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**An assessment of the role of motherhood in
the French Resistance movement, 1939-1945**

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'We, the mothers'

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Introduction

*'I did nothing.'*¹

These are the words of Gabrielle Ferrières, the sister of a distinguished Resistance hero, when asked of her own contribution to the movement. They could, however, be the words of thousands of women across Nazi and Vichy France, whose participation in resistance activities seemed, to them, to be of little value and significance. More than 70 years on, these self-effacing attitudes remain, as surviving women brush off their participation as 'just' a courier, or 'simply' an abettor.² As this dissertation hopes to show, there was nothing 'just' or 'simple' about these women at all.

In the decades following the war, feminist histories were able to detail just how heavily women were involved in the organisation and leadership of resistance movements, in a narrative which has subsequently been widely adopted. Many women have indeed been justly remembered and commended for their grand contribution, but this is exactly where problems begin to arise. By championing a narrative of 'grand' acts of resistance, where women would dedicate themselves fully to the cause, taking up arms and often living in recluse, we are concealing the actions of those for whom 'resistance' was fleeting, occasionally inadvertent and often in the notoriously difficult-to-access domestic realm. Cécile Rol-Tanguy, for instance, carried Resistance orders in the bedding of her baby's pram, hiding weapons in her potato sacks.³ These acts of so-called 'passive resistance' could range from stealing foodstuffs, to transporting Resistance documents, to forging signatures and identity papers, to anti-state vandalism and a whole host of other undertakings which we will later explore. Any analysis of this form of resistance has been noticeably absent from histories of the Occupation as these activities do not qualify as exceptional, thus are denied the appropriate historical consideration.⁴ It is my aim in what follows to counter this allegation and instead reveal the remarkable actions of women across occupied France, who formed the backbone of the entire Resistance movement. I am not alone in this endeavour; Margaret Collins Weitz has undertaken significant research into the mundane, every-day tasks undertaken by women, which do not feature in traditional historical accounts, and qualify their significance to any discussion of the success of the

¹ Gabrielle Ferrières in Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France 1940- 1945* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), pp. 95-97.

² Anne Sebba, 'The Forgotten Women of the French Resistance', *The Telegraph* (2016) <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/the-forgotten-women-of-the-french-resistance/>> [accessed 28/05/2017], para. 8 of 24.

³ Anne Sebba, *Les Parisiennes: How the Women of Paris Lived, Loved and Died in the 1940s* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), p. 266.

⁴ Harry R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in Southern France, 1942-1944* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon, 1993), p. 94.

French Resistance.⁵ What is somewhat novel about my work, however, is that it attempts to add a new dimension to discussion by stressing the unique significance of 'motherhood' in resistance activities and how this informed and affected wartime activities on an extraordinary scale. Using one's role as a mother as a frame through which to explore women's contribution to the French Resistance has provided an invaluable insight into the life of working people under the Occupation and revealed some astonishing facts about how the Resistance movement was supported and sustained. It has been a fascinating and enlightening study, and one which certainly deserves further investigation. These women have much to contribute, both to academic history and to collective memory of wartime France, if only we are willing to find them.

Following the liberation of France in August, 1944, General Charles de Gaulle triumphantly credited the victory to 'all of France', 'liberated by its people', in the beginning of what was to become a long history of political rhetoric mobilising collective memory of the French Resistance.⁶ The narrative is surely a familiar one; an underground networks of spies and saboteurs, displaying remarkable fortitude, enduring patriotism and contributing significantly to the war effort through armed confrontation and clandestine intelligence. This description undoubtedly remains an integral part of the French political and cultural landscape and continues to inform conceptions of national pride and identity. In French President Emmanuel Macron's recent speech commemorating the victims of the 1942 Vel d'Hiv raid, the 'special heroism' of French people was praised as their participation in the Resistance was once again held up as a unique commendation of their national character.⁷ What was most striking about this speech, however, was Macron's acceptance of French responsibility for the deportation of Jews and, correspondingly, Nazi collaboration. This issue of collaboration remains a hugely sensitive one in France, which has, in turn, coloured many histories of the subject. Reluctance to admit to consorting with either Germans or the Vichy has led to the falsifying of wartime accounts, biased memories and poses a significant challenge to anyone attempting to uncover a social history of occupied France. This is particularly true for a history of female experiences and activities, as women were subject to brutal punishments and public shame for acts deemed collaborative after the war. Historians themselves have been guilty of categorising women as either 'resisters' or 'collaborators' and, in doing so, perpetuate a false dichotomy of the 'good' and the 'bad; the 'loyalists' and the 'traitors'. I hope to demonstrate how such labels are not only

⁵ Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. vii.

⁶ Charles de Gaulle, 'Charles de Gaulle's Victory Speech on the Liberation of Paris – 25 August 1944', *Made From History* (2014), <<http://madefrom.com/history/world-war-two/charles-de-gaulles-victory-speech/>> [accessed 22/03/2018], para. 2 of 7.

⁷ Louise Nordstrom, 'Macron Restates France's Responsibility for WWII Roundup of Jews', *France 24/7* (2016), <<http://www.france24.com/en/20170716-macron-france-responsibility-wwii-roundup-jews-vichy-velodrome-hiver-paris-nazi-camps>> [accessed 20/03/2018], para. 6 of 17.

reductionist but also obscures the histories of those who did not fully identify with either party but moved fluidly along the spectrum of resistance and collaboration, sometimes committing acts of both within the same day.⁸ It is worth noting here that this dissertation has scope only to analyse women and the Resistance in depth, although it will touch on collaboration where appropriate. The complexity of collaboration deserves a whole study in itself and to attempt to cover it here would simply not do the issue justice.

The prevailing characterisation of the women in the Resistance is that they were predominantly young, single and childless. A fascinating study by the ADIR in 1975 details the demographics of 1,780 women deported in three large convoys from France, most likely to work-camps, from 1943 to 1944.⁹ There are a few things to note here; firstly, these women were all deported for various crimes of resistance, from sabotage to providing intelligence to theft. Secondly, the deportation convoys assessed were not chosen because they contained a rare demographic but because they were the largest. Strikingly, almost two-thirds of the women in each convoy (64%, 63% and 58%) were married, widowed or divorced and most had dependent children.¹⁰ In fact, married women with children made up the largest sub-group of the deportees; 60% of those aged between 25 and 50 had children below the age of 16.¹¹ This, of course, cannot be projected onto the entire female Resistance demographic as it is possible those with dependents were less able to retreat underground and thus were arrested more frequently. Nonetheless, this study certainly challenges the perception of young, single *résistantes* and sheds light on the proportion of mothers actively involved.

