’s accounts focus on a moment of despair [. . . and] take as their
point of departure a loss of identity which seems to render narrative
impossible. This, in itself, might serve to distinguish them from masculine war memoirs, which tend to emphasize action leading towards ultimate victory. (227) 148

The masculine protagonist, epitomized by de Gaulle in his own memoirs, has also faced this same moment of despair, the difference being that he experiences no identity crisis. Thus, he is still able to extract a clear story from the experience: “In his ordered, coherent narrative, the Gaullist persona at no time loses touch with the story he will later be able to tell: his experience is always potentially narratable” (Green 227-8). While Robert Antelme cannot by any means be associated with the Gaullist persona, Green’s statement certainly applies to the lucid “masculine” persona who speaks in L’Espèce humaine. Before we compare Antelme’s writing of the event with that of Duras, let us first look at her interpretation of his need to tell his story.

In “La douleur,” Duras’ inability to verbally express the horrors of war, contrasts Robert L.’s need to coherently explain and give order and meaning to his experience. Even though it may be impossible to capture the magnitude of the experience in words, he feels he must try, so that there is at least a chance of it being understood, repeated, and preserved as a lesson for mankind. Beginning with the ride back to France from Germany, even in his half-dead state, Robert L. talks on and on, telling his story, so that at least the story survives, if he does not. Even then, through his delirium, Robert L. has enough presence of mind to be philosophical. He does not blame any particular person or even race, but rather mankind and its institutions: “Au sortir de l’horreur, mourant, délirant, Robert L. avait encore cette faculté

148 This bare narration of loss and despair often associated with feminine writing does, however, exist in fiction written by men, as well as in the non-fiction writings of Holocaust survivors such as Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel. Later, in Nouvelles de la zone interdite, Daniel Zimmermann recounts, through a series of matter-of-fact anecdotes, the different brutal events that he witnessed as a French soldier in the Algerian war: standing guard, killing, being killed, losing limbs—these are all part of the daily life of a soldier. Rather than attempt a coherent explanation in a wordy novel or memoir, Zimmermann decided that this bare, anecdotal format best captured the trauma which remained stored in his senses.
de n’accuser personne, sauf les gouvernements qui sont de passage dans l’histoire des peuples” (63).

After stopping only for a few bites of dinner, “il [recommence] à parler” (64). Robert L. wants to finish his story before he dies, and yet he is afraid that if he stops speaking, he will surely die, for thinking and speaking are what assure him that he is still alive, still human. Although his story is not yet ordered, it flows, apparently unhindered by the effects of trauma: “il dit tout, tout ce qu’il a vécu depuis un an sans ordre” (Adler 220). According to Dionys Mascolo, Robert Antelme cannot stop talking; he cannot contain the torrent of words.149 Mascolo sees him as a man driven by the need to tell as much of his story as possible, in case he dies: “Robert parle, parle, il ne peut s’arrêter de parler. . . . Dans son délabrement physique, il n’est plus que parole, se souviendra Dionys” (Adler 220). During Robert L.’s recovery, Duras also highlights his need to talk, but more importantly, his lucidity: “Et la tête. Hagarde, mais sublime, seule, elle sortait de ce charnier, elle émergeait, se souvenait, racontait, reconnaissait, réclamait. Parlait. Parlait” (68). Duras has lived her end of the experience in a haze, as if it were out of her own necessity for self-preservation. The impossibility of writing things down clearly is precisely what keeps her alive, for, facing the pain and getting her story out completely and coherently might destroy her. For Robert L., it is quite the opposite, as if telling his story keeps him alive, and even makes him whole and connected again.

When he writes his story down in 1947, as L’Espèce humaine, it will be whole, with a clear beginning, middle and end. In fact, he divides his book into these three sections, almost literally. His sections are entitled Part I: Gandersheim, Part II: the Road, and Part III: The End. In L’Espèce humaine, Antelme’s narrative remains coherent and his identity and sense

149 Laure Adler interviewed Dionys Mascolo in March and April 1995.
of self are not divided. Antelme’s is “a mimetic and linear form of testimonial narrative . . .
with a stable self as its centre” (Gorrara, “Bearing Witness” 245). He preserves his identity
and sense of self by clinging to his political convictions and by elevating his discourse to the
level of humanity, in general. While he often uses the word “inimaginable” to describe his
experience, or rather, to explain that there are no words to describe it, he still manages to say
something. He ultimately finds a word, or quite a few, with meaning which comes as close as
possible to what he wishes to represent. Yet one has to wonder who comes closer to
representing the unimaginable—Antelme with his torrent of words or Duras with her
screams—for how can one express in words what he or she cannot even conceive? Duras’
writing truly bears the seal of this “inimaginable.”

In the preface to his Espèce humaine, Robert Antelme admits to the difficulty of
narrating an experience which is not only too painful to relive, but is also beyond words and
even beyond imagination:

A peine commencions-nous à raconter, que nous suffoquions. A nous-mêmes,
ce que nous avions à dire commençait alors à nous paraître inimaginable.
Cette disproportion entre l’expérience que nous avions vécue et le récit qu’il
était possible d’en faire ne fit que se confirmer par la suite. Nous avions donc
bien affaire à l’une de ces réalités qui font dire qu’elles dépassent
l’imagination. (9)

As Kristeva also noted of the camps, the reality of the horror exceeded the ability of language
to represent it: indeed, “the actuality of the Second World War brutalized consciousness”
(Black Sun 222). Yet distance allows Antelme to recall and recount his story for 300 pages
of text.150 His entire narrative, while sometimes in the first person, more often reverts to the
impersonal subject “on,” thereby making his story not really about his own experience but

150 By distance, I mean not only in time, but also psychological (protecting himself with the collective and
impersonal pronouns nous and on) and philosophical (contemplating human nature and the human condition
help him prevail over his individual victimization).
rather about the collective camp experience. His use of “nous” throughout the preface should alert the reader that Antelme intends to speak not only for himself, but for all deportees. His preface also suggests that his narrative will be a political and sociological study of camp society. Right away, he breaks down the different factions of the camp (namely, the political prisoners and the common prisoners), and the power struggle between them. The former wanted to establish order, while the latter wanted to maintain disorder, because it was the only society in which they actually had the upper hand. Antelme manages to make sense of this disorder and identify the enemy in this world: “A Gandersheim, nos responsables étaient nos ennemis” (10). Finally, it becomes obvious from his preface that, while he purports to relate his story as an individual, he actually raises questions regarding mankind in general:

La mise en question de la qualité d’homme provoque une revendication presque biologique d’appartenance à l’espèce humaine. Elle sert ensuite à méditer sur les limites de cette espèce, […] et surtout à concevoir une vue claire de son unité indivisible. (11)

Apparently, after this philosophical meditation on the experience of deportation, Antelme finds clarity of vision and of narration. After writing his book in 1947, Antelme falls silent and no longer speaks of the concentration camps, or his book. Yet, “[c]’est dans ce silence-là que la guerre est encore présente, qu’elle sourde” (Douleur 79). Indeed, as Jorge Semprún has demonstrated, the language of horror can only be captured by another traumatic or poetic language.

In Combattantes sans uniformes (1946), Élisabeth Terrenoire alludes to a silence, or perhaps utter speechlessness, when confronted with women’s wartime suffering: “On ne peut que se taire devant la somme des souffrances inhumaines subies par les femmes des détenus, des torturés, des déportés, des fusillés, devant l’angoisse indiscutable des jours, des mois, des années sans nouvelles. On ne peut que s’incliner devant tant de deuils!” (19). In this case, the
silence was either due to the incomprehension of such pain and anguish, or even out of respect. But after the war, another silence came about for different reasons. As we have seen, in post-war France, Charles de Gaulle and the political right quickly got to work to create the war myth of a unified, resistant France, not one which had collaborated in the deplorable acts of deportation and genocide. “[I]n his resolute call to restore national glory . . . de Gaulle turns a blind eye to the emotional trauma ravaging survivors of the camps and of the dead. His heady nationalism does little either to assuage the pain or mitigate the despair with which the populace must cope in the aftermath of such immense destruction” (Scullion, “Prisoners” 157). De Gaulle’s silence about the camps, then, does not stem from an inability to express the horror, as in Duras’ case, but rather, from an unwillingness to examine France’s responsibility in it. He prefers to steer the French away from guilt, shame and mourning, and lead the country into forgetting. This is one issue about which Duras does not remain silent in “La douleur.” Throughout her journal, she constantly makes angry references to de Gaulle’s insincerity, and she protests his administration’s ill treatment of the camp situation and of the deportees themselves. Duras refuses to be silent, refuses to contribute to the historical amnesia that is setting in. Instead, by demanding to be heard, even if the language is traumatized, Duras bears witness to the deportee situation, thereby not only ensuring that history does not forget it, but also that it makes history.

Through the example of Hiroshima mon amour, Cathy Caruth discusses the construction of history and the memorializing of events by traumatized witnesses. In this specific example, an encounter with a Japanese man in Hiroshima triggers flashes of a French woman’s suppressed memory of a past affair with a German soldier. These flashes, along with the man’s insistence, compel her to tell the story, which at first comes out as
incoherent fragments. As she continues, the past event takes form and increasingly demands to be remembered by her and heard by the other. Although she still may not completely grasp the traumatic event, it has at least begun the process of being memorialized through her address and the man’s witnessing. Duras demands to be heard in much the same way in “La douleur.” Although she may barely be able to speak the experience, she insists on trying so that it is not lost to history.

In April 1945, the Allies are marching towards final victory while the fate of thousands of deportees is still in the hands of the Germans. Throughout the journal, Duras mixes in news of the war that is still raging in Germany with her day-to-day observations of Paris. She repeats the news from the newspapers and describes the photographs, which show that as the Allies advance through Germany, the retreating Germans are mass-executing the deportees: “Ils ont commencé par les évacuer, puis à la dernière minute, ils les ont tués” (14). Some of the images of Germany, however, are exaggerated in her desperate imagination. She imagines the Allied soldiers indifferently marching right past her Robert L. and the tens of thousands of corpses strewn over the roads of Germany: “Sur la route, à côté de lui, passent les armées alliées qui avancent” (14). Back home, the French provisional government and its citizens are already talking of peace and reconstruction: “On parle déjà de l’après paix” (59). They are so busy looking forward to life after the war that they have already begun to forget the innocent victims, some of whom are still being slaughtered in Germany. They certainly do not talk about the millions of Jews who perished:

Ils sont très nombreux, les morts sont vraiment très nombreux. Sept millions de juifs ont été exterminés, transportés en fourgons à bestiaux, et puis gazés dans les chambres à gaz faites à cet effet et puis brûlés dans les fours crématoires faites à cet effet. On ne parle pas encore des juifs à Paris. (60)
Just ten years after the liberation of the camps, Primo Levi wrote a short essay voicing his distress over the forgetting and the silence on the subject of the extermination camps. In his opinion, it should have been “unnecessary to remind readers of the statistics, to remember that this was a massacre on a scale the world had never before seen” (Black Hole 3). Duras felt the need to include the statistics, for this silence continues to this day, and nobody knows exactly how many perished in the camps.

Duras bitterly accuses de Gaulle of only waiting for the official end of the war so that he can focus on his political career. From her viewpoint, he has already forgotten the deportees, many of whom have still not been liberated or accounted for (56). While Duras continues to wait, the people around her have also moved on and forgotten. She watches in disbelief as the city is once again lit up at night, the restaurants are full, and people now go about their daily business as if nothing ever happened: “Les gens sont dans la rue comme à l’ordinaire, il y a des queues devant les magasins, il y a déjà quelques cerises, c’est pourquoi les femmes attendent” (31).

“La douleur” is as much a statement about the collective amnesia of the Holocaust as it is of the horrific event itself: “La paix apparaît déjà . . . c’est aussi le commencement de l’oubli” (58). In their effort to put the war behind them, the people forget that Duras is still waiting for her husband. They also forget the other deportees that have not returned, and even those who have. By contrasting descriptions of this “return to normalcy” with scenes and statistics of the war, Duras reminds us what it is that the Parisians are forgetting. She alternates between comments about the return of the Nuit du Cinéma and staggering statistics

151 The title of the piece written for a Turnin newspaper in 1955 is “Deportees. Anniversary.”

152 Again, this resonates with Barthes’ notion of waiting: “j’attends, et tout l’entour de mon attente est frappé d’irréalité : dans ce café, je regarde les autres qui entrent, papotent, plaisantent, lisent tranquillement : eux, ils n’attendent pas” (48).
on the returning POWs: “Six cent mille juifs ont été arrêtés en France. On dit déjà qu’il en reviendra un sur cent. Il en reviendra donc six mille” (33). By using numbers and hard facts, in addition to referencing newspaper articles, as seen earlier, Duras lends credibility to her testimony for the historical record. Despite being part of traumatic and unreliable memories, the text serves as a record of an event in history and the French national response of “oubli,” led by de Gaulle himself.

Pointing to the fact that the war is not yet over, Duras contrasts the chaos and destruction still occurring in Germany with the efforts of reorganization taking place in Paris. City officials are already planning municipal elections, even though many POWs and deportees have not yet returned (41). Duras accuses de Gaulle of pushing forth the elections and advancing his own political agenda, while they leave their political prisoners farther behind: “De Gaulle n’a jamais parlé de ses déportés politiques qu’en troisième lieu, après avoir parlé de son Front d’Afrique du Nord” (41). With this statement, we see how even before the war’s official end, de Gaulle had already begun to construct his war myth of a glorious, military victory led by himself. Through him, and later his memoirs, the cult of masculinity and of the hero prevails.

We must remember, however, that because of its unavoidable bias, political ideology brings fiction into historical discourses. Historiography can also be literature, as Michel de

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153 With the repatriation of POWs just under way, these men would apparently be disenfranchised in this new government. Ironically, in a 1944 address to POWs still captive in Germany, Henri Frenay, the appointed Minister of POWs and Deportees, pledged that they would be part of the reconstruction: “[Le gouvernement] sait et il veut que vous soyez, dans la reconstruction de la France, l’une des assises fondamentales sans laquelle rien de définitif et de grand ne pourrait être conçu. Vous serez donc mes camarades, présents à la bataille, présents à la victoire, présents à la reconstruction” (Combat 153).

154 According to André Rauch, beginning with Napoleon’s creation of the national army, and lasting through the entire nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the soldier has been the epitome of masculinity, virility, and heroism. See specifically Chapter 2 of Le premier sexe: mutations et crise de l’identité masculine.
Certeau demonstrated in *L’écriture de l’histoire* (1975). De Gaulle’s bias is apparent to Duras. She also accuses him of only addressing himself to the political right, and of bleeding people of their strength in order to mold complacent, faithful Gaullists. Duras minces no words and directly names de Gaulle numerous times. She criticizes his policy, and how he interprets French history since 1870 with a right-wing bias. He clearly ignores the massive engagement of the political left and their great contribution to the Liberation of France, and then basically cuts them out of his post-war government, save a few token positions to placate them. But most repulsive to Duras is how de Gaulle refuses to validate the experience of the deportees and their families. Duras very sarcastically repeats de Gaulle’s words, calling them criminal. “Le trois avril De Gaulle a dit cette phrase criminelle: ‘Les jours de pleurs sont passés. Les jours de gloire sont revenus’” (41). She points out how, in his attempt to put any negative part of the history behind them so as not to weaken his own political position, he refuses to speak of the deportees:

De Gaulle ne parle pas des camps de concentration, c’est éclatant à quel point il n’en parle pas, à quel point il répugne manifestement à intégrer la douleur du peuple dans la victoire, cela de peur d’affaiblir son rôle à lui. (42)

While many French men and women also become complacent in this collective forgetting of the camps and deportees, Duras bitterly blames de Gaulle for orchestrating this massive repression. This anti-Gaullist discourse and the bringing to light of taboo issues such as the concentration camps is not necessarily feminine, but it is common to many of the women’s memoirs published in the 1980s, a time when the historical discussion was changing. We cannot be sure whether Duras originally documented these comments in 1945, as she observed and felt them, or whether she added them in 1985, at the time of publication.

155 De Certeau argues that all historical interpretations are subject to the author’s system of beliefs, references, and biases. These inevitably infiltrate and shape the historical data and its analysis. The interpretation/writing process thus takes on a literary and even fictional dimension.
Regardless, they express the views of a 1945 wife of a political deportee on historical amnesia. Duras’ actions and writing, then, are of resistance, not only for her fight against Nazi-perpetrated death, but also in her refusal of Gaullist-imposed silence.

