

# **Popular Music and Resistance in Occupied France, 1940-1944**

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## Popular Music and Resistance in Occupied France, 1940-1944

### Introduction

“In France, everything ends in songs.”

-Proverb from Pierre Beaumarchais’ *Le Mariage de Figaro*, 1778

“The French people . . . sing their defeats, their miseries, their troubles, as well as their good fortunes or their victories. . . It seems that song has become the natural expression of its sentiments.”<sup>1</sup>

-Léon Deutsch, *La Revue Française*, December 21, 1924

On December 14, 1940, six months after France’s shocking fall to Hitler’s army, cultural critic Jean Laurent penned an inspirational column for the nation’s new collaborationist newspaper, *Les Nouveaux Temps*. Borrowing playwright Pierre Beaumarchais’ observation that, in France, “Tout finit par des chansons” (“Everything ends in songs”), Laurent encouraged readers to reprise the nation’s traditional songs in order to navigate the sweeping changes that defeat had wrought upon the socio-political landscape. After all, Laurent observed, popular songs had always “reflected the qualities of our race,” eliciting proper feelings of comfort and reassurance no matter whether citizens were “in war or in peace, conqueror or conquered, happy or unhappy.” An “essentially French genre,” he continued, popular song owed its power to its open boundaries, its resistance to classification. “Like all that touches the collective heart, song has no limits,” he wrote. “As varied as the human soul,” songs and their performance offered a rich repository of representations from which citizens could draw to pursue a variety of rhetorical ends. “The true author of these popular songs is the people who sing them,” he wrote, “modifying them according to their wishes, following their dreams, their ideas, and their loves.” Tracing French popular song from its performance in ancient Greek temples, Gaulist settlements, the Sun King’s royal court, Revolutionary barricades, and WWI trenches, Laurent closed his article with an observation about song’s role in forming popular opinion. “Don’t forget,” he

concluded, “that it is through song that poets leave their ivory tower, go down to the streets, and address themselves to the crowds.”<sup>2</sup>

Given the power of song in the French cultural and political tradition that Laurent celebrated, it is hardly surprising that Occupation leaders turned to music as a rhetorical tool to promote collaboration among French citizens. Authorities capitalized on the mass appeal of popular music, hiring famous singers to record songs in support of the new government, banning “degenerate” American jazz from the airwaves, and providing youth with pro-collaboration songbooks.<sup>3</sup> These interferences were intended to coax along abrupt and colossal shifts in France’s political ideology and cultural norms, the most significant of which was a radical departure from the nation’s republican heritage. Indeed, while the fighting still raged, French leaders disbanded the Third Republic, the government in place since 1870, and granted power to the World War I hero Philippe Pétain. On June 22, 1940, Pétain signed an armistice with Germany that granted Hitler control over three-fifths of French territory, which included the most heavily populated and richest portions of metropolitan France. The rest of the country would be controlled by Pétain’s small government, headquartered in the spa town of Vichy. Pétain coupled these political changes with sweeping social reforms, introduced to the public through an ideological campaign called the National Revolution. The campaign, marketed extensively through public performances and radio broadcasts of Vichy’s new, jubilant anthem, urged French citizens to abandon their alleged obsession with *liberté, fraternité, et égalité* and obediently embrace an emphasis on traditional and Catholic duty, summarized by the new mantra, *travail, famille, et patrie* (work, family, and fatherland).

Yet, authorities were not the only ones to transform popular music into a weapon in the ideological battle over the nation’s future. As Laurent noted in *Les Nouveaux Temps*, French

people, whom he recognized as the primary “authors” of French song, possessed musical tools they could use to rhetorically regenerate and reconstruct their nation. While Laurent never explicitly called citizens to take up musical arms against collaboration, his narration of song’s role throughout French history provided a clear reminder of music’s potential for resistance. Like the creative troubadours who had repurposed songs to negotiate centuries of conflict, French citizens, he wrote, could mine the repertoire of popular song for symbols to modify “according to their wishes,” “dreams,” and “loves.” “As varied as the human soul,” yet the only true expression of the French “race,” songs, he suggested, were uniquely situated to voice the peoples’ concerns, fears, and defiance. By rooting songs in centuries of republican performative practices begun by the ancient Greeks and continued by France’s Revolutionary partisans and victorious soldiers of the Great War, Laurent drew attention to popular song’s ability to serve as aural expressions of democratic France. Calling song the means by which artists and composers “come down from their ivory towers” and “address themselves to the crowds” and the only “direct reflection of the collective heart,” his article suggested that songs were a vital mode of communication that could be embraced when other avenues had been foreclosed. Whether or not he intended to issue a call to musical defiance, Laurent provided ample arguments to communicate that regardless of Hitler’s cultural policy and active censorship, singing was still a viable method that citizens could use to access the public sphere and express collective sentiment.

This dissertation illuminates how French dissidents read between the lines of Laurent’s call for a national embrace of song, seizing popular music as a key mode of struggle during the German Occupation of their country from 1940 to 1944. Resistance fighters, Parisian youth, and prisoners of war mined a vast repertoire of symbols and modes of performance from a long national musical tradition and a burgeoning international entertainment industry, embracing

music as a rhetorical resource to destabilize Nazi ideology and contest collaborationist Vichy propaganda. They employed three main genres of popular song, *chanson*, jazz, and operetta, each of which had been linked to various, sometimes competing, notions of national identity. Having been established as the musical expression of the “true” French citizen, *chanson* provided a unique resource for the restoration of a republican national narrative, as its performance was connected to traditional values of liberal individualism. Jazz, at once a symbol of racial degeneration and a more “modern,” cosmopolitan France, offered Parisian youth a means to undermine Nazi and Vichy attempts to instill a strict racial hierarchy and restore conservative gender norms. Outside the borders of Occupied France, operetta – a genre of light opera that was well-known for its vulgar jokes and political satire – offered imprisoned soldiers a means to deploy existing tropes of French manhood on the camp stage. Grounding their virility in their heterosexual desire and prowess, the prisoners drew upon the melodies of *chanson* and operetta to create their own, original musicals that aimed to deny the power of their captors and recuperate the virility of their fallen nation. Ultimately, through song, French dissidents rejected Nazi subordination and the politics of *travail, famille, et patrie* and insisted upon a return to that trinity of traditional French values, *liberté, égalité, et fraternité*.

This study makes crucial interventions in the rhetorical analysis of music, an important area of research still struggling to identify a viable method of analysis. Begun in the 1970s when public address scholars turned their attention to social movements, early rhetorical scholarship set in place a method of analysis that encouraged rhetoricians to examine music just as they approached speeches, looking for the ways that lyrics and music worked together to more “effectively” change attitudes.<sup>4</sup> Despite the promise of these early studies, essays on the rhetoric of music came in disjointed and slow succession, and most continued to treat music as a text

whose meanings could be reliably located within lyrical and musical patterns.<sup>5</sup> While these early studies helped to establish music as a legitimate topic of rhetorical study and laid the groundwork for theorizing how sound and text work together, their contributions were limited by a method of analysis that located the meaning of sonic and textual dimensions on the page. The rhetoric of song could be illuminated, this method suggested, through critical “reading.”

Yet, as cultural and performance scholars have shown, treating music as a stable text whose meanings reside within the score is a fool’s errand. The first problem with this textual approach is that it fails to account for the polyvalent nature of music, by which I mean the ability of a single song to signify multiple meanings to various audiences. As Lawrence Grossberg has explained in his study of rock-and-roll, “different fans seem to use the music for very different purposes and in very different ways.” For some audiences, song lyrics may be extremely important, while others may focus their energies on experiencing sound affectively as cathartic release, vengeful satisfaction, guarded optimism, etc. Because of this polyvalence, Grossberg urges scholars to stop assuming that music functions primarily “by representing something—meanings, ideas, or cultural experience” and calls us to reconsider the “attempt to define one experience or use of [music] as the only one.”<sup>6</sup> The second problem with the textual approach to song is that it elides the historical contexts that have conditioned the meanings of lyrics and music. As Della Pollock explains, texts are “inseparable from the processes by which they are made, understood, and deployed” and continually “evoke their place within a history of tools, uses, and action.”<sup>7</sup> By locating all meaning within the musical score, textual readings fail to contextualize music within this broader history of production and use and assume *a priori* the representational work that lyrics and music perform. Ultimately, as Greg Dimitriadis notes, these critiques of textual approaches to music remind us that we cannot treat a musical score as

“internally consistent and entirely self-referential.”<sup>8</sup> Contrary to the popular expression, it is not “all on the page so to speak.”<sup>9</sup>

Because close textual analysis has been an important hallmark of rhetorical criticism, the critique of a textual approach to music threatened to drive a death nail into the already ailing rhetorical study of music. Yet, recently, a burgeoning interest in sound has reinvigorated efforts to account for the power of musical discourses. As the field of rhetoric has broadened its definition of public address and confronted its privileging of spoken and printed discourse, scholars have turned their attention to aural discourses, seeking to resist the “textocentrism” that has dominated our work.<sup>10</sup> In his analysis of the voices of the victims of the 9/11 attacks, for example, Joshua Gunn calls the discipline to restore its focus “on something singularly human: voice.”<sup>11</sup> In his recent book, Greg Goodale urges rhetoric scholars to develop the ability to understand how “a pause, an intonation, or even a noise can make a forceful argument.”<sup>12</sup> A handful of rhetoricians interested in music have taken up this task, focusing on how musicians help oppressed communities to resist domination by promoting alternative collective identities.<sup>13</sup> Through heavily-contextualized textual analysis and an at least cursory examination of the paratexts—music videos, liner notes, blog entries—that condition the meaning of this music, these scholars have established music as an instrument of power, while making some methodological progress along the way. Indeed, now sensitive to the problems of a textual approach to music, these scholars have looked beyond the musical score, considering how photographs, previous concert tours, and singer’s bodies bear on music’s representational power.<sup>14</sup>

This dissertation contributes to the discipline’s ongoing effort to establish a method for musical analysis by reorienting our focus from the musical score to the ways people make use of

musical works and cultures. Examining how people interacted with musical tools allows me to broaden the object of study beyond the immediate musical work while simultaneously recovering the importance of music's textual appeals. Indeed, taking seriously Christopher Small's reminder that "music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do," I look for the ways that people altered and combined the tools provided by pop music in order to craft new subject positions that rejected Vichy and Germany's ideal new citizen.<sup>15</sup> In all cases, the lyrics of the songs that inspired French partisans are vital to the music's rhetorical power, as these words were either originally composed or carefully enacted by those groups themselves. The musical elements of the songs are also important, for these melodies were signifiers of particular, often competing, national values. But examining how French people performed musical resistance demands that we also pay attention to the various ways that they appropriated musical culture. Indeed, French citizens' use of music wasn't limited to the act of singing. When groups like the Parisian youth known as the *zazous* appropriated the culture of jazz, they also borrowed swing fashion and dance to construct a countercultural identity that would disrupt Nazi social norms. Thus, while understanding the ways that real people used music helps to recuperate the musical text as a stable signifier, it also opens the object of study beyond the score to consider how embodied and visual discourses were also key sites of performing music.

Looking deeply at how French resisters used music during the Occupation also allows me to make a significant contribution to the historiography of WWII France. Indeed, historians and cultural critics have also analyzed popular music in isolation from the people who listened to it, treating songs as bounded texts operating in historical and performative vacuums.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the literature on popular music in WWII France suffers from two contradictory theoretical presumptions. Overwhelmingly, the scholarship flattens the significance of popular music during



the Occupation by treating it as either a means of escape from the realities of everyday life or as a tool of propaganda. The first of these positions, articulated most stridently by André Halimi, denounces those who participated in musical performances as unpatriotic, selfish collaborators. “While other occupied countries conserved a minimum of dignity,” he writes, “millions of French people sang during the Occupation.”<sup>17</sup> More recent scholarship by authors like Charles Rearick and Keith Reader avoids passing judgment on those who sang during the Occupation, yet still argues that music functioned primarily as a vehicle of escape.<sup>18</sup> Scholarship that does recognize the political potentialities of music during this period has oversimplified its function by reducing it to an instrument of Vichy or Allied forces.<sup>19</sup> While this work certainly helps to reconstruct the milieu in which music operated, it does not account for the complex ways in which people interacted with music during the Occupation.

Throughout this dissertation, I ground my analysis of the ways in which citizens used music to subvert dominant social norms with theories that emphasize performance as a key tactic of the oppressed. Like Stephen Gencarella and Phaedra Pezzullo, I see performance as “a creative act that occurs in specific times and places, and that promises to repeat, transform, contest, or transgress established cultural patterns.”<sup>20</sup> The liberatory potential of these creative acts has been well-established by scholars of performance and resistance. Dwight Conquergood, for example, has argued that it is only through their “performative repertoire” that subordinate groups can “skirt patrols, elude supervisors, pilfer the privileged, and make end runs around occupying authorities”<sup>21</sup> Prevented from enacting traditional modes of public speech, these groups must conceal their “subversive and utopian yearnings” by presenting them in “indirect, nonverbal, and extralinguistic modes of communication.”<sup>22</sup> James Scott also has argued for the resistant power of performance, showing how songs, jokes, folktales and rituals all offer a certain

camouflage for resistance and help citizens assemble a “variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, living under constant threat of Nazi retaliation, French dissidents eschewed both oratory and pamphleting as means to rally resistance or warn about the dangers of collaboration. Instead of dangerous and unpragmatic speech acts, they drew from the cultural resources of centuries of French folksinging and new “modern” jazz to compose a potent but subtle rhetoric of resistance that was not immediately recognizable to Occupiers and thus offered protection against violent retribution.

French musical performances did not only work by disguising critique or coding resistance, though these tasks were also certainly accomplished. The rhetorical promise of popular music was that it offered a repository of signifiers, invested with meaning by centuries of civic activism and decades of debate over new musical genres. By mobilizing these signifiers, dissident citizens called forth their collective past in a struggle to resist sweeping changes to French nationalism. John MacAloon notes this dimension of performance, writing that performances are opportunities in which people “reflect upon and define [themselves], dramatize [their] collective myths and history, present [themselves] with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, performances allow people to draw upon the past in order to become in the present.

Theatre scholar Elin Diamond’s work also helps explain this dimension of performance, noting that the term describes not only a present doing, but also a thing done in the past. Building on Butler’s work with performativity—a process of identity formation that relies upon the repeated citation of societal norms—Diamond notes the importance of understanding the performance’s location within a preexisting discursive field. Every performance, she writes, “embeds features of previous performances: gender conventions, racial histories, aesthetic

traditions—political and cultural pressures that are consciously and unconsciously acknowledged.” In other words, despite the unique ways that French citizens performed operettas, Resistance folksongs, and *zazouness*, all of these acts “contain[ed ] traces of other now-absent performances, other now-disappeared scenes” that conditioned the process of identity formation.<sup>25</sup> When resistance fighters sang the melodies that their Revolutionary forbears sang, for example, their performances were always already linked to the project of envisioning and defending a republican France, rooted in the philosophy of liberal individualism. At a time when traditional norms of national belonging were being uprooted, this historicized quality of performance allowed citizens to mobilize a variety of musical acts that were already imbued with nationalistic meaning in order to root their collective identity in a more familiar, more “traditional” sense of Frenchness. Likewise, past performances of *chanson* and jazz—and their attendant debates—invested these genres with meanings that citizens deployed in their struggle to envision and enact the nation and their place within it.

In order to account for the ways in which previous performances constrained and enabled French citizens during the Occupation, I will draw upon primary sources I have amassed from archives and will use secondary sources to place Resistance singing within the broader history of French political singing, or what I refer to as France’s “performative traditions.” Coined by James Jasinski, the term “performative traditions” refers to the historical discourses of action that serve as inventional resources for rhetorical action. Jasinski seeks to place discursive action within a broader historical context of speaking conventions in order to gain a fuller understanding of its meaning.<sup>26</sup> While Jasinski’s notion of performative traditions accounts for discursive forms, Richard Bauman’s discussion of “performance traditions” attends to the modes and practices of performance that set precedents and guidelines for future action.<sup>27</sup> Drawing

from both these conceptions, my study treats performative traditions broadly to refer to the modes and norms of discursive and non-discursive practice that conditioned the meaning of singing in WWII France.

By emphasizing the ways that historical modes of practice condition performance acts, my analysis keeps the subject at the center of the performance while maintaining an eye for the ways in which the performative act exerted power beyond the subject's control. As Bauman reminds us, past performances "provide precedents and guidelines for the range of alternatives possible;" they do not *determine* the meaning of current events.<sup>28</sup> While many humanities scholars have rejected the false choice between the sovereign and the socially-determined, powerless subject, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell offers a particularly helpful way of conceptualizing human actors. For Campbell, subjects are not autonomous originators of power, but "points of articulation" who, through the process of rhetorical invention, cobble together available resources to formulate "*personae*, subject-positions, and collectivities."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, this capacity to imagine oneself differently than Occupying authorities intended was the central tactic employed by French dissidents. Enacting a shift in subject position similar to what Kendall Phillips has termed a "rhetorical maneuver," citizens refused to become the obedient, traditional men and women that Vichy France and Nazi Germany demanded.<sup>30</sup> By inserting themselves into a transhistorical community of French heroes, for example, members of the French Resistance contested Vichy's new citizen and performatively realized their status as "true" Frenchmen. Yet, as we will see in the case of the French prisoners of war, musical performances sometimes undermined individual intent. As French soldiers being held prisoner in camps donned ladies' clothes to enact convincing representations of women on the camp stage, for example, they inadvertently undermined the very sexual difference they sought to uphold. In all, then, resistant

musical performances illustrate the power and limits of human agency, reminding us of Campbell's astute observation that rhetorical acts have agency that is all their own.<sup>31</sup>

To illuminate the ways that French dissidents mobilized musical culture in order to reclaim French national identity, I maintain focus on the performance of music as my central unit of study. This approach requires me to blend an analysis of the music itself (the lyrics, melody, and rhythm) with an examination of the ways citizens enacted the discourse. After all, as Conquergood cautioned, we cannot easily separate "speech, and writing, performance and print" because "these channels of communication constantly overlap, penetrate, and mutually produce one another."<sup>32</sup> Through extensive archival research in Paris' Bibliotheque Nationale, Archives Nationales, Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, and Préfecture de Police, I have uncovered musical texts and descriptions of performances provided in arrest reports, diaries, newspapers, and testimonials. When examining the musical works that inspired French citizens, I identify the ways discursive and musical tropes work to delimit the boundaries of belonging along the lines of national identity, race, and gender. By reading these musical tropes across the conditions of their performance, I work to account for the ways that embodied and visual dimensions of musical performance, such as vocal timbre, gestures, and fashion, colored the meaning of the musical act.

In order to understand how citizens drew upon their performative traditions to build rhetorical resources of resistance, I begin by placing popular music within the context of wartime France, when jazz's immense popularity began to eclipse that of traditional French *chanson*. Just as jazz fans celebrated what they considered to be a musical representation of freedom from restrictive social boundaries, however, conservative critics decried jazz as a degenerate art form that would ultimately corrupt the French race. These cultural leaders urged the nation to return to

its own musical heritage, to embrace *chansonniers* like Edith Piaf and Maurice Chevalier who would protect and promulgate traditional French values. Reconstructing these debates and grounding them in the political upheaval that followed France's defeat in 1940, I show how key sites of production rendered art songs and *chanson* the true paradigm of French musical tradition while resigning jazz and swing to the periphery of civic belonging. As collaborationist politicians and German occupiers attempted to uproot long-held notions of French nationalism and promote fascism, these meanings constrained Vichy's efforts and created rich opportunities for citizens to defy Nazi ideology and invoke their republican heritage.

In chapter two, I build on the relationship between French republicanism and *chanson* to examine the folksinging of the Resistance, a practice through which civilians transformed popular music from a tool of political propaganda into a grassroots means of reclaiming control over the boundaries of national identity. As citizens grew increasingly dissatisfied with Vichy's leadership and more sympathetic to the Resistance, they turned to well-known melodies in order to create songs that characterized the authoritarian government as fundamentally "un-French." Based on analysis of nearly 140 songs, resisters' testimonies, and police reports, I argue that singing functioned as a legitimizing practice through which Resisters asserted their right to lead the nation by appropriating popular songs promoted by the Vichy regime. Extending a performative tradition of political singing begun during the French Revolution, resisters sang to assert themselves as protagonists in national history while literally practicing the democratic forms they sought to safeguard.

Yet, the act of singing was not the only musical means by which dissidents rhetorically reinvisioned their nation, nor was *chanson* the only genre at their disposal. Chapter three takes up the second popular musical genre of the era, jazz, to expand the study beyond the act of

clandestine singing to the performance of a jazz-based identity on the streets of Paris. Here, I investigate how upper-middle class Parisian youth, known as “zazous,” mobilized jazz music to fashion a subversive identity that expressed their refusal to serve as national scapegoats and their rejection of fascist political ideology. Drawing upon police records and newspaper reports I recovered in Parisian archives, I argue that the zazous’ performance of swing identity undermined the essentialist racial ideology espoused by Vichy and exposed Nazi Germany’s “pure” New Europe as a social construct rather than a scientific truth. In the face of existing anxieties over the effects of *nègre* music on French audiences, Parisian youth employed zazou songs and fashion to mark a racialized swing identity on their white, upper-middle class, Gentile bodies. In so doing, they transgressed appropriate norms of gender and class and symbolized opposition to collaborationist politics. These “degenerate” musical practices presented powerful evidence, visible on the streets of Paris, that what Vichy and Nazi officials presented as the inescapable natural order was really a set of social constructions that were invented and could be contested. The subversive message conveyed by the youths’ performance of zazou identity was not lost on Vichy sympathizers and Nazi authorities, who disciplined the zazous by denigrating them in the press and subjecting them to violent street attacks.

Finally, I move outside the boundaries of Occupied France to show the ways in which music served as a rhetorical resource for the reclamation of individual and national dignity among nearly 1.8 million French soldiers held as prisoners of war in German territory. Imprisoned for the duration of the war and thus unable to protect the nation, these men bore the majority of the guilt for France’s shocking defeat, a capitulation that was primarily understood as a loss of national virility. Despite the humiliation of their capture and the austere conditions of camp life, the prisoners established vibrant theaters where they performed hundreds of shows

that featured soldiers in the roles of beautiful, young women, pining for the emotional and physical pleasures of true love. Through an analysis of three original operettas and countless theatrical reviews, recovered through extensive archival research, I argue that these musical performances enabled not only expressions of homosociality but also, ironically, reassertions of heterosexual prowess through the objectification of “women,” or the closest representation of women that could be conjured from resources in the camps. Alienated by Vichy’s politics of collaboration and increasingly worried about their wives’ fidelity, the prisoners looked to the romances deployed in the operettas as an allegory for their continued national significance. Thus, the operettas performed virile masculinity not only as a tool for surviving prolonged captivity but also for preparing the prisoners to reunite with a nation they feared no longer required their presence.

In all, centered on French resistance to Nazi control, this project recovers the significance of music as a rhetorical means of survival, resistance, subversion, and national identity construction. By combining a contextualized analysis of music and lyrics with a critical reading of performance practices reconstructed from descriptions in newspapers, diaries, and police reports, my dissertation advances a methodology for the rhetorical analysis of music, a project that communication scholars have been calling for since the 1970s. This study of popular music in Occupied France, moreover, makes a significant contribution to the historiography of WWII. While many scholars have analyzed the dialogue between German sympathizers and French dissidents along the axis of organized political resistance, my study illuminates the creative and cunning ways that individual citizens defied the Occupation outside of formal resistance networks and movements. As music scholars have noted, music is not a thing, but an activity that people do, a mode of communication with vast creative potential and significant social force.<sup>33</sup>



Borrowing from the work of musicology and ethnomusicology, I shed light on music's ability to make arguments, symbolize complex identities, and signify national belonging. Positioned, then, at the intersection of rhetoric, history, and music studies, my dissertation ultimately uncovers and explicates the critical cultural function of music in times of war.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Léon Deutsch, "La Chanson sentimentale," *La Revue Francaise*, 21 December 1924, 68, quoted in Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 54.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Laurent, "Tout finit par des chansons," *Les Nouveaux Temps* December 14, 1940.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Myriam Chimènes, *La Vie Musicale sous Vichy* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001); Nathalie Dompnier, *Vichy à Travers Chants* (Paris: Editions Nathan, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58:3 (1972): 273. See also Stephen Kosokoff and Carl W. Carmichael, "The Rhetoric of Protest: Song, Speech, and Attitude Change," *The Southern Speech Journal* 35 (1970): 295-302.

<sup>5</sup> For a sampling of work on the persuasive nature of song lyrics, see G.P. Mohrmann and Scott Eugene, "Popular Music and World War II: The Rhetoric of Continuation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (April 1976): 145-56; David A. Carter, "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Rhetoric of Song," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 365-74; William D. Harpine, "'We Want Yer, McKinley': Epideictic Rhetoric in Songs from the 1896 Presidential Campaign," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34:1 (Winter 2004): 73-88. For work that seeks to analyze the musical tropes within musical texts, see Robert Francesconi, "Free Jazz and Black Nationalism: A Rhetoric of Musical Style," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (1986): 36-49; D. Sellnow and T. Sellnow, "John Corigliano's 'Symphony No. 1' as a Communicative Medium for AIDS Crisis," *Communication Studies* 44 (1993): 87-101.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Grossberg, "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life," *Popular Music* 4 (1984): 225.

<sup>7</sup> Della Pollock, ed. *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1-45, quoted in Greg Dimitriadis, "Hip Hop to Rap: Some Implications of an Historically Situated Approach to Performance," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 19 (1999): 357.

<sup>8</sup> Dimitriadis, "Hip Hop to Rap," 357.

<sup>9</sup> Dimitriadis, "Hip Hop to Rap," 358.

<sup>10</sup> I borrow this word from Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research," *The Drama Review* 46, no. 2 (2002): 151-152.

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<sup>11</sup> Joshua Gunn, "Mourning Speech: Haunting and the Spectral Voices of Nine-Eleven," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 24: 2 (April 2004): 92.

<sup>12</sup> Greg Goodale, *Sonic Persuasion: Reading Sound in the Recorded Age* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Fernando Delgado, "Chicano Ideology Revisited: Rap Music and the (Re)Articulation of Chicanismo," *Western Journal of Communication* 62:2 (1998): 95-113; Fernando Delgado "All Along the Border: Kid Frost and the Performance of Brown Masculinity," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 20:4 (2000): 388-401; Lisa Foster, "The Rhetoric of Heavy Metal Resistance: Musical Modalities in Iraqi Public Life," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 4:3 (2011): 320-338; Bryan McCann, "Contesting the Mark of Criminality: Race, Place, and the Prerogative of Violence in N.W.A.'s Straight Outta Compton," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29:5 (2012): 367-386.

<sup>14</sup> Of special note here, is Lisa Foster's work to account for the musical and cultural contexts that condition the meaning of musical performances. See Lisa Foster, "Populist Argumentation in Bruce Springsteen's *The Rising*," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 48 (2011): 61-80.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 2.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Richard Raskin, "'Le Chant des Partisans': Functions of a Wartime Song," *Folklore* 102:1 (1991): 62-76; Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997); Christopher Lloyd, "Divided Loyalties: Singing in the Occupation," in *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno: Culture, Identity, and Society*, Hugh Dauncey and Steve Cannon, eds. (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 153-170; Keith Reader, "Flaubert's Sparrow, or the Bovary of Belleville: Edith Piaf as Cultural Icon," in *Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno: Culture, Identity, and Society*, Hugh Dauncey and Steve Cannon, eds. (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 205-224; Myriam Chimènes, ed., *La Vie Musicale sous Vichy* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> André Halimi, *Chantons sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Marabout, 1976), 9.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War* and Keith Reader, "Flaubert's Sparrow, or the Bovary of Belleville: Edith Piaf as Cultural Icon," 205-223.

<sup>19</sup> Myriam Chimènes, ed., *La Vie Musicale sous Vichy* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001); Nathalie Dompnier, *Vichy à Travers Chants* (Paris: Editions Nathan, 1996); Ursula Mathis, "Politique 'via ether': La chanson française de la BBC pendant la 2e Guerre Mondiale," in Antoine Hennion (dir), *1789-1989 Musique, Histoire, Démocratie* (Paris: Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1992), 481-498.

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- <sup>20</sup> Stephen Olbrys Gencarella and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, eds. *Readings on Rhetoric and Performance* (State College: Strata Publishing, 2010), 2.
- <sup>21</sup> Dwight Conquergood, "Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 80-123.
- <sup>22</sup> Conquergood, "Performance Studies, 148.
- <sup>23</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 19.
- <sup>24</sup> John MacAloon, quoted in Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 20.
- <sup>25</sup> Elin Diamond, ed. *Performance and Cultural Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1. Understanding performance as located within a pre-existing discursive terrain is well-established in the fields of rhetoric and performance studies. For examples, James Jasinski has theorized the ways in which past speech acts offer inventional resources for current rhetorical action. See James Jasinski, "Instrumentalism, Contextualism, and Interpretation in Rhetorical Criticism," in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Invention and Interpretation in the Age of Science*, eds. Alan G. Gross and William M. Keith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 195-223. Anthropologist Richard Bauman has argued that the form and meaning of performance is "rooted in culturally defined scenes or events" that "constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation." See Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-4.
- <sup>26</sup> Jasinski, "Instrumentalism, Contextualism, and Interpretation in Rhetorical Criticism," 195-223.
- <sup>27</sup> Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*, 3.
- <sup>28</sup> Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*, 4.
- <sup>29</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2:1 (March 2005): 5.
- <sup>30</sup> Kendall R. Phillips, "Rhetorical Maneuvers: Subjectivity, Power, and Resistance" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39:4 (2006), 326.
- <sup>31</sup> I refer here to Campbell's argument that "texts have agency." See Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," 7.
- <sup>32</sup> Conquergood, "Performance Studies," 151.
- <sup>33</sup> Small, *Musicking*, 2.