It is important to note that passive resistance in itself was not exclusively female. The French men who remained on the home front certainly participated, as the women did, in acts of passive resistance with varying degrees of commitment and intention. Graffiti of German property, for example, was rife in Paris and other cities and was a crime frequently attributed to young males. The men who worked in German run factories provide an interesting case study, as they technically worked for the German state but there are still cases of sabotage and vandalism in the workplace as some sought to disrupt their occupiers' war effort.¹² What, then, was so unique or exclusive about

⁸ Katherine Michelle Thurlow, 'Blurring the Lines between Resistance and Collaboration: Women in Nazi Germany and Vichy and Nazi-Occupied France during WWII' (doctoral thesis, College of William and Mary, 2017), p. iv.

⁹ Debra Workman, 'Refusing the Unacceptable: The Women of the *Association Nationale Des Anciennes Déportées et Internées de la Résistance*' (doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 1997), pp. 19-23.

¹⁰ Workman, 'Refusing the Unacceptable', p. 23.

¹¹ Workman, 'Refusing the Unacceptable', p. 23.

¹² Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, p. 14.

'motherhood' which merits it a special consideration in histories of occupied France above any other? This dissertation will explore how 'motherhood', as a role and a title, heavily influenced women to act in a way which could be considered 'resistant', and how it can be held responsible for the outcomes and memories of these actions. The first chapter will assess the role played by so-called 'maternal instincts' in activities which were purposefully and actively resistant. For this, I will draw on the written and oral testimonies of women who were consciously aware that they were performing in a way which was considered, at least, highly provocative and, at most, would qualify them for arrest, deportation or execution. This area will require the most attention to the authenticity of the evidence cited; most of the testimonies were written or recorded many years after the event and have, as such, likely been coloured by post-war retellings of the accomplishments of the French Resistance, specifically the centrality of women to these endeavours. They are, nonetheless, some of the most valuable sources available to us as one of the few places where we can directly access the voices of the women we are trying to discuss, in their own words. Within these testimonies, there are certainly instances of exaggeration and embellishment which, when studied in isolation, might seem to discredit the sources to some degree. However, we are able to somewhat overcome this by analysing a multitude of testimonies from different women of varying backgrounds, experiences and location. Instead of attempting to prove the authenticity of one account or another, we are able to chart certain themes and common sentiments which come up across all the testimonies. By using the sources to corroborate one another, we are thus able to offer a reasonable, considered assessment of the resistance they describe. The second chapter of this dissertation will look at the specific interaction between motherhood and food as a field in which acts of resistance were carried out. It will consider the extent to which we can actually qualify such actions as resistant when motivations were not necessarily political, asking if they were merely tactics of survival, to which we have equated a political alliance which did not really exist. The third chapter will explore accounts of the concealment and assistance of Allied servicemen, drawing on the letters and memoirs of British and American soldiers in France. It will argue that concealment should be thought of as a specifically gendered act of resistance, informed by conceptions of maternal duties, both by French abettors and the servicemen themselves. The fourth and final chapter will examine how idealised expectations of mothers were used by all parties during the Occupation and how this impacted the treatment of the women involved. Looking at Vichy propaganda around the celebration of motherhood, I will suggest that some women were able to use their maternal position to mask resistance activities and to inform the course of their punishment.

Methodology:

To begin, however, I will address some of the controversies behind particular terminology used. The terms 'resistance' and 'collaboration' (and 'resister' and 'collaborator') have proved somewhat problematic in historiographical discourse. There seems to be a propensity to label actors as one or the other, viewing the spectrum between the two as linear, when the reality is far more nuanced. Peter Davies claims an act of resistance was anything 'that, in the mind of the person executing the act, *felt* like an act of resistance'.¹³ There is a question over how appropriate the term 'resistance' might be to a person who, for example, intentionally gave a German official the wrong directions or made a joke at their expense but, nonetheless, allowing individuals to determine what was, for them, a resistant act is still a useful tool for categorisation. James C. Scott would disagree, stipulating that one does not have to be conscious of their decision to behave insolently in order for the act itself to be considered as such. He recognises the vast spectrum between overt defiance and hegemonic compliance, stressing the importance of recognising *subtle* acts in the context of a group denied scope for direct confrontation.¹⁴ This could involve spreading rumour and gossip or using euphemisms or jokes to subvert authoritative figures, known as 'infrapolitics'. Scott calls these small acts of disrespect and disobedience the 'hidden transcripts' which form the building blocks of actual rebellion; the logic of minor defiance is, for Scott, the same as that of resistance.¹⁵ For Ian Ousby, one need not carry out any form of insubordination whatsoever in order to qualify as part of the Resistance; instead, all they had to do was purposefully not 'collaborate'. In Ousby's assessment, remaining silent in the face of opportunities for advancement through collaboration was enough to equate a resistant act. Hannah Diamond, however, distinguishes acts which are 'resistant' or 'collaborative' based on motivation. She argues there is a degree of voluntary action and self-awareness in the words, which must be considered if we are to categorise actions appropriately.¹⁶ She differentiates between having a 'few drinks and dances with German soldiers and establishing regular intimacy', claiming an in-depth commitment to collaboration is an over-simplified analysis of such actions when it is likely many women merely intended to recognise the sexual appeal of the soldiers.¹⁷ This is not a view held by many women post-war, when so-called 'horizontal collaboration' was fiercely condemned. Madame Louise, an advocate of women's resistance activities, recalls, 'A woman who was the mistress of a German was not innocent. She knew that at

¹³ Peter Davies, *France and the Second World War: Occupation, Collaboration and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 36.

¹⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 136.

¹⁵ Scott, *Domination*, pp. 196-201.

¹⁶ Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France 1939-1948: Choices and Constraints* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 1999), p. 72.

¹⁷ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War*, p. 82.

any moment this German could arrest her brother and father'.¹⁸ In Diamond's view, it seems an act must have been politically motivated for it to be put into the inherently political categories of 'resistant' and 'collaborative'. Conversely, for Madame Louise, simple awareness of the political implications of an action, regardless of directed purpose, is enough to classify not just an action but also a person. I think there is some truth to both interpretations and will attempt to synthesise them in what follows. Actions cannot be viewed in isolation, without appropriate understanding of intentions, as to do so would certainly distort the historical record. There are instances, however, when we may be able to objectively label actions in a way the actor themselves would not in order to discover how fleeting, individual decisions contributed to wider events and outcomes. This becomes a somewhat dangerous field when we begin to use these objective categorisations for non-academic, hypothetical purposes and instead attribute blame to the people involved. For the purpose of academic enquiry, however, they are useful tools of categorisation, which we can use to further our understanding of the complexities of human endeavours.