There is one other official that Duras holds personally responsible for the disregard of deportees—ironically, he is the minister of POWs, deportees and refugees, Henri Frenay. Duras describes him during scenes at the Orsay as a politician more concerned with his own image and apparently out of touch with the deportees and their real needs. Time and again, she questions his sincerity and his policy, blatantly accusing him of letting the deportees die in Germany: “il a laissé fusiller. Maintenant, jusqu’au dernier camp de concentration libéré il y aura des fusillés” (36). Duras also holds Frenay personally responsible for her husband’s possible death. In one scenario, Duras imagines Robert L. being shot to death by a German soldier, with Frenay watching on as the German soldier pulls the trigger (36).

The POWs and deportees that return are also somewhat forgotten and ill-treated. Since nobody really understands what they have gone through, rather than treat them humanely and with the understanding and sensitivity that they deserve, de Gaulle’s intelligence branch of the Free French Forces, the BCRA, shuffles them like cattle through the transit centers at the Orsay and the hotel Lutetia. The exhausted returnees are made to wait hours in long lines and pass through various stages of processing, including disinfection.

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156 Henri Frenay, which Duras spells “Fresnay” in “La douleur,” had been the head of the Combat Resistance movement; he was also a staunch anti-communist.

157 In his own memoir, La nuit finira, Frenay cites that 330,000 POWs and deportees had been repatriated by the end of April 1945. He acknowledges this group’s political importance, and claims that the communists, aware of his influence over the POWs, had launched a personal attack on him in order to discredit him in their eyes and to promote hatred of Frenay among the POWs (511).

158 The French knew that in their haste to evacuate the camps and retreat, the Germans were shooting prisoners since there was no time to move them. According to Duras, somebody proposed the idea of sending parachutists into Germany, in advance of the Allied offensive, so as to protect the prisoners until the ground troops arrived; but Frenay rejected this idea due to political jurisdiction, and in the end, he did nothing (35-6).
Then, they are basically interrogated for information on the Nazis. This almost resembles the conditions under which they left, and “[t]he structure which ‘welcomes’ the returning prisoners is unpleasantly similar to that of the camps they left: authority, organisation, and regulations cover panic and horror” (Noetinger 69).

Duras presents the arrival of POWs like a movie or a theatrical show. A physical barrier separates the POWs from their audience. The first tier is the group of POW wives, who start shouting and applauding as soon as they see the trucks carrying the POWs driving up to the Orsay. The men file into the station, dazed and confused at the commotion, as women shout out names to them. There is a second set of spectators who are not actually waiting for anyone; they are just there for the show. You can tell these people apart from the wives because they do not participate in the clapping and shouting. Plus, they stand a bit further back, so as to take in the entire spectacle. Some onlookers are there out of morbid curiosity, but others are well aware that this is history in the making: “Beaucoup de gens qui n’attendent personne viennent aussi à la Gare d’Orsay pour voir le spectacle . . . ça ne se reproduira peut-être plus jamais” (23-4). This scene reflects the chaotic and absurd post-war atmosphere, where nothing is as the national models say it should be. The waiting wives are not the pillars of strength and joy that Vichy had projected them to be, and the confused and weary POWs are the opposite of de Gaulle’s military heroes.

Repatriation was especially hard on the POWs. They had been away the longest, since the beginning of the war, and had no understanding of what life had been like in France under the Occupation: “[it] took a while to realize that civilians had also been through a bitter struggle. [The POWs’] food parcels had often led them to believe that circumstances had not
been too bad” (Diamond 158). More importantly, the POWs had been made to feel like the heroes of France by the Vichy government; yet they did not return to a hero’s welcome:

To believe Vichy was to expect to be greeted as a hero. But in the France of 1945, the public viewed the resisters, and not the prisoners of war, as the heroes; resistance fighters had liberated France while the POWs waited in their camps. (Fishman, We Will Wait 154-155)

According to Duras, they were instead treated like outcasts, herded through the transit stations, interrogated as if they were guilty of something, and soon forgotten by de Gaulle and the French people.

“La douleur” raises an interesting question—who are Duras’ heroes? Certainly not de Gaulle, as he is in his own memoirs and in the narratives of other leaders of the Resistance such as Frenay and Claude Bourdet from Combat. For Duras, is it herself—the martyred wife who fights off death? Is it Dionys—the one who keeps her together, gives her hope and rushes off to save her husband? Or is Robert L. a hero simply because he survives the war? In “La douleur,” we will not find the typical hero common to the masculine resistance narrative, such as the soldier or active combatant who represents absolute virility and masculinity. In her story, the common people, the wretched people, are the heroes. Indeed there are no heroes at all, and everyone is portrayed in an ambiguous light. Those, such as de Gaulle, who should be portrayed as heroes according to the official history, are actually public enemy number one. In one of the stories of Part II, “Albert des Capitales,” the résistante, Thérèse, is not the heroine that she should be. In this story, based on actual events and where Thérèse is supposedly Duras, she becomes the torturer. Thus, Duras blurs the moral lines between the Resistance and the Nazis. We see how the “heroes” of the Resistance
can also torture like the Nazis. In most masculine memoirs of WWII, like that of de Gaulle, there is usually no such ambiguity. Men’s stories have honorable heroes, with clear convictions, who battle an obvious enemy. In Duras’ vision of the war, there are no standard heroes, and no clear delineation between good and evil, ally and enemy. Whereas Duras sees herself violently cut off from the Parisian society who has moved on and no longer waits, the one unlikely person that she identifies with is the mother of a young, dying German soldier. That woman also waits in extreme anguish for someone who will not return. The one thing that is clear to Duras is that there is no one Enemy—except the war itself.

Regardless of who is a hero and who is the enemy, one thing common to all is the isolation. Isolation pervades “La douleur,” and it is perhaps what makes the suffering intolerable. “War destroys illusions . . . it forces the individual to face the unbreakable loneliness of human beings, a theme constantly present in Duras’ work” (Noetinger 68). In Duras’ world, the heroes are all alone. They are not backed by the nation; they have been abandoned by it. Nor are they connected in their humanity, as Robert Antelme argues; they are rejected by it. In “La douleur,” Robert L. has been abandoned by the nation and is already forgotten. Allied troops and his fellow countrymen march right past his body, indifferently. Duras also imagines his corpse cut off from the rest of the dead in the mass grave: “A travers les squelettes de Buchenwald, le sien . . . Des milliers . . . et lui. Lui qui est . . . détaché pour moi seule, . . . complètement distinct, seul” (14). But even she detaches from her husband. Death for Duras does not mean a reunion with Robert L., but simply the cessation of the waiting and pain that she has become: “En mourant je ne le rejoins pas, je cesse de

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159 Later, during the Algerian war, the French will in fact become the torturers. Among others’, the writings of Benjamin Stora, Franz Fanon, and Assia Djebar expose this torture, as does the film, The Battle of Algiers (1965).
l’attendre” (15). If she no longer waits for him, then who will? The deportees have already been forgotten in France. True, there are the other waiting wives, but we have already seen how they are kept at bay, even physically by a barrier, because they challenge the construction of an official history of the war years which is trying to erase any reference to the camps.

In Écrire (1993), Duras includes the story of a twenty-year-old British pilot who was shot down and killed on the very last day of WWII. He was the very last death of the war. With this story, Duras points out the senselessness of any death caused by war, and the tragedy in all death, especially of young people:

Ici, on est très loin de l’identité. C’est un mort, une mort de vingt ans qui ira jusqu’à la fin des temps. C’est tout. Le nom, ce n’est plus la peine : c’était un enfant. . . . N’importe quelle mort, c’est la mort. N’importe quel enfant de vingt ans est un enfant de vingt ans. Ce n’est plus tout à fait la mort de n’importe qui. Ça reste la mort d’un enfant. (Écrire

By leaving the twenty-year-old pilot in anonymity, and making his death representative of that of all young people, Duras ties all of the war’s young victims into this one. He could be any young victim; he is every young victim: the deportee who could very well be twenty years old but who is so wasted away that he looks like a “vieillard” (Douleur 28), the many other young victims of the Holocaust who did not survive, or the sixteen-year-old German soldier languishing on the quay (Douleur 56). In this figure, Duras sees her own dead baby, or her younger brother, who also died during the war: “Mon petit frère était mort pendant la guerre du Japon” (Écrire 74). To her, deaths are all one and the same during war, and they are all unbearable. Her brother died “sans sépulture aucune. Jeté dans une fosse commune par dessus les derniers corps. Et c’est une chose si terrible à penser, si atroce,

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160 Again, she stresses the waiting. This topic is tabou in historical discourses, yet appears in literature and fiction, which is sometimes said to be more realistic than the non-fiction.
qu’on ne peut pas la supporter, et dont on ne sait, avant de l’avoir vécue, à quel point. Ce n’est pas le mélange des corps, pas du tout, c’est la disparition de ce corps dans la masse des autres corps” (Écrire 74). Duras is so traumatized by her personal tragedies that they all blend together. In “La douleur,” it will be Robert L. who has a “mort sans sépulture,” but at first she will keep his body apart from the others in the ditch, so as not to lose him. Yet, later she unites all of the dead in a common grave: the 400,000 German communists who perished between 1933 and 1938 with the millions of Jews. In her narratives, they all belong to the same family: “ces squelettes si extraordinairement identiques, ce sont ceux d’une famille européenne” (Douleur 57). “La mort de n’importe qui c’est la mort entière. N’importe qui c’est tout le monde” (Écrire 78). It is not only in Germany that these atrocities have happened, but in Europe: “C’est en Europe que ça se passe. C’est là qu’on brûle les juifs, des millions” (Douleur 56). Duras claims that, because it happened in Europe, all Europeans share equally in the suffering and in the guilt: “dans ces fosses nous avons notre part” (Douleur 57). Europeans have been both victims of the Nazis, and their accomplices, at least indirectly through their indifference: “Nous sommes de la race de ceux qui sont brûlés dans les crématoires et des gazés de Maïdanek, nous sommes aussi de la race des nazis” (Douleur 57). One might recognize in this shocking statement the philosophy of Robert Antelme or Primo Levi, who concluded that both the victims and the Nazis were part of the same human race, regardless of the victimization of the one by the other. While Antelme’s tone seemed less judgmental from the very beginning, Levi’s still had an accusatory ring ten years later: “we are part of the same human family to which our murderers belonged” (Black Hole 4). Yet, Duras seems not so much angry with the murderers as with their accomplices, who turned a blind eye to the atrocities, and through their inaction, allowed this evil first to take
place and then to be forgotten. Ultimately, through their indifference, the majority of Europeans let this atrocity happen to its own kind: “[f]or evil to come into being, the actions of a few are not sufficient; it is also necessary that the vast majority stand aside, indifferent” (Todorov 139).

In “La douleur,” Duras documents, in ghastly detail, the unbearable reality that many French people refused to confront after the war: the millions of people shot to death, gassed, burned alive, starved and tortured in the concentration camps, not in Germany, but in Europe. All of these victims are represented in the descriptions of Robert L., whom people literally turn away from, because the horror of the war—and their guilt—is too much to bear. The result of the Europeans’ collaboration with the Nazis, or in the least, their complacency, is etched on Robert L.’s body. He is the Holocaust incarnate. Since there are no words to describe it, Duras relates this horror the only way she can—with guttural screams, with silences, through statistics of the millions dead, with images of Paris and Germany, and by an almost clinical description of Robert L.’s decomposing body and subsequent recovery. The chaos of April 1945, the anguish of the wait for her husband’s uncertain return, and their mutual battle to literally survive, is reflected in Duras’ chaotic, traumatized writing. Nevertheless, besides physically and emotionally battling the greatest evil ever experienced, her willingness to record what she witnessed, despite the constraints of language and of the psyche to express such horror, is yet another example of a woman’s courageous resistance in the Second World War. Duras’ journal serves as both a historical reference, representative of the families of the millions of deportees, and as a counter-history to the official Gaullist version of post-Liberation Paris.
CHAPTER 4
CETTE EXIGEANTE HUMANITÉ DE LUCIE AUBRAC

The personal writings of Claire Chevrillon and Marguerite Duras have illustrated that there are multiple versions of wartime experience. The realities that each of these women lived during the Occupation were unique and different, depending on their individual circumstances. Still, their narratives are generally classified as feminine for portraying a view of war and resistance that focuses less on the public history of battles and great events and more on their private lives and daily fight for survival. These two authors have woven their personal stories into the public events, showing that the two realms are in fact inseparable.

In their narratives, Claire Chevrillon and Marguerite Duras describe the fight against the Germans; but rather than limit their description of resistance to the usual military combat found in history books and resistance narratives by men, they show that theirs—and most women’s—is a daily, ordinary resistance. The Nazis are certainly represented as the enemy, but rather than glorify warfare and resistance against this traditional enemy, as do typical masculine resistance memoirs, these two women writers show that the greatest enemy of all is war itself, for all of the death and destruction that it inflicts on humanity. In their realistic visions of war, everyone loses, even the victor.

Ils partiront dans l’ivresse, by Lucie Aubrac, is similar and yet quite different from the narratives of Claire Chevrillon and Marguerite Duras, in both message and form. The format of Lucie Aubrac’s account is similar to that of the other two in that it is also an autobiographical account, written in the first person, as a diary. In reality, it is a reconstructed
diary written in 1984; however, Lucie Aubrac also chose this genre because it renders the historical moment more immediate. Through a present-tense narration in the first person, the reader is able to directly witness the wartime events that impacted Aubrac’s life. The journal format also allows for a more detailed, daily account which gives a better picture of what everyday life, survival and resistance were really like for her in particular, and for women in general, during the Occupation. According to Naomi Schor, the detail of the everyday has long been associated with the “domestic sphere of social life presided over by women” (4).

Lucie Aubrac’s journal chronologically recounts the last nine and most critical months of her life in Occupied France, from May 1943 until February 1944. During much of this time, her husband, Raymond Aubrac, was in the custody of Klaus Barbie, the notorious torturer of Lyon. Having been arrested with Jean Moulin, Aubrac was condemned to death. After Lucie Aubrac and her combat group rescued him, the couple and their toddler son spent the last three to four months in hiding, wanted by the Gestapo.

The period covered by the journal also coincides exactly with the nine months of Lucie Aubrac’s second pregnancy, although it actually begins with a flash-forward to the birth of her second child in a London hospital. Physically and emotionally exhausted from the birth, she cries into her pillow. At first a bit disoriented, she then recalls the labor that has taken place overnight, under bomb attacks. To her screaming with every contraction, the

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161 Aubrac was the Resistance name for Raymond Samuel. Lucie Samuel’s Resistance alias was Catherine. After the war, Lucie and Raymond Samuel kept the Resistance name of Aubrac.

162 Jean Moulin, the most well-known hero and symbol of the Resistance, was Charles de Gaulle’s delegate in France. As of March 1943, he was responsible for uniting the individual Resistance movements all over France under the Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR). He was captured near Lyon in June 1943 as a result of betrayal, tortured by Klaus Barbie, and died on a train during deportation to a concentration camp.

163 The first entry is a “flash-forward” to February 12, 1944; the second entry of May 14, 1943 takes readers back nine months, to the beginning of the events; and subsequent entries chronologically work their way forward to February 12, 1944.
English nurse responds, “‘Shut up, it’s the war’ . . . ‘Voilà quatre ans qu’on travaille sous les bombes. Un peu de sang froid, madame, nous n’avons jamais vu une femme comme vous’” (15). The nurse’s contempt for what she perceives as weak and cowardly feminine behavior is ironic, given what we know about Lucie Aubrac. If we did not know better, the apparent weakness and emotion of this scene might lead us to believe that this diary will be a record of the fear, pain, and suffering of a woman during WWII, much like that of Marguerite Duras.

The diary format, an absent (imprisoned) husband, the exact correlation of the diary to the pregnancy, and a detailed description of the uniquely feminine experience of childbirth all suggest feminine wartime writing. Family and motherhood are central to Lucie Aubrac’s story. Hers is undeniably the story of a woman in Occupied France; it highlights the private life, the quotidian, and her daily existence and struggle to protect her family.

Yet, what do we make of Lucie Aubrac’s glorification of resistance activity including her own daring, heroic action? In both form and content, Ils partiront dans l’ivresse also breaks from what is traditionally considered a feminine account of war. In fact, it shares certain qualities with the war memoirs of Charles de Gaulle, since they both aim to portray a strong, active resistance. The language, the narratability, and many of the themes of the journal often resemble those of the masculine non-fiction war story, which is said to be well-organized, coherent and focused on the historical/political events and the action of combat. Lucie Aubrac’s story has a logical, chronological progression of events between its clearly delineated beginning (May 1943) and ending (February 1944). In addition to recounting her personal experience and professional life, she infuses her journal entries with lengthy descriptions of leaders of the Resistance and historical/political explanations meant to
complete her story and ensure its coherence. Alan Pedley considers de Gaulle’s more than forty written portraits of the statesmen, politicians, diplomats and military leaders with whom he had dealings one of the most interesting historical and literary features of the war memoirs (154-5). Like de Gaulle, who uses dialogue to add life to these personalities (Pedley 154), Lucie Aubrac also recreates conversations between herself and others. Her narrative also flows with information about her activities and dealings in the Resistance.