## Chapter 1

### **Repertoires of Resistance: Musical Resources for the Reimagining of the Nation**

Recounting one of the Occupation's most brazen acts of open defiance, actor Paul Meurisse described an evening at the A.B.C. music hall in Paris during the winter of 1941. Sitting backstage, awaiting her turn to take the spotlight, Edith Piaf listened to murmurs that rose from the French audience. Onstage, singer Marc Hely was finishing his set with a virulent attack on the English government. The German officers snickered, but the French, many of whom still hoped for a British victory, were not laughing. In response to the expressions of displeasure expressed by her compatriots, Piaf pushed past the stage manager and into the spotlight. "Le Fanion de la Légion!" she ordered the conductor. Turning to face the balcony of German officers, Piaf sang the tale of thirty French Legion soldiers holed up in a small fort in the Sahara under attack by enemy "bastards" in a fictitious colonial battle. Forcefully pronouncing each French word, she sang the story of Legion soldiers fighting bravely despite the hunger and casualties that decimated their numbers. The tempo quickened and the instrumentation crescendoed at the point in the song's narrative when the enemy seizes the Legion's flag, a tattered but powerful source of inspiration for the four soldiers who remain inside the fort. Just when it seems that all hope of victory is lost, Piaf sang, Legion reinforcements arrive to rescue their comrades, who have replaced the stolen flag with one drawn "on their stomachs, black with blood." Piaf's inspired performance drew cries of affirmation from her French listeners, who erupted into shouts and whistles. The next day, officials summoned Piaf to their headquarters and informed her that the song was officially blacklisted.<sup>1</sup>

Piaf's performance was one of the most courageous attempts to use popular music as a medium for dissent and weapon of resistance in German Occupied France between 1940 and

1944. In a climate of aggressive censorship and political repression, this kind of open defiance was rare.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, after its swift fall to Germany in the summer of 1940, France rallied around its new leader, the World War I hero Philippe Pétain, and acquiesced to his plan of collaboration. On June 17, Pétain announced to the nation that he had agreed to head the new government, headquartered in the spa town of Vichy, and was asking the Germans for an armistice. Arguing that sustained fighting would prove militarily and politically dangerous, the general urged French people to lay down their arms and accept France's misfortune. Continued warfare, he claimed, would result in the utter annihilation of the French military and eliminate the possibility of an independent French government. Furthermore, Pétain insisted that an armistice would guarantee France an honorable, though subordinate, place in Hitler's new Europe. The suffering France would endure under the Germans would be brief, he claimed, and would provide the opportunity for the nation to shed its purported obsession with individual liberty. Offering himself up "as a gift to attenuate the country's deep misfortune," Pétain was met with wild public approval.<sup>3</sup> Across the nation, people lifted him above the stature of modern-day king, laying gifts of local soil at his feet, raising his portrait behind church altars, and comparing him to the country's original savior, Joan of Arc.<sup>4</sup>

On June 22, 1940, the French signed the armistice with Germany at the same forest in Compiègne where Germany had surrendered in 1918. The agreement divided the nation into an Occupied zone that would be controlled directly by Germany and an Unoccupied zone that would be administered by Vichy in collaboration with the Reich.<sup>5</sup> The armistice also required France to accept the demobilization of its military and allowed the nation only a small armistice army of 100,000 troops.<sup>6</sup> Existing weaponry was to be handed over to the conqueror or kept under guard. A particularly severe stipulation demanded that France accept Germany's

imprisonment of nearly 2 million prisoners of war —the most men taken prisoner in the history of warfare—until a peace treaty would conclude the war.<sup>7</sup> The armistice also required France to pay the costs of its own occupation, a figure that ranged from 400 million to 500 million francs per day because of rapid inflation. By the end of Vichy's reign, these costs reached 65 billion francs, accounting for 60% of the national budget.<sup>8</sup> Although the conditions of the armistice were harsh, Vichy lauded the agreement as a safeguard against the full brunt of German repression. Believing that Germany would win the war, Vichy held that a policy of collaboration was the best way to protect France's overseas possessions and domestic interests during the occupation and to ensure its prosperous future in Hitler's Europe after the war ended.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, by the time Piaf gave her rousing performance of “Le Fanon de la Légion” at the end of 1941, the promise of Pétain's plan was beginning to fade. Plagued by food and clothing shortages and crippling inflation, French citizens started to recognize the material costs of the armistice with Germany. As Paul Simon, an active member of the Resistance and editor of a clandestine newspaper, wrote in his account of Occupied Paris in 1942: The Germans “are interfering with everything.” Whereas in 1871 they “occupied only,” now “they have installed themselves in the railways, public administration, police forces, banks, insurance companies, press, wireless, films, law and education. They are everywhere, even in the so-called unoccupied zone,” he complained.<sup>10</sup> Set against a backdrop of rising discontent during an unusually cold winter, Piaf's performance gave voice to these feelings of resentment and desire for revenge, even though it made no specific call to resist Nazi Occupation. Indeed, the song did not even chronicle the military exploits of the French army, but told the fictitious tale of foreign *légionnaires*. Given the subject of the song, the performance raises important questions about the power of music as a signifier of nationalism under the Occupation. How did a song about the

Foreign Legion—a military branch made up of mostly non-French soldiers—provoke strong patriotic sentiments in a French audience? What vision of the nation did Piaf’s performance conjure? How did the act of singing, often presumed to be apolitical entertainment, help Piaf to launch a substantive critique of France’s situation under the Occupation and Vichy?

In order to answer to these questions and understand how song served as a potent symbol of the French nation during WWII, we must examine the meanings that had been invested in singing before Piaf took the stage. This chapter argues that the French audience’s reaction to Piaf’s performance was not automatic, but contingent upon a unique cultural history that established singing as a significant mode of democratic participation and transformed leading genres of song into representations of competing constructions of French nationhood. This history, I maintain, was vital to the project of resistance because it endowed music with meanings that responded directly to the collaborationist government’s attempts to rearticulate French national identity along political and ideological lines. Begun by France’s Revolutionary partisans and continued by the soldiers of the Great War, singing had been prefigured as the natural mode of communication for a democratic people who insisted upon voicing their political grievances. Citizens throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries considered *chanson*—the term for popular French songs—to be the musical expression of the nation. Yet, by 1940, another musical genre threatened to eclipse *chanson*. Jazz—considered both a symbol of cosmopolitanism and freedom as well as racial impurity and gender confusion—offered citizens new resources out of which to craft an alternative, “modern” vision of the nation. Ultimately, jazz provided tools for the contestation of Vichy’s strict gender and racial norms, while *chanson* remained an ideal inventional resource for the rhetorical marking of French republican nationhood.



## **Republican Repertoires: Singing from the Revolution to the First World War**

The logic behind Piaf's decision to use singing as a mode of protest and the patriotic nature of her audience's reaction come to light when viewed within the context of French political singing. Indeed, this performance was not an isolated moment of politicized music making, but rather was rooted in the nation's longstanding tradition of republican singing. According to historian Laura Mason, singing became a national mode of civic engagement during the Revolutionary period (1789-1799), providing one of the "most commonly used means of communication" for partisans who were denied access to the public sphere based on their lack of social standing or education.<sup>11</sup> Easily circulated between oral and print cultures, songs provided one of the means by which mostly illiterate citizens negotiated pressing political and cultural contestations.<sup>12</sup> After the Revolution, Mason contends, the French no longer sang merely to entertain themselves or voice a common complaint. Instead, singing became a means by which the French participated in civic life, "evok[ing] a concrete political heritage and a set of claims for a more equitable and inclusive polity."<sup>13</sup> Singing demonstrated that the political sphere was not the possession of political elites, but a contested terrain over which many factions of the population struggled.<sup>14</sup> In this way, French political singing was imbued with republican values from the very start.

After the Revolution, the French continued to look to singing for a means of participating in civic life. As France struggled to stabilize, songs allowed citizens to interpret events around them and make arguments against the policies of their government. In 1850, for example, a locksmith named Demoulin wrote "subversive" songs that he and his fellow workmen sang in taverns until their arrest:

The National Guard  
 Are a lot of petticoats  
 They've marched through the mountains  
 And they've stolen all the grain.<sup>15</sup>

Because most French remained illiterate during the nineteenth century, songs offered an easy means by which people could voice discontent. French people adapted well-known melodies to their own purposes, setting new lyrics to popular tunes that could be easily memorized and performed. The ease with which songs could be taught and learned made them an ideal medium for the formation of national identity. Indeed, it was through songs that rural citizens learned what it meant to be “French” and were assimilated into the modern nation.<sup>16</sup> While songs such as “La Marseillaise” encouraged the spread of the national language, others were mobilized as part of a national education campaign designed to teach “a sense of the fatherland, of civilization, and of moral ideals.”<sup>17</sup> In this way, the construction of national identity was accompanied by a tradition of singing. Through their songs, French people reflected upon and built their notions of what it meant to be French.

Political critique and song became even more closely associated during the rise of operetta in the mid-nineteenth century. A reaction against the serious, often tragic nature of Opéra-Comique, a genre of opera that aimed to portray life as realistically as possible, operetta aimed to bring gaiety and fun to the stage. The fathers of the new genre, Hervé and Jacques Offenbach, departed from opera's strict ban on dialogue, mixing the spoken and sung word. Their finished works were marked by heavy parody and satire, most of which had to be disguised in the plotlines and identities of old folktales and well-known heroes and villains. Nonetheless, the operettas often did not clear the government censors. When Offenbach submitted *La Grande Duchesse* for review, for example, officials banned its production until he softened the operetta's jabs at the French military.<sup>18</sup> The parodies of political life were made even funnier through saucy,

bawdy jokes, often camouflaged through clever innuendo. To make the sexual meaning of these jokes clearer, the performances featured all female choruses, dressed in revealing clothing, their corsets stuffed with newspaper. In one of Hervé's performances, for example, 12 chorus girls hid in the wings on both sides of the stage and thrust their bare legs into the audience's view. By the standards of the mid-nineteenth century, when women were supposed to keep even their ankles covered, such a display of flesh was considered spectacularly titillating.<sup>19</sup> Commenting on the lewd nature of the operetta, composer Camille Saint-Saëns called it "a daughter of Opéra-Comique, a daughter who has turned out badly, but daughters who have turned out badly are not without charm."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, known for its saucy humor and political critique, operetta was immensely popular among French people as they navigated a series of significant political changes – between 1848 and 1870, France's government shifted from the Second Republic, to the Second Empire, to the Third Republic in a span of only 22 years — and fought the Franco-Prussian war.

The legacy of French political singing was again called upon in WWI, the *guerre totale* that marshaled the collective efforts of civilians and soldiers alike. Aided by the burgeoning commercial music market, song culture became enormously important on the home front and in the trenches. Songs were perfect for war, writes historian Regina Sweeney, as they were "portable, nondiscriminatory (not restricted to the active reader, for example), adaptable, and polyvalent."<sup>21</sup> They strengthened morale, gave meaning to seemingly senseless death, protested government decisions, and helped people escape the nightmare of war. As people adapted songs to fulfill their individual requirements and purposes, they drew upon "trusted cultural icons, such as prewar conventions, traditional language, and symbols" that songs made available to them.<sup>22</sup> These conventions lent symbolic meaning to songs, making a certain melody a declaration of

patriotism, another a villainous act of treason. As soldiers and civilians tried to negotiate their identities amidst a terrifying, alienating political climate, the songs became vital to their experience with their nation.<sup>23</sup>

Having facilitated the rise of French nationalism and sustained citizens over centuries of political turmoil, singing offered a logical mode of communication for those who found themselves suddenly under Nazi repression.<sup>24</sup> Germany defeated France within just six weeks, stupefying a nation that had won the Great War 21 years earlier.<sup>25</sup> Like the citizens who risked the guillotine for running afoul of the status quo during the Revolution, French citizens living under Nazi control suddenly saw their civil rights severely curtailed as German administrators began censoring the press, deporting foreigners, and blacklisting Jewish workers and artists. As historian H.R. Kedward has noted, the French slowly realized that they were not “facing a strictly military presence with defined powers and limited intentions but an all-pervading authority which was steadily enlarging its capacity to influence, infiltrate, and control.”<sup>26</sup> The Germans intervened at nearly every level of daily life, imposing curfews, cutting electricity, censoring newspapers and radio stations, and forcing cinemas to play reel upon reel of Nazi propaganda.

As Nazi Germany moved to curtail freedom of speech, the tradition of political singing provided a safer means to voice defiance. Decisively beaten and subjected to interferences at all levels of daily life, the French became acutely aware of the Reich’s power and their own subordination. Most responded with an attitude of *attentisme* (wait-and-see), attempting to quietly fly under the occupiers’ radar until the war’s outcome could become clearer. Writer Jean Paulhan described the atmosphere in a letter to a friend: “Have I told you that in the little bistro where I drink a coffee every morning in the company of five or six working men and women

from the *quartier* [neighborhood], never the same ones, in all their thousands of complaints over three months I have never heard a single mention of the Germans. It's a matter of prudence, dignity, fear, perhaps a mixture of all three!" In a 1942 letter to his colleague Lucien Febvre, historian Marc Bloch also described the silence of his compatriots: "One of the things that strikes me most today is how impossible it is for any of us to know what his closest neighbor is thinking and doing."<sup>27</sup> These testimonies reveal the pressure on French citizens to fall in line with the Nazi Occupation and avoid any indication of dissatisfaction with the Reich's policies. Singing—an oral mode of communication not dependent on the written word—offered dissident citizens a means to defy the occupation without leaving an incriminating paper trail.

In addition to its practicality, singing was particularly well-suited to recovering French national identity in the wake of the Reich's devastating requisition of French industrial and agricultural products.<sup>28</sup> For the French, who took great pride in the nation's renowned cuisine, the seizure of food stood an assault on national belonging. By the end of the Occupation, the Germans had taken 2.4 million metric tons of wheat, 891,000 metric tons of meat, and 1.4 million hectoliters of milk. The rationing program did little to alleviate hunger. In the winter of 1942-43, for example, official rations fell to 1,200 calories per day. Even with the help of the black market, the French consumed only an average of 1,500 calories per day.<sup>29</sup> To make matters worse, Germany's interference in the French economy resulted in a severe gap between prices for goods and wages. The Reich's economic controls failed to contain inflation or curtail shortages, so prices rose an average 17 percent each year, for a total of 90 percent over the course of the Occupation. These same economic policies were very successful, however, at keeping wages low. According to historian Lynne Taylor, by the end of the Occupation, two-thirds of French citizens were unable to purchase the minimum food ration, let alone afford the

cost of housing, clothing, and transportation.<sup>30</sup> Germans data corroborates this figure. In a 1942 study, the Reich noted that prices had increased by 70 percent in France, while wages had only gone up by 30 percent.<sup>31</sup>

Not only did the performative tradition of singing arm French citizens against Nazi Germany's assaults on their national identity, it also offered a resource to defend Frenchness against Vichy's attempts to radically redefine national belonging. Hoping to prepare citizens for their future role in the Reich's Europe, French leaders voted by an overwhelming majority (569 to 80) to abolish the Third Republic (the government in place at the time of France's fall) and allow Pétain to draft a new constitution for a National Revolution.<sup>32</sup> An ideological campaign designed to regenerate the country, the National Revolution held that rebirth depended upon the eradication of liberal individualism, the guiding political philosophy in France since the French Revolution. According to Pétain, democracy had corrupted France, promoting an obsession with individual liberty that made citizens unwilling to sacrifice for the nation's needs.<sup>33</sup> In an article published in the January 1, 1941, edition of the *Revue Universelle*, Pétain railed against individualism, arguing that it destroyed the family by "breaking and loosening attachments," damaged work by "promoting rights to the end of laziness," and endangered the fatherland by "shaking cohesions when it does not totally dissolve unity."<sup>34</sup> For him, individualism was a "parasite" that would prevent any national progress as long as it remained France's dominant political philosophy.<sup>35</sup> In order to return France to its pre-Revolutionary greatness and recover a national emphasis on duty, Pétain held that citizens needed a return to the organic, local communities of family, workplace, and region. To this end, he penned Vichy's 1941 "Principles of the Community," a set of obligations that were to replace the Declaration of Rights of 1789.<sup>36</sup> With this new constitution, Pétain hoped to eradicate France's Revolutionary republican trinity

of *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité*, and replace it with a new order of *travail, famille, et patrie* (work, family, and fatherland).<sup>37</sup>

Even Nazi and Vichy authorities recognized the link between French national identity and the nation's musical traditions, intervening into French culture in order to reorient the nation's artistic and aesthetic practices toward their own, sometimes competing, ideological ends. Indeed, while the Germans had brought France to its knees, crushing its military and decimating its economy, Hitler still felt threatened by what he perceived to be France's cultural superiority. Despite the titans of classical music that Germanic culture had produced, "it was Paris," writes journalist Alan Riding, "not London, not Rome, not Vienna, and certainly not Berlin—that defined style and taste for the region."<sup>38</sup> The problem for German propaganda officials was that French culture enjoyed broad influence outside the boundaries of the nation. In a 1940 report, Fritz Werner, a propaganda official tasked with promoting German classical music, summed up the problem. "Over recent centuries," he wrote, "the French have become masters in the art of penetrating other peoples with their cultural policy." The task of German officials, he continued, should be to dismantle French culture, which he compared to a wall dividing Germany and France and impeding entente.<sup>39</sup> To contain French music, the Reich tasked three administrative bodies with overseeing musical policy. The Propaganda Staffel, divided across fifty offices in Paris, controlled six sections of French cultural life including the radio, cinema, music, theatre, fine arts, music hall, and cabaret. The German Embassy and *Institut Allemand* (German Institute) also held offices in Paris and exercised control over music, promoting the performance of German music composed by Germans instead of Frenchmen. Ultimately, as Fritz Piersig wrote in his 1942 memo for the Propaganda Staffel, the Reich saw musical domination as a way to convince French citizens that "the new Germany is also reclaiming cultural domination in

Europe and that it is in the process of proving the justification for this reclamation through its presentations.”<sup>40</sup>

French music was also of great concern to the Vichy government, who hoped that a vibrant French musical culture would sustain morale and help demonstrate the nation’s vitality. “France was not defeated on the battlefield of the arts,” wrote university professor and director of the Administration of Fine Arts Louis Hauteœur in a report to the Minister of National Education. “Our architecture, our painting, our sculpture, [and] our music continue to inspire admiration.”<sup>41</sup> In Vichy’s eyes, music was a particularly important cultural treasure. Musicologist Leslie Sprout has shown that, while government intervention into the arts was not new under Vichy, the regime did more than other governments to support music specifically. “The allocation for music in the budget of the Administration of Fine Arts increased sharply during the four years of occupation, even as the administration’s total budget decreased,” she notes. By 1944, funding for music accounted for over a third of the total arts budget.<sup>42</sup>

In the interest of placating the defeated nation, German propaganda officials had to balance requests for more French music with their own cultural objectives. Captain Lucht, chief of the French Propaganda office, wrote that any concessions made to the French “must be offset by advantages for German cultural propaganda on such a scale that will indisputably substantiate Germany’s claims to cultural leadership.” In other words, if the Germans allowed the performance of one piece by a French composer, they should require the performance of two German pieces. To ensure proper German representation, officials even regulated the nationality of audience members. The Propaganda office claimed 20% of all seats in the theatres—at Vichy’s expense—and arranged for tickets to be sold to German military officials at half price. According to Sprout, half the audience was German at the Opéra throughout the occupation.<sup>43</sup>



Yet, as Piaf demonstrated, singing was a nimble resource that could also be exploited by everyday citizens. One could, as she did, use song to whip an entire auditorium of French citizens into patriotic fervor and walk out of the Nazi cultural offices with only a slapped wrist. This is because France's performative traditions allowed Piaf, and others, to deploy a mode of communication already linked to a republican, democratic tradition. Like her forebears who sang in order to access the public sphere during the nation's most politically contentious times, Piaf presumed a republican right to political discussion—a right that had been prohibited by the Nazi Occupation. As she sang, she deployed her nation's tradition of political singing to argue for a vision of the country that did not square with the politics of collaboration. In choosing the story of soldiers engaged in valiant battle against a seemingly unconquerable foe, Piaf suggested to her listeners that France had not yet been defeated, that the nation, injured as it was, still held hope for a free future. During one of the coldest winters of the Occupation, she invited hungry and exploited French audience members to understand themselves as an extension of those defiant Legion soldiers who crafted makeshift flags out of their own blood and aligned German officers with the Saharan “bastards” who trespassed on Legion territory. Mobilizing her own working class ethos, rooted in her meager beginnings as a street singer on the unsavory Rue Pigalle, Piaf sounded determination and rallied her compatriots to believe in France's eventual freedom. Like the heroes of the song, French citizens would endure their suffering under the Occupation while maintaining resolute allegiance to the nation. German authorities, Piaf asserted, were unlawful usurpers who would eventually be overthrown.

## Two Genres, Two Frances: *Chanson* and Jazz versus Vichy's New France

Piaf's defiance at the A.B.C. music hall did not just rely on the performative traditions that imbued singing with republican, nationalistic meaning. In addition to inheriting a mode of communication from her Revolutionary forebears, Piaf was also heir to a genre of French popular song known as *chanson*. Centuries of cultural debates had established *chanson* as the country's truest music, the only authentic expression of French national identity. Historian Jules Michelet, for example, wrote *chanson* into the narrative of the nation, linking the birth of popular song to the healthy French citizen. According to Michelet, the regular rhythmic meter of *chanson* came from the strong heartbeats of the ancient French weavers who first performed it. "The rhythm of the shuttle," he explained, "pushed forth and pulled back at equal intervals, pattered itself to the rhythm of the heart, and by evening it often happened that in addition to the cloth, a hymn or ballad had been woven."<sup>44</sup> Not only did the regular meter of *chanson* suggest a seemingly natural relationship to French citizens, but its emphasis on diction served to highlight the beauty of the French language. Many singers sang their verses in a recitative delivery, a mixture between speech and song that facilitated the telling of their, often complicated, stories. Indeed, as American composer Ned Rorem has observed, *chanson* was always as much a "verbal form as a musical form." Indeed, famous *chansonniers* like Piaf were remembered "more as *litterateuse* than as *musicienne*."<sup>45</sup>

The purported musical expression of the fit French body, *chanson* maintained its association with the everyman throughout the nineteenth century. Performed in informal venues known as *café-concerts*, *chansons* maintained their simple, melodic structures while evolving into commentaries on the comedic and tragic events of quotidian life. They were easy to learn and provided working men and women with a way to unwind after a long day's work, purge

painful emotions, and commiserate over social injustice. Consider the words of one nineteenth-century patron, who described *café-concert* audiences as “intoxicated by the nauseating atmosphere of tobacco and refreshments,” and delighted in the ability to “join in the singing of an idiot chorus that the singer bawls out.” Most importantly, he wrote, one did not have to abide by traditional modes of decorum while enjoying a *tour de chanson* (round of singing). A person could “keep one’s hat on and smoke while drinking a beer,” he explained.<sup>46</sup> This boisterous, informal atmosphere propelled *café-concerts* to great popularity. Between 1848 and 1914, there were at least two hundred of these cafés in Paris. By contrast, the number of theatres averaged to only forty.<sup>47</sup> Thus, performed in informal spaces designed and devoted to the themes of economic difficulty and unrequited love, *chanson* maintained its position as the appropriate musical expression of the French body politic.

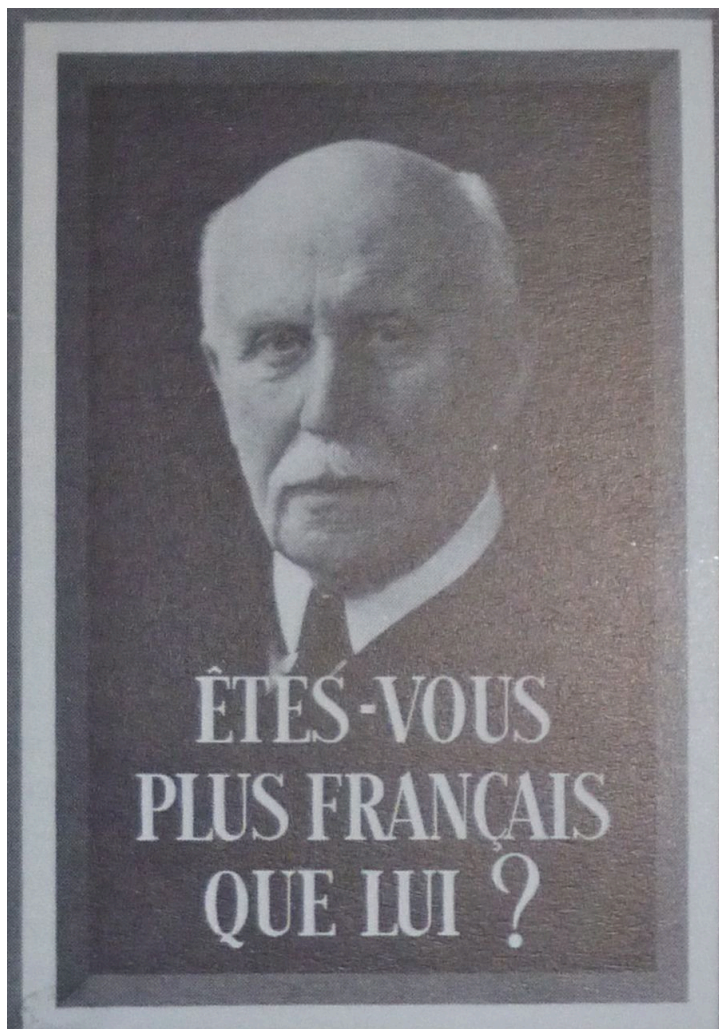
While new musical genres threatened the popularity of *chanson* in the early twentieth century, it reemerged in the 1930s as an inherently nationalistic genre of music, devoted to celebrating the beauty of Paris and the expansion of the French empire. The economic collapse of 1929 renewed interest in French *chanson* as the old themes of hardship and despair suddenly became germane for citizens coping with unemployment, reduced wages, and inflation. The economy also meant tough times for the luxurious music halls that staged elaborate variety shows, as these venues lost significant audiences. In 1929, for example, France hosted 1,910,000 foreigners, many of whom were wealthy patrons of Parisian entertainment venues. Yet, by 1935, that number had been reduced to only 390,000.<sup>48</sup> As unemployment rose, nationalist concern for French workers resulted in lost jobs for many foreign jazz musicians. The French, as historian Charles Rearick has argued, were “turning inward culturally,” showing “new enthusiasm for songs and films about the French people—in French.”<sup>49</sup> The market, relieved of the financial

burden of employing large orchestras, chorus lines, and dance troops, pumped out new songs about old France. Themes were nostalgic, celebrating long walks along the Seine with one's lover or a stolen kiss in front of the Eiffel Tower. In an attempt to revive confidence in France's future, songs also celebrated the nation's imperial history. Perhaps inspired by the 1931 Exposition Coloniale Internationale, an exhibit designed to give citizens the experience of traveling to the Casbah in Algiers or a palace in Morocco, songs took listeners on a musical journey beyond the hexagon. The foreign legion drew particular interest, as the nation romanticized the adventures of its imperialist soldiers. In 1936, Marie Dubas recorded "*Le Fanion de la Légion*," the song that Piaf would choose for her defiant performance at A.B.C. music hall in 1941.

Having emerged as the "natural" expression of true French citizens, *chanson* offered an ideal rhetorical resource for the subversion of Vichy's new vision of France. While Vichy's National Revolution failed to resonate strongly with many French people (for whom France's legacy of republicanism was central to their vision of the nation), Pétain was met with widespread support. The shock and pain of military loss, coupled with the Third Republic's unpopularity, helped the former general assume the role of redemptive savior.<sup>50</sup> His own illustrious war career offered compelling evidence of his ability to lead France through the Occupation. Having proven his patriotism and courage on the battlefields of the Great War, Pétain presented himself as the noble and wise grandfather of the nation, a benign patriarch who would guide his children to prosperity. Official Vichy propaganda strengthened his political authority by combining this image with claims of Pétain's essential Frenchness. Not only was he a tested military leader, this propaganda claimed, but he was the physical embodiment of French culture and values. Consider this widely-circulated poster, in which a stately portrait of Pétain

appears atop a pointed caption [Figure 1].<sup>51</sup> “Are you more French than he is?” the poster asks. The obvious answer was “no.” Pétain, the propaganda confidently asserted, was the most authentic embodiment of French ethnicity and French values and, therefore, the nation’s true leader. Armed with the ethos of an infallible leader, Pétain remained popular throughout the war, especially during its first two years. Even those who disagreed with the armistice trusted him, believing that he was secretly playing a double game with Germany, biding his time until the moment when he would deliver a fatal blow to the occupiers.<sup>52</sup>

Figure 1:



In the context of Vichy's attempts to radically refashion French national identity, *chanson* stood as a powerful tool with which French citizens could express continued devotion to the traditional order. Even though Piaf's performance of "Le Fanion de la Légion" made no explicit reference to the old trinity of *liberté, égalité et fraternité*, it sounded traditional Frenchness. Indeed, when Piaf took to the stage, she not only mobilized a performative tradition that was already aligned with France's republican values, but she sang in the tradition of those French workers whose healthy heartbeats allegedly gave rise to the nation's popular songs. Singing in a genre that had evolved as a cathartic response to the collective hard times of *le peuple*, Piaf vented French frustration through the allegory of the Foreign Legion soldiers, men who accepted their apparent demise with a sense of fatalism and patriotic dignity. A *chanteuse* par excellence, she emphasized the French text, using recitative delivery to articulate each word with impeccable diction in order to evoke a proud, defiant spirit. Most importantly, as she sang in the musical vernacular of the French nation, she identified herself as a true patriot and contested the national belonging of those who would accept the politics of collaboration. By asserting herself as a true French citizen, Piaf cast doubt on Pétain's Frenchness and rejected the authenticity of his claims to political legitimacy.

While *chanson* stood as a marker of traditional Frenchness, citizens also had jazz at their disposal, a musical marker of a more modern and cosmopolitan France. Indeed, despite its popularity throughout the nineteenth century and reemergence in the 1930s, *chanson* lost audiences during the early twentieth century when African American soldiers brought jazz to Europe during the Great War. Jazz music soared in popularity in 1920s France, quickly replacing *chanson* as the nation's most beloved genre of popular music. According to Matthew Jordan, jazz was so pervasive that as early as 1925, it was common to hear the music streaming out of

open apartment windows while strolling down the streets of Paris.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the rising availability of radios, whose sale increased from 3,200,000 in 1936 to 4,700,000 at end of 1939, helped jazz find new audiences.<sup>54</sup> The burgeoning film industry, whose profits increased by 45% between 1934 and 1938, also featured elaborate musical routines.<sup>55</sup> And French people purchased sheet music and recordings to enjoy at home. The 1936 hit song, “Au lycée Papillon,” for example, sold over 100,000 copies of sheet music and 12,000 records sold in less than three months. More than 200,000 copies of the song sold in 1937.<sup>56</sup> Performed by American black musicians and disseminated through improved technologies, jazz represented the kind of cosmopolitanism that was possible in a post-war world.