Chapter 1: Maternal instincts in Resistance activity

As we have discussed, the resistance experiences of the majority of women in occupied France remain largely obscured, in part due to the fact that they took place in the relatively inaccessible private domain and in part due to a lack of appreciation as to what qualified a 'resistant' act. There have, however, been some important attempts to preserve accounts and information pertaining to women who consciously participated in the Resistance. Margaret Collins Weitz in particular has conducted an impressive series of oral history interviews, for which she has provided the full transcripts. As we might expect, the women speaking in these transcripts often cite familial preservation and protection as their motivation for joining official Resistances or acting in such a manner on their own accord; the same is invariably true for those who confess to having collaborated during the Occupation. Lise Lesèvre is one who attributes her own fierce resistance activity to an instinct brought on by her maternal duties. She recalls, 'They taught us to hate – we, the mothers who saw so many little innocents leave for their deaths... I was obsessed with making those monsters pay'.¹⁹ Children did, inevitably, impact the type of resistance these ardent mothers were able to carry out as they feared implicating their dependents in the process, something which is evident from their transcripts. Agnes Humbert, mother of two, kept a particularly detailed journal during the war, in which she frankly details how she refused offers to escape from Anrath prison for

¹⁸ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War*, p. 84.

¹⁹ Lise Lesèvre, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 107.

fear of endangering her son.²⁰ She is not alone; other women felt similarly restricted in their activities, despite their devotion to the Resistance cause. Ida Bourdet recalls being particularly troubled by the threat she herself posed to her children: 'I did not send them to school but taught them myself... We had to move about frequently. That was very, very difficult.'²¹ These women are not, as some might accuse, attempting to overstress the contribution they made to the Resistance despite having young children; if anything, they lament their own limited impact. They do reveal, however, that concerns for familial duties impacted heavily on mothers in the Resistance to the extent that we cannot study these women in isolation from their domestic context.

What is perhaps most striking in the transcripts is the prevalence of what we shall call 'maternal instincts' in those who were confronted with situations which were as far removed from domestic life as could possibly be. During interrogation, after capture, in interaction with other prisoners, women drew heavily on their familiar matriarchal roles and performed in a way which we would recognise as 'maternal', by taking care of younger members and busying themselves with making their desperate conditions as 'homely' as possible. It is, of course, difficult to quantify what impact these efforts might have had but it is nonetheless possible to make some projections based on the available records. Humbert's journal reveals the intimacies of her time in Anrath prison and labour camp. She writes:

*'[I catch sight of] one charming face, a very young girl with blue eyes. Our eyes meet, and with a deft manoeuvre we manage to get next to each other... I squeeze her hand a whisper: 'Let's stick together, you and I, whatever happens.'*²²

Throughout Humbert's account and others, as we shall see, there seems to be a tendency to project tender, protective feelings onto particularly vulnerable associates in the absence of their own family. This is evident in the fact that Humbert is here drawn to a particularly 'very young' inmate, attempting to soothe her with physical touch, and again when she writes:

*'This evening I shall try and throw some underwear and stockings to Sylvie, who is so cold. The lives of my fellow prisoners intertwine with my own like vine tendrils... already prison life looms larger than my personal life, my house and family, which seem to be gradually fading into the background.'*²³

²⁰ Agnes Humbert, *Resistance: A Woman's Journal of Struggle and Defiance in Occupied France*, trans. by Barbara Mellor (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), p. 204.

²¹ Ida Bourdet, *Sisters in the Resistance*, pp. 226-227.

²² Humbert, *Resistance*, p. 116.

²³ Humbert, *Resistance*, p. 65.

Humbert is conscious of the way her family and domestic life are beginning to be replaced by prison life but, nonetheless, her role remains constant. She is displaying the same maternal urges to protect and clothe, even in the darkest of circumstances; the recipients are the only ones who differ. Humbert acquired the nickname 'Dustbin Duchess' during her internment, which she attributes to:

*'My daily habit of poking around with a stick in the factory waste bins. The treasures I unearth include rayon offcuts that we can cut up to make bandages for our burned fingers; bits of rubber to mend our aprons with.'*²⁴

Again, this is indicative of prevailing instincts to mend, provide and nurse. Wetiz's transcripts offer accounts from those who remember experiencing such motherly care upon their capture and cite this as the source of their courage and will to continue. Catherine Roux, a particularly young woman in the Resistance recalls the first moments of her internment:

*"Come little one, come', a voice said. I was pulled away from the door by a woman who had the only bed because she was the oldest. I cried out because I couldn't lie on my back (because of the beatings). She took off my things and took a chemise from clothes her family had sent her and ripped it into strips...[this woman] had been arrested because she was taking care of [a] British aviator en route to Spain via a network escape route... she was sixty-eight and very courageous.'*²⁵

Roux speaks very highly of her abettor and remembers her care with gratitude. The two developed a meaningful, if brief, relationship with similar characteristics of that of a mother and daughter. This woman hugely affected Roux's morale while imprisoned and her attitude to the Resistance community thereafter. I will not attempt to quantify what impact this had on the movement as a whole, but maternal instincts do seem to have come into play in a considerable way in these desperate situations. They have had a lasting impact on the individuals who remember them now with the view to commending these forgotten, overlooked acts of bravery.

Chapter 2: Food

We now turn to a somewhat alternative field of enquiry through which to assess the role of motherhood in the Resistance: food. Specifically, we will look at the rationing of food in occupied France and the lengths women were willing to go to ensure they had enough of it. These lengths

²⁴ Humbert, *Resistance*, p. 162.

²⁵ Catherine Roux, 'Draft Books Section About Catherine Roux', in *Moakley Archive & Institute* (1983), <<https://moakleyarchive.omeka.net/items/show/9209>> [accessed 12/01/18], p. 11.

were invariably illegal, which has led a number of historians to qualify those undertaking them as 'resisters' in that they were consciously undermining Vichy or Nazi rule. In order to evaluate if this is a fair assessment, we will look at official attitudes and punishments of those who committed food-related crimes to understand both how offenders were viewed by the authorities and how they viewed themselves.