The diary format allows Aubrac to recount precise memories of her experience with the Resistance, Jean Moulin, and Klaus Barbie, without being obligated to write a formal history of the Resistance in the academic perspective and language of a historian (L. Aubrac, Liberté 195). Yet precision and detail are important to her defense of the Aubracs and the memory of the Resistance. Lucie Aubrac’s language is rich with detail; it is coherent, straightforward, and more accessible to the general public than that of Duras, a writer by profession, who uses the poetic devices of exaggeration, repetition, breaks, and silences to amplify the unnamable horror of the war. Whereas trauma causes repetition and a lack of words in the language of Duras, words flow smoothly and abundantly from Lucie Aubrac.

These explanations often take the form of a flashback and are visibly distinguishable by italics. This device and the past-tense narration interrupt the current time of the journal, since the events described occurred outside of the scope of the particular day being narrated. These passages, then, appear to be the voice of the present-day author who provides additional information and commentary in order to make the narrative more complete and coherent for the reader. The flashbacks offer a variety of information, although they most often summarize events of the Resistance, such as the creation of Libération-Sud (133), or the arrest of important leaders in June 1943 (80). The passages describe resistance leaders, praising both their leadership and human qualities (132), but they also mention ordinary people in resistance, such as a mother-daughter team who printed the clandestine newspaper Libération-Nord and housed résistants (46).

In The Vichy Syndrome, Henry Rousso includes a table which illustrates that Ils partiront dans l’ivresse outsold books by historians such as Paxton and Azéma in terms of average sales per year. In just two years (1984-85) Aubrac’s book sold 29,374 copies compared to 45,072 paperback copies of Paxton’s La France de Vichy sold over a twelve-year period (1974-85). The average sales per year were 14,687 and 3,756 respectively. According to Rousso, this statistic demonstrates that “the public prefers firsthand accounts to scholarly reconstructions” (277).
She, too, has suffered a traumatic experience, yet her narrative is different from traumatic writing. There is no silence, no loss of memory or language that makes narration impossible for her. In fact, compared to the bare and barely readable passages of “La douleur” that leave Duras’ trauma and loss exposed, Lucie Aubrac’s rich, descriptive and coherent passages reflect the abundance of her experience. Unlike Duras, Lucie Aubrac does not dwell on death, despair or the negative aspects of war. Instead, more like de Gaulle, she lifts up the French Resistance and French victory through the language of confidence, hope, optimism, and victory. Duras’ apocalyptic vision of the world is described in the most pessimistic and painful terms in “La douleur,” whereas in Ils partiront dans l’ivresse, Lucie Aubrac celebrates life and demonstrates her faith in the return to a happy future through language and images which are equally full of optimism, and are at times humorous and joyful.

According to Jean-Claude Martin’s study of de Gaulle’s memoirs, optimistic and affirming language is plentiful in the master masculine war narrative: “C’est souvent sous la plume de de Gaulle que nous trouvons les mots espoir et espérance” (98). Masculine resistance narratives generally use this positive language to glorify the Resistance, assure a French victory, and even glorify death as heroic sacrifice. The men who write about the war in France during the post-war era often project this entirely positive image of a victorious France because they are aware that they are writing for History, or in de Gaulle’s case, creating a legend. Like de Gaulle, Lucie Aubrac sees the war as a contest to be won. She, too, has faith in her country’s ability to triumph. Through the positive images and reassuring

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166 “La douleur” (in quotes) refers specifically to the journal, which is Part I of La Douleur.

167 This is mostly typical of war memoirs such as de Gaulle’s that attempt to glorify the Resistance and the ultimate military victory. Fictional war novels, often more realistic than non-fiction, demystify this war myth by revealing the chaotic and destructive nature of war.
language of *Ils partiront dans l’ivresse*, Lucie Aubrac delivers a message of hope and confidence in a French victory at the hands of the Resistance.

In a September 12, 1944 speech, de Gaulle evokes the fighting spirit of the French people and their refusal to accept defeat: “Jamais la masse des Français ne tint la défaite pour acquise et jamais nos drapeaux ne furent absents des champs de bataille” (*Discours* 445). In fact, from the very first page of the first volume of his memoirs, de Gaulle foreshadows France’s victory by referring to the Paris monuments as “evidence of [French] national success” (*Call to Honour* 4). With this optimistic language of success and terms such as faith, hope, strength and a sure defeat of the enemy, de Gaulle describes his own confidence in the growing and maturing Free France based in London, as well as the public’s confidence and admiration of this External Resistance:

> Everyone, assured now in his faith and in his hope, had his eyes fixed on the outside world and was ambitious to see our strength emerge from its distant cradle, grow by fresh rallyings, strike at the enemy, [and] draw near to France. (*Call to Honour* 166)

Lucie Aubrac’s determination parallels de Gaulle’s. Whereas he declares, “If I live, I will fight, wherever I must, as long as I must, until the enemy is defeated” (*Call to Honour* 39), she vows to her husband: “nous nous engagerons l’un et l’autre, jusque au bout, et pour gagner” (*Ivresse* 72). Whether referring to her personal mission of saving her husband, her resistance work of rescuing imprisoned comrades, or the war’s outcome, Lucie Aubrac always shows a competitive and winning attitude, often using words such as “gagner” (168), “nous avons gagné” (191), “victoire” (134), and expressions of confidence regarding the missions: “je ne doute pas de la réussite” (34). Many women’s wartime narratives focus on how they painstakingly make it through the day. Marguerite Duras and Claire Chevrillon think more in terms of wanting the war or the hardship to be over. Duras just wants the
waiting to end; she cannot see past her painful situation enough to hope for something positive, much less to think in terms of victory. Lucie Aubrac, on the other hand, does not just want the war to be over, she wants to win it.

Besides the optimistic outlook, Lucie Aubrac somewhat shares de Gaulle’s tendency to portray himself as a great leader who took charge and earned everyone’s support and admiration. Usually, women’s memoirs or journals tend to be self-effacing. This is certainly the case in “La douleur,” and to some extent, even Claire Chevillon focused more on others than on herself: her POW brother-in-law, her sister and the children, her parents, her deported Jewish cousins and her cellmates in prison. Like de Gaulle, Lucie Aubrac is the central figure of her journal.

However, Lucie Aubrac’s journal differs fundamentally from de Gaulle’s war memoirs in several ways. While they both offer a résistancialiste version of the events of WWII, they differ greatly in their idea of who constitutes this Resistance that will procure the victory for France. The key player in de Gaulle’s narrative is the military External Resistance under his command. Whenever de Gaulle mentions the Internal Resistance, he mostly refers to the maquisards, since to him, resistance is synonymous with military action or combat (Unity 283). De Gaulle does credit the farmers and villagers who supplied and carried messages to the maquisards; yet, the comment intended to honor them serves more to glorify the maquis: “Fiercely, silently, the French peasantry aided these courageous men” (Unity 283). De Gaulle keeps these people shrouded in silence and anonymity, whereas Lucie Aubrac brings them to light through the characterization of the people she meets and who help her in her journey to freedom. According to Lucie Aubrac, the true Resistance is the Internal Resistance, the very mass of French people whom de Gaulle claims does not accept
defeat. Among these people are military men, political leaders and ordinary people, men and
women alike. Through the anecdotes in her text, Lucie Aubrac praises the extraordinary
heroism of ordinary people and also portrays the great leaders of the Resistance as ordinary
men. De Gaulle, on the other hand, sees the leaders of the Resistance only as soldiers or
politicians: “Jean Moulin was to die for France, like so many good soldiers” (Call to Honour
270) and Pierre Brossolette was a “prodigal of ideas [who] could rise to the highest planes of
political thought” (Call to Honour 274). De Gaulle’s attention is often fixed on the power
struggles and discord between him and other members of the French Forces or the Allied
leaders. Rather than focus on resistance leaders’ political posturing, Lucie Aubrac describes
the Resistance as a union of family and friends committed to one another and to a free
France. Her narrative stresses the cooperative nature of resistance and the combined effort at
all levels of society that it takes to win a war. Lucie Aubrac portrays herself as part of a
larger group—with her husband, her combat group, her resistance movement, de Gaulle’s
team by way of Moulin, and her country.

Despite the parallels between the narratives of Lucie Aubrac and Charles de Gaulle—
the glorification of the Resistance, the positive language and optimism, the completeness and
coherence of the account—the greatest difference still lies in the importance that Lucie
Aubrac places on her personal life. Contrary to de Gaulle, who leaves out any reference to his
personal life, save a few incidental remarks, Lucie Aubrac’s journal focuses as much on her
daily family life in all its mundane detail as it does on her official resistance activities. This is
in part because her personal mission and her resistance mission overlap: saving her husband
means saving a high-ranking resistance leader. But many other aspects of private life are
represented in her journal: caring for her child, the struggle to find food, teaching, snapshots
of daily life in Lyon, and the personal camaraderie between résistants. While her narrative centers on her own story, she also takes an outward glance at her world, shining the spotlight on everyday life and regular people in Occupied France. In this respect, Lucie Aubrac accomplishes something that Charles de Gaulle is unable to do: give a realistic depiction of wartime France and of the resistance fought by the regular people who comprised the Internal Resistance.

Lucie Aubrac’s wartime experience was indeed complex and multi-faceted. Her wartime journal accordingly recounts her experience as a wife, mother, schoolteacher, and résistante. We have already begun to see that this narrative cannot be easily classified. It is unique in that it fits neither the masculine nor the feminine stereotype. In fact, we shall see how it fits both categories at the same time. Although Lucie Aubrac’s journal exhibits qualities associated with masculine war memoirs such as de Gaulle’s, it is also different for its focus on her private life, which is considered a trait of feminine writing. Yet, we shall see how Lucie Aubrac’s narrative is almost the antithesis of that of Marguerite Duras, who is often considered the feminine writer par excellence.

The focus on death, despair and destruction commonly associated with feminine war narratives is prevalent in Duras. In sharp contrast to Duras, who drowns in images of death, deprivation and despair, Lucie Aubrac reflects images of life and hope. In “La douleur,” Duras has given up all hope and the will to fight, first with the death of her child, and then with the loss of her husband to deportation. She admits that without a child to care for, she, herself, has no good reason to survive. Lucie Aubrac’s children, on the other hand, motivate her through the difficult times; they give her the strength, the courage, and the determination to keep fighting. Lucie Aubrac not only fights for her family’s basic survival, but she is also
inspired to defeat the enemy in order to make France safe again for her children’s future. If at any time her courage and determination falter, all she has to do is imagine what would become of her children under the Nazi reeducation programs. Lucie Aubrac quickly chases away these rare negative thoughts with yet more forceful determination and commitment to fight to the end. Her children represent the hope and promise of a future, one which does not exist in Duras’ apocalyptic vision. Lucie Aubrac literally refers to her unborn child as “le bébé de l’amour et de l’espoir” (249).

Ironically, Duras is the one who has witnessed the end of the war, yet she still cannot salvage any hope after what she has seen. War itself is a traumatic experience, and like Duras, Lucie Aubrac also suffers the additional trauma of having her husband arrested and in the hands of the Nazis. Before learning that he is condemned to death and that Jean Moulin is already dead, she, too, suffers the uncertainty of his location and his fate. For two months, she visits the morgue regularly to see if he has been killed. To this trauma, we must add the constant anxiety of having to provide for and protect a child, and the stress of other obligations such as teaching and resistance duties, all of this during a time in which simple survival is nothing simple. But rather than give up in the face of this adversity, rather than give in to the fear of what horrors the future might hold for her children, in the height of war and of her own personal drama, Lucie Aubrac still finds the strength to continue, and the faith to believe in the end of the war and a return to normalcy. To Duras’ “je crois qu’il n’y a pas beaucoup d’espoir à avoir” (La Douleur 37), Aubrac responds, “Cette guerre ne va pas durer toujours! Nous aurons de nombreuses années de bonheur et d’autres enfants!”(48).

168 In the June 21 entry, Lucie Aubrac reacts to a June 20, 1943 BBC radio broadcast by former Paris deputy and communist Fernand Grenier. In the broadcast, Grenier refers to the tortured cries of Parisian mothers whose children are stripped from them to be sent to reeducation camps in the Reich.
Indeed, Lucie Aubrac’s journal reveals the positive attitude that results from her strength, determination, and confidence, all of which are generally considered masculine qualities. In her writing, Lucie Aubrac projects this strength and positivity through a clear, precise, and energetic language that reflects a “can-do” winning attitude, action, and control over self and all situations. Again, this energy, action, and self-determination are typically categorized as masculine traits. Yet, for Lucie Aubrac, it means just the opposite. The very day that Raymond comes home from a two-month prison stay, in May 1943, Lucie Aubrac practically wills her second child into being. She has wanted this child for some time, despite the war: “je sais déjà : nous aurons ce deuxième enfant que je souhaitais depuis des mois” (18). This desire to bring yet another child into a war-torn and dangerous world, and to actually willfully do so, epitomize the optimism and the resistant character of Lucie Aubrac: “The unborn child acts as a gesture of defiance. For Lucie Aubrac, the wife of a Jew, having a child in such conditions represents a victorious act of resistance” (Gorrara, “Reviewing Gender” 150). While Duras despairs and cannot see an end to the misery of war, Lucie Aubrac, through this defiant gesture of conceiving a child in 1943 France, demonstrates her faith that the Resistance will drive the Nazis out of France and that France will once again be a free and safe place to raise children. Thus, the child growing in her becomes a physical manifestation of the life, the hope, and the will that drive Lucie Aubrac to resist and which are reflected in her diary.

Whether a result of strength of character, naïveté, or plain foolishness, Lucie Aubrac is incapable of negativity and does not accept defeat of any kind: “Je n’ai jamais cru les mauvaises nouvelles, jamais accepté le pire, façon peut-être primaire d’exorciser le malheur, mais aussi formidable atout pour être, envers et contre tous, gagnante” (132). Even when an
operation fails, she does not consider herself defeated and finds a way to turn the negative into a positive learning experience.\textsuperscript{169} In her autobiographical book, \textit{Cette exigeante liberté} (1997),\textsuperscript{170} Lucie Aubrac admits, “Le risque était présent à chaque instant dans notre vie, mais j’étais follement optimiste et confiante” (85). Unlike Duras, Lucie Aubrac does not entertain the possibility of her husband not returning. She refuses to think in the conditional; she does not accept the term “if”: “superstitieux, [Maurice] use du ‘si’ que moi je refuse” (Ivresse 170).\textsuperscript{171}

Lucie Aubrac suffered traumatic events; yet, she did not allow herself to become a victim of the trauma, and her writing does not exhibit any of the signs of traumatic writing that are evident in Duras’ journal. Instead, Lucie Aubrac’s journal is intact and coherent, as is she, for the most part. In “La douleur,” we see Duras growing more and more desperate with every day that her husband does not return. By April 1945, she has been waiting for his return for almost a year, while many POWs and deportees have already returned. The unbearable waiting, the uncertainty of Robert L.’s fate, and Duras’ helplessness, lead her to the brink of madness. Duras’ traumatized and delirious state is appropriately represented by the chaotic writing of the journal. The content and form of Lucie Aubrac’s journal, on the other hand, suggest that she did not experience the same psychosis as Duras. At times in her journal, Lucie Aubrac reveals her human weakness. She has a few breakdowns, but each time

\textsuperscript{169} In this case, she is referring to an initial attempt to liberate Raymond on September 21, one which was aborted in progress due to a miscalculation. This was actually a fortunate turn of events, for the group then realized that the German soldiers riding in the back with the prisoners could have immediately opened fire on the prisoners. This realization led to certain adjustments in their plan, which was carried out on the next opportunity a month later.

\textsuperscript{170} This book, in the form of an interview with Corinne Bouchoux, is very much an autobiography. It spans Lucie Aubrac’s entire life, although, naturally, it focuses on the war years. Some of the content of \textit{Ils partiront dans l’ivresse} is repeated and commented throughout the interview.