For many of the beleaguered, war-weary French, jazz’s syncopated rhythms and upbeat tempo also signaled opportunities for societal transformation. Praised even by French cultural critics, jazz shook old, aristocratic notions of beauty, suggesting that artistic boundaries were more porous than previously thought. Whereas critics of high art music had previously embraced strict rules relating to musical composition, jazz music illustrated that classical technique was not the only path to musical excellence. Jean Cocteau, for example, argued that jazz could not be measured by traditional standards of musical excellence. Based on simplicity, instead of “numbers and geometry,” the new American music was a soothing balm to “the fatigue of our ears.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, for critics, jazz’s syncopated rhythms and improvisation conveyed a sense of freedom and liberation from traditional rules of harmony and voice leading. Film and music critic Emile Vuillermoz hailed jazz as a democratic departure from the old, stuffy music, that “secret and confidential language of an aristocracy particularly proud of its privileges.”<sup>58</sup> Jazz, these critics agreed, should be “felt” instead of critically appraised and evaluated.<sup>59</sup> In short, jazz

demonstrated that the norms of French cultural excellence were not absolute and challenged classical musicians' monopoly on good music.

Jazz's close association with black Americans led cultural critics to link the genre to racialized tropes of primitivism. For audiences scarred by "civilized" warfare, they argued, jazz offered a welcome return to nature. Indeed, early after its appearance in France, critics and enthusiasts alike began to link jazz to the black body, arguing that only black musicians possessed the unique physiology to play it authentically. For conductor Ernst-Alexandre Ansermet, "the negro . . . discovers a whole series of effects produced by the lips alone, which make it a new instrument. There is a Negro way of playing the violin, a Negro way of singing."<sup>60</sup> Even the French language conveyed the physiological connection between blacks and jazz. According to the *Litrée* dictionary, the word *syncope* was first used as a medical term to describe an irregular, sickly heartbeat. As opposed to the strong heartbeats of Jules Michelet's industrious ancient weavers, *syncopes* occurred in the "primitive" black body, not the healthy French body. Robust French citizens, possessing regular heartbeats, would naturally express themselves in the regular rhythm of *chanson*, he held. These linguistic connotations prefigured discussions of jazz as a uniquely black music, paving the way for critics like musicologist Blaise Pesquinne to describe it as the "artistic manifestation of a race that is different from our own."<sup>61</sup>

Of course, not all French people celebrated jazz's association with modernism and black culture. Traditionalists who hoped to preserve class hierarchy and strict gender norms feared that jazz would destabilize French society. Not only did the democratic structure of improvisation and the loosening of standards of artistic beauty threaten social order, but even the experience of attending a jazz performance led to the erosion of class difference. Indeed, new, elaborate music halls deliberately sought to equalize the economic standing of their patrons, offering tickets at



affordable prices and arranging patrons in visually identical seating sections. The ideal music hall, according to drama critic Legrand Chabrier should treat patrons “as equally as possible, this is to say that the series of seats should be as little distinct as possible, not formed into separate groups.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the jazz concert was also criticized as a destroyer of proper gender identity. In a column for the newspaper *La Revue de Paris*, Albert Flament expressed his inability to identify the genders of the bodies he saw dancing at the music hall, asking “Is this the bust of a woman which glides, under this ghastly head of a young man, jawbone drubbed with ashes? Is this the body of a man, under the mask of this alert sexagenarian, coifed with a green Tyrolean hat?”<sup>63</sup> Columnist Gustave Fréjaville also criticized jazz concerts for their alleged destabilization of the natural order, writing that “the most precious joy for the music hall fan is, in effect, to dream while awake, to see impossible things realized.” Jazz enthusiasts, he charged, took pleasure in imagining “that the sky and trees are yellow,” that women’s “lips are too red, their eyes too black or blue.”<sup>64</sup> In short, jazz led to a dangerous blurring of *a priori* distinctions between rich and poor, man and woman.

Linked to African American culture and representative of modernism, jazz was also deemed a foreign threat to French culture. Concerned for the future of the “race,” conservative critics rushed to the defense of the *chanson* genre, lamenting the decline of music sung for French everymen in the French language. In a 1926 column for the cultural weekly *Comoedia*, one man complained that only two out of ten songs performed on the music hall stage were sung in French, a trend that represented the “slow, sure death of French song.”<sup>65</sup> Fréjaville urged French singers to reprise the performance of the traditional *tour de chant*, so that the audience could experience the collectivity of their “hearts beat[ing] to a single rhythm and respond[ing] to each intonation by the singer.”<sup>66</sup> By contrast, jazz, an “uncivilized” and “racially degenerate”

musical genre, would allegedly slowly change French temperament and behavior, leading to the death of the nation. In an article for a conservative newspaper, Yvonne Moustiers predicted that “the death of [French] song would be to an extent the death of the French spirit.”<sup>67</sup>

As a symbol of modernity, cosmopolitanism, and transgressive social norms, jazz offered enterprising citizens another musical tool to level against the new conservative social order imposed by Vichy. In the attempt to reverse the “disastrous” effects of modernity, Vichy paired its rearticulation of French political philosophy with the aggressive promotion of traditional values. Specifically, Vichy decried the erosion of strictly defined gender identities that had occurred in the interwar period and called upon citizens to recognize innate sexual difference.<sup>68</sup> Only by rejecting the current “civilization without sexes”—to borrow Mary Louise Roberts’ term—could French people return to traditional family values and learn to respect church and state authority.<sup>69</sup> Citizens were to honor and obey the Catholic Church, women were to stay at home and devote themselves to raising children, and men were to assume their rightful place at the helm of their families and local communities. To facilitate a return to these social norms, Vichy passed legislation that promoted conservative religious teaching in French schools. For example, in November 1940, a law passed that allowed lessons on “duties to God” to be added to the public curriculum. In January 1940, local governments were required to subsidize Catholic schools. In January 1941, Catholic instruction was made available as an elective in public schools.<sup>70</sup> Vichy also used its legislative powers to limit women’s civil rights. An October 11, 1940, law, for example, mandated that married women whose husbands could support them be fired from their public sector jobs.<sup>71</sup> In April 1942, another law made divorce more difficult to obtain.<sup>72</sup> Accompanied by propaganda attacks on contraception and abortion, both of which had already been restricted or prohibited during the interwar period, these laws were powerful

instruments by which Vichy worked to reintroduce “traditional” French values among its purportedly “modern” citizens.<sup>73</sup> “The script was familiar,” writes historian Miranda Pollard, “taken from the stock repertoire of right-wing ideology.”<sup>74</sup>

One of the most popular propaganda posters for the National Revolution expresses Vichy’s objectives in clear visual imagery, representing old and new France as two different houses. On the left, the artist depicts Republican France as a crumbling shack, ill-supported by a weak foundation of Laziness, Demagogy, and Internationalism. The house crashes down in a billow of red smoke, an allusion to both the communist forces that were allegedly eroding French stability and the internal bleeding suffered by the nation. A Jewish Star hangs over the collapsing house, aligning France’s demise with its Jewish population and capitalistic greed. On the right, the artist depicts Vichy’s New France as a paradigm of order and stability. The image recalls the Biblical instruction to build one’s life on the rock, or the sturdy and timeless teachings of Jesus Christ, rather than on sand, or the fleeting and superficial values of nonbelievers.<sup>75</sup> Like the Biblical wise man who built his house on the rock, the poster asserted, Vichy had anchored France upon the solid foundation of Work, Family, and Fatherland, supported by the pillars of school, artisanry, peasantry, and the Legion. Marshal Pétain, symbolized by the six stars of his insignia, watches over the stable French house, kept in good order by the woman who emerges from the shutters, presumably letting fresh air into her clean and tidy home. As Pollard notes, this new representation of Vichy France is, above all, inward-looking, constructed in opposition to what Vichy considered an overly cosmopolitan and modern Republic.<sup>76</sup>

Figure 2: Poster for the National Revolution



Ultimately, as a symbol of modernity and more liberal norms of race and gender, jazz was uniquely positioned to argue against Vichy's vision of a pre-Revolutionary, Catholic France. As the collaborationist government embraced the radical racism of fascist Germany, called citizens to honor religious teachings, and urged women to return to domesticity, jazz stood in direct contrast to the aims of the National Revolution. Trading Louis Armstrong records, organizing clandestine dance parties, and reading tracts about the liberatory potential of improvisational music, jazz lovers rejected Vichy's construction of the nation and chose, instead, a new, cosmopolitan France where black and white musicians could at least perform together, even if not stand on equal social footing, and where women could at least dream of a life beyond the home, even if substantial barriers impeded their professional success.

## Conclusion

In sum, this history shows that French citizens living under the German occupation had at their disposal a performative tradition of republican singing and two distinct genres of popular music. *Chanson*, the nation's oldest popular genre, remained a marker of nationalism, reemerging as the economic recession of the 1930s renewed its relevance to struggling citizens. Imbued with meaning by both fans and critics, jazz stood as a potent symbol of modernism, cosmopolitanism, freedom, racial impurity, and foreignness. As well-known representatives of the nation's values, these genres offered inventional resources out of which dissident citizens built their political identities and critiques. Indeed, when Piaf took the stage to protest the mockery of the British government and to rally her audience to patriotic defiance of the German occupation, she appropriated not only a song about proud French Legionnaires, but the *chanson* genre and its attendant meanings. Singing the simple music of able-bodied French workers, she bolstered her position as a French national and claimed the right to speak. As the following chapters reveal, popular music was not just the tool of professional singers, but was performed by everyday citizens who strove to fashion resistance to the Reich. Indeed, as Piaf left her meeting with the German censor, French resistance fighters were combing the repertoire of French folksong, appropriating the beloved and well-known melodies of *chanson* to write their own critiques of Vichy's politics. As the next chapter shows, France's resistance fighters, characterized as out-of-touch and misguided young boys, wove musical culture into the fabric of their everyday lives, mining the realm of popular music for tools with which to delegitimize Vichy's leadership and imagine themselves as France's true guardians.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Meurisse, *Les Eperons de la Liberté* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1979), 153-4.

<sup>2</sup> In several popular press biographies, Piaf is credited with all sorts of resistant acts, including arranging for her photograph to be taken with prisoners of war so that the men could make a forged identity card and escape their captivity. See, for example, David Bret, *Piaf: A Passionate Life* (London: Robson Books, 1998), 44-5. Whether or not this is true, Piaf was remembered as a resister at the end of the Occupation and, unlike many of her colleagues in the music business, was not accused of having collaborated.

<sup>3</sup> Philippe Pétain, quoted in Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*, trans., Janet Lloyd (New York: The New Press, 1993,) 6-7 and H.R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance, 1940-1944* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1985), 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> H.R. Kedward, "Patriots and Patriotism in Vichy France," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 32 (1982): 176.

<sup>5</sup> Kedward, *Occupied France*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Fishman, *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in 20<sup>th</sup> Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 51.

<sup>7</sup> Yves Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre dans les Stalags, les Oflags, et les Kommandos, 1939-1945* (Paris: Hachette, 1987), 11.

<sup>8</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 51. For details about the terms of the armistice, see also Burrin, *France under the Germans*, 11-14.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Austin, "Propaganda and Public Opinion in Vichy France: The Department of Hérault, 1940-44," *European Studies Review* 13 (1983): 470.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Simon, *One Enemy Only—The Invader* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1942), 27, quoted in Kedward, *Occupied France*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>12</sup> See Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 2-3 for more on the ease with which songs were disseminated and learned within both cultures.

<sup>13</sup> Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, 7.

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<sup>15</sup> Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 435.

<sup>16</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 441.

<sup>17</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 442.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From H.M.S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (New York: DoubleDay and Company, 1983), 22-3.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Sterling Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera* (Philadelphia: David McKay Company, 1927), 126.

<sup>21</sup> Regina M. Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory: French Cultural Politics and Music during the Great War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, 12-3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Nearly all histories of WWII France emphasize the shock of French defeat. See, Kedward, *Occupied France*, 1 and Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> The German military killed 92,000 Frenchmen—twice as many casualties than it sustained—and injured over 200,000 Frenchmen. Even German generals, who had followed Hitler with apprehensive flashbacks to the disastrous Battle of the Marne, did not dream of such a swift and decisive victory. Ultimately, French high command—a disorganized group with antiquated military strategies—was to blame for the defeat. Despite the substantial size of the French ranks, their military's concentration on upholding the strong fortifications along the Maginot Line left the country open to attacks from the northern Ardennes region, near the Belgian border.

<sup>26</sup> Kedward, *Occupied France*, 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Both of these quotations were taken from Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 188.

<sup>28</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 53.

<sup>29</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 54-5.

<sup>30</sup> Lynne Taylor, "The Black Market in Occupied Northern France, 1940-4," *Contemporary European History* 6:2 (1997): 154.

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<sup>31</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 58-9.

<sup>32</sup> John F. Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France, 1940-1944* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 40. For more on the competing political ideas vying for power at Vichy, see Fishman's summary of the competing goals of Vichy traditionalists, technocrats, and fascists, 39-42.

<sup>34</sup> Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français: 17 Juin 1940-Août 1944*, ed. Jean-Claude Barbas (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989), 361.

<sup>35</sup> Pétain, *Discours aux Français*, 361-2.

<sup>36</sup> Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 149.

<sup>37</sup> Kedward, *Occupied France*, 22-3.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Riding, *And the Show Went On* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 51-2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* The quotation from Fritz Werner is also available in the original French in Manuela Schwartz, "La Musique et la Propagande Culturelle des Nazis," in *La Vie Musical Sous Vichy*, ed. Myriam Chimènes (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001), 90.

<sup>40</sup> "La nouvelle Allemagne revendique aussi la domination culturelle en Europe et qu'elle est en mesure de prouver par ses présentations le bien fondé de cette revendication." Quoted in Schwartz, "La Musique et la Propagande Culturelle des Nazis," 94.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Leslie Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>42</sup> Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Jules Michelet, *The People*, trans. John P. McKay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 47, quoted in Matthew F. Jordan, *Le Jazz: Jazz and French Cultural Identity* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 27-8.

<sup>45</sup> Ned Rorem, quoted in Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 170.



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- <sup>46</sup> Seth Schulman, *The Celebrity Culture of Modern Nightlife: Music-Hall, Dance, and Jazz in Interwar Paris, 1918-1930* (PhD diss., Brown University, 2000), 42.
- <sup>47</sup> Kelley Conway, *Chanteuse in the City: The Realist Singer in French Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 32-3.
- <sup>48</sup> Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, 118.
- <sup>49</sup> Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, 130.
- <sup>50</sup> John F. Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France, 1940-1944*, 6-7.
- <sup>51</sup> *La Propagande Sous Vichy, 1940-1944*, ed. Laurent Gervereau and Denis Peschanski (Paris: Bibliotheque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, 1990), 238.
- <sup>52</sup> Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 185.
- <sup>53</sup> Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 96.
- <sup>54</sup> Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 219.
- <sup>55</sup> Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, 220.
- <sup>56</sup> Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, 197.
- <sup>57</sup> Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'arlequin, notes autour de la musique, 1918* (Paris: Stock, 1978), 43, quoted in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 41.
- <sup>58</sup> Emile Vuillermoz, *Musique d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Les editions Georges Crés, 1923), 196, quoted in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 77.
- <sup>59</sup> Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 40-2.
- <sup>60</sup> Quoted in Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 25.
- <sup>61</sup> Jackson, *Making Jazz French*, 89.
- <sup>62</sup> Schulman, *The Celebrity Culture of Modern Nightlife*, 54.
- <sup>63</sup> Albert Flament, "L'Olympia," *La Revue de Paris*, February 1, 1927, quoted in Schulman, *The Celebrity Culture of Modern Nightlife*, 55-6.

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<sup>64</sup> Gustave Fréjaville, *Au Music Hall*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Paris: Aux Editions du monde Nouveau, 1923), 36, quoted in Schulman, *The Celebrity Culture of Modern Nightlife*, 56.

<sup>65</sup> Pierre Fontaine, “Est-ce l’agonie de la chanson française?” *Comoedia*, November 15, 1926, quoted in Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, 89.

<sup>66</sup> Fréjaville quoted in Conway, *Chanteuse in the City*, 62.

<sup>67</sup> Yvonne Moustiers, “Deux Epoques,” *L’ami du peuple du soir*, May 18, 1929, quoted in Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, 89.

<sup>68</sup> While women still experienced rampant discrimination under the Third Republic, several new laws granted them some measure of independence from their husbands. For example, in 1920 a woman could join a union without her husband’s permission. In 1927, she could keep her French nationality if she married a foreign man. By 1938, she could get a passport, open a bank account, and attend university without her husband’s authorization. See Conway, *Chanteuse in the City*, 74.

<sup>69</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 156.

<sup>71</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 62.

<sup>72</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 149.

<sup>73</sup> Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 57.

<sup>74</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Matt. 7:24-27 NIV

<sup>76</sup> I borrow from Miranda Pollard’s excellent analysis of this poster. See Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 3.

## Chapter 2

### ***La France en Chantant: The Rhetorical Construction of French Identity in Songs of the Resistance Movement***

On November 11, 1940, more than 3,000 Parisian high school and college students gathered around the *Arc de Triomphe* to stage the first public protest of the German occupation of France.<sup>1</sup> At 8:30 a.m., they began marching down the *Champs Élysées*, where five months earlier the Germans had paraded in triumph. As they marched, the students yelled subversively “Long live de Gaulle!” “Long live France!”<sup>2</sup> Reflecting the patriotic character of the protest, some young people wore tricolor rosettes on the lapels of their jackets and nearly all sang “La Marseillaise,” the French national anthem, which had recently been banned by the Nazis.<sup>3</sup> In the early evening, German soldiers arrested the protesters and transported them to Paris police headquarters for sentencing.<sup>4</sup> Upon being questioned by police, high school student Robert Monnerary told the authorities that he did not know why he had been arrested because he “didn’t sing or shout.” Similarly, René Chuzeville told the police that he was simply walking through the streets with friends from his school and had not “sung ‘La Marseillaise’” or “protested in any way.”<sup>5</sup> The facts that the arrested students consistently denied engaging in the act of singing the French national anthem, that the protesters joined in singing the anthem as an act of resistance, and that Nazis had outlawed the song in the first place all betray the multitudinous ways in which the performance of “La Marseillaise” exerted rhetorical power in Occupied France.

Despite the country’s swift defeat and the harsh terms of the armistice, the students mobilized the principal musical representation of national strength and determination in order to give voice to their hopes of a free France. Originally written as a rallying cry for French Revolutionaries, “La Marseillaise” evoked the memory of the struggle that had come to define

France's national character and called citizens to honor the legacy of her fallen patriots. Indeed, as they sang, the students likened the German occupiers to those eighteenth-century Prussian "tyrants" who would dictate France's future and imagined themselves as the faithful partisans who would eventually carry the nation to "triumph and glory." In this way, the French national anthem served as a powerful and widely-used cultural tool in the psychological fight against German Occupation, yet it was just one of the hundreds of songs sung and circulated by members of the French Resistance during the country's *années noires* (dark years). Whistled over the clanking of tools while sabotaging trains, sung in secrecy while hiding in caves, hummed to fight despair while interred in German prison camps, French folk songs sustained Resistance fighters throughout their struggle against the Nazis and their collaborators.

Folk songs, I shall demonstrate, served as a key form of cultural resistance that ideologized, inspired, and emboldened resistance fighters in France's war against Hitler. As resisters sang, they reprised a performative tradition of French political singing begun during the French Revolution. By extending this performative tradition of political singing, resisters asserted themselves as protagonists in national history while literally practicing the democratic forms they sought to safeguard. The discursive features of the songs strengthened resisters' claims to national identity. Deploying traditional national narratives, appeals to soldierly masculinity, and parody, Resistance songs, I maintain, defined the individuals who opposed German Occupation as members of a transhistorical community of French heroes. In this way, the songs sought to represent resisters as the guardians of true "Frenchness," an identity that excluded the Vichy regime from the national community and robbed it of its political legitimacy. Under the threat of fascism and the material constraints of war, the performance of Resistance

songs allowed partisans a means to assert political power and maintain influence in the public sphere when other forms of communication were unavailable.

These conclusions are based on an analysis of 137 folk songs, most of which were sung – and in this way, circulated – throughout France from 1940 to 1944. Because being caught with subversive printed materials could lead to execution, resisters rarely committed songs to paper, creating a challenge for the researcher intent on finding primary sources.<sup>6</sup> Despite the ephemeral nature of Resistance singing during the war, my archival efforts in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent have uncovered the lyrics and melodies of thirty songs sung by Resistance fighters from 1940 to 1944, including an unpublished collection compiled by Jean Maurin, a Resistance fighter in the *Val d'Allier* region.<sup>7</sup> These newfound texts significantly expand upon existing collections of Resistance songs, most of which are contained in two anthologies, *La Résistance en Chantant* and *Paroles et Musique: Les Chansons et la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*.<sup>8</sup> The texts that I have recovered and those available in the anthologies circulated through a variety of media and in multiple contexts. Some songs gained national popularity while others remained regional, their circulation documented in personal memoirs.<sup>9</sup> Some were heard over the radio while others were composed and distributed orally between factions of the Resistance. By examining both the songs written by members of the Resistance and those broadcast over the BBC, my analysis will draw upon songs circulated regionally as well as nationally.

Despite the importance of folk songs to the success of the Resistance movement, no scholar has analyzed how they functioned rhetorically.<sup>10</sup> This chapter treats seriously the voices of Resistance singers, showing the ways the act of singing constructed them as guardians of a traditional French republicanism at a time when national identity was in flux. To do so, I will

first situate the songs in the historical context of WWII France, establishing that the popularity of the Vichy government created the need for a legitimizing discourse that would challenge the dominant perception of resisters as either out-of touch eccentrics or dangerous outlaws. In the second section, I will theorize the performance of Resistance songs, showing how resisters appropriated a historical mode of political singing begun during the French Revolution to construct themselves as republican patriots. The third section analyzes the performance of Resistance singing, focusing on the discursive and musical deployment of national narratives that connect resisters to an idealized, historical French community. The performance of Resistance songs, I maintain, defined members of the Resistance as the guardians of traditional French values and descendents of France's heroes while excluding Vichy from the nation and subverting the government's claim to political authority.

### **Fallen France: Vichy, the Resistance, and Public Opinion**

While Pétain's National Revolution failed to resonate strongly with many French people for whom France's legacy of republicanism was central to their vision of the nation, the Vichy regime installed itself quite easily due to the unpopularity of the Third Republic. The shock and pain of defeat turned the Republic into a handy scapegoat, while Pétain settled into his role as redemptive savior.<sup>11</sup> Seeking to ease the transition to an entirely new political ideology, Pétain's supporters capitalized on his image as France's truest patriot, grounding the legitimacy of his political authority in his "Frenchness."

As a result of Pétain's popularity, few people actively resisted Vichy's collaboration with Germany during the first two years of the Occupation.<sup>12</sup> Even those who disagreed with the decision to sign the armistice were unlikely to oppose Vichy and Germany due to their confidence in Pétain, uncertainty about the war's outcome, and fear of German retaliation. In

1942, French essayist Jean Gu  henno documented the anxiety that paralyzed many, calling France a country that was “nothing but a frightened protoplasm.” Even as Allied victory became more certain, many French people were haunted by “the same fear, the same rot” that accompanied the beginning of the war. “The people are terrified,” Gu  henno complained in 1944. “They are wary of everything, the Germans, the English, the Russians; all they can think about is ‘getting through’ without coming to any harm.” “It is as if,” he wrote, “to the great mass of this country, nothing matters except survival, at any price.”<sup>13</sup> Certainly, most French people’s response to the war was to try to live as normally as possible. Trusting in P  tain’s alleged plan to throw off Germany, many kept beneath the radar for the entire Occupation.

Despite overwhelming support for collaboration with the Nazis, a tiny segment of the French population did rebel against Vichy’s policy. During the first two years of the Occupation, resistance was initiated by small groups of like-minded friends and family, most of whom knew nothing of each other’s existence or of Charles de Gaulle’s efforts to coordinate an organized Resistance in London. Slowly, these localized, small groups of resisters formed larger groups that eventually became the well-known movements and networks of the French Resistance. In the occupied zone, the movements were smaller and more self-conscious due to the German presence. Their main goal was to change attitudes among the population, an objective pursued primarily through clandestine newspapers and pamphlets that encouraged citizens to *narguer* (irritate) the Germans by any means possible.<sup>14</sup> Far more secretive, the networks had specific military objectives such as collecting intelligence, executing sabotage, and organizing escape routes. They were eventually linked to Allied intelligence groups, including the Free French in London, the British intelligence service, and the Special Operations Executive, Britain’s program to undermine Germany in occupied Europe with specially trained agents. In addition to the

movements and networks, Resistance groups also formed more militant units called “*maquis*,” the French word for “a group of dense shrubs or bush,” which reflected their practice of hiding in the countryside in order to resist German Occupation through acts of sabotage and violence. These units began appearing in 1942 and were first composed of Jews fleeing Vichy authorities, deserters from Vichy work camps, and young men trying to escape mandatory work service in Germany.<sup>15</sup>

While public memory has romantically swelled the numbers involved in the various resistance groups known collectively as the French Resistance, historians agree that membership was actually quite small. Throughout the Occupation, joining the active Resistance was a difficult choice to make. In the beginning, the public’s trust resided so fully with Pétain’s leadership and with Germany’s imminent victory that the few French who refused to accept German Occupation were often considered to be absurd, idealistic rebels. Claude Bourdet, a leader of the *Combat* movement, suggested that resisters were those eccentrics who had already “broken with their social and professional milieu.” Jean Cassou, another resister, claimed that, they were those “without possessions, without inheritance or title, with no fixed home, no social status, no real profession.”<sup>16</sup> So great were the risks associated with resistance that those who chose it needed to have nothing to lose. Even in relationships where political ideologies did not clash, joining the Resistance required a break with friends and family. Because continued communication put resisters and their loved ones in danger, many broke contact with their friends and family. Social isolation was particularly burdensome among members of the *maquis* who had to remain physically removed from their homes in order to escape deportation to German work camps. Thus, for a variety of resisters, Resistance activity often resulted in social isolation.<sup>17</sup>



Despite Pétain's popularity, the events of 1942-1943 caused public support to shift against Vichy's policy of collaboration. As hundreds of thousands of French men and women were rounded up for tours of forced labor in Germany, increasing food shortages left entire regions without bread and meat, and German soldiers pushed past the demarcation line to occupy the free zone, Vichy's policy of collaboration began to lose its appeal. Now under the full brunt of German Occupation, French citizens grew hostile to Vichy's policies. The entrance of the United States into the war at the end of 1941 and mounting Allied victories, both of which began to forecast the defeat of Germany, strengthened this opposition and made public opinion more sympathetic to Resistance efforts.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, even this change in popular opinion did not make joining the Resistance a popular choice. Indeed, just when the public became suspicious of Vichy's policies, the government increased its efforts to stamp out partisan activities, setting action against the Resistance as the new gauge of collaboration with the Reich. Indeed, by 1942, Vichy had deported so many of France's Jews and foreigners that the government no longer had sufficient leverage at Germany's bargaining table. Faced with the threat of losing authority in the unoccupied zone, Vichy targeted the Resistance, offering police action against its members as evidence of cooperation with the Third Reich.<sup>19</sup> As a result, many resisters were arrested, tortured, and executed. Those who escaped could not rejoin their units, as their colleagues feared that they would lead police to the group. In addition to strengthening police action against the Resistance, Vichy launched a propaganda campaign against the Resistance, conducted through the medium of the radio. Led by collaborationist politician Philippe Henriot, Vichy's radio broadcasts simultaneously characterized Resistance fighters as naïve, misguided adolescents and dangerous bandits from whom the French needed protection. One broadcast, for example, called the *maquis* "a bunch of

bandits and thieves and also, alas, some sincere young boys, abused by the fallacious propaganda from London.” These misguided youngsters, the announcer predicted, “will soon realize the enormous material superiority of Germany, and they will be condemned to stay in their camouflage in their forest, in their cavern, and in their den, waiting for a landing that will never come.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, Vichy’s vicious police and propaganda attacks tempered the popularity of the Resistance. While some citizens may have supported the cause of the Resistance, many were simply too afraid to join. Others continued to trust Pétain’s portrayal of resisters as dangerous ideologues who were best avoided.

Despite subsequent romanticizations of the French Resistance, those who participated were the object of the public’s scorn and Vichy’s disdain. In the early years of the Occupation, popular opinion rested overwhelmingly with Pétain. Trusting in their Christ-like figure to protect them from the full force of German repression, the French focused their efforts on resuming life as usual. Those who chose to resist often were ostracized from their communities and families. Some were characterized as maladjusted outsiders; others lost contact with their friends and family to try and protect them from the Germans. Just as public opinion began to change in favor of the Resistance, Resistance fighters found themselves the target of an aggressive French police hunt and maligning propaganda campaign. In the face of these hardships, how was the Resistance to establish any sort of political legitimacy? How were the emerging Resistance fighters to imagine themselves as France’s rightful political leaders when public support favored the collaborationist Pétain? How were they to craft a positive collective identity for themselves and the French people in the face of Vichy’s slanderous propaganda? How were they to sustain morale in the face of the torture and execution of their comrades? A crucial means employed by the French Resistance to overcome these challenges was the singing of folk songs. Through the

performance of these songs, resisters recited and disseminated a legitimizing discourse that allowed them to imagine themselves and to be imagined by their fellow citizens as the true arbiters of French culture and values.

### **Resistance Singing: A Historically Situated Performance Practice**

In order to understand the rhetorical function of Resistance singing, we must first reconnect music with its performance. As musicologist Christopher Small wrote in his influential book *Musicking*, “music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do.”<sup>21</sup> Small’s stress on the act of making music reminds us that songs are not simply composed of lyrics and melodies, but instead make up a complex medium of communication that combines textual elements with embodied, contextualized performance. Indeed, more than simply constructing a repertoire of songs, Resistance musical culture extended the historical practice of political singing begun by France’s Revolutionary ancestors and continued by the victorious soldiers of the Great War. As I argued in chapter one, these historical practices of French singing established the performance of songs as a means by which French citizens could participate in democratic life and in the construction of French republicanism. By 1940, national singing was not a form of entertainment, but a mode of action directly linked to the preservation of national identity. This performative tradition is vital to understanding singing in the French Resistance, as the behavioral structures and patterns of political singing that resisters inherited from their forebears worked alongside the songs’ explicit textual appeals to construct the rebels as guardians of French republicanism. Indeed, it was this combination of a mutually reinforcing performance practices and textual appeals that made the singing of Resistance songs so powerful in the battle for political legitimacy and so threatening in the eyes of the occupying forces.