From the outset, it is important to stress that food scarcity was distinctly a woman's issue.²⁶ We might even go further than this and claim it was chiefly an issue for women with dependents and heavy domestic responsibilities: mothers. Indeed, a report made by the Police Commissioner of Lille in April, 1942, following a 'baggage check' of passengers at Lille railway station, details how 'the great majority of those [trafficked] potatoes seized were from women, mothers of large families'.²⁷ The Commissioner goes on to profess surprise that 'the women, accompanied by their children, opposed our seizure of their bags'²⁸ – perhaps an indication that food was of such central importance to these mothers that they were willing to challenge state officials and risk punishment to preserve their illicit goods. This police report includes a study of the 63 cases of trafficking in ration cards in Lille, involving a total of 194 people, and cites married women as 1/5 of those arrested, which was one of the largest demographics.²⁹ This figure can be seen as remarkably high for two reasons. Firstly, the Commissioner initially set out to target industrial workers, who were suspected of carrying out illegal trading. The fact that so many women were caught, even though they were not being deliberately scrutinised, denotes just how heavily they were involved with trafficked goods. Secondly, the report only refers to those women who were actually arrested. It would not be unfair to suggest some mothers of large families would have escaped without punishment, as this dissertation will later explore how the status of 'mother' permitted special, often favourable, treatment by state officials. The issue of food rationing was intensely gendered and, in fact, came to characterise many women's memory of their experiences post-war.³⁰ As police records and oral transcripts make clear, much of this centred on the market and the long queues for inadequate supplies. Buying, cooking and fairly distributing food was central to a mother's role so the market was, in turn, an extension of the domain of that role. When this role was challenged, a very public social unrest occurred which was, for some, channelled into active opposition.³¹

²⁶ Paula Schwartz, 'The Politics of Food and Gender in Occupied Paris', *Modern & Contemporary France* (1991), Vol. 7, No. 1, 35-45, p. 35.

²⁷ Lynne Taylor, 'The Black Market in Occupied Northern France, 1940-1944', *Contemporary European History*, (1997) Vol. 6, No. 2, 153-176, p. 164.

²⁸ Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 164.

²⁹ Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 170.

³⁰ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War*, p. 49.

³¹ Schwartz, 'Politics of Food and Gender', pp. 41-43.

Food rationing in occupied France was a severe problem for civilians. Malnutrition was rife, which was evident from increased incidents of tuberculosis, diphtheria, stunted growth of children and adolescents and higher rates of infant mortality.³² Statisticians have estimated that the average daily intake by adults during the Occupation sank to around 1,200 calories per day.³³ As German policy dictated food production in France be directed to supply the German war economy, consumers readily blamed the state for shortages and antipathy began to grow. This was compounded by popular feeling that shops were profiteering from inflated prices.³⁴ In historical examples of enforced rationing, the existence of a black market has been almost inevitable. The same is true of occupied France where the black market thrived, but there were harsh punishments for those caught. Consumers were forced to pursue a range of options to increase the quantity of their rations, from arriving early at markets to bribe shop owners, to forging extra ration cards, to outright theft. Some women recall feigning pregnancy to hide the goods they had foraged or obtained by illicit means.³⁵ The situation was desperate, and no one went unaffected. The issue of food, then, was an important area in which mothers were brought into direct confrontation with official state systems. Flouting legal perimeters was a circumstantial necessity. Janet Teissier du Cros recalls:

*'We were all of us driven to some form of dishonest practice. It was no small hardship having to throw our moral scruples to the wind and settle down to a dishonest way of life, in full view of the children and in contradiction to all we were trying to teach them.'*³⁶

For Teissier du Cros, obtaining food by illicit means was not a choice but a means to survive. This is important, given that we have already established an act of resistance must be informed to an extent by motivation. In this instance, it was not loyalty to one party or another which inspired this mother's actions but a pure and simple desire to put enough food on the table. It is also telling that German and Vichy officials held a very different attitude towards those caught trading food illegally and those caught participating in the Resistance. The Germans actually delegated regulating rationing systems to the French police and French courts in a stark contrast to the way they fiercely prosecuted Resistant fighters themselves, with little consultation of French authorities.³⁷ Even in

³² Kenneth Mouré, 'Food Rationing and the Black Market in France, 1940-1944', *French History*, Vol.24, No.2 (2010), 262-282, p. 263.

³³ Ousby, *Occupation*, p. 118.

³⁴ Mouré, 'Food Rationing', p. 276.

³⁵ Diamond, *Women and the Second World War*, p. 58.

³⁶ Ousby, *Occupation*, p. 135.

³⁷ Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 174.

accounts of those women who did qualify themselves as part of the Resistance movement, the black market was another fact of life, rather than a deliberate insubordination:

'[I was tasked] to find on the black market, some chocolate, some things to sweeten up life for all these guys [active resisters]. So, I went around France a lot with baskets... I would put vegetables and then, in the bottom, I had hidden [foods]'.³⁸

In this passage, morale from forbidden food is mentioned. Similarly to previous analysis of how mothers were able to raise the morale of fellow prisoners through their care, they are able to raise the morale of armed and active Resistance members through sourcing food. Here again, the maternal services provided (feeding, cooking, nourishing) are providing the backbone for the Resistance movement and its fighters. Using the black market might not have been a resistant act in itself but it certainly helped to sustain the movement in a way which we should not underestimate. Conversely, there are those who argue that accessing enough food was itself a form of resistance, as a defiant demonstration that France could not be starved into submission.³⁹ It is also true that rationing and difficulties in accessing staple goods were actually hugely important factors in rousing women to formally join the Resistance. Pamphlets and stirring material were passed along food queues, such as the following letter from the so-called 'mothers of the Nord':

'ARISE WOMEN!!! There is wheat, much wheat in reserve in France, our children must have their full share. It is up to us to claim it!!!...To the Town Hall...To The Préfecture...let us all go together to claim bread for our children!!!'⁴⁰

The language here certainly conjures up the revolutionary spirit as it attempts to mobilise mothers specifically in anti-state demonstrations, but this brings us to the core question of this discussion; was this actually an act of 'resistance'? If, as the letter seems to suggest, what was actually being called for was not total revolution but a measured protest with a definitive aim and therefore endpoint, does this fit into our definition of 'resistance'? François Marcot and Jan Albert Goris would claim it does as protestors and black marketeers were acting patriotically, deeming the black market a 'vast movement of self-assistance'.⁴¹ It is true that participating in and buying food from the black market did undermine the mandate and structure of the Occupying authority, but is it

³⁸ Hélène Rénal, 'Transcript of Interview with Hélène Rénal', in *Moakley Archive & Institute* (1983), <<https://moakleyarchive.omeka.net/items/show/9209>> [accessed 16/02/18], p. 4.