\textsuperscript{171} Maurice David, Raymond’s cousin, a Lyon shopkeeper and member of their resistance movement.
it is only momentary, as she fights off any feelings of despair and regains her composure. Lucie Aubrac’s behavior falls more in line with what is conventionally expected of a man than of a woman. For Duras, the pain is so great that her narrating subject detaches from itself for self-preservation and survival. The pain is also great for Lucie Aubrac, yet she manages to overcome it. She first breaks down on the night of Raymond’s June 1943 arrest with Jean Moulin. When the shock of the day’s events and the uncertainty of her husband’s fate catch up with her, Lucie Aubrac admits, “je craque enfin. Je peux pleurer, pleurer à n’en plus finir. Épuisée, je m’endors de chagrin” (78). Yet she manages to sleep a full night and get back to work the next day, finding out where the authorities are holding the prisoners and participating in talks of a possible rescue attempt with Jean Moulin’s secretary. When Lucie Aubrac hears directly from Barbie that Raymond will be executed, she keeps her composure while she exits Gestapo headquarters and crosses the street. Even then, she does not fall apart like Duras. While Duras succumbs to her pain to the point of madness, Lucie Aubrac controls her emotions, something considered unconventional for women. Instead of letting the pain grow and stifle her, she literally stifles it:

J’ai mordu au sang mon index gauche pour m’empêcher de hurler, traversé la rue et me suis assise sur un banc. Je grondais en serrant les dents, pour que le bruit ne sorte pas de ma bouche. Je ne bougeais pas, mes larmes coulaient le long de mes joues. (87)

From that moment on, every time that Lucie Aubrac entertains a negative thought, she will immediately crush it with some offensive of her own. If the Nazis kill her husband, they do not, by extension, kill her, as in Duras’ case. Instead, they strengthen her conviction and force her to strike back: “[Raymond] est condamné. Ils vont le tuer. Maintenant il faut que je me venge” (94). Another night, at her sister’s house in Vichy, “[l]a nuit commence par des sanglots, des désespoirs, des révoltes,” but she immediately rejects the despair: “Je
n’accepte pas mon impuissance” (95). Actually, in a rash statement to her sister, she admits that she does not want to go on living without Raymond. But she will not simply fade away with her husband, like Duras. Instead, she will take control of the situation and strike back with even greater force. She imagines herself on a heroic suicide mission, taking with her as many German police as possible:

Dans mon imagination, je me vois déjà dans une opération suicide, mourant dans l’apothéose d’un carnage de policiers allemands. Pourquoi pas les faire sauter tous, dans l’École de santé ? Je sais où est leur chef, et je ne me dégonflerai pas. (96)172

Lucie Aubrac’s fantasies may also stem from the anguish and uncertainty of waiting, as Barthes model of waiting suggests, but she certainly takes the imagined death of the other to new extremes. Her reactions reinforce the dichotomy between the strong, active masculine hero in her text and the weak, passive feminine victim in that of Duras.

Lucie Aubrac generally refuses to accept her husband’s death, but being realistic, she checks the morgue regularly. On her first visit, she must describe her husband to the coroner. Yet, even in imagining him as a cadaver, she paints the picture of a hero of the Resistance, and not a victim of the Nazis. Duras continually kills her husband with her thoughts, but Lucie Aubrac, believing the power of visualization, refuses to do the same: “j’ai l’impression de le tuer en le décrivant. C’est comme si j’acceptais sa mort” (97). She does not accept her husband’s death. Every night, Lucie Aubrac climbs into bed next to Raymond’s pajamas and catches him up on the day’s events, while in her imagination, Duras climbs into the ditch and lies down next to Robert L.’s cadaver. Duras feels Robert L.’s death beating in her temples,

172 Granted, by the time of Duras’ journal, there are no Germans left in Paris for her to seek vengeance on. But even in the story “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” which takes place before the Liberation, while Duras uses the Gestapo agent for information and later marks him for execution, she is constantly inhibited by the fear of knowing that he really controls her fate.
and succumbs to it. Aubrac, on the other hand, fights the droning in her own head, and picks herself up with a pep talk:

Allongée, les oreilles pleines de bourdonnements, je reprends peu à peu mon calme. Ma fille, tu as trente et un ans, tu as déjà fait face à des situations graves. Cette fois, c’est tragique. Raison de plus pour être d’attaque. (98)

And attack she does—every time!

The greatest difference between Lucie Aubrac’s and Marguerite Duras’ experiences regarding their husbands is that Lucie Aubrac does not spend her days just waiting for Raymond Aubrac to return. Their narratives show that while Duras seems capable of little more than waiting passively by the phone,173 Aubrac quickly grows tired of waiting and moves into action. The more Duras does nothing but wait, the longer the wait feels to her. The prolonged waiting feeds her agony, madness, negativity and hopelessness, all of which paralyze her even further. The inactivity, in turn, stretches the sensation of waiting, and perpetuates the cycle. In short, waiting suspends time for Duras, and she is paralyzed within it. This suspension of time also prolongs Robert L.’s return for her. In contrast, Lucie Aubrac’s constant activity (resistance work, teaching, household duties, etc.) keeps her occupied, gives her less time to despair, and allows time to pass more quickly, also making her husband’s return more imminent. More importantly, her activity gives her a sense of control over the situation, one that Duras cannot experience in her state. Thus, the contrast between the waiting in Duras and its absence in Aubrac is significant in that it reveals the level of control that these women have or feel they have over their circumstances. Duras’ passivity represents a lack of control that Lucie Aubrac never accepts. Each and every time that Raymond is captured, she takes matters into her own hands to rescue him. Had he been

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173 Even in the story, “Monsieur X. dit ici Pierre Rabier,” which takes place in 1944 and during which Robert L. is still in France, Duras constantly waits and depends on the Gestapo agent for updates on her husband’s situation.
en route to Germany, she still would have rescued him: “Si Barbie m’avait dit: ‘. . . Il va partir dans un camp en Allemagne’, je me serais dit . . . il faut que je sache dans quel camp Raymond est interné. Je vais le faire évader!” (L. Aubrac, Liberté 105).

Through the action described in her journal, Lucie Aubrac proves that a woman is equally capable of carrying out resistance activities usually reserved for men, and that they can do more than provide back-office or domestic support services. Yet, the rescues that Lucie Aubrac orchestrates and carries out demonstrate her intelligence, courage, daring, and nerves of steel, all qualities traditionally associated with the masculine hero.

The journal begins with a demonstration of this courage and nerve on Lucie Aubrac’s part. Her husband had been arrested for the second time in March 1943,174 with three other résistants.175 Luckily, he was under a false identity, and the only charge that could be “proven” was a black market charge, which was actually his cover.176 Nevertheless, the prosecutor continually refused to sign Raymond’s temporary release. On May 14th, Lucie Aubrac confesses to her suspecting husband how she has had a hand in his early release, but first she recaps the whole escape plan. Through her use of the first person singular, we see Lucie Aubrac clearly in command, masterminding the plot and taking the lead role among

174 Lucie Aubrac actually rescued her husband three times, the first time being in 1940, when as a soldier in the French army, he was taken prisoner by the Germans. In August 1940, Lucie Aubrac managed to pass her husband some pills that made him sick, along with a change of clothes. He was transferred to a hospital, and with the minimum security, he was able to jump over the hospital wall to escape. Although this first escape is beyond the scope of the nine months of the journal, the author recounts it in one of the informational flashbacks to the reader, since it is the basis for the second rescue plan of May 1943.

175 Also arrested were Serge Ravanel and Maurice Kriegel-Valrimont of Libération-Sud, and François Morin-Forestier of Combat, who was also a leader in the Secret Army. These three were broken out of the Antiquaille hospital on May 24th thanks to Lucie Aubrac’s plan (Ravanel 103-4; R. Aubrac 111-2; Bourdet 224).

176 Raymond Aubrac had a complete set of false papers, including ration tickets, for the alias of François Vallet. He rented a room under this name and kept a small stock of food precisely for his cover as a petty black market dealer.
her Groupe Franc: “j’ai voulu recommencer le coup qui avait permis ton évasion de
prisonnier de guerre . . . pour moi, cette fois, le problème consistait à vous faire transférer en
bloc” (24). Since this rescue attempt was more complicated in terms of logistics and
materials, and required more time to prepare, a rescue by May 14th was impossible, and this
was unacceptable to Lucie Aubrac. Demonstrating great boldness and determination, she
stormed into the collaborating prosecutor’s office and threatened him in the name of de
Gaulle. Fortunately, her bluff worked, and Raymond was released by May 14th.

Lucie Aubrac references de Gaulle in her journal in quite a different manner than
Duras. Although the Aubracs were politically aligned with the left, they, like many
communists of the Resistance (save Duras), backed de Gaulle in his effort to unite all
Frenchmen in their fight. In 1943, he was the uncontested leader of the French Resistance.
Besides this moment in which Lucie Aubrac uses de Gaulle’s authority to threaten the

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177 The Groupes Francs (GF) were the regional militant arms of the resistance movements, specializing in
military action such as sabotage on trains and material depots, attacks on German soldiers, and prison breaks. At
first sporadic, the GF became more organized and multiplied under the Mouvements Unis de la Résistance
(MUR), organized in March 1943 (Ravanel 122, 140).

178 Raymond’s 1940 escape was the basis for this attempt. The detainees would fall ill and be transferred to a
local hospital, where résistants posing as German officers would come to take the prisoners for interrogation.

179 May 14th is the date that the Aubracs declared their love for each other in 1939, and they promised to never
be apart on that date (Ivresse 23).

180 The actual date of Raymond Aubrac’s prison release was May 10. However, to add romantic appeal to the
book, the publisher encouraged Lucie Aubrac to change the date to coincide exactly with this special
anniversary, and to make this the date of the child’s conception. The discrepancy between official records and
this detail of Ils partiront dans l’ivresse are key to the “Caluire Affair” controversy of the 1990s in which Klaus
Barbie claimed that Lucie Aubrac concealed the true date because she and Raymond Aubrac were in contact
with him during the days unaccounted for in her book, and that they were the ones who betrayed Jean Moulin.
For a summary of the controversy, see Claire Gorrara’s “Reviewing Gender and the Resistance: the Case of
Lucie Aubrac.” For a more complete analysis of the Aubrac affair, see François Delpla, Aubrac: les faits et la
calomnie and also Donald Reid, “Resistance and Its Discontents: Affairs, Archives, Avowals, and the Aubracs”
for its relevence to historiography.

181 Although Lucie Aubrac had participated in a communist youth movement, and the Aubracs were leftists,
they were not members of the Communist Party during or after the war. They had close friends in the Party and
worked with communist resistance groups, but they themselves were not officially affiliated with the Party, nor
was Libération-Sud a particularly communist resistance movement (L. Aubrac, Liberté 165-73).
prosecutor, and a couple of instances in which she repeats Barbie’s accusation that Raymond is a Gaullist terrorist, there are actually few references to de Gaulle in the journal. He is mostly mentioned as a sort of stamp of authentication for the representatives with whom the Aubracs come in contact, such as Jean Moulin and the General Delestraint, leader of the unified Secret Army (33, 63). We must also keep in mind that the narratives of Lucie Aubrac and Marguerite Duras portray different time periods. The former captures a moment in time when Lucie Aubrac, the résistante, and de Gaulle still share the same vision of a free France. By the time of Duras’ journal, de Gaulle is already focused on his reconstruction politics and his personal aspirations to lead the nation. He has already forgotten the immense contribution of the communists, and he has brushed aside the victims of the war, the deportees. Duras’ bitterness over what she feels is de Gaulle’s abandonment of the deportees, and in particular her husband, is apparent in her journal.

Whereas Raymond Aubrac’s release in May of 1943 satisfies his wife, Lucie Aubrac’s (or rather, Catherine’s) duty to the Resistance, and more importantly, her loyalty to her comrades, dictate that she finish the job she started and work to free the remaining prisoners. In a reversal of the traditional war myth and gender roles in which men take action to protect the women who wait safely at home, Lucie Aubrac asks her husband to stay safely behind for fear that he will be identified as one of the original detainees. Although he does take part in the rescue, Lucie Aubrac gives the impression that his participation depends on her approval: “j’ai un peu de remords d’avoir laissé Raymond participer à l’affaire” (34).

In the May 24, 1943 entry, Lucie Aubrac details how the rest of the prisoners are extracted from the hospital. While she cannot actively participate in the mission, for it requires men to pose as German police, she is still in on the action, riding in one of the
getaway cars, overseeing the operation. Lucie Aubrac devotes a page and a half of this diary entry to the rescue, giving a step-by-step, detailed description as the events unfold. She even fills the waiting time, unlike Duras who just waits. While waiting for the men to exit the hospital, Aubrac fills in the details of the operation: the exact position of the getaway cars, who is driving which vehicle, and the background of the participating agents. Her tone reveals a certain level of tension and anxiety; yet, it does not suspend the waiting. Instead, it adds suspense and a certain excitement to the mission. Although this rescue was a joint effort, Lucie Aubrac has been hailed as its mastermind and hero.

Lucie Aubrac’s journal reveals to what extent she is regarded as a hero by her comrades. Often, women were relegated to support tasks in the Resistance, but she is a rare example of a woman who distinguished herself in what was normally considered men’s territory: planning, leadership and combat. The only female in her Groupe Franc of twelve, Lucie Aubrac is as revered and respected as any man, and she is indeed known for her expertise in prison breaks. Not only is she consulted on a possible rescue for Jean Moulin in the days following his arrest, but in September 1943, in the midst of planning Raymond’s

182 In recreating the events that occurred inside the hospital, Lucie Aubrac had to rely on the accounts of the male participants and the men rescued. In her own journal, she quotes Serge Ravanel, who was one of the men rescued. The rescue is also briefly described in Raymond Aubrac’s Où la mémoire s’attarde and Serge Ravanel’s L’esprit de Résistance.

183 Lucie Aubrac and this rescue were the subject of a 1946 American comic strip entitled “Lucie to the Rescue,” published in True Comics. In 1941, to counter the superhero craze in the comic book market, the editors of Parents’ Magazine created True Comics as a combined comic book and newspaper which was sold at newsstands. With the slogan “Truth is stranger and a thousand times more thrilling than fiction” printed across its cover, the comics featured stories about historical events, scientific discoveries, and real heroic individuals (See the William E. Blake entry in the bibliography for full reference for this information. The particular Lucie Aubrac comic is referenced under its title). Not only did True Comics recognize the heroism in ordinary human beings, but it documented, as early as 1946, that women could take an active and important role in the French Resistance. This particular comic, with Lucie Aubrac as its central figure, proved that combat roles were not necessarily reserved for men.
third and most dangerous rescue, Lucie Aubrac is asked to break four more résistants out of a hospital in a nearby town.\textsuperscript{184}

Despite having her own husband in a precarious situation, not to mention the fact that she was pregnant and had other obligations, Lucie Aubrac still carried out her resistance duty of rescuing other men, illustrating her extraordinary qualities: determination, strength, courage, daring, poise, leadership, and selflessness. Most of all, we witness her commitment to saving fellow patriots and her loyalty and devotion to her friends and comrades in resistance. While Duras’ journal focuses solely on her husband, Lucie Aubrac’s story is not only of her immediate family, but also of her resistance family.

Lucie Aubrac was indeed a central figure in her resistance movement, and as such, she dedicates passages of her journal to explaining the political situation and the organization of her movement. In fact, she co-founded Libération-Sud with Jean Cavaillès\textsuperscript{185} and Emmanuel d’Astier de la Vigerie.\textsuperscript{186} For more than half of a four-page informational flashback, Lucie Aubrac outlines how the Movement began in Clermont-Ferrand, in October of 1940.\textsuperscript{187} At first, like with most resistance movements, its activity centered on printing

\textsuperscript{184} Lucie Aubrac details this rescue in the September 1-6 entries. For three days, she walks the halls of the hospital, dressed in a doctor’s coat and checking patients’ charts, just to get the personnel used to her presence. On the third day, she surveys the prisoners’ floor, determining the best time of day for the breakout. Within a couple of days, she returns with her Groupe Franc comrades, once again posing as German officers. This rescue is also depicted in the “Lucie to the rescue” comic strip, but with a slight variation on the last day’s events: instead of posing as Gestapo agents, the résistants pose as medical assistants taking the prisoners for x-rays.

\textsuperscript{185} Jean Cavaillès was a philosopher and mathematician, as well as a teaching colleague and good friend of Lucie Aubrac’s. He was executed in January 1944 at the deportation camp at Compiègne. His sister and fellow résistante, Gabrielle Ferrières, honored him in 1982 with a biography entitled, \textit{Jean Cavaillès, un philosophe dans la guerre, 1903-1944}.