At one level, the songs functioned in a manner not unlike print culture in constituting nation-states in the nineteenth century. As Benedict Anderson notes, nothing played a greater role in the development of the modern nation-state than “print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others.”<sup>22</sup> Songs, like national languages, newspapers and speeches, were among the symbols through which people identified themselves as members of the nation. At another level, however, singing – unlike print media or even public address – could not be as easily mobilized by the hierarchical structures of the nation-state because of its participatory nature. Unlike Robespierre’s speeches at the National Assembly in which one rhetor addressed an audience, the performance of these songs collapsed the divide between speaker and audience. The peasants and aspiring politicians who sang Revolutionary songs participated in the creation of the rhetorical message; they were not merely recipients of it. And while Robespierre’s speeches were delivered once, songs were sung repeatedly, serving new and different purposes at each performance. Therefore, singing was a radically democratic performance practice that allowed individual participants to simultaneously contribute to the meaning of the rhetorical act and derive their own unique interpretations of it.

By appropriating this historical performance mode, Resistance singers practiced the very republicanism they sought to embody. The act of patriotic, nonhierarchical singing violated the Vichy regime’s emphasis on obedience and service and marked singers as republican citizens, struggling to restore the tenets of liberal individualism. Whether or not they were aware of the rhetorical function of their performances, evidence from the personal memoirs of Resistance fighters demonstrates that they intended to safeguard republican traditions. For example, Alban Vistel wrote that his decision to participate in the Resistance had been a “reaction of individual

honor” and “a victorious refusal of any historical determinism.”<sup>23</sup> Many articulated their adherence to natural rights in opposition to the anti-Semitism embraced by Vichy and Germany. Like Jules-Geraud Saliège, the Archbishop of Toulouse, these resisters believed that people were governed by “human morality which imposes duties and recognizes rights. These duties and rights are derived from the nature of man . . . it is in the power of no mortal to suppress them.”<sup>24</sup> Engaging the widely held conception of France as an historic champion of human liberty, these resisters combined patriotism with reverence for individualism. Resisters had a “common patrimony” that bequeathed to them a “profound feeling for human dignity,” as the mayor of Toulouse stated in 1944.<sup>25</sup> Because political singing had developed in France as a decentralized mode of action tied to the preservation of republican ideals, it offered resisters a perfect inventional resource for the reclamation of a traditional national identity.

Fragmentary evidence of singing in the French Resistance gathered from police reports and resisters’ testimonies attests to the capacity of singing to mark French people as uncompromising opponents of collaboration. As the story of the protest on November 11, 1940, reveals, the singing of the French national anthem, “La Marseillaise” constituted a diverse group of high school and college students as unyielding French patriots who would never submit to German rule. These reports and others repeatedly demonstrate that the act of singing allowed police and citizens to identify resisters. A police report on August 17, 1941, documents the attempted arrest of 150 young people who sang the national anthem at Paris’s *Place du Chateau Rouge*.<sup>26</sup> On August 20, 1941, authorities were alerted that four French people had been heard singing the national anthem behind the backs of three German soldiers at *Place d’Italie*, one of Paris’s largest squares. The accused singers ran off before an arrest could be made.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most moving testament to the power of singing to mark citizens as guardians of a republican France can be found in the records of singing in German prisons and concentration camps. Roger Tabar, a prisoner of war from Paris, composed songs of resistance for his fellow Frenchmen. Even within the prison walls, Tabar argued that resistance was possible through singing. “All the prisoners weren’t admirers of Pétain,” he said, “nor were they collaborators like many who lived in Paris.” Tabar’s songs allowed these prisoners to enact their resistance, to “demoralize the Germans” and mark themselves as members of the Resistance.<sup>28</sup> Tabar’s testimony is only one of many that emphasize the role of singing in linking prisoners to a larger community of resisters. For example, two women who were prisoners at the Ravensbrück concentration camp remember singing the Resistance anthem “Le Chant des Partisans” to “feel at home even in the heart of Germany” and “to reinforce our solidarity, despite our political, religious, and social differences.”<sup>29</sup> Other prisoners sang “Le Chant des Partisans” before being killed. Maurice Druon, one of the song’s lyricists, recalls that a group of prisoners sang the anthem before being executed by a firing squad.<sup>30</sup> Composer Anna Marly remembers that two prisoners sang it while they dug their own grave before being shot by the German guards.<sup>31</sup> A musical symbol of French resolve and revolutionary spirit, “Le Chant des Partisans” offered a final means by which to defy German authority and express loyalty to France. Thus, while singing held myriad meanings in these moments, one of its powers was to symbolically connect prisoners to an idealized French nation in moments of profound despair, loneliness, and mortal danger.

A form of rhetoric available to all classes of people, singing provided French citizens with a participatory, profoundly democratic form of communication that mirrored their republican values. As all singers participated in performance, the hierarchical divide between

rhetor and audience collapsed, allowing them to enact republican ideals. If, however, the performance of songs was to be an effective strategy for seizing of political authority, resisters needed additional means by which to claim national identity for themselves and exclude Vichy from the nation's fold. Thus, the discursive and musical tropes discussed in the next section were vital to the rhetoric of Resistance singing as they worked to construct resisters as ideal French citizens. The use of lyrics and music grounded in the musical tradition of France transformed the radically de-centralized and democratic practice of communal singing into a means of marking resisters as the only true French and denying the Frenchness of Vichy. Ultimately, singing allowed resisters to negotiate two seemingly conflicting goals: the inclusive act of embodying brotherly republicanism and the exclusive act of rejecting those they considered foreign to the nation.

### **La France en Chantant: The Discursive Construction of "Frenchness"**

In the winter of 1942, Russian composer Anna Marly wrote the music and Russian lyrics to what would become the most famous anthem of the French Resistance, "Le Chant des Partisans." In the spring of 1943, the song was set to French text and chosen as the theme of the BBC's *Honneur et Patrie*, a program aimed at encouraging those in Occupied France to continue the struggle against the Germans. To the first time listener or reader, the song functions most obviously as a call to action, urging Resistance fighters to "come up from the mines" and "down from the hills" in order to take up arms against the German occupiers. Embedded in this overt call to action, however, is a national narrative, evoked through appeals to traditional French values of *liberté, égalité, et fraternité*. By exploiting these tropes, the song calls forth the memory of France's past and connects Resistance fighters with the nation's historical heroes and patriots.

Like other Resistance songs, “Le Chant des Partisans” deploys a national narrative through both lyrics and music. The constitutive power of narratives to communicate experiences of national belonging has received considerable attention in the field of rhetoric. Scholars like Michael McGee, Maurice Charland, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson have underscored the ways in which stories about a nation’s history work to construct a sense of a collective “people.”<sup>32</sup> While these critics have focused on narratives deployed through discursive means, others have illuminated music’s potential to tell national stories. For example, James Irvine and Walter Kirkpatrick show that melodies and rhythms work by evoking listeners’ “experiential capacity,” or the collections of personal experiences that imbue a set of symbols with meaning.<sup>33</sup> Alberto Gonzalez and John Makay echo this argument, demonstrating that music functions through a process of ascription whereby listeners assign meaning to certain musical patterns and then recall those meanings each time the familiar music plays.<sup>34</sup> Yet, music does not merely call forth the history of the nation but also sounds the emotions that attend the remembrance of the past. As Deanna and Timothy Sellnow write, “music sounds the way feelings feel.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, in order to see the ways in which singing constituted resisters as traditionally French, we must probe the songs’ discursive and non-discursive elements for the evocation of a traditional, idealized national narrative. By examining the tales of France’s national heroes, appeals to its legacy of individual liberalism, and the sounding of its national rhythms and melodies, we can see how invoking the memory of a perfected France works to constitute resisters as the true sons and daughters of that nation.

Like many other songs of the Resistance, “Le Chant des Partisans” uses appeals to the great Revolutionary triumvirate of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* to subvert the platform of Vichy’s National Revolution and identify Resistance fighters as members of a collective subject



that has long been dedicated to the protection of traditional French ideals. Its lyrics exploit the trope of *liberté* through an emphasis on individual rights. By identifying Resistance fighters as free agents who control their own destinies, the song emphasizes each person's agency. As the song proclaims, in the *maquis* "each man knows/What he wants, what he's doing." This belief in the individual's control over his/her own choices marks a significant departure from Vichy's emphasis on communal living and evokes the Revolutionary doctrine of individual liberalism. By appealing to liberalism's main tenet—individual rights—the lyrics of "Le Chant des Partisans" serve to ideologically connect Resistance fighters to French Revolutionaries. As the song continues, appeals to individual liberty grow even more evident as the lyrics encourage illegal acts of resistance in the struggle for freedom. For example, Resistance fighters may take up arms against their enemies ("Remove from the straw/The rifles, machine gun/And grenades!"), or they may disobey the law by freeing members of their movement from prison ("We are the ones who break/The prison bars/For our brothers").<sup>36</sup> As these lyrics suggest, the fighters are encouraged to battle tyranny through any means necessary; liberty demands and legitimizes any form of resistance. The song ends with a final appeal as the last stanza characterizes Resistance fighters as the champions of liberty, encouraging other members to "whistle . . . in the night," so that freedom may hear them. Here, a personified liberty draws close to the Resistance fighters in order to guide and protect them throughout their struggle, just as she did with their Revolutionary forbears.

Like "Le Chant des Partisans," many songs of the Resistance call upon the trope of liberty in order to link the resisters to a transhistorical national community and legitimize their vigilante acts. Made in opposition to the Vichy government, which, in the words of one song "puts France in the service of the Nazis" for "the pleasure of strangling the Republic," the

appeals ground themselves in an allegiance to French Revolutionary republicanism.<sup>37</sup> Whereas Vichy would happily let the country limp along in servitude, the Resistance proclaims the pursuit of liberty to be the guiding principle under which they fight:

Liberté! Cette grande espérance  
Qui brillait tout au fond de nos coeurs,  
Liberté! Pour nous et pour la France  
Nous ne voulions pas d'autre bonheur.<sup>38</sup>

Liberty! This great hope  
That has been shining deep in our hearts  
Liberty! For us and for France  
We wouldn't want any other happiness.

Here, Resistance fighters claim to be driven by a singular desire to restore freedom in France, the same hope that spurred the Republic's very founding. By continuing their forbears' struggle for *liberté*, the singers align themselves with these historical heroes. Other songs make this connection even more explicit by setting France's Revolutionary soldiers as the guides to freedom. As the song "Pas de Kollaboration" states, the example set by France's ancestors will lead them to reclaim the nation's freedom:

Ne ne voulons pas vivre en esclavage  
De nos aïeux retrouvant la fierté  
Nous saurons défendre l'héritage  
Des droits et de la liberté!<sup>39</sup>

We don't want to live in slavery  
From our ancestors, finding pride again  
We know how to defend our heritage  
Our rights and our liberty!

Indeed, the appeal to liberty derives its rhetorical power from its status as a culturally salient trope. Appeals to *liberté* carry particular connotations and associations, most obviously evoking France's unique and character-defining battle against the tyranny of King Louis XVI. By exploiting this trope, the Resistance fighters identify themselves as the "defenders of liberty," the descendants of those who have fought for France's freedom.<sup>40</sup>

"Le Chant des Partisans" also gives voice to the second Revolutionary ideal of equality by emphasizing the equal status held by members of the Resistance. Because all "march . . . kill . . . [and] die like dogs," no member is valued above another—all are equal in rank and status. This sentiment is echoed in the fourteenth stanza where the lyrics remind Resistance fighters that

no person is more integral to the fight for French independence than another. When one man dies, another “emerges from the shadows/To take [his] place.” While these lyrics may seem callous in their rejection of individual worth, they serve to emphasize the equality among Resistance fighters. While status, wealth and success may matter in the external world, these things are irrelevant to the fight against Germany. Indeed, many of the songs emphasize this equality among Resistance fighters. One attests that the *maquis* is made up of “children of the common people and of the bourgeoisie,”<sup>41</sup> another asserts that the movement makes no distinction between those who are “rich or without fortune.”<sup>42</sup> Despite socioeconomic status, these “soldiers of equality”<sup>43</sup> “are all the sons of our France.”<sup>44</sup>

Not only are men equal in the eyes of the Resistance, but all are bound together in pursuit of their goal. The unofficial Resistance hymn makes explicit appeals to brotherhood, or *fraternité*, as the resisters sing of their attachment to one another. The lyrics address fellow Resistance fighters repeatedly as “friend,” “brother,” “comrade,” and “companion.” These words work to constitute the Resistance fighters as an intimate group. In reality, the Resistance was made up of a variety of networks and movements that worked separately and secretly to overthrow German forces. By addressing fellow Resistance fighters as “friends” and “brothers,” however, resisters created a discursive means by which to overcome the diffuse nature of their movement’s organization and conceive of themselves as members of a larger, more significant community. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of the songs exploit the trope of brotherhood, claiming that resisters are “united like brothers by the same noble ideal,”<sup>45</sup> and “march together for happiness and justice.”<sup>46</sup> The songs portray a fierce devotion among members of the Resistance, even pledging not to leave captured members behind: “We are the ones who break/the prison bars/for our brothers.”<sup>47</sup> By evoking the ideal of fraternity, the lyrics not only

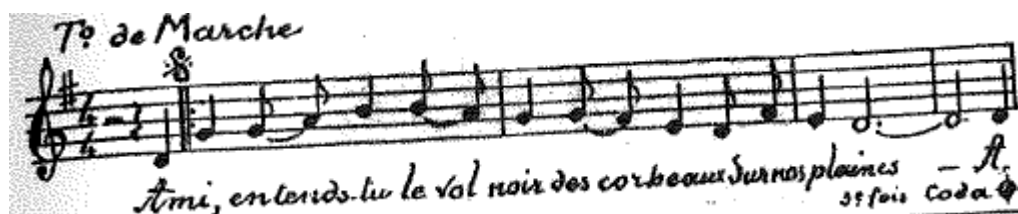
constitute Resistance fighters as a group unto themselves, but implicate them in a broader collective subject. The guardians of *fraternité*, they become a part of France's Revolutionary past.

The music of "Le Chant des Partisans" also functions to align Resistance fighters with their republican forebears. The song opens with a militaristic cadence played on a single, snare drum. Somber and fatalistic, the cadence calls to mind the image of soldiers resolutely marching toward the battlefield in order to cast resisters as state-sanctioned warriors. The song maintains this militaristic sound by deploying march-like rhythms reminiscent of "La Marseillaise," the song that became popular during the French Revolution and was later chosen as France's national anthem. Emphasizing beats one and three, the beats on which a soldier's steps would fall, the song evokes a strong sense of forward motion. To lend a sense of exigency to this momentum, "Le Chant des Partisans" begins each musical phrase with a pick-up, or a beat before the downbeat of the measure in which the phrase sounds. By beginning the phrase before the actual start of the measure, the song evokes the same urgent call to action found in the opening lines of the national anthem [See Figures 1 and 2]. Appropriating march-like rhythmic devices from "La Marseillaise," the melody of "Le Chant des Partisans" enhances the song's lyrical appeals to Revolutionary values by grounding them in a musical representation of the Revolution. As they sing, Resistance fighters identify themselves as soldiers in the same Revolutionary tradition, fighting to protect France's traditional values.

Figure 1: “La Marseillaise”



Figure 2: “Le Chant des Partisans”



Yet, while “Le Chant des Partisans” seeks to align resisters with the soldiers of the French Revolution, its sound makes a clear distinction between the romanticized and mythologized overthrow of the monarchy and the unpopular, arduous work of the Resistance. Indeed, in timbre, or color, and melody, the song sounds of somber determination and perseverance. For example, the singer’s voice is rich and dark, much like the sound we would expect to come from the lips of the muscular and fearless Marianne, the allegorical symbol of republican France. Singing in her lower register, the soloist enunciates in a deliberate manner as if each word was a conscious and defiant act of resistance. By deploying glottal stops and articulating the consonants in clear precision, the singer establishes herself as a free agent, resolute in her decision to overthrow the Nazis. As she sings, a chorus of men and women double her in unison, softly humming to convey the solidarity and fraternity to which the lyrics appeal. Unlike “La Marseillaise,” this melody is confined to a narrow range of pitches. Rather than soaring in idealistic expressions of optimism and hope, it remains grounded to the tonic, or

the central pitch of the key, as if painfully cognizant of the consequences of defying the Nazis. Shortly, an accordion enters the musical fabric, playing ascending melodic flourishes and sustained chords that call attention to its unique and unmistakable sound. The traditional musical instrument of France, the accordion bestows a sense of tradition and patriotism upon the resisters, reinforcing their status as the nation's true patriots and protectors. By sounding the feelings of patriotic determination and fatalistic acceptance, the song constitutes resistance fighters as modern-day soldiers, bravely and stoically facing the dangerous word of resisting the Germans despite the uncertainty of the war's outcome.

While "Le Chant des Partisans" appropriates rhythmic features of "La Marseillaise" in order to identify Resistance fighters as members of a national community, other songs borrow entire Revolutionary melodies to make this connection. For example, "La Marseillaise du Maquis" appropriates the melody of "La Marseillaise" for its lyrics:

Amis, voici la Résistance;  
Les vaillants soldats du maquis!  
Debout pour sauver notre France  
Forces française du pays!

Friends, here is the Resistance  
Valliant soldiers of the maquis!  
Ready to save our France  
The French forces of the nation!

Ils descendent de nos montagnes  
Comme nos ancêtres guerriers  
Et viennent en vrais chevaliers  
Protéger villes et campagnes.<sup>48</sup>

They are coming down from our mountains,  
Like our ancestral warriors,  
And come like true knights  
To protect our cities and towns.

Here, again, the melody and lyrics work together to connect Resistance fighters to the "ancestral warriors" of France's past. Because the song takes the melody of "La Marseillaise," the listener or singer cannot help but associate the Resistance members with Revolutionary soldiers who sang the hymn while storming the Bastille.

This same connection occurs in "Le Chant du Maquis," a Resistance song set to the tune of the Revolutionary War song "Le Chant du Départ." Originally a rallying cry among

Revolutionaries, the song became popular again as soldiers and civilians mobilized for WWI.<sup>49</sup> Having developed as a national symbol spanning at least two of France's main wars, the melody existed as a trope of traditional French patriotism. By setting new words to the same melody, the Resistance song seeks to evoke the same legacy of individual liberalism. This melody lends added meaning to the lyrics, which also contain appeals to traditional French values. Together, the lyrics and the melody offer a potent appeal to France's Revolutionary values. By evoking the Revolution through existing musical and discursive tropes, the Resistance song seeks to integrate Resistance members into the Revolutionary tradition.

### **“Le Chant du Depart”**

Victory singing  
 Opens the gates for us  
 Liberty guides our steps  
 And from the North to the South  
 The war trumpet  
 Signals the hour of the fight  
 Tremble, enemies of France

Kings drunk on blood and pride  
 The sovereign People comes forth  
 Tyrants go down to your graves

The Republic is calling us  
 Let us prevail or let us perish  
 A Frenchman must live for her  
 For her a Frenchman must die.

### **“Le Chant du Maquis”**

Do you hear over there  
 The hordes of invaders  
 On the far away path?  
 Listen as the sound of the chains  
 That the oppressors hold for our arms approach  
 Rather than become slaves  
 And serve our enemies

The time has come,  
 Come along brave soldiers  
 We must leave for the maquis

Let's march boys, because hope  
 Flowers again along our path  
 We will keep the soul of France  
 We will be her soldiers tomorrow.

Like “Le Chant du Maquis,” other Resistance songs also appropriate the melodies of popular and historic national hymns. Among the most popular melodies chosen are those of “L’Internationale,” “La Carmagnole,” “Regiment de Sambre et Meuse,” and “Alsace-Lorraine,” all of which originated during the Revolution and were remobilized for France's effort in

WWI.<sup>50</sup> As symbols of national identity, these melodies provided Resistance members with a powerful resource in the construction of their own collective identity as the only true French.

The act of singing reinforced these discursive tropes, offering resisters a means to enact their solidarity and resolve. Testimonies from former resistance fighters reveal that singing was an everyday part of life, a communal act that helped them to feel close to one another while giving voice to their shared ideals. For example, recounting his time in the French Resistance more than forty years earlier, François Musard described one Saturday night on the outskirts of Les Glières, a mountain town near the Swiss border. The men had finished their suppers and were playing cards to pass the time. To combat boredom, their sergeant suggested a singing tour, where each man would perform a song of his choosing. “Almost all of the group contributed,” Musard remembered. “Some sang well-known tunes, while others, whose voices weren’t as good, spoke monologues or recited bits of poetry.” The men sang many different songs, from military marches to love ballads, but the most memorable was one soldier’s original composition, written on behalf of their unit. As Musard recalled, the song’s “first verses and refrain stayed in the ears of our comrades for a long time.”<sup>51</sup> Julien Helfgott, another member of the *maquis*, also remembered the bonds forged through singing: “Stuck together, we dreamed, brothers bound by the same oath, united by a common ideal that we expressed in our songs, our words, and our laughter.”<sup>52</sup> As both of these testimonies demonstrate, singing was a powerful constitutive practice because it gathered resisters together to enact their ideals of brotherhood and voice their commitment to the reestablishment of a republican France.

Thus far, my analysis has emphasized the ways in which the songs of the Resistance exploited existing discursive and musical tropes in order to connect its members to a legacy of French republicanism. While appeals to national identity allowed resisters to gain political



authority by identifying themselves as members of a pure French citizenry, these appeals also enabled them to represent themselves as mature, manly soldiers. As Vichy tried to downplay the legitimacy of the movement by representing resisters as well-intentioned but misguided “boys” and “bandits,” the songs use appeals to national identity in order to characterize them as tough, steadfast national defenders. Take, for example, the last stanza of “Haut les Coeurs,” a song written in 1944 to “glorify the Resistance” and “provide the brave boys of the *maquis* with a march.”<sup>53</sup> While the author calls the subject of his praise “boys,” his lyrics certainly do not represent immature, inconsequential youngsters. Instead, the song claims that the Resistance fighters are the descendants of France’s historic heroes. “Firm and stoic,” the boys follow in the footsteps of their forbears to save France:

Nos martyrs, dignes de l’antique,  
Ont bravé leur bourreaux,  
Sans faiblir, fermes et stoïques  
Ils sont morts en vrais héros,  
Leur exemple nous entraîne  
Dans le noble et dur effort  
Pour une France souveraine  
Libre et fière dans son essor.<sup>54</sup>

Our martyrs, dignified with age  
Braved their executioners  
Without weakening, firm and stoic  
They died true heroes  
Their example leads us  
In our noble and difficult effort  
For a sovereign France,  
Blossoming, free and proud

Not only do these lyrics characterize the resisters as noble martyrs by associating them with France’s past heroes, but they also help to build a sort of military masculinity among the resisters through a more implicit argument about the nature of the battle. In order for the Resistance to be constituted as a legitimate movement, the songs must illustrate the significance of their struggle. By comparing the resisters to France’s past heroes, the songs make an implicit comparison between the situation faced by France’s mythic soldiers and the battle facing Resistance fighters. The link between these struggles is particularly explicit in the song “Les Libérateurs, Marche des FFI.” Here, resisters evoke the memory of France’s loss in the Franco-Prussian War (which cost

France the territory of Alsace-Lorraine, an area they recovered after WWI and lost again during WWII) to add weight to the Resistance's fight against the Germans:

|                                              |                                    |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Au chant de La Marseillaise                  | Singing the Marseillaise           |
| Les jeunes, imitant leurs anciens,           | The young, imitating their elders, |
| Se jettent dans la fournaise                 | Throw themselves into the fire     |
| Furieux Paris tue le Prussien. <sup>55</sup> | Furious Paris kills the Prussian   |

By comparing the battle against the German Reich and Vichy to other historic military conquests, such as WWI, the resisters imagine themselves as the next generation of resolute national defenders.

Perhaps one of the fullest examples of the attempt to reassert resisters' masculinity through appeals to national identity is the song "Maquisards." Written in 1944 "for the glory of the *maquisards*," the song alludes to both the French Revolution and to WWI in order to represent the resisters as a group of mature soldiers, fighting together for a sacred goal. The refrain begins by likening the struggle of 1940-1944 with that of the French Revolution. The first line alludes to 1793, the year that a poverty-stricken French citizenry brought Louis XVI to the guillotine. In case the audience/singer misses this reference to the Revolution, the author adds a second allusion to the Revolution by referencing its anthem, "La Marseillaise."

|                                                  |                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Du sol français,                                 | From French soil,                                |
| comme en quatre-vingt-treize,                    | like in ninety-three,                            |
| Surgit soudain un peuple de soldats              | A people of soldiers suddenly appeared           |
| Qui sur l'aile de La Marseillaise,               | Who on the wings of La Marseillaise              |
| Vint prendre sa place au combat                  | Came to take their place in combat.              |
| Pendant quatre ans, la haine les enflame,        | For four years, hatred has inflamed them         |
| Sauter, enfin, aux gorges des pillards.          | Jumping, finally, at the throats of the looters. |
| C'est pourquoi tout l'univers acclame            | That's why the whole universe acclaims           |
| Et salue nos vaillants maquisards. <sup>56</sup> | And salutes our valliant maquisards.             |

While this allusion to the French Revolution serves the previously mentioned goals of connecting the Resistance to a transhistorical French community, it also constitutes members as a legitimate, solidified group of soldiers. The lyrics call upon the image of Revolutionary France—

where lower-class citizens mobilized to overthrow a corrupt government—in order to represent the Resistance fighters as a “*peuple de soldats*.” Indeed, the phrase a “people of soldiers” makes a great deal of sense in regard to both the Revolution and the Resistance, as both movements mobilized the citizenry to effect change. Neither battle was fought by a national military, but by the people themselves. Regardless of their civilian statuses, French Revolutionaries are considered France’s truest and bravest heroes. By evoking the history of this army of citizens, the song transfers the validity and respect given to Revolutionaries onto the Resistance fighters.

The act of singing lent credence to these kinds of discursive attempts to construct resisters as manly soldiers, engaged in a fight-to-the-death for the liberation of France. Anecdotes from former members reveal that Resistance groups often sung to boost morale and renew dedication to the cause after traumatic events, such as the capture or death of fellow comrades. On March 1, 1944, for example, the *maquis* unit in Les Glières received word that one of their comrades, Michel Fournier, was caught in a police round-up while trying to procure medicine for his unit. Upon hearing the news of Fournier’s capture, one of the *maquisards* grabbed his guitar and played the first measures of “L’Hyme des Glières,” the group’s official anthem. As one comrade remembered, “a few people raised their voices, humming the first verses; the choir became more vigorous at the refrain

En avant bataillon des Glières  
 Décidés à vaincre ou à mourir  
 Pour chasser l’ennemi sanguinaire  
 Nous vaincrons, bataillon, nous vaincrons.<sup>57</sup>

At the ready, battalion of Glières  
 Determined to win or die  
 In order to chase the bloodthirsty enemy  
 We shall overcome, battalion, we shall  
 overcome.

In a moment of despair and anger, the performance of this hymn gave voice to the group’s frustration while enacting their status as a battalion of soldiers, resolutely fighting against the Germans to free France. Indeed, the singing of the Les Glières’ Resistance anthem offered a

means of reasserting the gravity of the struggle against the Germans and the resisters' status as resolute and self-sacrificing patriots.

Just as the songs connected the resisters to the nation's previous wars and warriors by emphasizing brotherhood, they also grounded this soldierly virility in the heterosexual objectification of women. The example of the song "Maquisards" demonstrates an interesting intertwining of these manly traits, setting its lyrical allusions to the Revolutionary war to the tune of a drinking song from WWI, "Quand Madelon." Written by Louis Bousquet and Camile Robert in 1914, "Quand Madelon" praises a "young and kind" barmaid for her good nature and good looks:

|                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quand Madelon vient nous servir à boire<br>Sous la tonnelle on frôle son jupon<br>Et chacun lui raconte une histoire<br>Une histoire à sa façon | When Madelon comes to serve us a drink,<br>Under the arbor, we brush against her petticoat<br>And each one tells her a story<br>A story in his own way. |
| La Madelon pour nous n'est pas severe<br>Quand on lui prend la taille ou le menton<br>Elle rit, c'est tout le mal qu'elle sait faire            | Madelon isn't harsh with us<br>When we take her waist or her chin<br>She laughs, that's all the bad that she knows<br>how to do                         |
| Madelon, Madelon, Madelon ! <sup>58</sup>                                                                                                       | Madelon, Madelon, Madelon !                                                                                                                             |

As resisters sang "Maquisards" to this familiar melody, they associated themselves with the soldiers of the Great War, those victorious soldiers who sang the song to distract themselves from the horror of the front lines and foster male camaraderie. As Regina Sweeney notes in her study of singing during WWI, the heterosexual objectification of Madelon encouraged male bonding as soldiers both became mutual appreciators of Madelon's beauty and rivals in her conquest.<sup>59</sup> As the song became more widely known, its melody came to represent male solidarity. The most popular melody among the songs of the Resistance, "Quand Madelon" endows the Resistance fighters with the same heterosexual masculine collectivity that soldiers of

WWI shared. In this way, the song helped Resistance fighters redeem their reputations from Vichy's infantilizing propaganda and assert themselves as a solidified, masculine group of fighters.

Yet, like all constitutive rhetoric, Resistance singing could only effectively construct collective identity if it also excluded certain citizens from the resisters' community of national heroes. Indeed, as the songs aligned resisters with the republican warriors of the past, they also attempted to dismantle the Vichy government's political legitimacy by barring it from the nation's fold. Many of the songs accomplish this goal by combining national narratives with appropriations of Vichy's songs. Setting their own lyrics to Vichy's melodies, the Resistance parodies the government's discourse and illustrates the hypocrisy of its claims to national identity. English scholar Linda Hutcheon has theorized parody as imitation that points out difference through critical distance and irony.<sup>60</sup> Hutcheon rejects a definition of parody as necessarily satirical, recovering its original meaning as a neutral form of ironic repetition that "can be playful as well as belittling," "critically constructive as well as destructive."<sup>61</sup> Through an ironic appropriation of the form of the original text, parody allows rhetors to demonstrate points of separation and contrast and invite alternative interpretations for consideration. As Bakhtin writes, it shows that one meaning is "incapable of exhausting the subject" and "forces us to experience those sides of the object that are not otherwise included in a given genre."<sup>62</sup> By setting new lyrics to Vichy's own melodies, Resistance parodies pointed to the discrepancy between Vichy's optimism and the harsh reality of life under the Occupation. The songs offered resisters the opportunity to open Pétain's discourse for collective reflection and to revise the public's understanding of the regime. The goal was to subvert Vichy's own claim to national identity, to portray the regime as corrupt and manipulative outsiders while representing

Resistance fighters as the true guardians of French values and culture.