³⁹ Sebba, *Les Parisiennes*, p. 117.

⁴⁰ Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 103.

⁴¹ F. Marcot, 'Etude Régionale: La Franche-Comté', in J.P. Azéma and F. Bédarida (eds), *Le Régime de Vichy et les Français* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1992), p. 643.; J.A. Goris, *Belgium under Occupation* (New York: Moretus Press, 1947), pp. 65-70; Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 174.

really fair to call this 'patriotism' or 'resistance'? Even if we believe it to be so, the question of what was actually being 'resisted' still remains; was the protest an affront to the German regime in principle, or just a challenge to the occupiers' rights to impose new rules?⁴² Lynne Taylor points out that the existence of a vibrant black market in other rationed countries, including Britain, complicates the assertion by Marcot and Goris that this was a deliberate protest to authority.⁴³ We must be wary of politicising actions on behalf of historical actors who would not attribute such labels to themselves as to do so is to misunderstand their motivation and distort the historical record. Food certainly played a large part in the Resistance, sustaining fighters and boosting morale, but participation in ration protests or the black market was not itself necessarily a resistant act. This is an important distinction to make if we are to offer a reasonable assessment of mothers in the Resistance.

Chapter 3: Gendered Resistance

One of the most important contributions of the French Resistance which we have yet to touch on was the aiding and abetting of Allied servicemen in France. This customarily took the form of concealing either members of the British and American air-force who had been 'downed' or escaped Prisoners of War and helping them make a safe return to Britain. In this chapter, I will argue that concealment of Allied soldiers should be thought of as a specifically gendered form of resistance activity, informed by conceptions of maternal duties by both the women themselves and the servicemen in their care. The Comet Line – the name given to the escape routes across continental Europe – was a huge operation, both in scale and success, yet the fact that it was largely run by women remains somewhat underappreciated. In fact, over 70% of the personnel working on four of the largest routes during the war consisted of women, and many of the routes operated under the overall command of a female leader.⁴⁴ The Line itself was actually founded by the extraordinary Andrée de Jongh, more commonly known in the Resistance as Dédée. De Jongh personally escorted 118 soldiers to safety and, allegedly, was interrogated twenty times by Nazis who were astounded a woman could have orchestrated the operation.⁴⁵ At a less prominent level, housing, feeding and organising the movements of Allied soldiers was a considerable undertaking and undoubtedly very dangerous, yet this service offered by women is often only fleetingly discussed in mainstream histories of the French Resistance. Sheltering an evader not only placed the family in danger of arrest but was

⁴² Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 156.

⁴³ Taylor, 'The Black Market', p. 156.

⁴⁴ *The French Resistance: The History of the Opposition Against Nazi Germany's Occupation During World War II*, ed. by Charles River (London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), p. 20.

⁴⁵ Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis* (London: Pocket Books, 2010), p. 216.

an extra mouth to feed from the already limited rations allocated; it is remarkable that so many families seemed willing to participate under such conditions. But participate they did; the network of those involved grew to be so big and so effective that airmen began to receive 'escape kits' as standard issue, including a silk map, compass, language card, fishing hook and line and even a razor and soap to prevent unshaven faces from standing out in a small town or village.⁴⁶ Some recall in their memoirs that motives for assisting downed air crews were more practical than humanitarian as those in rural areas did not want attention drawn to their other illicit activities, such as hidden foodstuffs, hence they were keen to remove Allied presence as covertly as possible.⁴⁷ It is perfectly likely that this would have been the case for some but, nonetheless, there are overwhelming accounts from those who remember the maternal care and support awarded to them when in hiding. The opening line of British pilot J. A. Stewart's memoirs embodies this sentiment: 'I believe in Guardian Angels!'⁴⁸ Stewart's writings detail his time as an evader hiding in France and, like many others, his experience seems to have been characterised by the generosity of his hosts, particularly in regards to food. He recalls: '[a woman of around 50] immediately whipped me into the cellar where she set up a dish of eggs with bread and milk... with little food at her disposal I must have been quite a burden.'⁴⁹ Stewart remained concealed for six weeks in four different houses before successfully returning to England. He, in his own words, 'had a wonderful time'.⁵⁰ This was not unusual; many of those who were aided by French women in their escape remember the immense kindness shown to them by their hosts. Dorcas Robert, for example, a café and grocery shop owner from Yssingaux, is highly commended for her warmth and affection by the men she concealed. One later wrote that 'Dorcas became a mother for all of us', recalling how she massaged his feet upon return from a long journey.⁵¹ This 'mother for all' attitude is explicit in many letters and memoirs from Allied servicemen and, equally, implicit in others, who refer to themselves as 'boys', using language which implies they are lost and afraid before being taken in by the safety and warmth of a French family. Flight Sergeant D A Farrington, for example, repeatedly dubs himself a youth, a 'boy', although he was in his mid-twenties when he landed in France, and seems to consider himself helpless and vulnerable.⁵² Conversely, the women took him in and are respectfully called 'ladies' and

⁴⁶ *The French Resistance*, ed. Rivers, p.15.

⁴⁷ *The French Resistance*, ed. Rivers, p.15.

⁴⁸ J. A. Stewart, 'Private Papers of J. A. Stewart', in *Imperial War Museum Archives*, Document 23374 [accessed 25/01/18], p. 1.

⁴⁹ Stewart, 'Private Papers', pp. 22-28.

⁵⁰ Stewart, 'Private Papers', p. 29.

⁵¹ Caroline Moorehead, *Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France* (London: Random House, 2014), p. 266.

⁵² Don A. Farrington, 'Private Papers of D. A. Farrington', in *Imperial War Museum Archive*, Document 22157 [accessed 25/01/18], pp. 1-7.