\textsuperscript{186} Emmanuel d’Astier de la Vigerie (then known as Bernard) was a journalist and ex-marine. He became the movement’s leader and later went on to play a key role in de Gaulle’s unified movement and provisional government in Algiers.

\textsuperscript{187} During this initial meeting, the three tallied their financial and material resources and allies, and delineated their territory, spanning from Marseilles (d’Astier) up to the Rhone-Alps region (L. Aubrac), and west to Toulouse (Cavaillès).
clandestine tracts to inform the public of the real news that they were not getting from the Vichy-controlled press. The combat groups did not form until later. Libération-Sud eventually became one of the largest and most important movements in the southern zone. In 1943, it joined forces with two other large movements to form the Mouvements Unis de la Résistance (MUR), which consolidated the military function into the Secret Army. In June 1943, the Secret Army was dealt a major blow with a wave of arrests including that of its commander, General Delestraint (63). Lucie Aubrac writes at length about the situation and some of its key players in a series of entries (June 15, 19, 20). She also details some of her husband’s meetings in the reorganization effort, including their meeting with Jean Moulin on the 20th of June.\(^{189}\)

The description of meetings and names is the type of detail commonly found in the memoirs of male resistance leaders, who seem to go from one meeting to another. Depending on their importance, they tend to focus on the politics of war and resistance, rather than its day-to-day operation. De Gaulle’s memoirs often seem to be an endless string of meetings and names of military men and politicians from all continents. Lucie Aubrac’s descriptions are different in that they are of course limited to local activity.\(^{190}\) Also, along with political

\(^{188}\) Beginning in 1943, one of Jean Moulin’s mission was to merge the three largest Resistance movements of the southern zone—Combat, Libération-Sud, and Franc-Tireur—under the Mouvements Unis de la Résistance (MUR). As of March 1943, he began to merge them with groups in the north under the Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR).

\(^{189}\) This is the date of the initial meeting between the Aubracs and Jean Moulin at the Tête-d’Or Park in Lyon. The Aubracs were to give Moulin their response over dinner the following night; however, this dinner never took place. Jean Moulin and Raymond Aubrac were arrested the afternoon of the 21st, with five other members of the MUR, when the Gestapo raided their meeting place, a doctor’s office in the nearby town of Caluire. An eighth man who was not scheduled to be at the meeting, René Hardy from Combat, suspiciously escaped. Hardy is the one commonly thought to have betrayed the group and cost Moulin his life, although it was never proven in court, where he was tried and acquitted twice.

\(^{190}\) There are also some references to Paris, since she once lived and studied there and was well-connected. Lucie Aubrac also had links to Libération-Nord.
characterizations, she adds anecdotes and information that speak for these leaders’ personal qualities as well. Many of them were already friends or had become close friends from their contact through the Resistance. De Gaulle’s memoirs are limited to describing their professional relationships, which were at times tense.

Besides politics, resistance narratives by men generally focus on combat-type action which falls under the masculine classification of resistance tasks. De Gaulle cites examples of such activity as he narrates the actions of the maquis with a tone of excitement: “with what triumph they saw the soldiers of the Wehrmacht fall beneath their bullets, the trucks burn, the railway cars leap from their tracks, the routed German troops leave their weapons behind!” (Unity 283). Over the four months between her husband’s arrest (June 21) and rescue (October 21), Lucie Aubrac successfully leads her combat unit in the effort to free her husband. She, too, carries out “masculine” activity such as reconnaissance work, handling weapons, and participating in an armed attack on the Germans.

According to André Rauch, the ideal of the soldier as the absolute model of masculinity and heroism dates back to Napoleon’s army, and dominated at least until WWI: “jusqu’à la Première Guerre mondiale au moins, le soldat va servir d’emblème au lustre masculin” (47). Epic war stories have helped to maintain the legend of the soldier and feed this image of the mythical masculine hero. Rauch cites legendary stories from the Battle of Waterloo, in which stoic, wounded soldiers are exalted as the most virtuous and heroic of all warriors (75-80). De Gaulle certainly continued this trend into the twentieth century, with similar representations of glorified wounded soldiers in his war memoirs: “Whether they died standing, heads high, or lying on the ground because of their wounds, they shouted ‘Vive la France!’ into the faces of the Germans who fired at them’ (Unity 283-4). Lucie Aubrac also
uses this very model of the heroic dying soldier who has become legend. She cites Raymond, who describes how he imagined his death at the hands of the Nazis: “Je revoyais . . . la gloire du soldat face à un peloton d’exécution et qui tombe en criant : ‘Vive la France!’ J’en rêvais” (191).191

Rauch believes that the perpetuation of these epics, and not necessarily natural ability, have precluded women from engaging in armed combat. According to these legends, taking up arms to defend one’s country is restricted to men and is what defines masculinity. Masculinist ideology excludes women from war and from the men’s circle simply on the basis of their femininity:

Le devoir de défendre la patrie définit la condition masculine ; aucune constitution physique n’empêche les femmes de tirer au fusil, mais ces récits leur dénient ce rôle. Le moyen de détruire et de tuer, bref le recours à la violence armée n’est pas un privilège féminin : leurs rôles de mère, d’ épouse, de fille, de sœur les tiennent à l’écart de la guerre, et donc du cercle des hommes. (Rauch 81)

Bourdieu has also demonstrated with the particular example of the Kabyle society that “manliness” is synonymous with “the capacity to fight and exercise violence” (Masculine Domination 51).

In his discussion of Napoleon’s army, Rauch also points out that the ideal of defending one’s country was only subordinate to defending one’s courage, for courage was masculinity itself: “. . . se subordonne à celle de défendre le courage, c’est-à-dire l’identité masculine” (81). In fact, any non-courageous behavior, such as fear and the thought of desertion, was synonymous with femininity (Rauch 82-3). Rauch’s analysis shows that, historically, women have been excluded from combat. Furthermore, the epic association of

191 Actually, Lucie Aubrac demystifies the legend by having Raymond immediately reveal that this is but an ideal. The reality is far different: “Mais je connaissais la réalité. Dans une cellule, seule dans un coin, le nez contre le mur, à genoux, on attend la balle dans la nuque” (191).
courage with the masculine identity also implies that women cannot be courageous, or if they are, then they are exhibiting masculinity. Yet, Lucie Aubrac did participate in armed combat, displayed great courage, and earned her place among the men of the Groupe Franc, the Resistance, and History.

Lucie Aubrac, the only woman in her Groupe Franc, clearly becomes its commander on the mission to save her husband, and her men follow her faithfully. According to the journal, both the Groupe Franc and Libération-Sud put all of their material resources at her discretion—vehicles, weapons, and money. D’Astier de la Vigerie’s trust and confidence in Lucie Aubrac are absolute: “‘Elle réussira, elle est tenace, c’est une question de temps et de moyens. Il faut l’aider le plus possible’” (129). She also has the support and solidarity of other important leaders of the MUR. 192 De Gaulle also cites examples of how everyone shows unfailing confidence in him: “This massive confidence, this elemental friendship which their acknowledgements lavished upon me—here was what would steel me to my task” (Unity 362). His task, as he sees it, is none other than the salvation of France. 193 Due to the arrogant tone of his memoirs, what should be seen as solidarity becomes tainted with vanity and self-glorification. De Gaulle takes every opportunity to show that everyone is behind him because he is such a great leader. Furthermore, he immortalizes his reputation by referring to himself in the third person: “All these ministers . . . proudly associated themselves with Charles de Gaulle” (Unity 197). Through her own incredible example and leadership, Lucie Aubrac earns the utmost respect, loyalty and unconditional support of her Groupe Franc and other resistance leaders. Yet, they stand together, and these feelings are

192 The men she names are very important leaders of other large movements: Claude Bourdet of Combat, Claudius Petit of Franc-Tireur, and Georges Marrane, a liaison between MUR and his Communist Party’s National Front organization.

193 Salvation is the title of the third installment of de Gaulle’s war memoirs.
mutual. Lucie Aubrac’s narrative expresses her sincere gratitude and appreciation for her comrades in combat and in resistance. Although she is in charge of this mission, she neither feels superior to them nor does she feel marginalized for being a woman. Instead, she becomes part of the men’s circle.

Lucie Aubrac and the men experience together what is often seen as stereotypical male bonding over training and war games. During the months of preparation and training, they bond over target practice and tactical rehearsals. She meets with them often in their garage, another typically male domain. They finish many an evening eating and drinking together: “Maintenant, je connais mieux les hommes du Groupe-Franc; de temps en temps, je vais boire un pot avec eux, je passe régulièrement les voir à leur garage et ils m’emmènent dîner” (122). By October 20, the eve of the mission, Lucie Aubrac is an integral part of the Groupe Franc, one of the guys, whom she refers to as “les copains” (162). That night, after having dinner with the men, she jokes that she is off to do her veillée d’armes, referring to the night of prayer and meditation that precedes the dubbing of a knight: “si je ne suis pas consacrée chevalier demain, je ne le serais jamais” (172). Ironically, the men do not understand, and Aubrac has to explain the rules of male chivalry to them. The next day will indeed be Lucie Aubrac’s final test, her final rite of passage into their brotherhood. Aubrac’s emphasis on a masculine rite within a male-dominated circle certainly suggests an awareness of the traditional notion of a hierarchy of genders. But rather than subscribe to the symbolic violence of masculine domination and internalize the subordinate position of women, Lucie Aubrac defies gender difference and bias. By successfully undertaking activities generally classified as masculine, she ignores the established boundaries between genders and

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194 See Chapter 1 for Bourdieu’s definition of symbolic violence and his theories on masculine domination.
demonstrates that women are on par with men. For Lucie Aubrac, resistance tasks correspond to ability and not to gender divisions.

Lucie Aubrac’s confidence in the success of the mission never falters, although doubt surfaces among some of the team members just days before the rescue. But Lucie Aubrac rallies the men every way she can—with persuasion, anger, contempt for their defeatism, by setting an example, and with her unfailing optimism: “Qui va se dégonfler? Moi, j’irai avec ceux qui sont d’accord. . . . Nous sommes sûrs de gagner” (168). In the end, these “soldiers” look past Lucie Aubrac’s obvious five months of pregnancy, and see only their strong, courageous and determined leader. They, in turn, show their faith in her by following her into battle. With both image and language, Lucie Aubrac evokes the military portrait of a leader supervising his men as they prepare for battle. On the morning of October 21st, as she leaves the garage, she turns for one last look at them preparing for their mission and knows they will not desert her: “Entre nous, la fraternité, l’estime est totale, c’est pour ça qu’il ne peut pas y avoir de désertion” (175). Once again, in these scenes with the Groupe Franc, the masculine values of courage, confidence, honor and fraternity are praised, and it seems that the feminine is overlooked (Lucie Aubrac’s pregnancy) or rejected (desertion is considered feminine behavior by traditional soldiers, according to Rauch). Ironically, it is Lucie Aubrac who embodies this ideal masculinity.

After four months of planning and training together, the men have gotten to know Lucie Aubrac, and have the utmost confidence in her. They know that she will show up on the day of the mission, not as a spectator, but as an active, armed participant. She has already

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195 The Groupe Franc temporarily lost one of their key participants, Serge Ravanel, who was shot by the Gestapo while on another mission.
proven herself as a capable combatant who does not hide behind her gender or her pregnancy and is willing to take all of the same risks as them:

Ils savent qu’ils s’engagent dans une affaire difficile et périlleuse. . . . Plus que tout, ils me savent gré d’avoir pris, malgré ma grossesse, les mêmes risques qu’eux ces derniers mois, et d’être avec eux ce soir, en combattant comme les autres. (175)

Because of her proven track record, but even more so, for her unwavering strength, courage, determination and optimism, the men of the Groupe Franc entrusted their lives to Lucie Aubrac and were willing to follow her loyally into a dangerous situation, risking their own lives to carry out her mission. According to Donald Reid, “The myth of Lucie Aubrac was born well before her husband’s escape and was what led resisters to take chances with her” (“Resistance and Its Discontents” 125). In his own memoir, a member of the Groupe Franc, Serge Ravanel, questions why he agreed to participate in this extremely dangerous mission against the second-most powerful Nazi installation in France (160). His response echoes his group’s consensus opinion—with Lucie Aubrac in charge, it had an excellent chance of success: “Je savais Lucie Aubrac capable de toutes les audaces et d’aboutir là où tout autre aurait échoué” (160). In fact, Ravanel had firsthand knowledge of her success rate, for she had rescued him in May. The October 1943 mission yielded even better results than expected: along with Raymond Aubrac, they liberated thirteen other members of the Resistance.

“Cette occupation, cette Résistance, quand plus tard j’en parlerai . . . le souvenir le plus tenace sera cette impression d’avoir passé ma vie à attendre” (Ivresse 140-141).

Ironically, it is Lucie Aubrac who expresses the sensation of endless waiting, although her story is really one of action. This is because she does not equate waiting with passive inactivity, as does Marguerite Duras. Whereas Duras stresses the waiting, Lucie Aubrac
leaves out the waiting and highlights the activity. Even when Lucie Aubrac specifically mentions the waiting in her journal, the passage is really about the activity: “Pendant ces cinq jours d’attente, je ne manque pas d’activité” (Ivresse 111). Furthermore, other obligations have not disappeared along with her husband. The reality of her life is such that Lucie Aubrac does not have the time to wait, since other obligations keep her constantly occupied. She has to care for her son, plan and teach lessons, continue to do other resistance tasks, all the while preparing Raymond’s rescue. Most importantly, Lucie Aubrac might wait for information and for appointments, but she does not wait for her husband to return. Instead, she plays an active role in bringing him back.

As for Duras, she is unable to identify with women like Lucie Aubrac:

_Je n’ai jamais rencontré une femme plus lâche que moi . . . des femmes qui attendent comme moi, non, aucune n’est aussi lâche que ça. J’en connais de très courageuses. D’extraordinaires. Ma lâcheté est telle qu’on ne la qualifie plus._ (Douleur 30)

Both women find themselves in similar situations, with their husbands condemned to death at the hands of the Gestapo, and yet their responses—and their narratives—are quite opposite. While Duras’ journal is weighed down with death and despair, a record of the horror and loss of war, Lucie Aubrac’s diary overflows with life and hope, and celebrates the successes. To Duras’ absolute pessimism, Aubrac counters with the utmost optimism that usually characterizes masculine resistance narratives. To Duras’ “feminine” passive waiting and utter paralysis, Aubrac opposes scenes of “masculine” courage and acts which fall under the masculine definition of resistance that is rooted in action and combat. Instead of allowing her fears and anxiety to paralyze her, instead of accepting the role of a weak, helpless wife, Lucie Aubrac pushes herself through the pain and despair into heroic action: “Tu ne te laisses pas couper des copains, montre à ceux que tu rencontres que tu restes dans l’action . . . il ne faut
pas qu’ils prennent l’habitude de te considérer comme une épouse bouleversée” (98). If Duras is considered a model of feminine writing, and Lucie Aubrac’s war story, with its masculine characteristics, is quite the opposite of “La douleur,” does this imply that Lucie Aubrac’s heroic persona and writing fall under the masculine category?

*Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* certainly contains elements typically associated with masculine resistance narratives: descriptions of resistance leaders, historical explanations, summaries of the organization, politics and activities of her movement and the Resistance in general, depictions of daring action and combat in which the model of masculinity—that of the courageous soldier—is upheld. At times, Lucie Aubrac portrays herself in this masculine light. She describes herself orchestrating and leading several prisoner rescues, including the final rescue of her husband, in which she commands and fights alongside her all-male combat group. As she describes leaving her house for the last time on the day of Raymond’s rescue, Lucie Aubrac clearly evokes the image of a soldier answering the call to war by drawing a parallel with the moment that her father left his home to fight in WWI:

> Il me semble que c’est l’au revoir de cette petite villa que j’abandonne pour toujours. . . . Je pars dans un état un peu second. Il va se passer quelque chose qui changera ma vie. En juillet 1914, quand mon père a quitté sa vigne, sa femme et ses petites filles pour partir à la guerre, il a dû être dans le meme état d’esprit? Tout à coup une mobilisation qui force à rompre avec tout un passé et un environnement. (173)

This scene illustrates Lucie Aubrac’s sense of duty and patriotism. Despite her regret over leaving the relative security and stability of her home and real family life, like her father, she answers the soldier’s “mobilisation,” the call to national duty. While she wonders if he felt the same remorse over leaving his family, she can relate to the necessity of her father’s break

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196 Numerous literary critics have associated Duras with feminine writing. In particular, a footnote in Hélène Cixous’ “The Laugh of the Medusa,” identifies Duras as a rare example of French feminine writing: “In France . . . the only inscriptions of femininity that I have seen were by Colette, Marguerite Duras, ... and Jean Genêt” (878-9).
with his personal life for the greater good of the nation. Fortunately for her, her patriotic duty happens to be in line with the duty to her family, since the Resistance leader that she is about to rescue is her husband.