In order to deny the Frenchness of Vichy, the Resistance chose for its songs one of the most popular hymns to Vichy leader Marshal Philippe Pétain, “Maréchal, Nous Voilà.” Written in 1941, the song lauds Philippe Pétain as France’s “savior” and pledges service in Vichy’s National Revolution:

Une flamme sacré  
Monte du sol natal  
Et la France enivré  
Te salue Maréchal!  
Tous tes enfants qui t’aiment  
Et vénèrent tes ans  
A ton appel suprême  
Ont répondu: “Présent”

Maréchal, nous voilà!  
Devant toi, le sauveur de la France  
Nous jurons, nous tes gars  
De servir et de suivre tes pas  
Maréchal, nous voilà!  
Tu nous as redonné l’espérance.  
La patrie renaîtra  
Maréchal, Maréchal, nous voilà!<sup>63</sup>

A sacred flame  
Comes up from native soil  
And an intoxicated France  
Salutes you, Marshal  
All your children who love you  
And venerate your years  
To your supreme call  
Responded: Present

Marshal, here we are  
Before you, the savior of France  
We pledge, we, your guys  
To serve you and follow your steps  
Marshal, here we are  
You have given us back our hope  
The fatherland will be reborn  
Marshal, Marshal, here we are!

To accompany this optimistic pledge, the Vichy song employs a jubilant march, full of pick-ups and dotted rhythms similar to those found in “La Marseillaise” [see Figure 3]. Full orchestration, including a regal brass section, lends additional pomp and confidence to the jaunty march.

Recorded by French singer André Dassary and the Ray Ventura Orchestra in 1941, the song opens with an eight-measure trumpet fanfare that deploys the brass’ imperial tones in order to call French citizens to attention as they “venerate” their authoritarian leader. The trumpet section continues to blast triplet figures as the soloist sings, marking Dassary’s praise of Pétain with the regal sound of a coronation ceremony. During each refrain, a men’s chorus echoes Dassary’s operatic tenor, lending a sense of strength and virility to the song’s pledge to national service. At

the end of the recording, the men join Dassary in a final, climactic refrain. The men sing at full volume, joining their voices to bestow a sense of tough manhood to the song's call to service. Leading the nation's rebirth is not a slight task, the men's voices suggest, but a struggle that demands physical and mental fortitude. Through the combination of these strong, manly voices, the imperial brass flourishes, and the march-like rhythms, the song characterizes Pétain as a king-like leader whose majesty compels the eager obedience of a tough and muscular citizenry. Vichy attempted to use this melody to ascribe a sense of military honor to the act of serving Vichy and its National Revolution.

Figure 3: "Maréchal, nous voilà!"



However, given the conditions of the armistice (whereby Vichy agreed to the reduction of the French army to 100,000 men, the disarmament of the navy and air force, and the surrender of all French weapons) and Vichy's failure to shield French citizens from the horrors of the Occupation, such a confident, glorious, military march seems inappropriate for Vichy's call to service. Indeed, in light of the harsh living conditions for most French, Marshal Pétain hardly qualified as the "savior of France." The Resistance points to the ludicrousness of Vichy's claims

of national defense and protection by pointing to the truth about the Vichy regime, setting their lyrics to the collaborationist government's own melody:

|                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ayant trahi la France            | Having betrayed France,      |
| Les hommes de Vichy              | The men of Vichy             |
| Ont fait une alliance            | made an alliance             |
| Avec nos ennemis                 | with our enemies             |
| Ils prêchent la défaite          | They preach defeat           |
| Et la résignation                | and resignation              |
| Mais ils paieront leur dette     | But they will pay their debt |
| A toute la nation. <sup>64</sup> | to all the nation.           |

Indeed, not only do the Resistance songs blame Vichy for the German Occupation, but they argue that France can only be saved without Vichy's interference:

|                                      |                               |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Nous gars d' la Résistance           | We, the men of the Resistance |
| Qui n'avons pas peur de rien,        | Who aren't afraid of anything |
| Nous sauverons la France             | We will save France           |
| Sans ce triste Pétain. <sup>65</sup> | Without this sad Pétain       |

While these examples put forth compelling and explicit arguments about the hypocritical and treasonous nature of the Vichy government, what is most interesting about the Resistance's use of parody is the way in which the songs deploy the same national tropes I described previously in order to integrate the Resistance into the nation's fold while excluding Vichy from the nationhood. By setting discursive appeals to the nation's history to the music of the Vichy regime, the songs point out the falsity of Vichy's claims to national identity and assert that the Resistance fighters are the only true guardians of France.

Perhaps the best example of the rhetorical strategy of parody employed in the songs of the Resistance is "Les Voilà, Nos Soldats."<sup>66</sup> The song opens with the same lines as the Vichy song, but deviates from the original by the end of the first verse. While "Maréchal, Nous Voilà" begins by describing Marshal Pétain as the subject who calls the people to action, "Les Voilà, Nos Soldats" identifies France as the issuer of the call:



“Maréchal, Nous Voilà!”

A sacred flame  
Comes up from native soil  
And an exhilarated France  
Salutes you, Marshal  
All your children who love you  
And venerate your years  
To your supreme call  
Responded: Present

“Les Voila, Nos Soldats”

A sacred flame  
Comes up from native soil  
And a bereaved France  
Comes back to life at its signal  
All of the Empire who loves France  
And calls themselves her child  
To her supreme call  
Responded: Present

By identifying France as the source of the call to action, the Resistance song transfers political authority from Pétain and Vichy to a mythic French community. Marshal Pétain does not issue the alarm, but France herself beckons her citizens to arms. While this shift may seem subtle, it has three major implications for the Resistance movement. First, this shift takes away Pétain’s right to lead and designates France herself as leader of the nation. Because the Resistance serves an abstract France and not a concrete Pétain, its members need an indication of what France would have them do. The only place to look for such guidance is within France’s own history. Second, this shift distinguishes Vichy as separate from France. The Resistance song indicates that serving France is not the same as serving Vichy. By separating the French government from the idea of the nation itself, the Resistance song excludes Vichy from the national narrative. Third, the shift transfers agency from the Vichy leaders to the French people. The original song casts Pétain as the main agent in France’s fight and asserts that the people’s role is merely to follow him. However, because the Resistance song identifies France as the issuer of the call to action, the people are led by history’s example instead of a human agent. In the absence of a human leader, the people must become agents in the fight against Germany. They cannot look to a politician or a soldier to restore France to her sovereign state, but must take individual action in order to overcome the enemy.

Having identified France as the source of the people's call to action, the song then constructs an idealized vision of the nation. In the refrain, the song evokes a narrative of France that features the nation's most revered military heroes

|                                         |                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Jeanne d'Arc, les voilà,                | Joan of Arc, here they are                  |
| Nos soldats, les sauveurs de la France. | Our soldiers, the saviors of France         |
| Les voilà, nos soldats.                 | Here they are, our soldiers                 |
| Ceux de Clovis, de Turenne et de Foch.  | The ones of Clovis, of Turenne and of Foch. |
| A nouveau de l'ennemi,                  | Once again from the enemy,                  |
| Ils ont refoulé la fureur boche         | They drove back German fury                 |
| Debout, la France est là,               | Standing tall, France is here,              |
| Et la gloire couronne ses soldats.      | And glory crowns her soldiers.              |

This refrain names Joan of Arc, the young martyr who returned the area of Orléans to France in the fifteenth century; Clovis, the king who united the Frankish tribes in 481 C.E.; Turenne, the general who saved Alsace from German annexation in 1675; and Foch, the French general who planned the final offensive against Germany in WWI as the main figures in the narrative of France's glorious past. Taken together, these soldiers represent France's most celebrated military conquests. While the original song identifies Pétain as the "savior of France," this new refrain undermines his credibility and authority by ascribing French heroism to other figures. In other words, the Resistance song denies Pétain's hero status by omitting his name from the list of France's true heroes. Not only does this omission challenge the sincerity of Pétain's intentions and strength of his abilities, it also serves to separate him from the national community that makes up France's past.

While the refrain excludes Pétain from the national community, it includes the Resistance fighters as members of this transhistorical group. After all, the Resistance fighters are the "soldiers of Clovis, of Turenne, and of Foch." By representing members of the Resistance as the descendants of a lineage of French heroes, the song fully integrates Resistance fighters into the

national narrative. Constructed as true French citizens, the Resistance fighters then secure ultimate political and moral authority. They may disobey Vichy's laws, sabotage German operations, harbor Jews, and so forth because they are members of France's national community. Thus, national identity legitimizes their vigilante approach, transforming a group of rebels into a band of national heroes.

By setting these lyrics to Vichy's own melody, the Resistance song exposes the absurdity of Vichy's appeal to allegiance and demonstrates that such a glorious military march is only appropriate for France's true soldiers, the Resistance fighters. Only when the melody is used to call upon citizens to oppose German occupiers can its confident, militant sound be genuine. While Resistance singers obviously could not replicate the elaborate and dramatic sound of the original song in their camps, they still associated the military pomp and fanfare of "Maréchal, Nous Voilà" with their version of the song. By mimicking the original melody, the Resistance song denies Vichy's claim to military honor and transfers such honor to the Resistance fight. Indeed, such a grandiose sound proves quite appropriate for the heroic band of French heroes that the Resistance fighters join.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that the songs of the French Resistance played a vital role in the legitimization of the movement. Suffering from a lack of broad public support and targeted for denunciation in an aggressive propaganda campaign waged by Vichy to mollify Germany, the Resistance remained unpopular until the liberation in the summer of 1944. Yet, Resistance fighters challenged Vichy's negative representations through the performance of songs. By reprising a performative tradition of political singing rooted in republican patriotism, Resistance

fighters mobilized a beloved popular culture form to define themselves as genuinely French. Through the singing of the songs, they aligned themselves with a transhistorical community of patriotic French citizens, using discursive and musical tropes to delineate the boundaries of membership. In this way, the performance of folk songs allowed resisters to remain squarely within France's revered republican tradition while excluding Vichy and its supporters from the nation. Not only did these performances bolster resisters' claims to political leadership, they also helped to combat Vichy's infantilizing propaganda. Finally, the songs of the Resistance used parody to subvert Vichy's political authority. While the government's propaganda aimed to persuade the French that no one was more French than Philippe Pétain, the Resistance used songs in order to demonstrate Vichy's betrayal of the French people and to cast collaborators outside the nation's fold. Setting their own national appeals to Vichy's melodies, they illustrated the ludicrousness of Vichy's alleged patriotism and asserted themselves as the only true French. As the following chapters reveal, *chanson* was not the only musical genre available to dissident citizens. Indeed, as resisters settled in for rounds of singing in their makeshift camps, French teenagers known as *zazous* were causing a scene in Parisian cafés, humming the tunes of "degenerate" jazz refrains while wearing the ostentatious clothing of American zoot suiters.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to historian Raymond Josse, between 3,000 and 10,000 students were involved in the protest. The exact number of participants is unknown, as many ran away to avoid arrest and left no record of their activities. Also, it is difficult to separate the protesters from the onlookers who came to watch the protest or happened to be on the Champs Élysées that day. See Raymond Josse, “La Naissance de la Résistance Étudiante à Paris: Et la Manifestation du 11 Novembre 1940,” *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* 47 (Juillet 1962): 22.

<sup>2</sup> Josse, “La Naissance de la Résistance Étudiante,” 17. Josse notes that the protest was patriotic in nature, rather than political.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the politics of *La Marseillaise*, see Nathalie Dompnier, “Entre La Marseillaise et Maréchal, nous Voilà! Quel Hymne pour le régime de Vichy?” in Myriam Chimènes, *La Vie Musicale sous Vichy* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001), 69-89. While *La Marseillaise* was banned in the Occupied zone, it was allowed in the Unoccupied Zone, controlled until 1942 by the Vichy government.

<sup>4</sup> All information about the November 11, 1940 protest was taken from Josse, “La Naissance de la Résistance Étudiante à Paris,” 1-31.

<sup>5</sup> Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Box BA 2361, Paris France.

<sup>6</sup> Occasional access to printing presses meant that some songs could be distributed on paper. In Ardèche, WWI veteran Achille Coevet gave copies of his song to Resistance trucks that carried it to another Resistance group in Les Vans. (See Sylvain Chimello, *La Résistance en Chantant* (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), 211.) So great was the fear of arrest, however, that most people did not keep written copies of the songs. Jean Melamed, for example, was arrested in Paris on August 25, 1941, when authorities found subversive songs in his apartment.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Maurin, *Chansons et Poésies de la Résistance*, as collection of songs and poems from the French Resistance, Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, ARC 074-72, Paris, France. Maurin's manuscript provides the lyrics and melodies of nearly thirty songs. Half were written by members of the *maquis* and half were created and broadcast by the BBC. In addition, my archival research also uncovered two Resistance songs, “*Chanson du maquis vasio*,” and “*La Ballade des Pendus*.” These songsheets were mixed in with other WWII pamphlets and indicate the presence of other songs still undiscovered in France's archives.

<sup>8</sup> Chimello, *La Résistance en Chantant*; T. Barthoulot et al., eds. *Paroles et Musique: Les Chansons et la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (Besançon: Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation, 2003). These anthologies contain the words and sometimes music of Resistance songs, but offer no analysis of their rhetorical function.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Jeanne Lerouge, a nurse in the Dordogne region, remembers hearing a song she wrote for a local group sung by soldiers from several neighboring regions. She was “surprised to hear it whistled or hummed . . . in other places and by men that [she] didn't know,” a testament

to the fact that “the song was a bit widespread” despite the fact that it had not been printed. Lerouge’s quotation comes from Chimello, *La Résistance en Chantant*, 246.

<sup>10</sup> While musicologists have written extensively on the role of art music (such as symphonies and operas) in wartime France, they have ignored the abundance of vernacular and popular songs that circulated widely throughout the country. One important exception, however, is Richard Raskin, “Le Chant des Partisans: Functions of a Wartime Song,” *Folklore* 102:1 (1991): 62-76. For a sampling of the scholarship on WWII art music in France, see Lilise Boswell-Kurc, “Olivier Messiaen’s Religious War-Time Works and Their Conversational Reception in France (1941-1946)” (PhD diss., New York University, 2001); Myriam Chimènes, *La Vie Musicale sous Vichy* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2001); Jane Fulcher, “French Identity in Flux: Vichy’s Collaboration and Antigone’s Operatic Triumph,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 150:2 (June 2006): 261-295, “Musical Style, Meaning, and Politics in France on the Eve of the Second World War,” *The Journal of Musicology* 13:4 (Fall 1995): 425-453, “The Preparation for Vichy: Anti-Semitism in French Musical Culture between the Two World Wars,” *The Musical Quarterly* 79:3 (Fall 1995): 458-475; Daniel Matore, “Le Modernisme Musical Français à la fin de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale,” *Revue Internationale de Musique Française* 18 (November 1985): 69-78; Caroline Potter, “French Music and the Second World War,” in Richard Langham Smith and Caroline Potter, eds., *French Music Since Berlioz* (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); Nigel Simeone, “Messiaen and the Concerts de la Pléiade: ‘A Kind of Clandestine Revenge against the Occupation,’” *Music and Letters* 81:4 (2000): 551-584; Yannick Simon, “Les Périodiques Musicaux Français pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 49:1-2 (Jan.-June 2002): 67-78; Leslie A. Sprout, “Music for a ‘New Era’: Composers and National Identity in France, 1936-1946” (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France*, 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 185.

<sup>13</sup> Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 188.

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 408-9.

<sup>15</sup> H.R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France: A Study of Ideas and Motivation in the Southern Zone, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 233.

<sup>16</sup> Claude Bourdet, *L’Aventure Incertaine* (Paris: Stock, 1975), 26-7, quoted in Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 403.

<sup>17</sup> Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 404-5; Patrick Valérin, *Chansons et Chanteurs des Années Noires*, 191.

<sup>18</sup> R. Austin, “The Cult of the Outlaw,” in *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology*, eds. Roger Austin and H.R. Kedward (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), 240-5.

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- <sup>19</sup> Austin, “The Cult of the Outlaw,” 242.
- <sup>20</sup> Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 119.
- <sup>21</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 2.
- <sup>22</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 36.
- <sup>23</sup> Alban Vistel, *Héritage Sprirtuel de la Résistance* (Lyon: Éditions Lug, 1955), 63, 81, quoted in Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France*, 11.
- <sup>24</sup> Copy of Saliège’s letter, reproduced in *Ville de Toulouse Bulletin Municipal* (Numéro spécial consacré à la liberation de Toulouse, October 1944 [Marseille: Imprimerie Gaussel & Cie]), 28, quoted in Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France*, 11.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ville de Toulouse Bulletin Municipal*, 12, quoted in Sweets, *The Politics of Resistance in France*, 12.
- <sup>26</sup> Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Box BA 2105, Paris, France.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> Roger Tabar, quoted in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 158.
- <sup>29</sup> Raskin, “Le Chant des Partisans,” 68.
- <sup>30</sup> Raskin, “Le Chant des Partisans,” 76.
- <sup>31</sup> Composer Anna Marly quoted in Raskin, “Le Chant des Partisans,” 69.
- <sup>32</sup> Michael C. McGee, “In Search of ‘The People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 249; Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 140-41; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words: Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 55.
- <sup>33</sup> James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick, “The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 279.
- <sup>34</sup> Alberto Gonzalez and John J. Makay, “Rhetorical Ascription and the Gospel According to Dylan” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 4.

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<sup>35</sup> Deanna Sellnow and Timothy Sellnow, “‘The Illusion of Life’ Rhetorical Perspective: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Music of Communication” *Critical Studies Media Communication* 18 (December 2001): 397.

<sup>36</sup> “Les Chant des Partisans,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 113.

<sup>37</sup> “Pas de Kollaboration,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> “Liberté,” Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 191.

<sup>39</sup> “Pas de Kollaboration,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 96.

<sup>40</sup> “Francs-Tireurs Partisans de France,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 131.

<sup>41</sup> “Les Fifis,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 128.

<sup>42</sup> “Francs-Tireurs Partisans de France,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 131

<sup>43</sup> “Chant des Maquisards Chauvinois,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 259.

<sup>44</sup> “La Marche du Maquis,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 197.

<sup>45</sup> “Le Chant des Maquis Ardéchois,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 208.

<sup>46</sup> “Le Chant héroïque de la Resistance,” in Sylvain Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 200.

<sup>47</sup> “Les Chant des Partisans,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 113.

<sup>48</sup> “La Marseillaise du Maquis,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 238.

<sup>49</sup> Sweeney, *Singing our Way to Victory*, 43-55.

<sup>50</sup> For more information about the history and uses of these songs, see the indexes of Sweeney, *Singing our Way to Victory* and Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*.

<sup>51</sup> This anecdote was taken from François Musard’s testimony in Patrick Valérin, *Chansons et Chanteurs des Années Noirs: Une Approche de l’Histoire au Travers de la Chanson et de ses Serviteurs* (Malemort: Proanima, 1996), 192-93.

<sup>52</sup> Julien Helfgott, quoted in Valérin, *Chansons et Chanteurs des Années Noirs*, 193.

<sup>53</sup> “Haut les Coeurs,” in Chimello, *La Resistance en Chantant*, 168.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*



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<sup>55</sup> “Les Libérateurs,” in Chimello, *La Résistance en Chantant*, 179.

<sup>56</sup> “Maquisards,” in Chimello, *La Résistance en Chantant*, 119.

<sup>57</sup> Anecdote taken from Valérin, *Chansons et Chanteurs des Années Noirs*, 196.

<sup>58</sup> “Quand Madelon,” Du Temps des Cerises aux Feuilles Mortes, accessed January 7, 2012, [http://dutempsdescerisesauxfeuillesmortes.net/paroles/quand\\_madelon.htm](http://dutempsdescerisesauxfeuillesmortes.net/paroles/quand_madelon.htm).

<sup>59</sup> Sweeney, *Singing our Way to Victory*, 122, 130.

<sup>60</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 32. Like Hutcheon, Robert Hariman theorizes parody as a neutral act of “placing speech beside itself” that often “turns whatever was being used for effect into a joke.” See Robert Hariman, “Political Parody and Public Culture,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94 (2008): 249.

<sup>62</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 55, quoted in Jonathan Gray, *Watching with the Simpsons: Television, Parody, and Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

<sup>63</sup> “Maréchal, Nous Voila!” in Barthoulot, *Paroles et Musique*, 62-3.

<sup>64</sup> “Maréchal et Laval,” in Maurin, *Chansons et Poésies de la Résistance*.

<sup>65</sup> “L’Espoir des gars du Maquis,” in Chimello, *La Résistance en Chantant*, 282.

<sup>66</sup> “Les Voila, Nos Soldats” in Barthoulot, *Paroles et Musique*, 81.

### Chapter 3

#### **“Y’a des zazous”: Jazz, Race, and Resistance in Occupied France, 1940-1944**

On the evening of June 8, 1942, Ginette Orien, a seventeen-year-old Catholic from Paris’ wealthy seventh *arrondissement*, was arrested near *Place de la République*. Just one day after implementation of the Eighth Ordinance, the law that forced Jews to identify themselves by attaching the government-issued Yellow Star to their clothing, Orien was caught wearing her own, homemade star. Made from yellow construction paper across which was written “Swing 135%,” Orien’s star marked her as member of the zazous, a countercultural group inspired by their love of jazz, or swing, music.<sup>1</sup> The star, an imitation of the star that Jewish citizens were forced to wear, deployed representations of “degenerate” jazz to mark a new, racialized swing identity on Orien’s white, Gentile body.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, when writing his report of the young teen’s actions, Orien’s arresting officer wrote that her star took on the “same dimension as the racial insignia” (“*de même dimension de l’insigne racial.*”) and poked fun at the very serious threat that Jews posed to France’s future.<sup>3</sup> Across Paris, Orien’s fellow zazous, were engaging in the same protest. Carefully crafting their own yellow stars to match the style and size of those French Jews were forced to wear and emblazoning them with the words “jazz,” “swing,” and “zazou,” these youth mocked fascist France’s anti-Semitism by transforming a symbol designed for oppression and control into a symbol of their subversive jazz identity. For participating in this act of defiance, at least eleven zazous were arrested, many of whom were sent to the labor camps at Drancy and Tourelles.<sup>4</sup> In honor of their bravery, to this day their faded yellow stars hang in the headquarters of Paris’ Préfecture de Police.

While the Yellow Star campaign serves as a powerful demonstration of the ways in which jazz music and culture offered a resource for resistance in Occupied France, it is but one

example of the zazous' subversive tactics. Blamed for the decadent behavior that had allegedly caused France's defeat and charged with the task of leading the nation's rebirth, these youth struggled to free themselves from Vichy's oppressive rhetoric and policies throughout the Occupation. The promise of jazz culture, I shall show, was that it held tools out of which the creative zazous could fashion a subversive identity that symbolized their refusal to serve as national scapegoats and their rejection of fascist political ideology. Specifically, I argue that the zazous' performance of swing identity undermined the essentialist racial ideology espoused by Vichy and exposed Nazi Germany's "pure" New Europe as a social construct rather than a scientific truth. In the face of existing anxieties over the effects of *nègre* music on French audiences, zazou songs and fashion helped the swing kids to mark a racialized swing identity on their white, upper-middle class, Gentile bodies that transgressed appropriate norms of gender and class and symbolized opposition to collaborationist politics. These "degenerate" musical practices presented powerful evidence, visible on the streets of the city, that what Vichy and Nazi officials presented as the inescapable natural order was really a set of social constructions that were invented and could be contested. The subversive message conveyed by the youths' performance of zazou identity was not lost on Vichy sympathizers and Nazi authorities, who sought to discipline the zazous by denigrating them in the press and subjecting them to violent street attacks. Ironically, the harsh reaction of Vichy France and Nazi Germany to contain the zazous worked to reify their transgression, as it confirmed the cultural intelligibility of the zazous' subversive, racialized identity.

Despite the zazous' open defiance of the social order imposed by Nazi and Vichy authorities, these youth did not leave any personal records detailing their motivations or experiences. Because of the absence of such sources, many scholars have looked to the state's

criticisms of the zazous in order to understand the group's political meaning and significance. These scholars have recovered key source material and have demonstrated the ways that the collaborationist press portrayed the zazous as nonsensical teenage rebels. For example, historian Patrice Bollon has argued that zazous were problematic because they were perceived to lack a clear and consistent ideology. The zazous, he writes, "seem almost possessed by a desire to be unclassifiable . . . one even has the impression that they take pleasure in the status of objects that are almost indifferent, neutral, mute."<sup>5</sup> According to Bollon, the zazous rejected a coherent set of motives and goals; their dress and behavior was subversive by virtue of being incomprehensible and meaningless. Jon Savage echoes this interpretation in his study of youth culture, suggesting that the zazous "cultivated a blank façade" that mirrored the nebulous nature of life under the Occupation. By "turning adolescent obnoxiousness into street theater," he writes, "they offered a symbolic resistance to the Occupation's 'ambient, abstract horror' that also mirrored its ultimate vacancy."<sup>6</sup> These scholars' efforts at recovering the state's representations of the zazous as empty and meaningless have provided a vital foundation for future studies of the countercultural group. Indeed, they encourage us to take up the question of why, if the zazous were "blank," "meaningless," and "incomprehensible," their behavior provoked such virulent condemnation in the collaborationist press.

Other scholars have complicated the understanding of zazous as devoid of meaning by uncovering additional institutional sources that point to the zazous as a legitimate countercultural group. In the most recent study of the zazous, for example, historian Sophie Roberts analyzes arrest records to argue that the zazous participated in a rejection of the Vichy regime and should be understood as positioned somewhere between organized resistance and collaboration, in a category she calls "dissidence."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in her exhaustive analysis of newspaper coverage of

the zazous, Emmanuelle Rioux concludes that Vichy saw the zazous as stubborn republicans, holding on to the individualistic, decadent behavior that brought about France's defeat.<sup>8</sup> Cultural studies scholar Matthew Jordan's insightful analysis of debates about the acceptability of jazz and the formation of French national identity reveals the ways in which the zazous served as a screen onto which Vichy projected its anxieties about reforming national belonging.<sup>9</sup> While Jordan notes the racial dimension of the zazous' public performance, his study examines Vichy's attempts to delegitimize the zazous as "degenerate" Jews and leaves room for an examination of the swings' own performances of racial identity. Noting that the Vichy regime pointed to the racial impurity of jazz in order to "denounce the useless snobs who performed the very public swing persona instead of their proper racial identity," Jordan invites us to consider *how* the zazous transgressed the lines of appropriate whiteness.<sup>10</sup>

Given the absence of any records of the zazous' philosophy or beliefs, it is hardly surprising that past scholars have based their conclusions on available institutional sources. Nonetheless, expanding our understanding of the zazous necessitates an examination of the group on their own terms. Although a dearth of primary accounts of the zazous' activities presents challenges to reconstructing their subversive performances, the task is not impossible. Indeed, we can recover zazou "voices" by reading the music and fashion that structured their identity. Just as orators' organization, syntax, and arguments reveal insights about their ethos, the cultural products that these teenagers embraced tell us a great deal about the people they endeavored to become.<sup>11</sup> Borrowing cultural critic John Storey's observation that popular music often supplies the resources out of which countercultures constitute themselves, I consider jazz music and fashion the tools by which the zazou community discovered and reproduced itself.<sup>12</sup> I view the lyrical tropes, rhythms, and dress that were popular among swing kids as the

foundations of swing culture. My approach, then, is to probe jazz music and culture for clues by which to decode the subversive meaning of zazou identity. I ask, for example, how popular swing songs drew the lines of zazou belonging? In what ways did their eccentric dress reify or alter the collective identity articulated in jazz music and lyrics? What do these appropriations of jazz culture tell us about the zazous' opinions of fascist ideology? In sum, what kind of collective identity did the zazous build from the jazz cultural products available to them?

To answer these questions, I first reconstruct the historical context in which the zazous enacted their resistance, paying particular attention to Vichy's attempts to reform the nation's youth, a demographic it charged with the crucial task of national renewal. Next, I examine the cultural products that the zazous mobilized to construct their swing identity. This analysis includes *Mademoiselle Swing* (1942), the musical film that was immensely popular among the zazous, and four of the most popular French swing songs of the era.<sup>13</sup> The first of these songs, Johnny Hess' "Je suis Swing" (1938), gave rise to the youth movement by coining the term "zazou." The second, Loulou Gasté's "Elle Était Swing" (1941) offers helpful insights into the formation of swing identity, as it was released prior to the press' reactionary attack in the summer of 1942. The last two songs, Henri Martinet and Raymond Vincy's "Y'a des zazous" (1942) and Johnny Hess's "Ils sont zazous" (1943) were recorded at the height of the zazou movement, before the threat of forced labor in Germany encouraged zazous to go underground or join the *maquis*.<sup>14</sup> In order to see the ways that the symbolic appeals invoked in music were accompanied by material efforts to remark the young Parisian body, I also investigate zazou fashion, documented in a photograph and described in personal memoirs and the non-collaborationist press. Having established the dimensions of zazou identity, I then turn to an analysis of the reactions to the zazous found in the collaborationist press. While these responses

aimed to bring the zazous back under the control of fascist society, I argue that they actually contributed to the swings' cultural-political critique. In their failure to discipline the zazous, these insults merely echoed the zazous' subversion, providing the youth with a mouthpiece for their resistance.