‘saviours’, entirely responsible for his safety and wellbeing. He describes his childlike uncertainty at approaching a farm in which he could see a woman and child:

‘I knocked on the door and crossed my fingers. The woman came to the door... she told me to come in, beckoning me to sit down by the fire... she reappeared with a plate of bread and chicken.’⁵³

As in Stewart’s memory of his concealment experience, Farrington’s was equally dominated by discourse around food and sharing family provisions. He writes:

‘Nothing was too much trouble, especially where food was concerned. I only had to ask for a particular meal and Madame Beauchet would provide it for me... the women brought us wine, French bread, butter and cheese – a feast indeed!... It never failed to amaze me how these ordinary French people were so willing to give food and shelter at a moment’s notice to complete strangers.’⁵⁴

Farrington is perhaps adhering a familiar stereotype of the ever-optimistic British soldier, as he cheerfully exclaims his meal of bread and cheese was ‘a feast!’; his declaration that he could ask for any ‘particular meal’ and it would be delivered must be taken with a pinch of salt as ration availability would have dictated this impossible. What Farrington does illustrate, however, is genuine gratitude for the service provided by what he fairly calls ‘ordinary French people’. Indeed, these were not rich Parisians or even particularly large landowners but rural artisans who undertook this particular branch of resistance activity, often placing themselves in considerable danger in the process. Evelyn Sullerot remembers her fear as the young daughter in a family which concealed Allied soldiers: ‘When you hid someone you risked your life, your very life. You can’t imagine what that entailed and how exhausting it was.’⁵⁵ This was not lost on their guests; Farrington’s host family, including the young son, were arrested after his flight jacket was discovered on their farm.⁵⁶ The aforementioned Dorcas Roberts, too, was arrested along with her sister and infant niece:

‘The women made a lot of noise as they went, to warn the others to keep away... flyers were pasted all over Yssingaux’s walls: ‘Yssingelais! Protest against Mme Robert’s arrest! Force them to return this mother to her three children!’⁵⁷

⁵³ Farrington, ‘Private Papers’, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Farrington, ‘Private Papers’, pp. 13-18.

⁵⁵ Evelyn Sullerot, ‘Transcript of Interview with Evelyn Sullerot’, in *Moakley Archive & Institute* (1983), <<https://moakleyarchive.omeka.net/items/show/9209>> [accessed 18/02/18], p. 33.

⁵⁶ Farrington, ‘Private Papers’, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Moorehead, *Village of Secrets*, p. 266.

Roberts is just one of the women we have come across for whom participation in the Resistance was both *in spite* of and *because* of her role as a mother. Maternal feelings were very much brought into play and informed the risks taken by host families. Danger of arrest was, of course, the ultimate burden but there were many other daily tasks which were only increased by the presence of one or more extra mouths to feed. Anges Humbert's diary describes how an occupant:

*'joke[d] about the meal I had served to him at home the night before: sautéed swede with black pudding. Never will he know how long I had to queue in the freezing cold outside that wretched charcuterie on rue des Cinq-Diamantes before I eventually managed to carry off that miserable lump of black pudding – tasteless and fatless.'*⁵⁸

Humbert is right – there are many who will never know just what was done in order to make sure they were fed, clothed and warm during their escape. The memoirs of those I have quoted above gave particularly detailed accounts of their host families, but there were some whose French abettors were merely a nameless footnote in the story of their grand escape home.⁵⁹ Still, en masse the evidence sits overwhelmingly in favour of those who commend the generosity and bravery of their concealers. Farrington not only dedicates his entire epic memoirs to his 'dear French friends' but writes of his frustration that a resistant fighter he came across, known only as 'Pearl', was later awarded a civilian decoration when 'it ought to have been a military decoration'.⁶⁰ The actions of many families who were involved in this particular branch of resistance activity remain overlooked and underexplored, which does make it difficult to draw quantifiable assumptions regarding the effect of these activities on the wider war or Resistance movements. Nonetheless, the evidence we do have grants us an insight into how the home environment helped to sustain Resistance fighters and Allied soldiers. Not only was it a place of physical refuge, it was also the source of morale for many who were reminded of what it was they were fighting for. Concealment, then, was one of the most valuable services provided by the French Resistance and, even today, some veterans still claim they are indebted to those strangers who protected them in their time of need.⁶¹ As we have seen, this burden was invariably taken up by the matriarch, which leads me to argue that historians should see this as a specifically gendered form of resistance activity, inspired and sustained by maternal

⁵⁸ Humbert, *Resistance*, p. 32.

⁵⁹ A. Malecki, 'Private Papers of Flying Officer A. Malecki', in *Imperial War Museum Archives*, Document. 9530 [accessed 25/01/18].

⁶⁰ Farrington, 'Private Papers', p. 75.

⁶¹ Luke Ramseth, 'Shot Down Over WWII France', *The Salt Lake Tribune* (2017), <<https://www.sltrib.com/news/2017/11/12/shot-down-over-wwii-france-this-utah-man-evaded-nazis-with-help-from-a-french-farming-family-that-came-to-love-him-as-a-son/>> [accessed 03/04/18], para. 71 of 71.

instincts. One's role as a mother could not help but inform one's role in the Resistance; in this area, at least, the two seem undeniably linked.

Chapter Four: Motherhood in the Vichy and Nazi State

In this final chapter, we will consider how 'motherhood' as a role and a status was used both by women in the Resistance and also the Vichy and Nazi state. We will explore how this, in turn, affected the activities and treatment of the women involved and, to an extent, subsequent memory of mothers' Resistance involvement. To do this, we must first understand the ideology and policies of the Vichy government, which set out a vision of an idealised 'mother of France', not dissimilar to that promoted in Nazi Germany. Marshal Pétain set out a hugely nostalgic political agenda as Chief of State in Vichy France. Much of his government's philosophy centred around a return to the so-called 'natural' hierarchies, in which the order of bodies and gender was a crucial dimension of political and social order.⁶² In line with this, to be a Mother, to give life and sustain working families was held up as a particularly valuable form of patriotic service. It was to be highly respected and enthusiastically celebrated; a woman need want nothing more than the ultimate position as a mother in France, of France, for France. This was in no small way influenced by the French Catholic construction of the Virgin Mary, who was the ultimate figure of purity and excellence. Indeed, the Vichy saw the Catholic Church as their natural ally in all of its strictures on the family, morality and demography.⁶³ As such, the Vichy government disseminated mass propaganda encouraging motherhood and publically revering those dedicated to their children. In his 1941 address to the French People, Pétain cited the 'family' as the foremost pillar of his constitution.⁶⁴ Mother's Day became an impressive occasion, with festivities in school and communities and even medals awarded to 'deserving mothers'.⁶⁵ From 1942, school girls were required to study domestic science each week and textbooks were rewritten to claim the military hero Joan of Arc was well versed in cooking and sewing.⁶⁶ Discourses around championing motherhood were permeated through radio, newspapers, community events and church sermons. Compounding these celebratory measures were restrictive ones; in 1941, divorce laws were altered to prohibit ending marriage until after a minimum of three years in wedlock, in a process that could take seven years to finalise.⁶⁷ The Vichy

⁶² Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine: A Contribution to a Political Sociology of Gender* (New York: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 5.