Lucie Aubrac’s portrayal of herself as a soldier expresses more her sense of national pride, duty to her country and faith in the Resistance, than it does a vision of a gendered Resistance. As Rauch observes, there is no physical impediment that keeps women from taking up arms to defend their country. Lucie Aubrac’s resistance activities provide evidence that women were equally capable of military maneuvers. Since all opportunities were always open to her, she never noticed sexual discrimination in the distribution of resistance tasks. From her experience and observation, duties were assigned according to individual skill and aptitude (L. Aubrac, “Présence des femmes” 20). For these reasons, Lucie Aubrac did not really see herself as an “honorary man” in a man’s world. Nor did she see herself as a representative of women. According to Donald Reid, “in keeping with the ideology of ‘French singularity’, Lucie Aubrac resented being labeled the first woman parliamentarian; she represented the Resistance, not women” (“French Singularity” 210). In her own words, she represented Free France, and that was all (Francos 376).

Yet, as Rauch points out, masculinist myth-making has historically made it difficult for women to be recognized in the patriotic, armed defense of their countries, at least as women. Mythological and historical figures of women warriors, such as the Amazons or Joan of Arc, have always been associated with masculinity. It is not surprising that Lucie Aubrac

197 In this article, Reid illustrates how Lucie Aubrac fits Mona Ozouf’s concept of French singularity by subordinating sexual politics to those of the nation through her focus on the Resistance.

198 In July 1944, Lucie Aubrac was sent back to France with the mission of setting up departmental Liberation committees in the liberated zones.
has been compared to both of these figures; some of these judgments having come from her resistance leader, d’Astier de la Vigerie (Reid, “French Singularity” 206). While Lucie Aubrac did not originally see herself or the Resistance in a particularly gendered light, she eventually acknowledged the “postwar coding of . . . the Resistance as masculine” (Reid, “French Singularity” 212). In her journal, Lucie Aubrac shows how this perception of her as a soldier, as a man, is also shared by some of the men that she encounters outside of the Groupe Franc and her own movement. At one point during their months in hiding, the Aubracs are hosted by a man, Favier, who is used to hiding important army generals en route to London. Apparently, he is aware of Lucie Aubrac’s reputation, and has heard of her latest feat. Putting his arm around her, he remarks how rare it is to find a woman like her. In other words, he, too, looks past her obvious six months of pregnancy, sees her as a man, and welcomes her into the circle of men. When he orders the women to tend to the Aubracs’ child, Lucie gets up as well, “pour obéir” (210). To this, Favier responds, “‘Pas vous ! Je parlais à mes femmes. Vous êtes un homme, vous ! Vous vous battez comme un homme ! Restez avec nous.’” (210). This gendered stereotype annoys her and triggers a flashback to her history professor, who had recommended that she take the masculine agrégation exam because she had the “puissance intellectuelle d’un homme” (211). Again, throughout her life, the men that surround Lucie Aubrac associate her strength, courage and intelligence with masculine values. Of course, in their eyes, they are paying her the greatest compliment possible to a woman. As Paula Schwartz observes, when women succeed at tasks labeled

199 After the very public attack on the German truck, the Gestapo discovered Lucie Aubrac’s true identity, which forced the Aubracs into hiding. They went from hideout to hideout in the country while awaiting passage to London. Due to flying conditions, this took several months—until February 1944.

masculine, in a domain usually dominated by men, they are acknowledged by being granted the status of honorary man. Through Favier’s acceptance and praise, Lucie Aubrac is once again honored by being allowed into the “men’s club.”

But how does a story written by a woman, with a woman as its central figure, qualify as a masculine narrative? More precisely, how does the story of a pregnant woman qualify as masculine? In this journal entry recounting her exchange with Favier, Lucie Aubrac questions gendered stereotypes: “Pourquoi faut-il que le plus grand compliment qu’un homme puisse faire à une femme, c’est de lui dire : vous écrivez, vous travaillez, vous agissez comme un homme!” (210).201 She defies Favier’s strictly masculinist definition of courage and heroism by reminding him that, in this case, the soldier, the hero, the “man” is a pregnant woman: “‘Moi, je me sens très bien dans ma peau de femme ; ce que j’ai fait, c’est un boulot de femme, et de femme enceinte, en plus; ce qui ne vous arrivera jamais à vous !’” (211). Lucie Aubrac never forgets her uniquely feminine condition and the fact that it is precisely this condition which enables her to free her husband: “je regarde mon ventre en repensant à mes démarches auprès de la Gestapo, avec la rengaine de ma grossesse illégale. Est-ce que tout ça a l’air masculin?” (210). According to Claire Gorrara, with this commentary, Lucie Aubrac “highlights how ridiculous socially constructed images of masculine prowess are when applied to a pregnant woman” (“Reviewing Gender” 150).

Not only does Lucie Aubrac do her job as well as anyone else despite being five months pregnant, but she uses her femininity as a tool for the Resistance. This is indeed one aspect of Lucie Aubrac’s resistance which is strictly feminine and that no man can emulate: she can and often does resort to “féminine ruse” (flirtation, playing the naïve girl in distress, etc.). For Raymond’s third and final rescue, Lucie Aubrac goes as far as to exploit her real

201 These appear to be the reflexions of the present-day Lucie Aubrac who, by 1984, is more gender-conscious.
pregnancy, claiming that after a whirlwind romance with the prisoner, she is expecting his child. She requests a “mariage in extremis” to legitimize her child. Barbie shows no empathy, but she eventually bribes her way through a couple of old, sympathetic German officers, one of whom ultimately arranges this marriage for the eve of the prisoner’s execution. By fabricating a story which creates a legitimate reason for meeting with the prisoner, Lucie Aubrac secures him a couple of transfers between the prison and Gestapo headquarters. This is precisely what she wants, since her plan is to attack the transport truck en route. Although she admits that initially storming into Barbie’s office was impetuous, and that her distraught act was in part real, her quick-thinking, scheming and negotiating allowed her to manipulate the situation to her advantage. The men of her Groupe Franc might have considered Lucie Aubrac’s pregnancy a hindrance to the Resistance, yet they did not, for it never slowed her down. In fact, it became her greatest weapon: “Disrupting associations of the masculine as the active and the feminine as the passive, Lucie Aubrac interprets her biological specificity as a woman not as a sign of weakness, but as evidence of her capacity to operate as a Resister in difficult conditions” (Gorrara, “Reviewing Gender” 150).

Does Lucie Aubrac, then, intend a feminine reading of her narrative? Whereas the men look past her pregnancy, Lucie Aubrac forces the reader to take note of her feminine condition with constant references to physical symptoms, her child’s movements, and her growing stomach. Are these reminders which often occur in traditionally masculine environments such as the Groupe Franc garage meant to undermine the stereotyping of war

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202 Raymond Aubrac is now under the false identity of Claude Ermelin. Although Barbie learns that Ermelin is a false identity, he only uncovers Raymond’s previous false identity of François Vallet.

203 According to French law, a “mariage in extremis” allowed a couple to marry if one of them was on the verge of death. These marriages were usually performed to legitimize a child who would otherwise be born without a father (Ivresse 133). Lucie Aubrac used a bourgeois alias to stress the fact that she needed this marriage to maintain respectability.
and resistance as masculine? After all, Lucie Aubrac makes it clear from the very first entry—a scene of childbirth—that she is a mother. The unborn child is present from beginning to end, and there are constant reminders of the pregnancy throughout the journal. In fact, the text is literally inscribed in femininity. While these months happen to be the most critical in the lives of the Aubracs, it is no coincidence that Lucie Aubrac’s story is framed perfectly within the nine months of her second pregnancy. This in itself should be a clear indication that this is a woman’s war story. Also, because of its diary format, one can assume that the text will be a record of a woman’s daily life in times of war. As we have seen, especially with Claire Chevrillon, documenting the daily reality and daily resistance of one’s personal life is generally associated with feminine writing. Through her depiction of the quotidian, Lucie Aubrac unfolds her private life as wife and mother alongside her professional identity of schoolteacher and public resistance persona. She continually reminds us that her unborn child, a clear sign of her femininity, accompanies the resistance hero at all times. Her private and public lives are necessarily and naturally intertwined, and her masculine and feminine personae are inseparable. Furthermore, by mixing in the daily with the resistance activity, Lucie Aubracportrays herself, her husband and other résistants as real, ordinary people.

According to Claire Gorrara, “[b]y integrating pregnancy and motherhood into her clandestine activities as both a motivating force and as a reflection of her success, Aubrac creates an image of the Resistance which is firmly grounded in women’s biological lives” (Women’s Representations 41). There is no doubt that one of the messages that Lucie Aubrac

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204 Actually, Lucie Aubrac had originally submitted a twelve-month account to her publishers (covering the period from May 10, 1943 to May 14, 1944), and it was they who suggested cuts and changes in order to frame the story within the nine months of pregnancy (Allison 121). This reveals the artificiality of gender distinctions, and that the author’s primary concern was to recount a crucial period in the Resistance.
wished to relate through her journal was that many ordinary women resisted, that mothers resisted. In London, in 1944, she conveyed this message to Allied journalists. The scene was captured in the last frame of the 1946 American comic strip, “Lucie to the Rescue”:

“Thousands of wives and mothers risked their lives daily so that France could be free. I am only one of many” (42). “Grounding” the Resistance in women’s biological and daily lives did just that—by taking the Resistance out of the battlefield, it made it more tangible and complex. Although Lucie Aubrac and Charles de Gaulle had the same intention of glorifying the Resistance, her version is far from the lofty and intangible myth that he created. Donald Reid cites Maurice Schumann’s Free French Radio broadcast of March 24, 1944: “In the same place, eloquent men would have made them [the Allied journalists] understand France. She [Lucie Aubrac], without eloquence, was making them feel it, touch it” (“French Singularity” 208). De Gaulle and Lucie Aubrac also attributed the success of the Resistance to different forces: for him, it was the military Free French Forces, and for her, the Internal Resistance, which was actually comprised of more women than men. In an interview with Claire Gorrara, Lucie Aubrac explained that in the journal she put together her unborn child with the freeing of men as a message of hope. But this child provided an even more tangible benefit as the center of Lucie Aubrac’s ruse to rescue Raymond.

In Chapter 1, we learned that it was easier for women to circulate and perform certain resistance tasks, such as that of liaison agent, because they were less suspect and viewed as innocent and incapable of conspiring. In “Women, Resistance, and Communism in France 1939-1945,” Paula Schwartz shows us how they often turned this to their advantage, employing “feminine ruse” against German officers, using tactics such as flirting, playing dumb and playing the helpless female. Lucie Aubrac exploited her femininity as a weapon
for the Resistance on many occasions. In 1943, she plays dumb and innocent, and uses bribes and tears on the German officers and French public officials: “Like an actress, [Lucie Aubrac] plans her persona and costume down to the last detail and succeeds in arranging a meeting between herself and Raymond which leads ultimately to his escape” (Gorrara, Women’s Representations 40). This time, Lucie Aubrac takes the exploitation of femininity to the extreme, blending the traditional stereotypes of the helpless female and family values to get exactly what she wants (Hewitt 271). Résistante Célia Bertin asserts that Lucie Aubrac’s plan could only have been devised by a woman (290).

Like other feminine accounts of war, Ils partiront dans l’ivresse is not only a record of resistance activity, but also a document of Lucie Aubrac’s daily life as a woman in occupied France. Indeed, many scenes from her private life serve this multiple purpose of witnessing the devastating effects of war on the general population and the hardships of everyday life, all the while showing how women used this everyday life to resist war and occupation.

Much like Claire Chevrillon, Lucie Aubrac reveals the difficulties of maintaining a household in times of war. In fact, she points out that participating in the Resistance was harder on women than on men because of this dual role as résistante, on the one hand, and head of household on the other. Women worked twice as hard, and were stretched twice as thin: “Pour une femme, plus que pour un homme, à côté de la vie souterraine de la Résistance, des actions plus ou moins dangereuses, il y a le quotidien qu’il faut assumer : une

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205 Years earlier, for example, she had played the role of fiancé to try to rescue Jean Cavaillès from a prison in Montpellier. Under this guise, she was able to get close enough to slip him a metal saw and a sleep remedy for the guard. Although Lucie Aubrac had planned every last detail, Cavaillès was caught because, out of conscience, he did not give the guard the full dose of the medication. He eventually escaped on his own, but was later recaptured, tortured and executed by the Nazis in 1944.

206 In “Résister au féminin,” Dominique Veillon also comments on the importance that Lucie Aubrac places on her wardrobe, noting that in the diary, Lucie Aubrac not only describes her costume for her act with Barbie and the Gestapo, but, in another passage, also fusses over what to wear to her meeting with Jean Moulin (Veillon 91).
maison à tenir, un mari, un gosse à nourrir, du linge à laver” (28). Lucie Aubrac recalls a graphic conversation about the filthy laundry that she washed for all five prisoners in Raymond’s cell during two months. It is important to note that during war, something as common as doing laundry becomes an act of resistance, not only because it supports resistance agents in a practical manner, but also because it allows them to feel human and thus resist the degradation and humiliation of the German prison experience. In Cette exigeante liberté, Lucie Aubrac enumerates the many ways that providing fresh laundry to a prisoner could actually save his life—he would feel less desperate and thus less inclined to commit desperate acts, his physical appearance could sway a judge’s ruling, and the clandestine messages sewn into the lining of his clothes kept him informed and gave him hope:

Cette Résistance au quotidien n’est pas très médiatique. Pourtant, faire la queue pour porter du linge en prison, le laver, le rapporter, a pu sauver la vie à des hommes qui, sans cela, auraient peut-être parlé, ou commis des actes désespérés… Tous ces hommes, qui, sans ces visites des femmes, auraient été sales devant le juge, lui auraient fait mauvaise impression… L’action de nombreuses femmes donna à ces hommes l’espoir d’un message dans une couture ou une cigarette. Ce n’était peut-être pas spectaculaire, mais c’était vital. (128)

As Claire Andrieu demonstrates with the example of the countrywoman whose reason for ironing the underwear of a résistant at 2:00 a.m. is because “[c]’est pour la France” (86), doing laundry was considered a patriotic duty.

Lucie Aubrac also uses the topic of food to expose the realities of the Occupation and to defeat the myth that the French are better off thanks to the Franco-German collaboration. Although many times she chooses to highlight the positive side of having food, some of these very passages serve to remind us of how difficult it is to come by, especially in the cities. For example, during Lucie Aubrac’s food expedition to the country, a remark by her father about
the freshness of his asparagus allows her to comment on the actual situation: “Cher papa! Il n’imagine pas que les asperges, denrée de luxe, ont disparu depuis trois étés des magasins, et ne se trouvent qu’aux restaurants de marché noir ou sur la table des occupants” (55). A tour of her uncle’s vinyard allows her to explain (through his voice) the dirty practices of the financial sector of the Vichy government, which requisitions some wine and intentionally ruins the rest. These types of actions made modest résistants out of common people who protected their food supply by hiding stock from the Germans and the government. Back in Lyon, Lucie Aubrac’s many detailed references to the ration ticket system, including sample conversations between women and merchants, show to what extent the Occupier uses hunger to control and dehumanize them. Hunger—a physiological and psychological tool of warfare—keeps people preoccupied with their basic subsistence and survival so that they neither have the time, strength, presence of mind, or spirit to rise up in other ways. References to food in women’s wartime narratives, then, often carry a message of resistance.

We have seen that, given a definition of resistance based on the gendered division of tasks, women resisted largely from the workplace, employing their work resources for the many social services of the Resistance, such as printing tracts and false identity papers. Lucie Aubrac also resists through the workplace, secretly dropping a tract of Libération-Sud in a co-worker’s mailbox, for example. But mostly, she uses her classroom to resist, often working subtle messages of resistance into her school lessons. In a lesson intended to criticize the food shortage and rationing system, Lucie Aubrac times a lecture on agriculture—contrasting statistics of pre-war food surpluses to their present-day scarcity and rationing—to coincide with a certain ticket distribution (29). In June, inspired by her re-
reading of *Le silence de la mer*, she gives a geography lesson about the Vercors region of France (71). Another day, it is a lesson on ancient history: “Mesopotamie, Babylone, . . . les Hébreux, Moïse et le Mont Sinaï. Les petites Juives de la classe s’épanouissent” (165).