### **Youth in the Occupied Zone**

Vichy's plans to revitalize France focused on the nation's youth, a demographic that they simultaneously blamed for the defeat and held accountable for a prosperous future.<sup>15</sup> Brought up under the influence of capitalistic liberal Republicans, French youth, authorities held, had become soft, leisure-loving, and lazy, characteristics seen as responsible for the 1940 military loss to Germany.<sup>16</sup> As one politician wrote in the Catholic newspaper *La Croix*, young people needed to give up their obsession with "being witty, light, libertine, mocking, skeptical, and whimsical" and focus on "God, nature, work, marriage, love, children—all that is serious, very serious, and looms ahead of [them]."<sup>17</sup> Not only had young people inherited a skewed set of priorities, Vichy officials argued, but they had become weak-willed and resigned. In a pamphlet circulated among the *Campagnons de France*, one of Vichy's youth movements, Minister of Foreign Affairs Paul Baudouin summed up the problems that plagued French adolescents, decrying the ways in which "youth lived without ardour, discouraged before it acted." Because this generation of French youth "was refused its chance" under the previous government, "it no longer even cherished the desire to demand one" but "fled from risk and shrank from effort. It was sad and paralyzed."<sup>18</sup> Yet, in spite of these alleged shortcomings, many believed that the youth were uniquely poised to reinvigorate the nation. In one edition of *L'Illustration*, a popular middle-class magazine, columnist Henri Joubrel argued for the need to "excite" the youth,

because “the majority of adults are too impregnated by the ideas that had run in the old government to see their errors.” Unhardened by the passing of time, the youth were still malleable enough, Joubrel held, that even their “hearts” could be changed.<sup>19</sup>

In order to eradicate the evils of the past and make youth into future disciples of the National Revolution, Vichy targeted France’s public school system. Since the law required children between the ages of six and 14 to attend school, young people offered Vichy a captive audience of impressionable citizens on whom they could attempt to impose the new social order. While government leaders vacillated over the ideal educational model throughout the war (Pétain went through three different ministers of education in one six-month period), most agreed that education should stress traditional morality, militaristic obedience and discipline, a return to the Catholic faith, and allegiance to Pétain.<sup>20</sup> When Abel Bonnard took over the ministry of education in 1942, these principles were joined by an effort to eliminate class difference. As Bonnard wrote, “the reign of the French bourgeoisie is over.”<sup>21</sup> To promote efficient labor, whether performed in the nation’s homes or factories, young girls and boys were taught separately in “traditional” domains. Vichy made *enseignement ménager*, the French equivalent to home economics, for example, a compulsory subject for female students. In a pamphlet distributed to teachers, the *Commissariat Generale à la Famille* (General Agency to the Family), argued that “it is very useful to make young girls like all these feminine tasks for which they are particularly gifted and that secretly correspond to their desires.”<sup>22</sup> Young men, on the other hand, were to be taught “force, steadfastness, courage, and other virile qualities” that would aid them in their future workplaces.<sup>23</sup> These reforms were accompanied by the teaching of essentialist racial constructs. Officials replaced educational textbooks that were considered to be anti-German with new anti-Semitic books and encouraged instructors, in the words of political activist and



journalist Maurice-Yvan Sicard, to bring French youth back “to the elementary forces which make up our country: land, blood, and race.”<sup>24</sup>

While five to seven percent of French youth did continue their schooling beyond the age of 14 (notably the children of the middle and upper-middle classes), most could not afford the cost of secondary education and consequently sought employment. In Paris, where Vichy’s official youth movements were banned, collaborationist youth organizations formed, all promising to train unemployed youth for the hard work and moral fervor necessitated by the National Revolution. According to Halls, these organizations were not widely popular, attracting only one out of six French youth.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, because these groups were widely discussed and promoted in the fascist press, their influence extended beyond actual members.

The discourse of two of the most influential of the collaborationist youth movements, the *Jeunesse Nationales Populaires* (JNP) and the *Jeunes Populaires Français* (JPF), reveal the kinds of ideological pressures operating on Parisian youth during the war. The former was the youth section of the socialist Marcel Déat’s collaborationist party, *Rassemblement National Populaire*. This organization envisioned a state that would be neither capitalist nor communist, where socio-economic class would not depend upon wealth or family heritage. The JPF was created in 1942 as the youth-wing of politician Jacques Doriot’s fascist party, *Parti Populaire Français*, and held a doctrine similar to that of the JNP. Anti-Semitic, anti-capitalist, anti-Communist, the movement claimed to be the only revolutionary organization in France. Indeed, so radical were its leaders that in May 1942, they called for a series of racial and hereditary investigations before members could marry.<sup>26</sup> The JPF believed that Vichy’s National Revolution was not stringent enough to combat the ills of young people and, in the words of Halls, “rejected what they considered the milk and water pabulum served up as ‘moral

renewal.”<sup>27</sup> Leader Daniel Vauquelin urged his members to adopt a violent machismo in their campaign, encouraging youth to “know how to strike” and reminding them that “it matters little if we are hated.”<sup>28</sup> Young women were urged to reject work outside the home and to dedicate themselves to continuing the French bloodline and upholding the nation’s spirit.<sup>29</sup> Vauquelin also placed great influence on the physical appearance of his followers, claiming dress to be “the sign of the race” and warning that France’s fate depended upon “whether you hold yourself well or poorly.”<sup>30</sup> While all of the collaborationist youth movements were not officially affiliated with the fascist party, they adhered to fascist ideology in their emphasis on moral, disciplined living, suspicion of foreigners and Jews, and hatred of capitalism and communism.

Given Vichy’s attempts to remake French youth into obedient disciples of the National Revolution and the collaborationist youth movements’ more radical calls to embrace Nazi ideology, French youth were under considerable pressure to dutifully take their place at the helm of national revitalization. Yet, in the spring of 1941, the Parisian press began reporting inappropriate behavior practiced by wealthy “*petits swings*” (little swings) in the capital’s cafés. Dressed in oversized suit jackets and cropped pants, the self-proclaimed “zazous” were allegedly shirking their civic responsibilities and mocking the nation’s defeat by dancing to the latest jazz hits. The word “zazou” was nonsensical, first appearing in a scat from American jazzman Cab Calloway’s 1933 “Zaz Zuh Zaz” before being immortalized in French jazz singer, Johnny Hess’s 1938 hit song “Je Suis Swing.” As Parisian teenagers appropriated the word for the title of their countercultural movement, other French musicians featured it in their songs, celebrating the adoption of zazou identity. Most zazous were between the ages of seventeen and eighteen years old, although arrest records show that some zazous were as old as twenty.<sup>31</sup> As their access to

restricted clothing and frequent patronage of expensive Parisian cafés reveal, most of them were the sons and daughters of middle to upper-middle class Parisians.

### **“Je Suis Zazou:” Articulating the Zazou Race**

Despite the fact that the zazous left no personal writings, we can reconstruct their performance of collective identity by examining the cultural products that inspired them. The zazous built their community on jazz music, a genre whose popularity grew immensely during the Occupation. Radio-Paris, the capitol’s publicly broadcast network, went from playing nearly four hours of jazz music per week in September 1940 to playing 24 hours a week in December 1941. By April 1941, the station featured more than 35 hours of jazz per week.<sup>32</sup> One of the earliest of the swing hits was French singer Johnny Hess’s 1938 single, “Je Suis Swing” (“I am Swing”), a celebration of jazz music that would coin the nonsensical term “zazou.” The song begins by marking a generational shift in musical preferences, declaring “negro music and hot jazz [to be] old things” and that “now, being in style requires swing” (*Maintenant pour être dans la note, il faut du swing*). As the song continues, Hess makes an ontological claim about “being swing” that asserts a deep connection between musical tastes and the body:

|                                                    |                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Afin d’chanter un opéra j’allais voir le directeur | In order to sing in the opera, I went to see the conductor |
| J’voulais chanter la Traviata en Ré Majeur         | I wanted to sing La Traviata in D Major                    |
| Il m’a d’abord interrogé                           | First, he asked me                                         |
| Est-ce que vous êtes ténor léger                   | If I was a light tenor                                     |
| Basse chantante ou baryton                         | Lyric bass or baritone                                     |
| J’ai répondu “Ah mais non”                         | I responded, “Oh no”                                       |
| Je suis swing                                      | I am swing                                                 |

In these lyrics, Hess deploys the flexibility of the French verb *être* (to be) to herald a transformation in fans’ relationship to their favorite music. In French, “I am” is used to denote

ontological meaning, but also to convey tastes and preferences. For example, one could say “*je suis professeur*” (“I am a professor”) or “*je suis sushi*” (“I like sushi”). Exploiting this linguistic slippage, Hess invites listeners to “be swing” instead of “like swing.” Hess supports his assertion that one *is* the music one loves with an argument rooted in physiology. Indeed, when the conductor of “La Traviata” asks Hess what his voice type is, he replies that he is not a tenor or bass, but a swing. This new voice type evokes physical difference to separate Hess from his forebears and to explain his obsession with jazz music. Instead of possessing a voice suited to the stereotypically stodgy, stiff operatic arias of the aged and uncool, Hess has the voice of a young, hip swing singer and must, therefore, sing jazz. The claim of these lyrics is that there is a chicken-and-egg relationship between the body and one’s musical preferences. While the song does not reveal whether biology causes a love of swing or a love of swing alters one’s biology, it does represent jazz as a state of being that is rooted in and marked through the (young) body.

The notion that Parisian swing fans had a physiological connection to jazz music was highly problematic in Occupied France, because it resonated with long-standing denunciations of jazz as racially “degenerate.” Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, French music critics consistently defined jazz as the product of American blacks and argued that its pulsating rhythms would have disastrous effects on the morality of white audiences. For example, in his 1923 pamphlet “*Danseront-elles*” (“Will They Dance?”), José Germain cautioned audiences against the effects of *nègre* music, calling jazz an external influence that eats away at French nationhood and triggers a dangerous “change of mentality.”<sup>33</sup> Performances such as Josephine Baker’s 1925 *La Revue Nègre*, an erotic dance set to jazz music, confirmed conservative critics’ convictions that jazz, was “the triumph of lustfulness, the return of the morals of the first ages.”<sup>34</sup> These anxieties grew even more intransigent in the 1930s, as the rise of fascism encouraged xenophobic

reactions to foreign cultural products. According to Gustave Fréjaville, a critic for the cultural weekly *Comoedia*, jazz required the French to hide “the characteristics of our race and national temperament.”<sup>35</sup> Another critic warned that jazz “makes us degenerate, like certain human races that appear to have lost their ancestral history.”<sup>36</sup> As the “expression of an un-French ethnos like the *nègres d’Amérique*,” they maintained that jazz would inevitably have a weakening effect on French audiences.<sup>37</sup>

Johnny Hess’ “Je Suis Swing” confirmed these fears as it claimed that young jazz fans were, in fact, racially different from their parents’ generation and their teenage contemporaries. By representing the love of jazz music—a genre that had already been maligned as “degenerate”—as marked on and through the body, the song suggested that the *zazous* shared a physical connection to American and African blacks. This kind of symbolic *métissage* clouded the white waters of French national identity, exacerbating pre-existing fears over a nation in decline. Indeed, set against the backdrop of Nazi and Vichy’s sweeping reforms to France’s sociopolitical landscape and the absence of nearly two million French men in German prisoner of war camps, the presence of the young *zazous* intensified fears over both the loss of French customs and French bodies. After all, a physiological disposition for jazz could be passed genetically to future generations. The protagonist of Hess’s song, for example, goes from having three children by two different women, to producing another “four children in one shot” with yet another mistress. Thus, *zazous* were not only proof of jazz’s demoralizing effects on “national temperament,” but also evidence of the decline of the Catholic family. Instead of reproducing the French race through sanctioned, traditional sex and gender norms, young jazz fans, their music asserted, would submit to the lascivious impulses awakened by primitive rhythms and produce

another generation of weak, immoral citizens. Thus by being “swing,” the zazous were spreading un-French genetics and cultural practices, placing the future of the nation at even greater risk.

“Je Suis Swing’s” representation of “zazouness” as a racial category, however, pointed to a deeper problem with the Parisian youth. Not only did their performance of swing identity threaten Vichy’s notion of a “pure” French race, but it compromised the integrity of the Nazis’ entire racial hierarchy. On one level, the fact that the zazous were aligning themselves with blacks undermined Hitler’s “scientific” race theory, as it demonstrated that race was a flexible category whose lines could be redrawn according to a person’s tastes. If the zazous’ love of jazz music and fashion made them racially different from their French counterparts, then the potential for self-determined racial identity seemed limitless. Pitted against infinite possibilities for newly created racial identities, Hitler’s essentialist “truths” about the inherently inferior qualities of other races could not hold.

Yet, the song’s construction of swing identity was particularly threatening because it challenged the dominant position of whiteness within Nazi race hierarchy. Indeed, by claiming zazou identity, young Parisians demonstrated the possibility for racial “play” on the white body. As they listened to Hess describe “swing” as a physical state and danced to his “*nègre*” jazz rhythms, zazous stepped outside the appropriate boundaries of whiteness and experimented with alternative racial markers. In the process, they undermined the status of whiteness as the superior racial identity. Whiteness derives its power by presenting itself as an invisible, universal identity.<sup>38</sup> In the words of film scholar Richard Dyer, white is perceived as “not anything really, not an identity, not a particularizing quality.” It appears as “no colour because it is all colours.”<sup>39</sup> This status as a universal allows whiteness to stand at the locus of racial organization, serving as the standard by which all other races can be measured and subordinated.<sup>40</sup> However, the zazous’

performance of swing race undermined this position by suggesting that permutation was possible within the allegedly universal category of white.<sup>41</sup> As young white swings adopted the notion of zazou as a racial construct, they particularized their racial identities. This kind of race play dislodged whiteness from its place at the center of racial organization, thus calling alleged truths about the inferiority of “undesirable” races into question.

Johnny Hess’s appeal to a fundamental link between biology and the love of jazz was echoed in many of the French swing songs of the early 1940s. When Vichy grew more aggressive in its anti-Semitism in 1942, popular swing songs became even more explicit in their assertions that “zazou” was a racial identity. One of the clearest examples of this is Henri Martinet and Raymond Vincy’s 1942 hit “Y’a des zazous” (“There are Zazous”). The song begins by heralding the arrival of a new zazou race:

|                                  |                                                      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Jusqu’ici sur terre              | Until now on earth,                                  |
| un homme pouvait être            | a man could be                                       |
| Blanc ou noir ou jaune ou rouge  | White or black or yellow or red and then that was it |
| et puis c’est tout               |                                                      |
| Mais une autre race est en train | But another race is appearing                        |
| d’apparaître                     |                                                      |
| C’est les zazous                 | It’s the zazous                                      |

After announcing the appearance of the zazou race, the singer describes the group’s physical characteristics. In a playful nod to the fascist understanding of race as rooted in shared physical characteristics, the song announces that one can identify a zazou by looking for those who wear a “fake collar that comes up to the tonsils” and sport “hair cut up to the backbone.” The song grows more subversive, poking fun at fascist notions of racial contagion by characterizing “zazouness” as a sickness that can spread outside of genetic transfer. Indeed, “the zazou, it’s contagious;” the singer himself is already “half of one.” The theme of contagion appears in many swing songs of the era, notably in Johnny Hess’s 1943 “Ils sont zazous.” Here, Hess sings of

swing as a “the sickness that took his daughter, his wife, his priest, his doggie” and that “in the end the whole family, the whole world became zazou.” The symptoms of “zazouness” are again visible on the body:

|                                      |                                            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Les ch'veux tout frisottés           | Hair all curly                             |
| Le col haut de dix-huit pieds        | The collar eighteen feet high              |
| Aaah, ils sont zazous                | Ah, they are zazous                        |
| Le doigt comme ca en l'air           | The finger like that in the air            |
| L'veston qui traîne traîne par terre | The jacket that drags, drags on the ground |
| Aaah, ils sont zazous                | Ah, they are zazous                        |

By describing the unique physical characteristics and habits that are then passed down biologically to future generations or through a process of contagion, the lyrics of this song again represent “zazouness” as a racial category. The introduction of this new race worked to symbolically destabilize existing social hierarchies by demonstrating the potential for racial play. By asserting that zazou identity was rooted in the white body of swing fans, these songs called into question a social hierarchy that relied on a universal whiteness at its center. With no universal white identity left to serve as the standard of measurement, essentialist assumptions about other races suddenly appeared arbitrary and ill-founded.

Yet, the swing songs that were popular among zazous did not merely assign physical features to the swing race, but fleshed out the category to include descriptions of zazou behavioral norms. Perhaps influenced by Nazi/Vichy stereotypes about oversexed blacks, the songs portrayed zazous as insatiable lovers. Take, for example, Loulou Gasté's 1941 hit single, “Elle Était Swing,” a silly chronicle of a young man's love life. After his zazou girlfriend leaves him, the singer runs off to the countryside to marry another woman who, “blonde and skinny” has all the “proper allures.” After they marry, he discovers, to his delight, that the woman he thought to be such a prude is actually zazou. While she “wasn't beautiful” and even “slobbered lightly,” she had one physical thing going for her “something very surprising:”



|                                                    |                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Elle était swing, swing, swing, swing              | She was swing, swing, swing                     |
| Oh terriblement swing, swing, swing                | Oh terribly swing, swing, swing                 |
| Je la trouvais divine                              | I found her divine                              |
| Je devins son amant en deux temps trois mouvements | I became her lover in two times three movements |
| Elle était swing, swing, swing                     | She was swing, swing, swing                     |
| Oh terriblement swing, swing, swing                | Oh terribly swing, swing, swing                 |
| Et sa lèvre mutine                                 | And her mischievous edge                        |
| Me plaisait follement sans savoir                  | Drove me crazy                                  |
| ni pourquoi ni comment                             | without knowing how or why                      |

Here, again, the song reasserts “zazou” as a racial identity by characterizing swing as something that one *is*, not something one likes. On the heels of the description of this unpleasant looking

girl, the portrayal of her as physically “swing” evokes the notion of jazz as a bodily marker.

After all, it was by *looking* at the girl that the singer could tell that she was not beautiful, slobbered a bit, and was swing. However, this physical feature was not revealed to the singer until after his marriage, implying that “swingness” is somehow rooted in sexuality. As the song progresses, the singer reveals more about the race-specific sexual desires that his girlfriend exhibits: “she was a little bizarre, during the day she slept/ but what noise what racket when the night fell.” These details about the nocturnal passions of his new wife evoke stereotypes about the sexuality of black jazz to represent the zazous as animalistic and sex-crazed. The singer completes this move to make “zazou” into a racial marker at the end of the song, announcing that he and his wife “you guessed it/had a lot of children who sing and dance all the time.” Here, the implication is that zazous have voracious sexual appetites that result in many swing children.

Perhaps the best example of the sexual dimensions of zazou identity can be seen in Richard Pottier’s 1942 film, *Mademoiselle Swing*. Premiering at the height of the zazou phenomenon in June 1942, the film tells the story of Irène, a young girl from the small provincial city of Angoulême, who defies traditional gender norms to become a famous swing singer and dancer.<sup>42</sup> Irène’s journey begins one fortuitous night when her swing club hosts a performance

by a traveling Parisian band. After the concert, she sneaks out of her uncle's house and goes to the train station to give the handsome bandleader, Pierre, a copy of her own swing composition. Just as she places the song into Pierre's luggage, Irène gets trapped in the cattle compartment of the train and taken to Paris. In the capitol city, she adopts an alter-ego, *Mademoiselle Swing*, and captivates Parisian audiences with her hit song and tap dancing routine. A celebration of the self-made woman, the film offers a model of femininity that transgressed Vichy's emphasis on the domesticated and dutiful Catholic wife. Indeed, while the regime sought to convince women to dedicate their lives to their husbands and children, *Mademoiselle Swing* gave zazous an example of freethinking femininity in the figure of the autonomous and successful Irène.

The film consistently deploys swing music as a symbol of the professionally and sexually liberated woman. In the film's central jazz scene, for example, the Parisian band begins its set by playing a medley of folk songs from a variety of French provinces. As the musicians play, dressed in regional costumes, the camera focuses on a percussionist mocking traditional life. Disguised as a provincial bride, the drummer rejects the flowers offered by his fellow bandmate and only agrees to the pretend marriage when given a goose. The refusal of the flowers suggests that the provincial bride does not want or need to be seduced by romantic gestures. Rather than silly, frivolous flowers, she prefers practical gifts better suited to traditional life. The actors' silly grins and bad costumes make clear the fact that this exchange is intended to poke fun at the ridiculousness of outdated dating customs and conceptions of female desire. The audience responds in kind, laughing at the old-fashioned model of a woman so devoted to her role as a homemaker that she would reject flowers but consider a goose an appropriate sign of affection. Suddenly, the music changes as the swing band takes up the folk melody, discarding its stiff rhythms for swing syncopations. As the band blasts their catchy riff on traditional songs, the

percussionist takes off his disguise and the traditional musicians exit the stage. The sudden musical shift suggests that the world has moved beyond archaic regional courting rituals and parochial notions domestic femininity. Jazz, the scene argues, operates as a force against the foolish and oppressive ideals of the past.

As the scene continues, swing music deploys an even more overt critique of traditional gender norms. When the bandleader asks if there are any swing enthusiasts in the crowd that would like to perform with the band, the camera pans across the audience for several seconds, searching for someone brave enough to take the stage. Since Pierre's entire band, like most jazz bands of the era, is composed of men, viewers expect a male volunteer. But Pierre's invitation is eventually answered by a group of twelve young women. As the women hurry to the stage, the viewer reflects upon the absence of a courageous male performer. Given Vichy and Nazi Germany's emphasis on strong, tough men, and demure, prim women, it seems odd that women would be the ones to take the limelight. The scene's subversive message becomes clearer as the women begin to sing the children's song "Mon père m'a donnée un mari" ("My Father Gave Me a Husband"). At first, the young women sing the song unaccompanied, in straight 4/4 meter. After one verse, the band enters, swinging the rhythm in a jazz style. The women begin to dance, smiling mischievously as they sing about the small size of their husbands:

|                                          |                                       |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mon père m'a donné un mari,              | My father gave me a husband,          |
| Mon Dieu, quel homme, quel petit homme ! | My God, what a man, what a small man! |
| Mon père m'a donné un mari,              | My father gave me a husband,          |
| Mon Dieu, quel homme, qu'il est petit !  | My God, what a man, how little he is! |

In this moment, the women issue an even clearer challenge to Vichy and Nazi Germany's emphasis on muscular and tough manhood. Indeed, while prevailing notions of masculinity emphasized physical fitness and strength, the song decries a Frenchman so small that his suit is

made from a leaf (“*d’une feuille on fit son habit*”). By the third verse, the song takes on undeniable sexual overtones as the women continue, lamenting the difficulties of having a small husband in the bedroom:

|                                          |                                       |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Dans mon grand lit je le perdis,         | In my big bed I lost him              |
| Mon Dieu, quel homme, quel petit homme ! | My God, what a man, what a small man! |
| Dans mon grand lit je le perdis,         | In my big bed I lost him,             |
| Mon Dieu, quel homme, qu'il est petit !  | My God, what a man, how little he is! |

In this verse, the women invite viewers to imagine the sexual failings of such a tiny man. After all, if this husband is so small that his suit is made from a leaf, we can envision the intimate scenarios during which his presence might be underwhelming. Thus, what began as the performance of a familiar, child-like song ends as a statement about the rejection of patriarchy and the recognition of female sexuality. By volunteering to sing a song about the small stature of their husbands, the women point to the failings of the men that governing authorities held responsible for reasserting the nation’s virility. The repeated complaints about the husband’s small size, particularly the size of his reproductive organs, moreover, mark women as sexed beings with desires outside the realm of motherhood. For the zazous, this liberated femininity stood as another component of swing identity.

Just as the lyrics of swing songs proclaimed the advent of the new, sexualized zazou race, to fans, the music sounded the possibilities of identity play. In one of the zazous’ most revered treatises on the promise of swing, *De la vie et du Jazz*, famous music critic Charles Delaunay wrote that the most important aspect of jazz music was its liberatory swing rhythm.<sup>43</sup> According to Delaunay, swing seemed to defy linear time by displacing the beats from where they would logically fall in a rational progression of time. Without swing, he wrote “the note, the musical phrase, even the general atmosphere, doesn’t appear to detach from the rhythm on which it falls regularly, automatically, mechanically, like the tic-tock of a pendulum.”<sup>44</sup> Swing’s power to give

notes a “sort of rhythmic mobility”<sup>45</sup> made it a powerful symbol of freedom from reason, a divisive quality that Delaunay charged with having “separated man into compartments, classes, parties, and races” and led to the First World War.<sup>46</sup> Thus, for the zazous, swing songs were even more powerful tools for the symbolic construction of an alternate identity. Listened to as musical representations of freedom, the rhythms of the songs seemed to mirror the promise of a more open social system that allowed for alternative performances of race and gender. Furthermore, the opinion among jazz fans that swing was a unifying music seems to indicate a degree of intent among the zazous. While we cannot know if they were conscious of the subversive effects of their presence, their reading of Delaunay’s book suggests that they would have been in support of the disruption of France’s essentialist and divisive racial hierarchy.

Despite the subversive nature of swing lyrics and music, these jazz hits were immensely popular among French audiences. Indeed, given the ban on American jazz, French musicians, who were permitted to record and perform jazz, achieved enormous fame. Thus, we cannot explain the reasons why the zazous were perceived as such threats to French society through an analysis of their music alone. The problem clearly was not jazz music itself; it was jazz music sung on the lips of upper-middle class white students, dressed in the extravagant and outlandish clothing of American zoot suiters. As testimonies and newspapers attest, wild combinations of dress and hairstyles accompanied the subversive lyrics of swing songs. The zazou race was taking material form.

### **Zazous in Zoot Suits: Fashion as the Embodiment of the Zazou Race**

The zazous’ appearance was perhaps the most vital component to their subversion of racial hierarchy, as it offered physical evidence of a transgressive, particularized French identity.

Their fashion and haircuts often mimicked the descriptions of zazous contained in songs by celebrities like Johnny Hess, Henri Martinet, and Raymond Vincy, suggesting that the zazous existed in real life, not just in the commercial music industry's imagination. Dressed in long, oversized jackets and cropped pants, zazou men adopted a version of the American zoot suit, a style they likely first saw on the bodies of American jazz performers during their prewar concert tours in Europe. Young swing men complemented these suits by wearing their hair long, greased, and often curled.<sup>47</sup> Women zazous wore short skirts, high heels, and heavy makeup. Both genders often embellished their outfits with an umbrella draped over the crook of an arm, an accessory that recalled Neville Chamberlain's habit of carrying an umbrella during public appearances. Poking fun at the fascist notion that race is rooted in and displayed through common physical characteristics, these outfits created the features that would mark the young swings as "zazou." The zazous' clothes and hair reinforced their gender critique by marking swing men as effete and swing women as oversexed, promiscuous jezebels. Drawn from American and British fashion and purchased at exorbitant rates on the black market, these outfits also signified a rejection of Vichy's National Revolution and allegiance with the Allies. An overt form of resistance, swing fashion elevated the threat posed by the zazous beyond teenage rebellion to the ranks of national betrayal.

In the case of the swing youth, dress offered a powerful method for the construction of racial identity because it allowed zazous to alter the appearance of their bodies. The zoot suit was particularly useful as a marker of zazou identity because it distorted the proportions of the body, causing the arms to look abnormally long, the chest too wide, and the legs bizarrely short. The suit's ability to alter the look of the body is well documented in fictional accounts of the jazz era. In his novel about a young black man's quest for self-discovery, author Ralph Ellison describes

his first encounter with black zoot suiters through the voice of his protagonist. “It was as though I’d never seen their like before,” he recalls. Amazed at the zoots’ physical difference, the hero marvels at how their legs swung “from their hips in trousers that ballooned upward from cuffs fitting snug about their ankles” and how their coats hung “long and hip-tight with shoulders far too broad to be those of natural western men.”<sup>48</sup> Struggling to make sense of these altered bodies, he compares them to “those African sculptures, distorted in the interest of design.”<sup>49</sup> As Ellison describes, the zoot suit was ideal for changing the appearance of the human body. This feature made it a powerful tool by which zazou men could mark themselves as racially different from their French counterparts. While women zazous did not wear the zoot suit, their make-up, high heels and short skirts functioned similarly to change the body’s proportions and coloring. According to the March 1942 edition of the widely-read bourgeois magazine, *L’Illustration*, women zazous chose fashions that would alter their bodies, creating outfits out of “bum-freezer jackets with boxy shoulders,” “short and pleated skirts” that revealed their legs, and flat shoes with soles stacked as “large as ships,”<sup>50</sup> When the zazous complemented these outfits with their own versions of the Jewish Yellow Star, they provided even more evidence that “zazou” was a racial identity.<sup>51</sup>

Through their fashion, the swing youth deployed the same performance of open sexuality that was described in their songs, particularly for “loose” jazz women. Trading the knee-length skirts and tasteful make-up of the day for “scarlet lips and nails,” and “short pleated skirts,” these women embodied the sexual freedom that had already been associated with jazz since the 1920s. While no photographs exist of zazou women, the costume of the protagonist in the film *Mademoiselle Swing* helps demonstrate the ways that jazz fashion emphasized female sexuality. Before young Irène becomes the fiery and mysterious Mademoiselle Swing, she wears a

conservative dress that covers her chest with a high neckline and conceals her shoulders with short sleeves. The waist of the dress is fitted and falls to a feminine and youthful knee-length, full skirt. Yet, when Irène sneaks out to give her first performance on the Parisian stage, she leaves her modest, everyday dress at home. In a frantic search for her run-away niece, Irène's aunt finds the discarded dress and asks in horror, "Did she leave naked?" As the camera shifts to the music hall, we see that Irène did not leave the house nude, but in an elaborate and revealing swing costume. Composed of a strapless black-sequined bodice and matching wide-legged pants, the new outfit marks a significant departure from Irène's gamine-like dress. By exposing her bare chest and shoulders and falling into pants instead of a skirt, the swing outfit portrays Irène as a modern, sexualized woman. Colored by her aunt's suggestion of Irène's potential nudity, the sequined swing ensemble stands as a symbol of promiscuous swing femininity.

For men, the carefully styled appearance of the zazou ran counter to dominant images of appropriate youthful masculinity, projected mainly by the muscular bodies and militaristic dress and haircuts of men in the collaborationist youth movements. Take, for example, one description of swing men from the March 1942 edition of *L'Illustration*:

They wore long checked jackets riddled with pockets and belts. Their shirts had high collars, with long sleeves covering manicured, beringed hands. They were often decorated with woolen and string ties. The trousers were straight, the socks of bright primary colors. The whole effect was topped off with huge crepe-soled shoes and hair, 'oiled like salad,' that hung over their collar. As a final, dandyish touch, they fixed handkerchiefs in their buttonholes.<sup>52</sup>

The preponderance of complicated accessories like pockets, belts, woolen ties, and handkerchiefs, mixed with the maintenance of "manicured, beringed hands" marked zazou men as effeminate consumers of jazz culture. Indeed, since the 1920s, music critics had portrayed jazz consumerism as a feminine preoccupation, extolling the virtues of face powder and hair styling cream for women who wanted to stay beautiful as they danced.<sup>53</sup> The long, carefully coiffed hairstyles of



zazou men recalled this gendered consumption and confirmed male zazou's effeminate and soft nature. The French adaptation of American zoot suits contributed to this perception by making swing men appear shorter than they really were. A rare photograph of a zazou man demonstrates the ways that the cropped, high-waisted pants shortened the length of the legs and torso and made the male body appear slight [See Figure 1]. The photo underscores the notion of effeminate swing masculinity by capturing the swing in the middle of a swing dance routine. Grinning broadly as he points one finger in the air, the small zazou hardly seems equipped to reassert the strength and vitality of the nation.

Figure 1.