⁶³ Davies, *France and the Second World War*, p. 27.

⁶⁴ Marshal Pétain, 'Address to the French People – Vichy, France, 1941', *Ibiblio*, <<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/1941-08-12a.html>>, [accessed 18/03/2018], para. 31 of 50.

⁶⁵ Julian Jackson, 'Reconstructing Mankind', *The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 331.

⁶⁶ Jackson, 'Reconstructing Mankind', p. 331.

⁶⁷ Jackson, 'Reconstructing Mankind', p. 331.

regime sought to regulate and harness sexuality, yes, but, more than this, it sought to tap into the uniting, rallying power of 'motherhood' for their new vision of France, which was to rely on a strict dogma of nuclear family values. This would play the key role Pétain's mantra of work, family, fatherland (*travail, famille, patrie*). Miranda Pollard surmises the Vichy's vision of motherhood well: 'a specific reading of gender and family was being used to depoliticise civil relations and establish new hierarchies of private virtue, duty and female self-sacrifice'.⁶⁸ She stresses that this process relied on a passive female presence, dependent on the public, male gaze for recognition.⁶⁹ The special position of mothers in society was an idea propagated by the Vichy to the public with vigour during their four years in office, which coloured the way mothers were perceived and treated. Members of the state and the Resistance, and those who were in-between, recognised the values and respect of motherhood in France and, as we shall see, readily employed it for their own cause.

From the available transcripts and accounts of women who undertook Resistance work, it is not without cause to suggest that one's status as a mother was a useful asset for clandestine activities, particularly when brought into direct confrontation with Vichy or German officials. Through adhering to prescribed ideals of the maternal figure, these women were able to affect the way their crimes were treated and, in some cases, mitigate punishment. This was in no small way down to the dichotomy of masculine energy versus female domesticity purported in Nazi and Vichy propaganda and ideologies. Women, but particularly mothers, were seen as naturally, biologically passive and harmless, hence their movements tended to arouse little suspicion and were frequently overlooked. In the instances where women were investigated or caught, some were able to use their domestic role to influence their captors. When the Gestapo arrived at Ida Bourdet's house in Vence, who had been working as an assistant for the NAP (*Noyautage de l'Administration Publique*), she 'greeted them with ease and politely asked them to sit down'.⁷⁰ She gave them refreshments and invited them to warm themselves by her fire. Somewhat thrown, her visitors left with only the threat of return, which allowed Ida and her children the chance to escape.⁷¹ When asked why she thought she was treated so leniently, Ida replied that '[I played] the lady in front of these individuals who respected established order'.⁷² Her maternal demeanour, and likely an element of social class, influenced her investigators who were perhaps wary of disrespecting a seemingly pious and dedicated mother. Of course, we cannot take Ida's word as gospel; she is recounting her story

⁶⁸ Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue and Mobilising Gender in Vichy France* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 49.

⁶⁹ Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, p. 45.

⁷⁰ Ida Bourdet in *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 228.

⁷¹ Ida Bourdet in, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 228.

⁷² Ida Bourdet, in *Sisters in the Resistance*, p.228

decades after the event to an academic specifically researching women's role in the Resistance. But there were others who share a similar anecdote, such as Catherine Roux, who was stopped by Germans in Lyon while carrying incriminating documents. She claimed she was a governess, on her way to take a six-year old for her daily walk.⁷³ It is surely telling that this was her chosen alibi as Roux was aware a woman carrying out domestic, maternal responsibilities would be respected and her character outwardly irreproachable. There were those such as Madeline Dreyfus, who helped to find hiding places and new identities for Jewish children through the OSE (*Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants*). To avoid arousing suspicion, Dreyfus was sent to transport these children by pretending they were her own and taking responsibility for their wellbeing.⁷⁴ Here, the façade of motherhood was thought to be sufficient protection from Nazi checks. Dreyfus' Resistance work continued from this as she became the principle point of contact for the families and schools in which her charges were dispersed – a position which eventually led to her arrest and internment. She was caught during a Gestapo raid at the *Institut des sourds-muets*, where she had lodged some children. Fearing that her colleagues and family would be implicated if her house was searched, she pleaded to be allowed to call home so that someone would give her daughter a bottle, which she was granted.⁷⁵ She used the opportunity to phone the U.G.I.F (*Union general des Israélites de France*) and warn of her arrest. Her domestic responsibilities allowed her this chance as the Gestapo understood the familial duties of even a culprit from the Resistance. Later on that day, she was permitted to go home and feed her daughter herself, accompanied by a Gestapo officer, only to discover her house had been emptied and everyone had escaped.⁷⁶ Her motherhood was not only a mask for her Resistance activities but also allowed her small liberties as a prisoner. During her time at Drancy prison, Dreyfus was registered by an old acquaintance who listed her as 'the wife of a prisoner of war...[with] a three year old daughter who was dependent upon her.'⁷⁷ At the time, this meant that Dreyfus would not be deported; once again, domestic and maternal responsibilities were useful to those in the Resistance as it allowed them certain treatments and preferences denied to their male counterparts. Conversely, Nazi and Vichy officials used motherhood as a way to manipulate and threaten those they interrogated. Evelyn Sullerot recalls a woman she knew in prison: 'The Germans took her month old infant and fractured its skull before her eyes in the hope that she would reveal where her husband was. Those are unthinkable things.'⁷⁸ The tragic woman Sullerot remembers here

⁷³ Catherine Roux, 'Draft Book Section', p. 8.

⁷⁴ Patrick Henry, *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France During the Holocaust* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), p. 69.

⁷⁵ Henry, *We Only Know Men*, p. 73.

⁷⁶ Henry, *We Only Know Men*, p. 73.

⁷⁷ Henry, *We Only Know Men*, p. 75.

⁷⁸ Evelyn Sullerot, 'Transcript of Interview', p. 34.

was a victim of her own motherhood as her captors used her role against her in the hope of gaining information. Where this was not physically possible, the threat itself was employed, as Lise Lesèvre details: 'Once they [Germans] told me of a 'tragic' event. They said...my oldest had been arrested and executed. 'Marcel?' I asked in a faint voice. 'Yes, Marcel.'"⁷⁹ As Lesèvre's son was actually called Georges, she knew this was a lie.