Perhaps the most memorable lesson is actually one imposed by the Minister of Education on May 8\textsuperscript{th}, which requires history teachers to compare Pétain to Joan of Arc in order to show how he is her legitimate heir through shared virtues (31). Refusing to sing the Marshal’s praises was in itself a form of unorganized resistance practiced by many schoolteachers (Cohen 82). Lucie Aubrac’s senior students go as far as to make a mockery out of the assignment by adding random categories to the comparison, such as age, marital status, and ally or enemy. From that day on, Lucie Aubrac shares a complicity with these girls, some of whom ask to become part of her network when they graduate. Knowing that her students discuss their lessons with their parents, Lucie Aubrac’s teaching is a way of spreading messages of resistance. These lessons allow her to indirectly criticize Vichy and counter its propaganda, promote the Resistance, and offer messages of tolerance, solidarity and hope to the Jews. Lucie Aubrac’s contacts through her profession also provide a recruitment base for the Resistance. These passages also enable Lucie Aubrac, the author, to highlight the less traditional but no less important forms of resistance, such as that of Vercors. We also see that the Resistance was composed of ordinary people such as teachers, parents and young adults, and that the battlefield was not the only legitimate space for resistance.

Not only did women resist from the workplace, but sometimes, as in the case of teachers, their profession enabled them a privileged position through and from which to witness. In fact, the classroom in *Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* has a double impact of

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207 *Le Silence de la mer* is a story of subtle resistance, written by Jean Bruller under the penname of Vercors and published in Paris in 1942 by a clandestine press that he created, Les Éditions de Minuit.
witnessing. Not only does Lucie Aubrac use her classroom to raise consciousness in her students about the effects of the Occupation on their lives, but the author also uses these school scenes to show the reader the horrible effects of the war on the children and the influence of Vichy collaboration on the school system. The most visible effect of the war on the schoolchildren is the impact of hunger on them. Lucie Aubrac comments on the lack of protein in their reduced meals and its effect: by noon, students begin to shut down from the malnutrition, almost to the point of falling asleep. The school doctor calls this “[s]omnolence de la faim” (72).

On several occasions, Lucie Aubrac reveals the collaboration of Vichy at work through the education system. The lesson on agriculture exposes a food shortage due in part to the labor shortage caused by the deportation of young Frenchmen for forced labor in Germany, the Service de Travail Obligatoire (STO). Another vile example of collaboration is the Minister of Education’s mandate that history teachers take the students to a traveling exhibit on racial characteristics in preparation for viewing the anti-Semitic propaganda film, Juif Süss, that will be playing in the Lyon cinemas. Although she debates the wisdom of drawing attention to herself, Lucie Aubrac ultimately writes a letter of protest for her colleagues to sign. Her rather strong letter to the school’s director clearly states that taking their students to such an exhibit would be unworthy of their mission as history teachers, for it goes against their task of giving students an appreciation for freedom, tolerance, and culture (167). Through this incident, Lucie Aubrac illustrates the microcosm of a world in which some people do nothing or comply out of fear, others refuse in a more subtle manner such as calling in sick on the day in question, while a third group speaks out in protest. Five of the eleven teachers sign Lucie Aubrac’s formal letter of protest, and four others call in sick. The
response of school authorities to this refusal further reveals collaboration at some levels of
the administration and sympathy at other levels. Lucie Aubrac only wishes that the statistics
of her profession reflected all of France: “Neuf sur onze. Pas mal! . . . Allons, elle se tient
pas mal ma profession; si toute la France était comme ça!” (167).

At the 1975 Union des Femmes Françaises colloquium on the Resistance, Marie-Elisa
Cohen spoke about the participation of teachers, and particularly female teachers, in the
Resistance. In her presentation, she noted that, overall, there were few collaborators among
teachers, and that there were no women’s names on the lists that she reviewed. Cohen
attributes this to the close, protective relationships that the women formed with their
students: “pour les femmes, la relation enseignante-enseigné est-elle plus affective que pour
les hommes et c’est souvent en se sentant responsable de leurs élèves qu’elles ont été
amenées à prendre part à la lutte pour la Libération de la France” (82).

Lucie Aubrac’s journal entries attest to her love for teaching and for her students. She
describes her wonderful relationship with students of all ages: “je m’entends bien avec mes
élèves. Nous avons, dans ma classe de terminale, une complicité de fous rires” (31). On July
9th, Lucie Aubrac delights in a day-long field trip with her sixth-graders, and admits, “Je suis
prise par la passion d’enseigner au point d’oublier, un moment, ma situation” (99). Her
passion for teaching and the focus on her students provide a temporary escape from her
problems until the very day before the rescue: “Comme toujours, quand je suis en classe,
j’oublie les soucis extérieurs” (170). Yet, as we have seen, the students give Lucie Aubrac
cause for concern. She cannot help but worry about their physical and mental well-being and
safety. She shows concern for their nutrition and shields them as much as possible from the
Vichy propaganda and brainwashing tactics imposed through the school system. While she is
proud to instill a spirit of resistance in her students, she shudders at the thought of two of her graduating seniors joining the Resistance (101). Lucie Aubrac had reason enough to fight for her own children’s future, but there is no doubt that she cared tremendously for her students and felt it her duty to protect them as well.

Much like Claire Chevrillon, Lucie Aubrac uses her entire text to openly denounce the Vichy collaboration, with observations and comments interspersed throughout. Of course, this is much easier to do when writing in the 1980s, but the Aubracs were never fooled by Vichy, and Raymond Aubrac’s arrests and time in prison opened their eyes to the truth of collaboration by the French police. Lucie Aubrac addresses this topic by recreating conversations between the couple through which Raymond recounts moments from his two months in prison (March—May 1943). During this time, he observed how the French police obeyed German orders without question. Upon hearing that French police arrest and deliver prisoners to the Germans for interrogations, Lucie Aubrac expresses her shock at how the ordinary policeman and the French judicial system could serve the Gestapo:

Je frémis : on a beau savoir qu’il y a collaboration entre Vichy et Hitler, y être confronté dans la réalité, c’est autre chose. Je jure de m’en souvenir après la guerre. Des policiers français, c’est-à-dire de vrais fonctionnaires et non pas seulement des formations fascistes telles que la Milice, obéissent sur le plan professionnel aux ordres allemands. . . . ‘Devant les allemands, me dit Raymond, les inspecteurs français étaient de vrais tapis’. (22-3)

Lucie Aubrac’s vow to remember this proves her commitment to witnessing after the war. Even though she wrote in retrospect, we can believe that in her role as teacher, she promised to remember what she witnessed, or in the least, that these events were not easily forgotten, whether or not she actually made a conscious decision to act as witness at the time.

Women’s wartime personal narratives have shown us how opportunities and reasons to resist and witness arise within the context of, but also go beyond, their everyday domestic
and professional lives. Some of these acts constitute a basic form of resistance: that of survival and refusal, of not accepting the hunger and the denigration imposed by the oppressor. In Lucie Aubrac’s case, willingly becoming pregnant in the height of war and occupation is in itself a defiance because it demonstrates her confidence that the Resistance will defeat the Germans and that she will raise her children in a free France.

Another form of resistance is refusing to promote the fascist propaganda of the Nazis and Vichy, and in fact using work venues such as the classroom to spread counter-propaganda and offer an alternative perspective: “[The] pedagogical role of the witness is played out literally in the text with Aubrac’s attack on the Vichy regime through her role as a history teacher. Aubrac is aware that the classroom has become a battleground for the control of her students’ minds” (Gorrara Women’s Representations 37).

These daily personal and professional activities or situations of women also serve as a screen for more organized resistance work. Résistantes distribute tracts and recruit among their colleagues, for example, and female liaison agents transport illicit materials and arms in their grocery carts and baby carriages, literally covered by the mundaneness of their home life. In her study on the resistant woman, Maggie Allison notes this practice in Lucie Aubrac, although it is indeed quite common among women: “it is this very detail, in Ivresse, concerning le quotidien (the daily round) that enables Lucie Aubrac, and other women, to convey an air of normality in times of danger by carrying on as usual, even though some act of Resistance is about to take place” (122-3). We see how Lucie Aubrac uses a family outing in the park to conceal the meeting with Moulin: “Une mère et son gosse, quoi de plus transparent dans un parc, un dimanche après-midi” (69). She describes her baby boy
swinging from the arms of Raymond Aubrac and Jean Moulin on their way to watch the Guignols.

Scenes in women’s wartime diaries depicting everyday life often carry a message of war/resistance, whether it is as obvious as using the ordinary to conceal resistance business or something more subtle. The scene of the class fieldtrip to a nearby village enables Lucie Aubrac to touch on several wartime themes: the STO, the maquis, the BBC, the black market and the solidarity and contributions of common French people. During this fieldtrip, Lucie Aubrac meets a country woman. Through their conversation we learn that the woman’s two sons have gone off to join a maquis in order to avoid forced deportation to a German labor camp. Like Lucie Aubrac, this woman also listens to the BBC “et y puise l’espoir” (101). She then offers the schoolchildren a basket full of fresh peaches, for which Lucie Aubrac feels slightly embarrassed, since the woman has nothing to gain by this gesture in a time where everything has a price.

While Lucie Aubrac describes many domestic scenes of relative normalcy, such as Jean-Pierre playing while she plans lessons for her classes, upon closer examination, we can often find a subtext of war. In one entry, Lucie Aubrac makes it a point to describe Jean-Pierre staging a war with the miniature animals that he has arranged into opposing armies. As in the real war, in his version, it is the ones whom he dislikes who are vanquished (62).

War and resistance are indeed an everyday presence in the Aubrac household; the Resistance and the daily converge in their home and family. Meetings are held in their home, despite the security risks, since many members of their movement are already good friends: “nous nous connaissons tous . . . et notre logement . . . est le lieu de passage pour un bref casse-croûte ou pour une nuit. Nos copains, solitaires, loin des leurs, viennent se frotter un
The Aubracs provide fellow résistants a refuge in the often isolating world of resistance work. They act as a substitute family to those who are cut off from their own families, offering them a home-cooked meal, an innocent child to play with and a taste of normal family life. The Aubracs’ home, and especially their child, represent a reminder of normalcy, security and happiness: “la vraie maison d’une vraie famille, comme au temps de la paix, celle qui rendait aux clandestins le souvenir de la stabilité et leur donnait le goût de la reconquérir” (173). This family life offers résistants the hope and the promise of a return to peaceful times, and gives them the desire and renewed energy with which to continue the fight. In return, surrounded by her friends, Lucie Aubrac feels invincible: “Dans notre Mouvement, nous fûmes dès le début un groupe d’amis profondément unis . . . Notre amitié était telle que nous avions l’impression de nous protéger mutuellement, d’être invulnérables. Et il ne nous est jamais rien arrivé lorsque nous étions ensemble” (132).

In Lucie Aubrac’s account, solidarity is what keeps prisoners, résistants, and family and friends alive, through the sharing of food, information, mutual protection, and companionship. Any sense of division and isolation would have defeated the Resistance, for solidarity and friendship are the keys to a successful resistance and to survival.

With its focus on family, and on the Resistance as extended family, Lucie Aubrac’s journal “encourages a presentation of the Resistance as a clandestine family unit which extends over the whole of France” (Gorrara “Reviewing Gender” 149). Many people aided the Aubracs with all kinds of services, and Lucie Aubrac remembers them fondly in her narrative. By describing some of her missions, Lucie Aubrac reveals the members of this

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208 It was common practice to recruit new résistants among family and friends with proven trust and shared convictions.
family, the unlikely chain of allies that supported her and the Resistance: “une complicité unissait le professeur d’histoire aux cheminots de Vénissieux, . . . des Suisses, citoyens d’un pays neutre, prenaient des risques pour aider les résistants et la Résistance chez leurs voisins” (155). Furthermore, the Aubracs’ more than three months on the run allow Lucie Aubrac to bring to the forefront the people from all walks of life who helped them along the way. In doing this, she presents a unified, resistant France consistent with the “résistancialiste” version of history that was established by de Gaulle and other post-war authors on the Resistance, but that was threatened in the 1980s by Klaus Barbie’s defense team, as well as by the renewed debate on Vichy. Lucie Aubrac certainly addresses collaboration in her text, but collaborators are often people in state-controlled positions, like the police or school administrators. In her experience, the average French person supports the Resistance in some way. Nevertheless, she is honest in showing how in times of war everything comes with a price, and people who might ordinarily be decent people, such as the morgue attendant and the prison guard, require bribes. Still, the good/evil dichotomy is much clearer in Ils partiront dans l’ivresse than in La Douleur, where the line between the résistant and the collaborator are blurred, and where de Gaulle is one of the evils.

Lucie Aubrac particularly honors the country people who gave everything and risked everything to hide them and other clandestines. For them, the danger was constant, whereas the résistants moved around. Since the war, Lucie Aubrac has continued to laud these ordinary heroes in speeches and interviews:

Consider all the farm women who hid the supplies that had been parachuted. . . . When the Germans found Allied materiel these women were killed or deported; their farms burned. And yet they took that risk. Now men don’t generally consider that heroism. But that is unjust. I believe the peasant

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209 See the section of Chapter 1 on historical context for more detail on the “résistancialiste” version of the Occupation years.
woman—who must have been frightened for she knew that there were twenty containers of Allied arms to be picked up a few at a time in the months to come—was much more courageous than say someone involved in the sort of thing that I did with our armed group. This is much more difficult than direct action, which is generally done by teams, and over almost immediately. (Weitz, “Lucie Aubrac” 96)

*Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* reveals that the Resistance succeeded thanks to ordinary people, both the common people in the shadows as well as its leaders. Lucie Aubrac’s portraits of well-known leaders, while a commentary on politics and organization, also portray them as loyal, caring friends, and as regular people. Lucie Aubrac even reveals the very human side of Jean Moulin, as he laughs like a little boy at the Guignols. Her portraits of leaders of the Resistance often highlight their human virtues as much as their leadership abilities.

As much as she alludes to herself as a masculine hero, Lucie Aubrac also shows herself as an everyday person in her daily routine. By doing this, she not only destroys the myth that the war hero is the male soldier on the battlefield, but also the myth that feminine heroism comes only from extraordinary standouts. Lucie Aubrac replaces the image of extraordinary heroine with that of everyday résistante.

Through her portraits of common people who helped the Resistance, who are often forgotten, and leaders of the Resistance (including herself) who are often deified, Lucie Aubrac shows us that, in fact, the movement is embodied by different types of people and their diverse actions.

*Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* teaches us that, for Lucie Aubrac, resistance is a mix of many things. Resistance work blends into her home and professional life. Because this is Lucie Aubrac’s day-to-day reality, references to home, school, the daily routine and resistance work are often mixed in the same journal entry, or even the same sentence. On a
typical day, she teaches a class, then sets off to find food for her little boy, and later meets with her Groupe Franc. Regarding the May breakout of her three comrades, she matter-of-factly informs her team that she can be involved since there is no school: “La date de cette évasion est fixée au lundi matin 24 mai. Je n’ai pas classe le lundi matin; je peux donc être dans le coup” (34). This division of duties continues up to the very last day before the rescue: “Pendant toute la semaine, je vais me partager entre le lycée, la maison et le Groupe-Franc” (32).

According to Domna Stanton, a review of autobiographical writings by women disclosed that “the autogynographical narrative was marked by conflicts between the private and the public, the personal and the professional. . . . There was a systematic tension between the conventional role of wife, mother, or daughter and another, unconventional self that had ambition or a vocation” (13). The texts of Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac all illustrate that the public and private worlds overlap in times of war and that a woman’s daily life inevitably gets entangled in a daily resistance. Yet, we learn from their texts that these first two authors did not experience the same continuity in their lives as Lucie Aubrac. Claire Chevrillon had some difficulty in reconciling her identities, and at some point chose to go underground and dedicate herself entirely to her work for the Resistance. Duras is more difficult to judge, since by the time we see her in “La douleur,” she has given up almost all activity other than waiting for her husband to return. However, Lucie Aubrac’s text suggests the opposite of Stanton’s findings—that there is an absolute continuity between Lucie Aubrac’s private and public duties, as well as between her many identities. Again, this is probably best represented by the fact that her unborn child accompanies her throughout; mother and résistante are one.