Not only did outlandish clothes and hairstyles mark zazous as disruptive men and women, but they also revealed a troubling political dimension of “zazouness.” First, the American and British fashions that inspired swing style suggested that the youth sought to align themselves with France’s new enemies. Simone de Beauvoir notes this connection in her memoir *The Prime of Life*, recalling that “their Anglophile and anarchic attitude did stand for a kind of opposition to the regime. We saw some of them in the [Café de] Flore, and despite their affected airs, we rather liked them.”<sup>54</sup> Wearing versions of American zoot suits and carrying Neville Chamberlain umbrellas, the zazous identified with the two most powerful Allied nations at a time when

national survival had been staked upon collaboration with Germany. While the severity of this political betrayal remained obscure – did the clothes mean that the zazous merely liked English music and culture, or did they signify outright support of the Allies? – swing outfits revealed a refusal to view the United States and England as dangerous national enemies. This attitude struck authorities as unpatriotic national treachery.<sup>55</sup>

More than communicating disloyalty to France, zazou fashion also implicated the swings in a political critique of Vichy's economic policies. As the regime moved to eradicate capitalism and collapse class difference, the zazous stubbornly embraced the economic privilege made possible under the nation's previous government by wearing exorbitantly expensive and complicated swing clothing. Indeed, as historian Dominique Veillon has shown in her study of fashion during the Occupation, the clothing required to embody zazou identity was extremely difficult to procure. While a majority of French textiles were requisitioned by Germany, the remaining cloth and leather was difficult to transport across the boundaries of France's new zones. Additionally, the absence of 1.6 million men held as prisoners of war meant that factories could not maintain normal rates of production.<sup>56</sup> By January 1941, one could only procure leather shoes through a voucher program that constrained citizens to one re-soling and one new pair of shoes per year. To conserve materials, the thickness of the sole and the shape of the uppers were regulated. By 1942, no leather shoes were available at all, leading citizens to perfect wooden soles.<sup>57</sup> Clothing was also in short supply. February 14, 1941, marked the last day that department stores could freely sell their merchandise before the implementation of a voucher program. Two months later, citizens would have to comply with the additional burden of donating two items of used clothing for each new item purchased. Women's magazines began

featuring articles that advised women how to lengthen their children's shoes, mimic the look of silk stockings with the judicious application of leg dye, and make purses from scraps of leather.<sup>58</sup>

Given such severe shortages of cloth and leather, the zazous' ornate and complicated outfits signaled upper class belonging, a class performance that ran counter to the economic aims of Vichy's National Revolution. Indeed, the necessary colored socks, over-sized jackets, short skirts, oversized shoulder bags, and sunglasses could only be acquired on the black market, a system that was notorious for price-gauging, charging as much as 200% more than prewar costs.<sup>59</sup> Being a zazou was therefore a sign of wealth, for it required access to non-essential materials in a time when most people worried about replacing a worn winter coat or stretching meager food rations through the end of the week. This display of material privilege symbolized the zazous' rejection of the alleged sins of a capitalistic, republican government and demonstrated the young swings' refusal to submit to the authoritarian controls of Vichy's government. These wealthy students, who spent their afternoons in the cafés of Paris' most fashionable neighborhoods, threatened occupying forces because they drew attention to class difference, using their privilege to symbolically hold on to the promise of a capitalistic system and a free France. In all, the zazous' fashion combined a demonstration of gender and political difference that did not square with the German and Vichy authorities' emphasis on racial purity or communal living.

### **Strange Bedfellows: Zazous and the Collaborationist Press**

By early 1942, collaborationists had observed the racial dimension of zazou identity and were releasing a series of articles and cartoons that would underscore the threat presented by the swings' racial make-up. One of the earliest cartoons to comment on this hazard was "*Éclipse de*

*Race: Les Swings*” (Racial Eclipse: the Swings), a front-page drawing that ran in the January 29, 1942, edition of the fascist newspaper *Au Pilon* [See Figure 2]. The cartoon depicts a group of Parisians, some seated at a sidewalk café, others walking and talking in the street. The men wear traditional zazou clothing; their pants are slightly too short, their coats are made from ostentatious checkered fabric, and their hands grasp long umbrellas. The women are also dressed like zazous, sporting short skirts, teased hair, and platform heels. The headline, “Racial Eclipse,” reveals that these outlandish clothes had produced the zazous’ desired effect, standing here as physiological markers of racialized zazou identity. The young men and women who wore this clothing, the cartoon suggests, were literally obscuring the French race from view. Reading the paper at their parents’ breakfast tables that January morning, the zazous could not have been more pleased. The cartoon, even as it sought to denounce the swings, confirmed the cultural intelligibility of their subversive, racialized identity.

Figure 2.



As the zazous perfected their swing outfits and complicated their political and social critiques, the press published myriad columns and cartoons that highlighted their conscious transgression of social norms, reifying the very identity it sought to eradicate. Portraying the swings as impure, queer snobs, the press continually criticized them from within the social order that they rejected. This strategy failed to discipline the zazous because it depended upon the assertion of the very norms that the zazous had already abandoned. Paradoxically, then, in the process of denouncing the zazous, the press only succeeded in exposing the totality of their subversion. Dick Hebdige has observed this phenomenon in his seminal study of subculture and style, noting that countercultures often seek to expose the “false obviousness of everyday practice” by embracing a total departure from the mainstream culture.<sup>60</sup> In a strategy that he calls “revolting style,” countercultural groups revere objects that are disdained by society in order to communicate significant difference from the society they hold to be false.<sup>61</sup> For the zazous, this strategy was particularly effective because it rendered Vichy France and Nazi Germany powerless to control and discipline them. As the flustered press continued its efforts to malign the zazous, it merely drew attention to the zazous’ total rejection of fascist values. By the summer of 1942, the press had worsened the threat of zazous by providing inspiration for their resistance. Paradoxically, then, the collaborationist press’ efforts to delegitimize the zazous actually worked in their favor. With each cartoon and column, the press affirmed their purposeful transgression of race and gender norms and inspired new methods by which they could critique of pro-Nazi France.

Perhaps the most recurring critique of the zazous centered upon their performance of wealth. Pierre Ducrocq, a columnist for the right-wing paper *La Gerbe*, was an especially vocal detractor, using his regular column, “*Swing Qui Peut*” (“Swing Who Can”) to denounce the

swings as opportunistic consumers. Yet, as I have shown, the zazous purposefully marked themselves as privileged bourgeois citizens, defying Vichy's economic policies by wearing their expensive zazou outfits in the city's posh cafés. Thus, when Ducrocq lamented the presence of the snobby zazous in the June 4, 1942, edition of *La Gerbe*, his attack merely confirmed the success of the zazous' performance of upper class identity. According to Ducrocq, "At a time where we must above all count on the youth, they betray our hope." Instead of following Pétain's plan for a society based on community and work, they "dream of a bourgeois 'rascaltocracy' [*voyoucratie*]." <sup>62</sup> Later in June 1942, he explained the primary conditions of becoming a zazou—having money but "not having anything to do." <sup>63</sup> For Ducrocq, zazous' eccentric fashion was the ultimate proof of their wealth. Criticizing the "blind parents" who financed the "bourgeois" and "expensive" tastes of their swing children, he exclaimed that "Swing is bourgeois! Swing is expensive!" <sup>64</sup> Other columnists echoed Ducrocq's assessment of the zazous' financial ease, lamenting the arrival of "zazou snobbism," and encouraging an attitude of disdain for those "daddy's boys" who don't "stand for anything but themselves and the gains of the black market." <sup>65</sup> The wealthy zazous, for whom expensive fashion was a symbol of their refusal to take ownership of the nation's alleged sins, could not have written a better portrayal of their bourgeois class performance.

The press also remarked on the zazous' failure to adhere to traditional codes of gender and sexuality. According to the September 16, 1943, edition of *Au Pilon*, the zazous augmented the nation's shame by putting on exhibitionist shows of passion in front of German soldiers. Recounting a particularly steamy scene between a zazou couple on the metro, the anonymous author describes the inappropriate way that the young swings behave. Cuddled tenderly together, the "'male' whispers confidences in the ear of the 'female'" who "as if in a state of ecstasy

swoons, giving the performance of a physical tension at the last stage, the one that precedes the great launch” (“*comme en état d’extase, se pâme en offrant le spectacle d’une tension physique au dernier stade, celle qui précède le grand départ*”). Both the author’s recounting of such inappropriate public sexual activity and his use of quotation marks around the words “male” and “female” reveal that he perceives zazou youth as lying outside the boundaries of respectable masculinity and femininity. Yet, for the zazou women who had celebrated the success of the sexually liberated protagonist of the film *Mademoiselle Swing* and danced to the syncopated rhythms of a song about the sexual shortcomings of their lovers, this public display of female sexuality was hardly cause for alarm. Instead, the *Au Pilon* author’s condemnation of the zazous’ “parade of love” worked as validation that the swings’ gender transgression was culturally intelligible.<sup>66</sup> Pitted against the swings’ continued defiance of gender norms, the article demonstrated the zazous’ complete rejection of fascist notions of respectable femininity.

Due to the American influences on their musical and fashion tastes, the zazous were also portrayed as lovers of Anglo Saxon culture and supporters of the Allied Forces. According to an article in *Au Pilon*, the zazous incorporated English into their everyday speech, greeting each other with a hearty “*A l’eau! A l’eau!*” (Hello! Hello!) and departing with a “*Baille, baille*” (Bye bye).<sup>67</sup> Pierre Ducrocq warned of their dancing habits, casting doubt on the zazous’ national fitness because of their affinity for an “epileptic, Anglo-Saxon dance.”<sup>68</sup> These cultural preferences allegedly signaled betrayal of France and support for Great Britain in the war effort. One columnist in *Au Pilon* wrote that “the zazou-zazou is . . . of gaullist sentiments.”<sup>69</sup> Another columnist, writing before the summer vacation of 1942, wished his readers a happy vacation in spite of the pesky zazous who had reportedly appeared in the western region of France. “They’re going,” he said, “probably to testify in their own way to the high regard in which they hold the



ineffable Neville Chamberlain.”<sup>70</sup> For the zazous who purposefully appropriated the zoot suits of American jazzmen and accessorized them with umbrellas like those carried by Neville Chamberlain, the critiques of zazous as pro-Allied were hardly devastating. Rather than exposing some horrible secret about the zazous’ wayward politics, these insults merely emphasized the zazous’ purposeful alignment with the Allies. In the end, the press’ critiques demonstrated that the zazous had so fully rejected the social codes of fascist France that they could no longer be disciplined through symbolic means.

By the summer of 1942, the collaborationist press had proven to be such a constructive force for the promotion of the zazous’ subversive identities that the young swings began drawing inspiration from its criticisms. In their most significant effort to malign the zazous, editors at the fascist newspaper *Au Pilon* published a series of cartoons that aimed to deny the existence of a unique zazou race by depicting the swings as Jews. If they could represent zazous as Jews instead of wayward white teens, *Au Pilon*’s editors hoped, they could deny the possibility of race play and rehabilitate an essentialized racial hierarchy. Portraying zazous as Jews was a promising strategy for collaborationists, as the connection resonated with fascists’ earlier efforts to establish jazz as the product of both black and Jewish musicians. As musicologist Michael Kater has shown, earlier race “scientists” had already documented that these groups shared common blood, despite Jews’ allegedly superior mental powers. Black blood coupled with sly cunning, according to the Nazis, accounted for Jews’ special talent as jazz performers and their success as commercial music managers.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, as the smarter, genetic cousins of blacks, Jews were portrayed as especially fearsome sexual predators. Indeed, while blacks allegedly had no control over their sexuality, Jews, the Nazis held, were purposefully plotting to seduce Aryan men and women.<sup>72</sup> To sell these beliefs, fascist music critics and concert organizers blended symbols of

black and Jewish identity in order to align the two groups. The poster for Dusseldorf's 1938 exposition of "degenerate" music, for example, featured a monkey-like black, wearing a Star of David, and playing the saxophone.<sup>73</sup>

Rooting their cartoons in these past attempts to portray jazz as black and Jewish music, *Au Piloni* emphasized the alleged similarities between the zazous and Jews in order to deny the existence of a unique swing race. A cartoon from the May 28, 1942, edition of *Au Piloni* shows two Jewish women preparing for an evening out [See Figure 3]. The blonde woman is dressed in typical zazou fashion, wearing a loud, polka-dotted dress and a hat adorned with the *Croix de Lorraine*, the symbol of Charles de Gaulle's Free French Forces. The dark-haired woman, drawn with a stereotypically large Jewish nose and a Star of David on her dress, offers her opinion on her friend's new hat: "I think it's charming, but is it not a bit too original?" The blonde replies, "You mean to say that it's the most zazou of all of my swing hats!" The dialogue emphasizes three alleged similarities—political disloyalty, greediness, and promiscuity—between Jewish and zazou consumer practices to align the two groups. While there is no record of zazous actually wearing the *Croix de Lorraine*, the cartoon deploys the Gaullist symbol to allude to the zazous' alleged support of the Allies. To compare zazou and Jewish consumption practices, the cartoonist underscores the fact that the ridiculous *Croix de Lorraine* hat accounts for just one of the blonde's collection of ostentatious swing hats. Finally, the cartoonist depicts the blonde in a tight, low-cut dress and heavily applied make-up to assert zazou and Jewish women as oversexed vixens, well outside the boundaries of Vichy's model of domestic femininity. Like the pro-Allied, greedy, immoral Jews, the zazous, the cartoon asserts, are unpatriotic, loose, and capitalistic detriments to society.

Figure 3.



Other cartoons were more explicit in drawing the link between the capitalistic, immoral Jews and the zazous. For example, on June 6, 1942, the ominously titled fascist newspaper, *Je Suis Partout* (“I am Everywhere”) published another cartoon featuring a hypothetical version of France, governed by Charles de Gaulle, personified as a Jewish, zazou woman. The woman dances scandalously for the rest of the European nations, all depicted as leering, wealthy Jewish men [See Figure 4]. The caption reads, “For a Swing France in a Zazou Europe.” The claim of the cartoon is that the zazous, like the Jews, would ruin France by refusing to abandon their corrupt attachment to capitalism. Instead of returning to the land and relying on their local communities, de Gaulle and his zazous would make France vulnerable to the trends of the world market. The cartoonist symbolizes this economic “selling out” of the nation through a veiled reference to prostitution. Standing atop a bar, dancing with her legs open, Zazou, Jewish, Gaullist France seems willing to let any nation defile her for the right price. In both of these

cartoons, the artist mixes the physical markings of zazous and Jews to insinuate that both groups present the same menace to French society. By subsuming zazous into the category of Jews, the cartoon attempts to discipline the zazous by denying the existence of a unique “swing” race.

Figure 4.



Yet, rather than being silenced by the press’ attacks, the zazous simply appropriated them into their subversive repertoire. In June 1942, weeks after *Au Pilon* printed their first Jewish/Zazou cartoons, young swings like Ginette Orien seized the connection between themselves and the Jews as inspiration for their Yellow Star campaign. Historian Sophie Roberts has noted the direct link between the press’ cartoons and the zazous’ Yellow Star Campaign, arguing that these caricatures motivated the zazous’ protest by setting them far enough outside the boundaries of society that they could embrace overt political resistance.<sup>74</sup> My analysis invites us to reconsider their resistance within the context of an ongoing constructive relationship between the press and the zazous. As I have shown, the zazous had removed themselves from

Vichy/Nazi society long before the *Au Pilon* published its cartoons. By pinning homemade “zazou” Yellow Stars to their clothing, the zazous acknowledged and exploited their purported similarity to the nation’s most “undesirable” group to insist upon their status as a racial community. As they played along with this connection, the youth insisted upon their own *unique* swing identity. Inscribing their stars with the words “swing,” “jazz,” and “zazou,” the youth refused to accept a collapse of Jewish/zazou identity and alarmed authorities to the fact that there were at least two impure “races” threatening the nation. Therefore, the campaign should be understood as another act of subversion, another moment in which the zazous transformed collaborationist insults into a means of thumbing their noses at fascist social and political ideology.

By the end of June 1942, the zazous’ subversive ideology proved to be too far outside fascist social order to combat through symbolic means. Ultimately, collaborationists would resort to violence to subdue the unruly zazous. In an article published in the June 11, 1942, edition of *Au Pilon* entitled “What is a Zazou-Zazou?,” author Ferdinand encouraged readers to damage the zazous’ clothing and shave their hair. “The most practical remedy for getting rid of a zazou,” he wrote, “consists of either cutting his jacket or overcoat with scissors, or with removing his hair with clippers.” These solutions, Ferdinand continued, avoided the risk of making the zazou into a martyr while “demoralizing” him and “depriving him of all his means of action.”<sup>75</sup> One week later, another columnist noted that the “zazou hunt . . . is already open.”<sup>76</sup>

Responding to these articles, members of the *Jeunes Populaires Français* organized to execute attacks on the zazous they saw in the streets, reprising a familiar strategy for the correction of disloyal female sexuality [See Figure 5]. As Fabrice Virgili has documented in his study of women accused of “horizontal collaboration,” the shearing of hair has long been a

method of punishment for female sexual betrayal, existing in France during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries before being reprised during the liberation in 1944.<sup>77</sup> The JPF tackled the zazous to the ground and tore their clothes and shaved their heads, no doubt recalling their leader's admonition that "'you will be hard, you will be strong, you will be violent, but you will be correctly dressed.'" <sup>78</sup> Given the fact that men zazous purposefully failed to subscribe to Vichy's codes of virile masculinity, we can read the shaving of their heads as an effort to rid the zazou of his sexual and class identity and remark his body as a sign of appropriate French manhood. The discourse that accompanied the press coverage of these attacks corroborates this explanation. Full of sexual innuendo, the caption at the bottom of a June 23, 1942, cartoon from fascist newspaper *Le Cri du Peuple* asks the trampled zazou if "he wouldn't like a little rubdown" (*friction*). Even the cartoon evokes the sexual dimension of the attacks. In a posture that recalls the act of rape, the JPF member straddles the zazou from behind to shave his hair, unmarking his swing identity and bringing his body back under the control of dominant codes of race and gender.

Figure 5.



## Conclusion

In sum, I have shown the ways in which the zazous' own performances of swing identity worked to destabilize the social order espoused by Nazi and Vichy authorities. Jazz music, a cultural product considered to be an inferior, "negro" art form, provided the symbolic means by which Parisian youth could invent a new racial category and play with the essentialized social norms of the era. By adopting the clothing described in the songs they sung, these young people embodied their "zazouness," marking themselves as transgressive men and women and individualistic capitalists who threatened the rebirth of a pro-German France. Even the collaborationist press' efforts to malign them contributed to their countercultural identity. Repeatedly portraying the zazous in the terms of their own swing identity, the press merely demonstrated society's inability to bring them back under the control of fascist ideology.

By the end of 1942, the press' campaign against the zazous had subsided. While the young swings may have been cowed by the JPF's attacks, it is more likely that the

implementation of forced labor for French youth in German munitions factories led many of the swings to trade their zoot suits for less conspicuous clothing. Indeed, as Vichy agreed to supply Germany with increasingly large numbers of young workers in 1942 and 1943, dressing as a zazou became too risky for those who hoped to fly under the authorities' radar and remain in France. Yet, just as the zazous were hanging up their short skirts and umbrellas, across the Rhine river, nearly two million of their compatriots were busily forming jazz ensembles, staging variety shows, and writing original operettas. As the next chapter shows, France's prisoners of war, emasculated by the nation's defeat, also turned to musical culture to survive the *années noires*, mining the genres of *chanson* and operetta for tools with which to survive their long captivity.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> While jazz and swing are technically two different genres of music, the zazous did not distinguish between them in the creation of the yellow stars. Indeed, the popular songs of the era also used the terms interchangeably, collapsing the two styles into the same genre.

<sup>2</sup> Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris, Box B/A 2436.

<sup>3</sup> Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris, Box B/A 2436.

<sup>4</sup> Sophie Roberts, "A Case for Dissidence in Occupied Paris: The Zazous, Youth Dissidence, and the Yellow Star Campaign in Occupied Paris (1942)," *French History* 24, no. 1 (2010): 89.

<sup>5</sup> Patrice Bollon, *Morale du Masque* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990), 135-6.

<sup>6</sup> Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 390.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, "A Case for Dissidence," 82-103.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuelle Rioux, "Les zazous: Enfants terribles de Vichy," *L'Histoire* 165 (1993): 37. See also Emmanuelle Rioux, *Les Zazous: Un Phenomene socio-culturel pendant l'Occupation*, Mémoire de Maîtrise, Université de Paris X-Nanterre, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Jordan, *Le Jazz: Jazz and French Cultural Identity* (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 194.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> I refer here to Edwin Black's seminal essay, "The Second Persona." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 109-19.

<sup>12</sup> John Storey, "Rockin' Hegemony: West Coast Rock and Amerika's War in Vietnam" in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), ed. John Storey, (Pearson, 2009), 90.

<sup>13</sup> Noel Burch and Geneviève Sellier refer to the movie as a "cult film" for young zazous in *La Drole de Guerre des Sexes du Cinema Francais, 1930-1956* (Paris: Editions Nathan: 1996), 135.

<sup>14</sup> D. Poulin, "Zazous and Swing Jazz: Cultural Resistance under the Vichy Regime 1940-1943" (MA, Université de Quebec à Montreal, 1995), 55.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) and Sarah Fishman, *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in 20<sup>th</sup> Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

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- <sup>16</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 60.
- <sup>17</sup> J. Peyrade, quoted in Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 166.
- <sup>18</sup> Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 132.
- <sup>19</sup> Henri Joubrel, "Formation de la Jeunesse," *L'Illustration*, March 21, 1942, 201.
- <sup>20</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 61.
- <sup>21</sup> Abel Bonnard, quoted in Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 36-7.
- <sup>22</sup> Commissariat Générale à la Famille, *Aux Educatrices*, quoted in Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998,) 80.
- <sup>23</sup> Young men received more rigorous training in areas that were gendered masculine, such as physics and chemistry, than did their female counterparts. They were also encouraged to play sports, an activity that Vichy held would prepare them for the mental and physical work of reforming the nation. For more on boys' education, see Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 86-9.
- <sup>24</sup> Maurice-Yvan Sincard, quoted in Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 164.
- <sup>25</sup> Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 183.
- <sup>26</sup> Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 330.
- <sup>27</sup> Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 183.
- <sup>28</sup> Daniel Vauquelin, "Discours de fondation des Jeunesses Populaires Francaises," *Les Documents de la jeunesse*, No. 1, quoted in Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 183.
- <sup>29</sup> Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France*, 330.
- <sup>30</sup> Daniel Vauquelin, "Discours de fondation des Jeunesses Populaires Francaises, salle de la Mutualité à Paris," May 25, 1942.
- <sup>31</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 68.
- <sup>32</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 67.
- <sup>33</sup> José Germain, "Danseront-elles," quoted in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 111.
- <sup>34</sup> Pierre de Regnier, commenting on *La Revue Nègre*, quoted in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 109.

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<sup>35</sup> Gustave Fréjaville, "Les attractions de la quinzaine," *Comoedia* (May 21, 1930), quoted in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 145.

<sup>36</sup> Fernand Mazzi, "Le rythme et la musique," *Le Monde Musical*, no. 12 (December 31, 1930): 409, quoted in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 146-7.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice Delage, paraphrased in Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 115.

<sup>38</sup> Phil Chidester, "May the Circle Stay Unbroken: *Friends*, the Presence of Absence, and the Rhetorical Reinforcement of Whiteness," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25:2 (June 2008): 157-174; Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 291-309; Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 29 (Autumn 1988): 44-64.

<sup>39</sup> Dyer, "White," 45.

<sup>40</sup> When perceived as a universal, lack of race, whiteness is always oppressive, as "race" is understood as impurity, as distance from whiteness. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "there is no dominant race; a race is defined not by its purity but rather by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination." See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 379, quoted in Nakayama and Krizek, "Whiteness," 299.

<sup>41</sup> Literary scholar Mike Hill has shown the importance of preventing variations within whiteness, arguing that "in order to maintain its categorical salience racial identity must stave off intraracial permutation. This is so because permutation is what identity cannot have if it is to remain categorically defensible." See Mike Hill, *After Whiteness: Unmaking an American Majority* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post Colonial Studies Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 205.

<sup>42</sup> Production for *Mademoiselle Swing* began on November 17, 1941 and the film premiered on June 12, 1942. See Appendix A of Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 198. Originally intended for release in April 1942, the film's debut was delayed until June because of the line "il faut braver le destin" (You have to defy destiny), a line that the Nazis thought evoked a sentiment of defiance. See Burch and Sellier, *La Drole de Guerre des Sexes du Cinema Francais*, 136 for more information about the release of the film.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew Jordan notes that Delaunay's book became "important underground literature for *les Swings*." See Jordan, *Le Jazz*, 188.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Delaunay, *De la Vie et du Jazz* (Paris: Editions Hot Jazz, 1941), 74-6.

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<sup>45</sup> Delaunay, *De la Vie et du Jazz*, 76.

<sup>46</sup> Delaunay, *De la Vie et du Jazz*, 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> In her memoir *The Prime of Life*, Simone de Beauvoir describes the fashion worn by young zazou men, noting that “they wore their hair long, Oxford fashion, and carefully curled, and carried umbrellas, and dressed in zoot suits.” Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, (Cleveland, OH, 1962), 407, quoted in Roberts, “A Case for Dissidence,” 92.

<sup>48</sup> Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1947), 380 quoted in Stuart Cosgrove, “The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare,” *History Workshop* 18 (Autumn 1984): 77.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *L’Illustration*, quoted in Savage, *Teenage*, 386-7.

<sup>51</sup> For more information about the zazous and the Yellow Star Campaign, see Roberts, “A Case for Dissidence,” 82-103.

<sup>52</sup> *L’Illustration*, paraphrased in Savage, *Teenage*, 386-7.

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 27-8.

<sup>54</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, quoted in Roberts, “A Case for Dissidence,” 92.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Ferdinand, “Qu’est-ce qu’un Zazou-Zazou?” *Au Pilon*, June 11, 1942 and “Les ‘Zazous’ en Vacances,” *Au Pilon*, August 6, 1942.

<sup>56</sup> Dominique Veillon, *La Mode sous l’Occupation: Débrouillardise et coquetterie dans la France en guerre, 1939-1945* (Paris: Editions Payot, 1990), 76.

<sup>57</sup> For more about the shortage of shoes, see Veillon, *La Mode sous l’Occupation*, 79-97.

<sup>58</sup> For a description of the new leg dye, see Veillon, *La Mode sous l’Occupation*, 51. For information about clothing restrictions see Veillon, *La Mode sous l’Occupation*, 102-4.

<sup>59</sup> Fishman, *The Battle for Children*, 58-9.

<sup>60</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), 102.

<sup>61</sup> Hebdige, *Subculture*, 106.

<sup>62</sup> Pierre Ducrocq, “Swing Qui Peut,” *La Gerbe*, June 4, 1942.

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<sup>63</sup> Ducrocq, "Swing Qui Peut," June 18, 1942.

<sup>64</sup> Ducrocq, "Swing Qui Peut," June 4, 1942.

<sup>65</sup> "Zazoutisme..." *Au Piloni*, June 22, 1944.

<sup>66</sup> "Le Dernier Cri des Jeunes Zazous," *Au Piloni*, September 16, 1943.

<sup>67</sup> Ferdinand, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Zazou-Zazou?" *Au Piloni*, June 11, 1942.

<sup>68</sup> Ducrocq, "Swing Qui Peut," June 4, 1942.

<sup>69</sup> Ferdinand, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Zazou-Zazou?" June 11, 1942.

<sup>70</sup> "Les 'Zazous' en Vacances," *Au Piloni*, August 6, 1942.

<sup>71</sup> Michael H. Kater, *Different Drummers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 20. While Kater does not validate Nazi claims that the commercial music business was controlled by Jews, he does claim that it was a "truism" that Jewish musicians were highly accomplished jazz players.

<sup>72</sup> Kater, *Different Drummers*, 33.

<sup>73</sup> Kater, *Different Drummers*, 32.

<sup>74</sup> Roberts, "A Case for Dissidence," 93.

<sup>75</sup> Ferdinand, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Zazou-Zazou?" June 11, 1942.

<sup>76</sup> La Chasse est Ouverte, *Au Piloni*, June 18, 1942.

<sup>77</sup> Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), 182.

<sup>78</sup> Jaques Doriot, quoted in Savage, *Teenage*, 389.

## Chapter 4

### Music Men: The Rhetoric of French POW Operettas

During their five-year captivity in Oflag XVII A, a German prisoner of war camp in northeastern Austria, a group of French soldiers surreptitiously filmed a documentary entitled *Sous le Manteau (On the Sly)*. Hiding the film in the soles of their shoes and camouflaging the camera inside a hollowed-out dictionary, the prisoners recorded rare images from inside the camp, including scenes from its vibrant theatre culture. The documentary begins by taking the viewer into the middle of the performance of a play in which a married couple pushes their baby stroller across a pretend boulevard. Garbed in a floral dress and white gloves, the beautiful, feminine wife pauses to comb her fingers through her shoulder-length blonde hair as her husband admires her. Suddenly, footage of the play ends and the film shows another, more raucous performance. Instead of a prim and modest housewife, we see a beautiful dark-haired woman, swishing her skirt to expose her bare legs as she performs a can-can routine. The camera then moves to the audience, showing the soldiers seated in the front row leaning forward to get a closer look. They exchange glances, jabbing each other in the ribs to see if their friends are equally appreciative of the dancer's charms. As the can-can routine comes to a close, the prisoners' faces change from prurient admiration to amusement. Remembering that the beautiful starlet is really just a costumed male prisoner, they laugh and applaud vigorously. Underscoring the falseness of the female impersonation, the camera moves to behind the stage where the "actresses" remove their skirts and put on their fatigues. The film's narrator closes the montage by explaining the unmarking of female identity as a process of shoring up manhood. "The [male] sex takes back its rights," ("*le sexe reprend ses droits*") he observes.

The footage of theatrical performances given in Oflag XVII A offers a unique glimpse into the rhetorical function of culture for the nearly two million French prisoners of war held in captivity from 1940 to 1945. These soldiers were imprisoned for the duration of the war and bore the majority of the guilt for France's shocking defeat, a capitulation that was largely understood as a loss of national virility. Despite the humiliation of their capture and the stark conditions of camp life, the prisoners established vibrant theaters where they performed hundreds of variety shows, dramas, and original operettas, most of which told tales of beautiful, young women pining for the emotional and physical pleasures of true love. As the narrator of *Sous le Manteau* reveals, these performances were not mere entertainment, void of political import. Indeed, the power of these performances, I argue, was that they invited prisoners to "take back the rights" of their sex, to reclaim their manly dignity and national pride. As male prisoners watched the compelling performances of their comrades, dressed in tailored skirts and well-styled wigs, they objectified and subordinated the female body, a process by which they could measure their sexual dominance and reclaim a sense of virile masculinity. While the most commonly displayed body was that of the European woman, operettas also featured representations of women indigenous to France's colonies. These embodied representations, I argue, played a particularly important role in consolidating French manliness, as they directed the expression of heterosexual desire through the prism of colonial domination to cast the men as powerful, civilized agents.