Motherhood, then, was readily manipulated by both sides as they recognised it was a hugely emotive ploy. In many cases, one's status as a mother seemed to dictate the leniency or severity of treatment by government officials, who were heavily influenced by state veneration of the maternal figure and its religious connotations. It is possible that this is one reason why mothers have been seemingly absolved of Resistance culpability in historical memory; in the minds of the writers and historians responsible for crafting the narrative of the movement, as in the minds of the Nazis and the Vichy, motherhood and Resistance fighters were not natural synonyms. They were the unexpected, undervalued backbone of the movement and, perhaps, were so effective exactly because their role as a mother provided the impetus and the cover for their extraordinary activities.

Conclusion

The war awarded women new opportunities across Europe and is often hailed as a watershed moment for feminism. The reality, however, was not quite so auspicious. Resistance member, Anne-Marie Bauer, refutes any misconception of a progressive post-war France, claiming: 'The women left the area where they were confined and they fought...like the men. But after the war, they were again shut up and it was worse than ever.'⁸⁰ The exceptional heroines of the Resistance, so often mobilised in political discourse during the rebuilding of France, did not represent their sisters throughout the country, whose contribution soon faded to the background as the returning soldiers encouraged a restoration of 'innocence and femininity'.⁸¹ Of course, this is partly down to the nature of the sources available but, nonetheless, both history and popular memory favour the salacious stories of spies, saboteurs and horizontal collaborators. It is, I think, unfortunate that much of the existing literature on women in the French Resistance suggests their actions were motivated by love and romance, as they blindly followed suitors into the Resistance network. This is fundamentally reductionist and undermines the agency of women across the movement. So, too, is the focus on shorn women who are derided even today as 'sluts, absolute sluts.'⁸² In this area, there

⁷⁹ Lise Lesèvre, *Sisters in the Resistance*, p. 105.

⁸⁰ Anne-Marie Bauer, 'Transcript of Interview with Anne-Marie Bauer, in *Moakley Archive and Institute* (1983), <<https://moakleyarchive.omeka.net/items/show/9209>> [accessed 18/02/18], p. 20.

⁸¹ Sebba, *Les Parisiennes*, p. 352.

⁸² Evelyn Sullerot, 'Transcript of Interview', p. 32.

is still much historical ground to make up, which I hope will come with time as the topic becomes less contentious in France.

I have hoped to demonstrate in this dissertation that it was the mothers, the home-makers, the food-suppliers, the hosts and the caretakers who formed the backbone of the French Resistance – many of whom were unaware of the potency of their actions. I have claimed it was their unique role and identity as a mother which influenced the way they behaved and justified their resistance through examining the prevalence of maternal instincts in Resistance activity. This dissertation has considered the memoirs and testimonies of women who had been imprisoned, many of whom recall how they naturally assumed a matriarchal role and used this for the care and benefit of their companions. These testimonies have been truly pioneering in revealing the extent of the activities of older women with families and opened up a new avenue for discussion around what we might consider to be an act of resistance. Following on from this line of thought, this dissertation explored the importance of food in the lives of the French population under occupation, discussing the extent to which illegal methods to access foodstuffs could be considered to be a resistant act. The data provided by French authorities regarding the prosecution of black marketeers and food thieves suggested there was little political motivation behind such activity, which contests the characterisation made by some historians that those who disobeyed the state by obtaining food by illicit means were part of the Resistance. Nonetheless, food was undoubtedly a central part of the Resistance movement and access to extra rations or contraband proved crucial, both in terms of morale and sustenance. Obtaining food, therefore, was not inherently political in itself but frequently served a political purpose. The third chapter of this dissertation considered how the aiding and abetting of Allied soldiers in France through concealment in one's home was one of the main contributions of the Resistance movement. More than this, however, it was argued that the act of concealment could be seen as a specifically gendered form of resistance. Through analysing the language used in the memoirs of servicemen recalling their concealment experiences, the particular importance of motherhood was revealed in this area; implicit references to a mother-son dynamic suggests the care and sacrifices made for the Allied soldiers were based on familial, matriarchal duties. In this way, motherhood can be seen to have been central to Resistance activity. The final chapter of this dissertation explored how motherhood was used or exploited by all sides for specific political agendas, based on the Vichy ideal of pious, devoted mothers. Adhering to prescribed expectations of older women with families provided a useful cover for clandestine activities and allowed those women who were caught and arrested certain privileges and leniencies during investigation. Motherhood was recognised across France as being hugely emotive, hence it was readily employed by the Resistance, Vichy and Nazis, and all those who fell between, as a means

through which to achieve a specific political outcome. This has in turn affected the way historians and writers remember the Resistance; even now, the daring actions of women with children are often dismissed as a desperate measure to protect one's dependents rather than a carefully calculated act which utilised the protection awarded through motherhood. One thing this research has certainly demonstrated is that we must be wary of assuming women of the past were oblivious to the social expectations of those who were, say, young, attractive, frail or, as in this case, maternal; the evidence reasons they were not only aware but willing to exploit such expectations where necessary.

In the above chapters, I have attempted to refute any notion that the Resistance movement began and ended with de Gaulle. I have, instead, placed the credit firmly on the shoulders of the ordinary men and women of France who participated in the movement, even fleetingly or without political motivation. There is perhaps an ethical question here, as some believe that by promoting or disseminating the names and actions of people who had not chosen to do so themselves we are actually removing the agency we claim to award. Madeline Barot of Cimade, for example, refused a request to name those who should be honoured for the work they had done in the war, arguing it would be wrong to glorify their deeds because they had not chosen to glorify themselves.⁸³ This may well be the case; however, whether or not such an approach has a place in the historical discipline is another question entirely. This dissertation has offered a social and feminist assessment of occupied France in an attempt to add a new dimension to the history of the French Resistance. Having drawn together an array of evidence, mothers were revealed to have been a crucial part of sustaining the movement, making up a far wider demographic of those involved than previously appreciated. Without their participation, support and, frequently, sacrifice, the movement would have suffered immeasurably; indeed, there may well have been little in the way of Resistance to speak of at all. In lieu of all we have discovered and discussed, it is unsurprising that the pronoun so often assigned to the French Resistance is 'she'.

⁸³ Moorehead, *Village of Secrets*, p. 286.

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