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210 Domna Stanton defines autogynography as autobiographical writing by women (5).
Returning to the opening scene in the London hospital, Lucie Aubrac gives an indication from the very beginning that her world will be this mix of the private and the public, the feminine and the masculine, the ordinary and the heroic: “Lucie Aubrac portrays herself giving birth in distinctly unheroic terms, as if to underscore the fallible, ordinary human quality of her persona” (Hewitt 269). If we recall, the English nurse admonishes Lucie Aubrac for her apparent weakness: “‘Shut up, it’s the war’ . . . ‘Voilà quatre ans qu’on travaille sous les bombes. Un peu de sang froid, madame, nous n’avons jamais vu une femme comme vous’” (15). Ironically, it is another female who projects the stereotype of the weak woman onto Lucie Aubrac. When the nurse tells Lucie Aubrac that she has never seen a woman like her before, she does not realize the extent of her statement. The English nurse has no idea that she is dealing with one of the bravest heroines of the French Interior Resistance. But to stress her disbelief in legends of the extraordinary, Lucie Aubrac pokes fun at herself by repeating what a hospital matron says as she picks the fainted Lucie Aubrac off the floor: “‘Drôle d’héroïne!’” (16).

Lucie Aubrac is indeed recognized as a heroine. That same day, while still in her hospital bed, she is honored by military men who pin a medal on her: “ces militaires . . . marquent leur fraternité en me traitant en soldat et me donnent ce qui est pour eux la reconnaissance du mérite militaire: une médaille” (16). But once again, or rather, right from the start of the journal, Lucie Aubrac demystifies the cults of masculinity and heroism by placing this ultimate symbol of masculine, military glory next to the ultimate symbols of femininity—her lactating breasts: “Devant les grandes pointes noires de cette médaille, je tremble pour mes seins si vulnérables et gonflés de lait” (16). By joining these symbols of masculinity and femininity in the same image, Lucie Aubrac places side by side the public
and the private, History and the personal experience, the heroic and the ordinary, the ultimate model of masculinity (the soldier) and the ultimate symbol of femininity (the mother).

But Lucie Aubrac also portrays herself and others résistants as regular human beings, exposing their vulnerabilities and revealing their humanity. She admits that at times she acted impetuously, such as the times that she threatened the prosecutor or barged into Barbie’s office: “[Lucie Aubrac] also takes stock of her own rash actions and occasional fits of bad temper, thereby showing that it is fallible human beings (like herself) that make up the Resistance, not perfect ideologues” (Hewitt 270).

It is this very non-gendered, non-mystified and grounded focus on the human aspect of the Resistance that characterizes Lucie Aubrac, her text, and resistance itself. Ils partiront dans l’ivresse is neither a masculine nor a feminine account of war and resistance; it is a human account, written from a human perspective which encompasses a myriad of experiences. In fact, all accounts are simply human accounts, for each person writes his or her story based on individual lived experience, whether it falls under stereotypes of masculinity, femininity, or a combination of both. It is only logical that de Gaulle’s memoirs should have a political and military focus, since that was his world, and that Duras’ wait for her husband should take over hers. Likewise, Lucie Aubrac can attest to the reality of everyday life and resistance within France, both ordinary and militant, for that was her individual experience.
CONCLUSION

Since the 1960s, historical and literary criticism supports the notion that opposing representations of war and resistance are dictated by men’s and women’s biological difference as well as their traditionally gendered roles in society. Men’s writing, which dominates post-war historiography, is said to highlight the grand historical/political events and idealize the image of the virile, masculine hero in military battle or armed combat, as André Rauch demonstrated.\(^\text{211}\) With the wave of women’s personal wartime narratives that has emerged since the 1970s, and which often features women in typically feminine spaces such as the home and workplace, women have supplemented the prevailing masculine vision of war and resistance with a broader, yet more detailed view of life under the Occupation. Their memoirs and journals look beyond the soldier on the battlefield to witness how war affects ordinary people in their everyday lives, everywhere. Women’s writings attest to the day-to-day struggle of regular people caught in war, their daily resistance, and their ordinary heroism. As a result, this more comprehensive and detailed view of daily life under the Occupation has brought out the vast participation of women in all areas of the Resistance. It has also brought to light the less glorious aspects of war, such as waiting, suffering, death, and chaos, which are equally part of war, but which have often been left out of the men’s accounts that comprise the official history.

Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac are among these women who have debunked the masculine stereotype of military war, resistance, and heroism. Their

\(^\text{211}\) See Chapter 2 (47- 84) of André Rauch’s *Le premier sexe: mutations et crise de l’identité masculine*. 
writings demonstrate that the public war also affects every aspect of private life, as it infiltrates individuals’ homes and personal lives. These women offer examples of how the basic struggle to survive, provide for, and protect one’s family under extreme conditions of war is in itself resistance. In fact, they show us that resistance is first instinctive, before it becomes organized and militarized. While these authors undeniably inscribe the history of WWII with women’s individual and organized resistance, do their writings constitute a feminization of history? Do they necessarily replace the masculine model of war and resistance with a feminine model? Must we continue to adhere to a polarized and mutually-exclusive classification?

Within her theories on feminine writing, Hélène Cixous opposes a simplistic division of writing according to sex. In other words, writing by women is not necessarily feminine, and writing by men, masculine: “De toute manière, de la féminité – à définir – il y en a aussi chez les hommes, et donc ça ne doit pas revenir s’enfermer dans l’histoire de la différence anatomique et des sexes” (Interview 155). We have touched on examples of twentieth-century war literature by men that transgress the masculine stereotype of the efficient and glorious military machine. French novelists Barbusse, Vercors, Claude Simon (La route des Flandres) and even Céline (Guignol’s Band) reveal the chaos, the quotidian, and the horror of war. Instead, Cixous prefers the idea of a bisexual writing that is neither completely feminine nor completely masculine, but that is inclusive of the other (Wiedemann 1). Other gender theorists, such as Judith Butler and Elisabeth Badinter, have also moved “away from arguments about sexual difference toward the notion of a gendered continuum” (Morgan 193).
The notion of gendered writing is in many ways upheld by the texts of Chevrillon and Duras, as they have a more traditionally “feminine” representation of war. Nevertheless, as we have seen with Duras, *La Douleur* also belongs to traumatic writing, a genre which does not discriminate by gender. Lucie Aubrac, however, is a perfect example of someone who has blurred traditionally constructed gender lines when it comes to her resistance acts and writing. She participated in armed action and organizational leadership, all the while trying to protect her family, students, and friends, many of whom were fellow résistants. Lucie Aubrac’s account of resistance naturally blends the public record of Libération-Sud with her personal story. Her life and writing span the continuum of “masculine” and “feminine” wartime experience, resistance, and heroism, proving that contrasting representations are not restricted to authors of opposite sex, nor are they mutually exclusive in the same work.

*Ils partiront dans l’ivresse* challenges the division of texts into masculine and feminine and rejects such a one-dimensional categorization. From the very first page of her journal, Lucie Aubrac emphasizes this crossover, moving easily from her feminine and private childbirth to the masculine and public recognition for her military exploits. In the end, she writes across the spectrum of human experience, of all that she encountered simultaneously as she fought to make a life and a future for herself, her family, her country, and humanity. To read her text from either a masculine or feminine perspective would be to limit our reading of this text. By starting with the human perspective of Lucie Aubrac, we can perhaps proceed to challenge restrictive readings of other texts, including canonical works such as *La Douleur*, or the lesser-known, more personal works such as that of Claire Chevrillon. In the end, Lucie Aubrac, Marguerite Duras and Claire Chevrillon can only attest to their own individual resistance experience, which largely depended on their location, their
contacts, personal circumstances, and individual motivations. The same can be said for everyone, male and female alike. It is no surprise that de Gaulle’s memoirs focus on the military, since he defined himself through this military/political persona. Ultimately, writing can certainly be influenced but is not limited by one’s sex or socially-constructed gender definitions. It is, rather, based on personal human experience which is multi-dimensional and which can transcend society’s stereotypes. Hélène Cixous hints at this as well: “A part of me is specifically woman and the rest of me is human” (Sellers 151).

In a time when the traditional divisions between literature, fiction, and history have been called into question, the texts of Chevrillon, Duras and Aubrac respond to these issues of genre with the same degree of fluidity. In their personal narratives, these authors represent the big events of the war as they heard about them and experienced them alongside the daily events of their private lives. Duras, a professional writer, admittedly mixes pieces of autobiographical fiction with her supposed real journal in La Douleur. Lucie Aubrac, a historian by profession, instead writes a non-academic, more accessible text that reads and sells like a best-seller novel. Claire Chevrillon has the manuscript, originally intended only for her family, edited and translated for publication. During the 1980s, at a time when wartime documentation was still scarce, the memory of the Holocaust and the Resistance were being threatened, and traditional concepts of war, resistance, and history were being questioned, these three women chose to publish their personal documents for the public record.

Since the last part of the twentieth century, with the changes occurring in historiography and the realization that all history is subjective, personal narratives like these

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212 Ironically, the text has been criticized by historians for its romanticization and for a lack of historical accuracy, yet historians themselves often read the text (and thus criticize it) as history. Klaus Barbie’s lawyer also tried to build a defense based on the text.
have become a valuable resource for a more complete understanding of the war years.

Bridget Brereton raises the question of the status or usefulness of diaries and memoirs as historical document:

How far can these memoirs [and] diaries . . . by women help us to reconstruct the history of the region . . . ? They all permit us to listen to women’s voices and women’s experiences . . . in contrast to the vast majority of written sources . . . generated by men. Like oral testimonies, they often tell a life-story as the subject herself saw it, emphasizing the activities and emotions important to her own lived experience; they are potentially rich in experiential material . . . Historians have more or less accepted by now that such matters are legitimate (and necessary) subjects for their enquiry. (146-7)\textsuperscript{213}

Brereton suggests that these texts give rise to women’s voices which were previously silenced by the masculine domination of society and its institutions such as writing, and specifically, historical writing. She also acknowledges that these diaries do not offer a traditional, objective view of history, nor do they generalize women’s experience into a collective female voice. Each woman’s experience translates into a unique and personal rendition of the history that she witnessed. The texts of Claire Chevrillon, Marguerite Duras and Lucie Aubrac do corroborate some of the “historic” events of WWII. They also provide much general insight into the daily lives and resistance activities of French women during the Occupation. Yet, each one can only represent the wartime experience from her own perspective, through her own unique vision. Such is the case with all witnesses of history.

Throughout history, women’s memoirs and personal writings have challenged such distinctions of gender and genre and have constructed a new literary and historical space which combines the historical with the personal, and reflects the multiplicity of life and

\textsuperscript{213} While Brereton’s study focuses on Caribbean writers of an earlier period, the question is valid for all personal writings across time and space.
human experience.\textsuperscript{214} As such, I prefer not to speak of a feminization of history, but rather a humanization, or personalization, of history; that is, a more personalized representation of historical events that is based on individual experience, but which is still part of the historical discourse. Indeed, this literature begins to fill the blanks in historical memory and discourse.

\textsuperscript{214} See Faith Beasley’s study of the seventeenth-century memoirs of Mlle de Montpensier.
The following biographical summary contains information on the authors of this study that is relevant to their wartime activity:

Claire Chevrillon

Claire Chevrillon was born in 1907 to an elite, intellectual French family. Since her mother was Jewish, anti-Semitic persecution affected the family directly. During the war years, Claire Chevrillon was a high school English teacher. At first, she performed individual acts to support the British, and mainly helped her family, friends, and students to survive the day-to-day hardships of war. In October of 1942, when she learned of an organized underground movement against the Nazi Occupier, she joined its Paris Air Operations. She first worked as a “mailbox,” allowing her apartment to be used as a clearinghouse for messages and documents passing between fellow resistance members. She also served as a liaison, a messenger who physically transmitted the information and documents, as well as coordinated meetings between resistance members and leaders.

Until September of 1943, Claire Chevrillon managed to lead a double life, balancing her activity in the Resistance with her legitimate life as a schoolteacher. At that point, she went underground and dedicated herself to being a full-time chiffreuse, that is, a woman who encoded and decoded the strategic communications passing between the different bodies of the Resistance. By 1944, Claire Chevrillon was head of the Code Service for the Delegation, General de Gaulle’s provisional government in France (Le Service du Chiffre de la Délégation Générale du Gouvernement Provisoire). She “was the main link in the lines of communication running between the Free French Government in London and de Gaulle’s Delegation in France” (Translator’s Note, xi). From this important position, she deciphered,
transcribed and encoded the telegrams going back and forth between London and Paris. Many of her coded telegrams were reproduced in the famous book and subsequent film, Is Paris Burning?

Upon the Liberation of Paris, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Claire Chevrillon to travel to London to give speeches on the Occupation and Resistance. After the war, she worked for a year with the United Nations Relief and Repatriation Association in Germany. She then returned to education for a number of years, in Paris and England, before moving on to other posts abroad.

Originally, Claire Chevrillon documented her wartime experience in a 1985 manuscript intended only as a private, family record for her grand-nieces and nephews. At the insistence of a friend who translated the manuscript, Code name Christiane Clouet: A Woman in the French Resistance was published in 1995.

**Marguerite Duras**

Marguerite Duras, born near Saigon in 1914 as Marguerite Donnadieu, needs no presentation. However, it is interesting to note that for approximately one year (1942-43), she worked for the Comité d’organisation du livre, as secretary of the division that controlled the distribution of paper for the printing of books. Already, three months after the armistice, most of the publishing companies had signed a convention with the occupying authorities agreeing not to publish anything anti-German or that would be forbidden in Germany. Because of the shortage of paper, which played perfectly into the Nazi censure, book publishing became even more selective. By 1942, German authorities demanded that in the occupied zone, paper distribution be discussed only with those publishers that supported German interests at 100% (Adler 155). Essentially, Marguerite Duras—then Marguerite
Antelme, for she was married to Robert Antelme—decided which books were published. It is through this position that she met her lover, Dionys Mascolo, D. of La Douleur. (Adler 158).

In 1943, while still working in this position (which some might consider collaboration), Duras, her husband and her lover joined the Resistance through a friend. Soon, she was recruiting and acting as a mailbox and liaison agent. It is now common knowledge that the three became involved with François Mitterrand’s network, a group whose mission was to fight for the rights and honor of prisoners of war. In 1944, Mitterrand’s network merged with two others who shared the same goals, and they added to their cause that of deportees. Mitterand became the head of the new National Movement of Prisoners of War and Deportees (Le Mouvement National des Prisonniers de Guerre et Déportés - MNPGD). According to Duras biographer Laure Adler, Mitterand “se souvient d’une jeune femme vive, déterminée, exaltée qui s’offrait toujours à faire les missions les plus délicates” (174). Robert Antelme and Dionys Mascolo also became increasingly active in the Resistance, but in June 1944, Antelme, his sister, and other members of their group were arrested and later deported. This is the time period reflected in La Douleur.

Marguerite Duras’ career as a writer, and her identity as Duras, began during the war years. While some of her texts are personal and autobiographical, none of the more than fifty novels, plays and screenplays, speaks about the war, except for Hiroshima Mon Amour (1960), and forty years later, La Douleur (1985).

**Lucie Aubrac**

Lucie Aubrac was born Lucie Bernard, in 1912, to humble winegrowers in Burgundy. At age 17, she moved to Paris on her own and quickly became involved with the young communist movement. It was among this group that she first heard of fascism and anti-
Semitism. Between 1931 and 1938 she passed the bac, studied at the Sorbonne, and earned her agrégation in history. Her first teaching position was in Strasbourg, where she met Jean Cavaillès, with whom she would later co-found the resistance movement, Libération-Sud. In Strasbourg, she also met Raymond Samuel, an engineer fulfilling his military service. They married in 1939.

In 1940, the Samuels forfeited visas to the United States, choosing not to leave behind family, friends, and a country in distress. They moved to Lyon, where they lived with their infant son. Until October 1943, Lucie led a double life: legally, she was Lucie Samuel, wife, mother, and schoolteacher; while in her clandestine world, she was Catherine, the résistante. But in October 1943, after breaking her husband out of German custody for the third time, she was exposed and hunted by the Gestapo. Lucie Aubrac (who took her husband’s resistance code name) was then designated to represent her resistance movement in the interim government in Algiers. This assured her departure for London. After months of failed attempts, she was finally flown to London in February 1944, where she gave birth to her second child just days after her arrival. Lucie Aubrac was “the first woman appointed to the Consultative Assembly of the French Committee of National Liberation in Algiers. In recognition of her accomplishments, [she] was awarded the Croix de Guerre and the French Medal of the Resistance” (Rossiter 167).

After spending time abroad in diplomatic roles, the Aubracs returned to France and Lucie Aubrac returned to her teaching. Well after retirement, she has continued to tour schools throughout France, giving lectures on the Resistance, bringing history to life for the students, and showing the relevance to present-day situations worldwide. She continues to
honor the memory of the Resistance while spreading a message of freedom, justice, equality and tolerance.
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