Yet, despite their convincing nature, the female impersonations were an imperfect means of securing the prisoners' positions as virile men. Indeed, as actors adopted the mannerisms and dress of women, they also pointed to the performative nature of gender, demonstrating that even an unkempt man could transform his body into that of a beautiful, elegant starlet. Ultimately, then, the female impersonators threatened the notion of essential manhood that the prisoners

were trying to recuperate. Wrestling with the ambiguity of gender, the men reacted to the staged performances by producing additional discourse that reminded them of the female impersonators' true identities. I argue that these reminders, found in the cartoons and theatrical reviews of the camp press, worked simultaneously to guard against the homoeroticism inherent to cross-dressing while upholding the authenticity of the "women" that grounded the notion of essential manliness. Together, the performances and the printed responses reveal that the POW operettas walked a discursive tightrope between believable but transparent female impersonations.

But POW operettas did not just remind the men of their desire for women. Through the representation of a hyper-sexualized femininity, these performances also reminded them of women's desire for men. Indeed, as male actors disguised as beautiful young heroines yearned for the pleasures of heterosexual intercourse, they invited prisoners to see themselves as the only beings capable of satisfying women's physical needs. While the nation's defeat had stripped the men of their status as talented and heroic soldiers, operettas offered another foundation on which to build manly self-worth—sexual prowess and dominance. This self-image, already grounded in French national identity, proved particularly useful as the men struggled to accept a seemingly interminable captivity that jeopardized their national relevance. Distraught by their lack of political influence and anxious about the continued fidelity of their wives, prisoners assuaged their fears, I argue, by staging allegorical operettas that deployed heterosexual love as a metaphor for their relationship to fallen France. These tales worked in tandem with appeals to manly sexual prowess to assure the prisoners that the nation was pining for their return.

While the recurring phenomenon of prisoner of war theatre has been documented across a variety of historical and national contexts and publicized in films like Renoir's "*La Grande Illusion*," scholars have been slow to analyze the critical function of French prisoners' theatrical



and musical performances during WWII.<sup>1</sup> Although the two seminal studies, Pierre Gascar's *Histoire de la Captivité des Français en Allemagne: 1939-1945* and Yves Durand's *Prisonniers de guerre dans les Stalags, les Oflags et les Kommandos, 1939-1945* document the importance of cultural life within the camps, neither work attempts to reconstruct and explicate the performances themselves as tools of survival. Nonetheless, these scholars have paved the way for future analysis by excavating vital primary sources that document the theatre's ability to provide a creative outlet and a means of temporary escape.<sup>2</sup> Marshaling evidence from prisoner testimonials, letters, and diary entries, these works shed light on the theatre as a refuge from the loneliness and depression suffered in captivity and lay the groundwork for critical analysis of the performances themselves.

More recently, scholars have begun interrogating the ways in which cultural life inside German prison camps, or the prisoners' performances of plays, operettas, orchestral concerts, and variety shows, served as a site of resistance. Andreas Kusternig, for example, has documented the protest of a cabaret group called "Les Bigophones" that performed in Oflag XVII. Using similar sources as Durand and Gascar, Kusternig demonstrates that the theatre provided prisoners with a variety of props that could camouflage the construction of escape tunnels.<sup>3</sup> While Kusternig's work helps to establish the theatre as a political space of resistance and dissent, it does not consider how the performances themselves gave voice to partisan attitudes or fostered subversion. How, for example, did theatrical storylines and music provide the symbolic means through which prisoners could assuage the guilt and humiliation of their defeat? How did staged performances provide rhetorical opportunities for French prisoners to recover a sense of agency in a camp where their every move was dictated and controlled by the Reich? How did the theatre offer inventional resources through which the prisoners could

rehabilitate a damaged relationship with their home country, a nation whom many felt had abandoned them?

To answer these questions, I approach the analysis of POW theatre as a reflective space where prisoners could recast and resolve their unique social struggles. Borrowing from Victor Turner's theory of the theatre as a set of magic mirrors that magnify, distort, or diminish the faces that peer into them, I view the POWs' staged performances as opportunities for POWs to combat their feelings of emasculation and shame by creating images of themselves that emphasized their virility and strength.<sup>4</sup> After all, to borrow Turner's words, "no one likes to see himself as ugly, ungainly, or dwarfish"—or, in the case of the prisoners, untough, undesirable, or unmanly.<sup>5</sup> The prisoners own writings underscore the constitutive function of the stage. Indeed, actors and spectators urged fellow prisoners to submit original scripts and audition for roles so that the theatre could be "better suited to their wishes."<sup>6</sup> Paul Juif, a former captive in Stalag VII A, compared the role of the prisoners' theatre to that of the ancient Greeks, urging his comrades to treat the stage as a vehicle for expressing their patriotism and building their manhood. "The theatre," he wrote, not only offered a "powerful agent for the diffusion of Hellenism" and "all the ideas and feelings that attach" to Greek nationalism, but it also "helped in the emancipation of man," the development of the freethinking "modern man."<sup>7</sup> Others encouraged their fellow men to use the theatre as a means of defying German oppression. In a pamphlet entitled "To Understand the Prisoners," for example, Joseph Folliet remembers that under "the eye of the victor," dramatic and musical performances proved that, although defeated, "we are not broken."<sup>8</sup> The writings of prisoners like Juif and Folliet demonstrate that the theatre was more than a tool for escape or an avenue for creativity. The stage offered a rhetorical venue where they

could throw off the humiliation of defeat and reclaim their positions as proud Frenchmen, beloved by country and family.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout my analysis, I strive to maintain emphasis on the performed nature of POW operetta. Like music critic Simon Frith, I treat these songs not as literary objects to be “analyzed entirely separately from music,” but as “speech acts, words to be analyzed in performance.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, while the prisoners staged productions of all sorts of theatrical events—including drama and dance—their musicals provided a particularly rich rhetorical opportunity as most of the melodies were taken from the genres of *chanson* and operetta. A symbol of French national identity revered as a verbal form as much as a musical form, *chanson* carried aural markers of Frenchness while highlighting the textual appeals that prisoners would need in order to defy their position as the vanquished soldiers of a fallen nation.<sup>11</sup> Operetta, a form of light opera that first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century and featured political satire, erotic jokes, and romantic plotlines, offered soldiers a model of musical performance already suited to the project of challenging Nazi power and recovering their lost manhood.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, by combining melodies of both genres into new, original operettas, the prisoners marked themselves as proud Frenchmen who refused to accept the emasculation of defeat.

The most vital component to the operetta’s reclamation of the prisoners’ masculinity was the powerful illusion of a feminine presence. Wearing carefully styled wigs and fashionable dresses, the female impersonators, or *travestis* as they were called in French, were a mainstay of the camp stage. Like the American female impersonators who rose to stardom in the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the men who played these roles were not excessive, over-embellished drag queens, but imitators who aimed to reproduce femininity as convincingly as possible.<sup>13</sup> In the process, the men privileged certain representations of womanhood over

others, exerting power over the construction of appropriate gender boundaries. Jill Dolan has theorized this phenomenon in her work on drag, arguing that male cross-dressing allows both the performer and spectator to “conspire to construct a male-identified subject” a mythical woman born out of male desire and dominance.<sup>14</sup> Sharon Ullman echoes this observation in her study of American female impersonators, noting that the process of imitating women gave men the opportunity to take power over normative femininity and reinforce male authority.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the “women” who elicited the lustful gazes of French POWs confirmed the prisoners’ power, as they were always already reflections of their preferred version of womanhood.

These women, formed in man’s own image and for his pleasure, cemented the prisoners’ masculinity by facilitating the maintenance of a patriarchal brotherhood. Indeed, as footage from *Sous le Manteau* reveals, prisoners did not experience heterosexual desire as an insular, private yearning, but as a communal affirmation of their gender dominance. When the two beautiful starlets strutted across the stage, for example, the film captured prisoners exchanging glances and elbowing each other’s ribs, bonding over their shared desire for and dominion over women. Eve Sedgwick has explained the constitutive nature of male heterosexual longing, arguing that it works to “consolidate partnership with authoritative males in and through the bodies of females.”<sup>16</sup> Extending René Girard’s concept of the erotic triangle—a model of heterosexual desire that identifies a third axis of power in sexual relationships—Sedgwick notes that the relationship between men, even rivals, is “even stronger and more determinant of actions and choices” than their desire for beloved women. This manly bond—elicited by the sexual pursuit of women—is “definitive of masculinity.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, as men gathered in makeshift theatres to participate in the communal ogling of representations of sexy leading ladies, they strengthened their understanding of belonging to that special system of domination: patriarchy.

Yet, just as the exhibition of representative female bodies offered men the opportunity to experience and express manly virility, it also undermined their manhood. Prisoner diaries and camp newspapers confirm the destabilizing nature of the female impersonations, documenting that the feelings they elicited occupied a slippery position between sanctioned heterosexual desire and transgressive homoeroticism. Judith Butler has theorized this phenomenon, explaining that cross-dressing displaces “the entire enactment of gender significations from the discourse of truth and falsity.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, in established normative hierarchies where people are assumed to have a stable, internal identity that is marked on the body, female impersonations confuse the distinction between interior identities and readable exteriors, exposing the notion of essentialized gender as a lie. Thus, the POW theatre offered an imperfect means of securing the prisoners’ positions as powerful, virile men and required additional discourse in order to police the porous boundary between heterosexual and homosexual desire.

To understand the ways in which the theatre functioned rhetorically to rebuild the identity of French POWs, I first reconstruct the historical context in which they enacted their performances, underscoring the gendered nature of France’s humiliating defeat in 1940, the emasculating conditions of captivity, and the formation of artistic centers within the camps. Next, I turn to a close reading of “*Au Temps des Crinolines*” (“In the Time of Crinolines”), an operetta written and performed by prisoners in Stalag 1A, a camp located in the village of Stablack in East Prussia. Here, I demonstrate the ways in which the exhibition of European and colonial “female” bodies shored up sexual difference and masculine power. Because the authenticity of these female impersonations undermined the gender hierarchy upon which the prisoners’ virility was staked, prisoners struggled to identify the proper response to the performances. Through an analysis of the cartoons and editorials printed in camp newspapers, I argue that the mens’

reactions sought to recuperate essentialized gender by reminding their comrades that the starlets were actually men—unkempt oafs to whom no manly Frenchmen could be attracted. In the third section, I show the ways in which female impersonations allowed men to deploy sexualized representations of femininity that established male desirability. Through an analysis of “*D’Amour et d’Eau Fraiche*” (“Of Love and Cold Water”), an operetta written and performed by prisoners held in Oflag VIA, a camp in western Germany, I show how the female impersonations enacted fantasies of men’s own sexual worth in order to further establish their manly power. Finally, I move to an analysis of “*Blanche Neige*” (“Snow White”), an allegorical tale of reunion between separated lovers also written and performed by prisoners held in Oflag VIA. Here, I show how the operetta deployed the sex politics of heterosexual love to explain the prisoners’ relationship to the French nation. Indeed, while Vichy’s policies alienated the prisoners, operettas like “*Blanche Neige*” exploited the politics of heteronormative love to reassure prisoners that they had not been forgotten and would resume their place at the head of the nation upon their liberation.

### **Disarmed and Dismantled: The Emasculation of Capture**

Even before France’s official defeat in June 1940, the experience of war with Germany was interpreted through gendered terms that heralded a crisis in French masculinity.<sup>19</sup> Outmatched by the size, youth, and technological superiority of the German army, the French military proved unable to defend the nation’s borders or shield civilians from combat. Indeed, as the German army penetrated France with alarming speed, the illusion of a safe civilian zone apart from the official war “front” evaporated, forcing the nation’s women, children, and elderly out of their homes in search of safe shelter. In what is known as the *Exode*, between eight and ten

million French citizens and Belgian refugees fled the fighting, transforming the nation's streets into chaotic labyrinths. Accounts of this period emphasize the feminine nature of this national fleeing, highlighting the tales of mothers leading children through the panic-stricken mob and desperate women selling their bodies for gasoline.<sup>20</sup> In his memoir, Jean Vidalenc describes the horror in vivid detail, recalling the "craters that blasted out of the roads by bombs, houses that were falling down or in flames . . . and everywhere, alas the dead." Amongst the destruction and carnage, one sight struck him as particularly terrible: Lying against a wall was "a woman who was fatally wounded, holding in her arms a baby of about two, whose skull was completely split open. At her side two children of three and five years old crying."<sup>21</sup> The suffering endured by women and children, perceived to be the nation's most vulnerable demographic, validated the notion that French manhood had been weakened. The resolved and valiant soldiers who so victoriously defended the nation in 1919, it seemed, were nowhere to be found.

While French civilians struggled to escape combat zones, the French army withdrew in confusion and dismay. After just six weeks of fighting, the French army surrendered, having sustained twice as many casualties as Hitler's army. When combat ceased, the Germans took 1.8 million French soldiers as prisoners of war, making them the highest number of men ever captured at one time in the history of warfare.<sup>22</sup> While soldiers who had served in WWI and those who had four or more children were repatriated, 1.6 million Frenchmen were held captive in Germany and nearly 1 million were imprisoned for five years. The men held in German prisoner-of-war camps accounted for the nation's youngest and most robust men. As historian Yves Durand reports, 65% to 70% were between the ages of 25-35, the average age being just over 30 years old. Most were married and had young children.<sup>23</sup> The Germans had not only defeated the French, they had beaten and captured the nation's strongest and most virile men.

Although Vichy leader Philippe Pétain sought to deflect criticism from the soldiers by blaming capitulation on the decadent individualism of the Third Republic and the nation's low birth rate, the vanquished soldiers felt the sting of defeat with particular acuteness. The experiences of most captured soldiers did not square with contemporary notions of military valor, especially since most were taken prisoner without ever seeing active combat.<sup>24</sup> According to Yves Durand, "the captives were seized by a feeling of powerlessness," sickened by "having participated in the collapse of the nation."<sup>25</sup> Former POW Raymond Henri recalled reading about the soldiers' disgrace in an editorial while imprisoned. "The prisoners are France's shame," he remembers reading. "They should have gotten themselves killed rather than accepting a life of luxury [*la vie de chateaux*] in Germany." Francois Mitterand, an imprisoned soldier who would later become the nation's president, also noted the nation's disdainful attitude toward the prisoners, writing in 1945 that "[W]e were defeated soldiers and therefore contemptible."<sup>26</sup>

The prisoners' own experiences of disarmament and imprisonment lent even greater resonance to their national shame. In their testimonies and memoirs, former POWs often recall the humiliation of being stripped of their weaponry and uniforms. Describing his capture, Captain Arnoult remembered the shame of surrendering his equipment: "Each man passed through the hands of a few [German] soldiers: one tore off my bag, another my identity cards [*porte-cartes*], they made us throw away our helmet and gas mask, and it was in jacket and bare head, possessing nothing more than a satchel, that I took my place in the troop."<sup>27</sup> After spending several weeks in hastily built and unsanitary provisional camps known as *frontstalags*, the troops were hauled across the Rhine in overcrowded cattle cars where they endured horrible thirst, hunger, and filth on their way to undisclosed locations. Sergent Depoux described the inhuman conditions that he and his men suffered during their three-day journey to Stalag 1A: "What a



voyage! Piled to sixty or seventy in cattle cars with almost no provisions; a stop every 24 hours for the satisfaction of natural needs,” he wrote. When it was time to sleep, “Big fights took place every night” as men tried to find room to stretch their legs. In the end, as Depoux remembers, they scrambled for a place at the edges of the cart where they could sit with their legs crossed and lean their heads against the slopes of the train. Immobilized there until the train stopped, “It was a true torture.”<sup>28</sup> Upon their arrival in Germany, many prisoners were paraded through city streets where local residents mocked and ridiculed them. One soldier remembers women and children hurling insults at him and while they drew their fingers across their throats in gestures of execution.<sup>29</sup>

Once in German territory, the prisoners were divided amongst 87 different camps, located across Germany, Poland, and Austria. The officers, whom the Geneva Convention of 1929 specified could not be forced to work in enemy territory, were separated from their troops and divided across seventeen *oflags*. The enlisted men, who made up the vast majority of the prisoners, were dispersed among 70 *stalags* where they would await assignment to one of the 82,000 work camps known as *kommandos*.<sup>30</sup> While most prisoners credit the German soldiers with treating the French with professionalism and even compassion, their testimonies underscore the struggle to maintain a sense of dignity and self-respect inside the camps. One of the most frequently recounted experiences of captivity was the embarrassment of mass cleansings and delousings. In his diary, former officer Georges Mongrédien described the emasculation he and his comrades experienced as they undressed and surrendered all their clothing, bedding, and bags to the Germans for disinfection. The men’s heads and genitals were then shaved before they were cleansed with a shower, the application of a grey anti-lice ointment, a soda cleaning, and a second shower. Afterwards, the naked men walked in single file to the German doctor’s office

who examined all their (formerly) “hairy parts.” For the next two hours, the men waited for the return of their clothing and personal effects in a cramped and cold room. Mongrédien remembers the humiliation of the experience, noting that “nothing was more ridiculous than these fifty men, crammed together, completely naked, chatting as though in a salon . . . we suffered an inexpressible sense of embarrassment.” In a final demeaning gesture, the Germans threw their clean laundry and bedding “*pêle-mêle*” in the grass of the camp courtyard, leaving the naked men shivering and exposed as they searched for their belongings.<sup>31</sup> Forced nakedness was a common experience throughout captivity, particularly in the first months when soldiers eagerly awaited a second pair of clothing from their families or the Red Cross. Former POW Francois Lalin remembers that “during many months, you had to wash your clothes in Adam’s suit [*en costume d’Adam*] and watch over them as they dried . . . because all unguarded laundry was regularly stolen.”<sup>32</sup>

The intense humiliation of the first few weeks of captivity yielded only to an acute awareness of the loss of one’s personal autonomy. Prisoners’ daily lives were regulated by German guards who planned their meals, assigned their work detachments, and organized their daily schedules, including the times at which they would wake, submit to “roll call,” and go to bed. The Reich even controlled the men’s contact with their own friends and families. Prisoners and their wives could only exchange two letters and two postcards per month, with letters restricted to twenty-seven lines and postcards limited to seven lines. All correspondence was heavily censored to prevent prisoners and their families from discussing political topics.<sup>33</sup> For men in *oflags*, constant confinement to the camp meant that personal autonomy was especially constrained. For five years, these men never heard the running water of a stream or felt the cool shade of a large tree. And while the enlisted soldiers enjoyed greater freedom of movement when

working on labor detachments, they, too, lived in social isolation as they were strictly forbidden from fraternizing with German civilians.

One of the greatest hardships for both groups of prisoners was the lack of female contact. Men in the *oflags* were confined behind the barbed wire of their camps for the entire war, deprived of even the sight of a woman for the duration of their imprisonment. In their diaries, the imprisoned soldiers repeatedly lamented the absence of women, remarking that they had not seen a women's face or heard a women's voice for the entire five years of their captivity. Camp newspapers often featured drawings and sketches that poked fun at the officers' desperation for female contact. In a drawing entitled "*Nostalgie*" ("Nostalgia") created by the prisoners in Oflag III C in July 1941, for example, a group of soldiers gathers to gaze upon a pair of women's undergarments that hang on a clothesline just beyond the barbed wire.<sup>34</sup> Holding their heads in their hands, the men stare at the bloomers with mixed expressions of fascination and yearning.

Figure 1: “*Nostalgie*,” July 1941, Archives Nationales



So desperate were the prisoners for female contact that many risked severe reprisals when presented with the rare opportunity for female interaction. Georges Mongrédien recalled such an event in his diary, writing that “This afternoon, a young comrade watched some walkers pass by: six young girls passed; one of them blew him a kiss; at the risk of ten years in prison, he responded with the same gesture!”<sup>35</sup> Even in *stalags* where prisoners were more likely to interact with the German civilian population on their work detachments, access to women was limited to prevent the formation of romantic relationships. Given the paramount importance of protecting

the purity of the nation's bloodline, punishment for "interracial" sexual relationships was severe. On September 10, 1939, Hitler announced that German women who committed "crimes against the race" would have their heads shaved publically and would be deported to concentration camps for at least one year. Prisoners of war who slept with German women risked imprisonment or death.<sup>36</sup> Thus, not only were prisoners prevented from socializing with women, but they were confined to a homosocial space where heterosexual acts were virtually impossible. While mention of homosexual relationships is rare within the writings of the prisoners, some did note their existence. Former prisoner Robert Christophe, for example, described learning of a German lecture given to Frenchmen on "the danger, the shame, and the immorality of relationships between men."<sup>37</sup> In his pamphlet, "In Order to Understand the Prisoners," Joseph Folliet, in a homophobia characteristic of the time, decried the presence of "sex maniacs—fortunately very rare—who looked for arousal in imitation and sometimes, alas, substitute lovers."<sup>38</sup>

Despite their feelings of humiliation and deprivation, prisoners in both the *oflags* and *stalags* organized elaborate cultural centers in the heart of their camps. Almost immediately upon their arrival in German territory, the prisoners arranged themselves into orchestras, choirs, and theatrical troupes and began petitioning their families and the Red Cross for sheet music, musical instruments, and scripts. While the artistic groups often performed separately—the orchestra playing an evening of Chopin, for example, or the actors reviving a classic Molière play—they also pooled their talents to put on original operettas. As the next section argues, these musicals responded directly to the prisoners' feelings of emasculation and powerlessness, inviting them to see themselves once more as manly agents. Indeed, as one prisoner wrote in *Confins*, the newspaper of Stalag 1A, the theatre proved that they "always succeed in what they truly want,"

that no amount of adversity and isolation could kill their proud, French spirits.<sup>39</sup> Yet, as we shall see, the reassertion of the prisoners' virile pride and masculine power did not rely primarily upon the quality of their sets or the sound of their orchestra, but on the "women" the stage brought before their eyes.

### **Looking at "Women": Female Impersonation and the Male Gaze**

On January 22, 1942, members of the theatrical troupe *Theatre des Aspirants* (Theatre of Cadets) debuted their original operetta, "*Au Temps des Crinolines*" ("In the Time of Crinolines") for their comrades in Stalag 1A.<sup>40</sup> The musical tells the story of two poor artists, Marcel and Rodolphe, struggling in nineteenth-century France to live off of the meager earnings made from the sale of their paintings and poetry. On the day of a peasants' Bohemian ball, two serendipitous events occur that promise to change the pair's bad luck. First, they meet and fall in love with Estelle and Véronique, the young, beautiful nieces of their landlord. Second, the men make the acquaintance of Monsieur Glandaine, an idiotic *nouveau riche* whom they con into buying their work. With the help of their friend Colline and landlord Agathe, Marcel and Rodolphe pose as established artists and bring Glandaine to the Bohemian ball, an event, they tell him, is really designed to honor the highly-esteemed and wealthy Duke of Palikao. All goes according to plan, until Estelle and Véronique, whom Agathe had ordered to stay at home, sneak out of the house and come to the ball, disguised as allegorical representations of France's colonies. Marcel and Rodolphe, unaware of the true identity of the indigenous women, praise their beauty and declare them the queens of the ball. Véronique and Estelle, horrified at their new lovers' duplicitous behavior, suffer brief fits of jealousy before exposing their true identities. After a series of

dramatic protestations of love, the couples are reunited and live happily ever after, supported by the money they procured from the gullible Monsieur Glandaine.

The characters of Estelle and Véronique are vital to the operetta's ability to cast prisoners as powerful, virile agents because they give men visual access to "female" bodies. In her seminal essay on the power of looking, film scholar Laura Mulvey has demonstrated the ways in which the visual consumption of women's bodies works to reify male dominance by offering men control over the styling and representation of the female body.<sup>41</sup> In the case of "*Au Temps des Crinolines*," and other POW operettas, however, the male gaze operates less through the mechanics of determinism than through the expression of heterosexual desire. Indeed, beginning with the girls' first onstage appearance, the dialogue and songs encourage audience members to yearn for the girls' innocent "smiles, youth, and frills." First, Marcel, the painter, asks Estelle to pose for him. As he studies her face, he sings of her charming "sweet smile that makes one dream," and her wheat-colored, blonde hair:

Devant mes yeux son doux visage  
Vient me troubler  
Et je sens près de son image  
Ma main trembler . . .  
Mais quand je vois ce doux sourire  
Que fait rêver  
Dans mon cœur tout bas j'ose dire  
En suis-je aimé

Before my eyes, her sweet face  
Begins to disturb me  
And I feel, close to her image,  
My hand tremble  
But when I see this sweet smile  
That makes one dream  
Deep in my heart I dare to say  
Does she love me?

In this song, Marcel explicitly brings Estelle "before his eyes," so that he can revel in the pleasure of her "sweet face." By demonstrating his heterosexual desire, Marcel marks himself as a virile agent and offers the audience a surrogate through whom they may also experience manly sexual longing.

The relationship between Rodolphe and Véronique is also negotiated through the act of looking. As the two get to know each other, Véronique reveals that she is a hat-maker.

Immediately, Rodolphe notes the fine quality of her own hat and adds that her dress is just as lovely to look upon. “Will you permit me to admire it?” he asks. “Walk a little, will you?”

Véronique shyly acquiesces, singing of the way his gaze “intimidates her” even as she desires his approval:

|                                       |                                |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tout ceci est bien modeste            | All this is very modest        |
| Et devant vos yeux je reste           | And before your eyes, I remain |
| Intimidée . . .                       | Intimidated                    |
| Cependant, monsieur, pour vous plaire | However, sir, to please you    |
| Je veux bien essayer de faire         | I really want to try to do     |
| Ce que vous demandez                  | That which you ask             |
| Voyez par ci, voyez par là            | Look here, look there          |
| Comment trouvez-vous ceci             | How do you find this?          |

In this scene, a timid Véronique submits to Rodolphe’s gaze, twirling before him despite the fact that he “intimidates” her. As she elicits his feedback (“look here, look there/ how do you find this?”), she reifies his right to visually consume and judge her body, shoring up his sexual dominance. By the end of scene two, Marcel and Rodolphe’s status as powerful agents has been made clear, predicated upon their desire for and access to Estelle and Véronique’s bodies.

The process of consolidating masculine power continues as the play progresses, achieving its climax through allusions to the racial and sexual and politics of colonialism.<sup>42</sup> Once at the ball, given in honor of France’s colonial expeditions, Marcel and Rodolphe consume a series of *tableaux* representing France’s imperial might. Together, these colonial scenes work to secure imperial power by constructing the white colonizer as the civilized, knowing agent and the indigenous colonist as the barbaric, ignorant subordinate.<sup>43</sup> “*Au Temps des Crinolines*” deploys these tropes, seeking to transform the nation’s imperial strength into a metonym for the men’s own virility. In the first colonial scene, for example, an Algerian official pleads with his friend, a French officer, not to destroy the Casbah or central market, as its disappearance would be “as cruel to our hearts as the disappearance of old Paris would be to yours.” The subtext here



is clear: from the perspective of the refined Frenchman, the Casbah appears impoverished and dilapidated. Yet, because this crumbling city center is all the Algerians know, they value it just as much as their colonizers treasure the beautiful, cosmopolitan Paris. In a style befitting his status as the benevolent imperialist, the French officer reassures his Algerian friend that France will allow the colonists to “remain as the centuries made you,” and that “France will conserve for you all the poetry of your Orient.” This exchange establishes France as the knowing, paternalistic protector of an ignorant and weakened Algeria. Indeed, by promising to guard Algerian culture, the Frenchman lays claim to knowledge of the nation, asserting that France can make proper decisions about what to conserve and what to discard. At a time when France’s postwar autonomy and independence were in question, this reference to the nation’s imperialism attempted to shore up French virility and reassure prisoners that far from becoming the colonized, they would retain their status as manly colonizers.

The next six scenes continue to build the masculine character of the French nation by taking the audience on a tour of France’s empire, represented in allegorical form by a variety of beautiful indigenous women from Indochina, Senegal, and the Antilles. Here, the operetta makes explicit use of the sexualized component of imperial rule, deploying women’s bodies in order to characterize France’s colonies as effeminate countries that a patriarchal France has a natural right to subordinate. Reprising the familiar colonial strategy of securing political domination through sexual domination, the scenes confer power and might on the French nation through the visual consumption and possession of beautiful indigenous women.<sup>44</sup> As the male audience members gaze upon exotic dances and steamy love scenes, the brown bodies of these beautiful colonial subjects confirm the prisoners’ status as manly agents, suggesting that the French are so powerful that indigenous men no longer represent a sexual threat. At the conclusion of the

colonial tableaux, Rodolphe and Marcel explicitly proclaim their right to domination, both sexual and regional. For example, while dancing with Véronique, whom he believes to be a representation of Martinique, Rodolphe marvels that “only a few moments ago I was a simple poet, now here I am a colonist, landing on Martinique.” Meanwhile, a similar conversation occurs between Marcel and Estelle, disguised as the representation of Guadeloupe. As they dance, Marcel remarks that he has “always had a marked preference for her, the most beautiful, the largest” of the Antillean islands. “How many times have I traveled up and down it in my dreams as a youth,” he asks. Guadeloupe uncovers the true meaning of his remark, jealously observing that “now you travel up and down it with your gaze.” Throughout the colonial tableaux, the operetta works to build white French authority through the old gendered tropes of colonial domination.

In the case of “*Au Temps des Crinolines*,” and in general, making the male gaze a viable process of building male virility and sexual power required theatrical troupes to make the female impersonations believable. In camp theatres across Germany, directors recruited tailors and hairdressers to fashion beautiful dresses and stylish wigs and required actors to shave their legs and underarms.<sup>45</sup> Photographs from the POW stage reveal the impressive results of these efforts, showing the ways that male actors transformed themselves into Estelle, Véronique, and other heroines.<sup>46</sup>

Figure 2: Photograph from “*Au Temps des Crinolines*,” Stalag 1A, Archives Nationales.



Figure 3: Prisoner dressed as a woman for a performance of "*Le Bal des Voleurs*," Archives Nationales





Figure 4: Prisoner dressed as a woman for a performance of “*Barbara de Michel Duran*,” Archives Nationales



As these photographs document, prisoners took the task of performing female roles seriously, adopting womanly physical characteristics (dress, hair, makeup, etc.) as well as body language

and postures. Beveling their hips and raising their pinkie fingers, the actors' mastery of feminine style not only created the conditions necessary for their comrades' expression of heterosexual desire, but also demonstrated considerable manly control. As historian Alon Rachamimov has demonstrated in his analysis of Russian WWI theatre, the "perfection" of a female performance allowed men the power to enact womanhood, in some cases offering "more authentic representations of femininity than women themselves could."<sup>47</sup> Convincing impersonations cast men as ultimate creative masters who could make woman, breathe life into her, just as Adam created Eve. By "perfectly" embodying their preferred representation of femininity, they evidenced ultimate artistic and gender mastery.

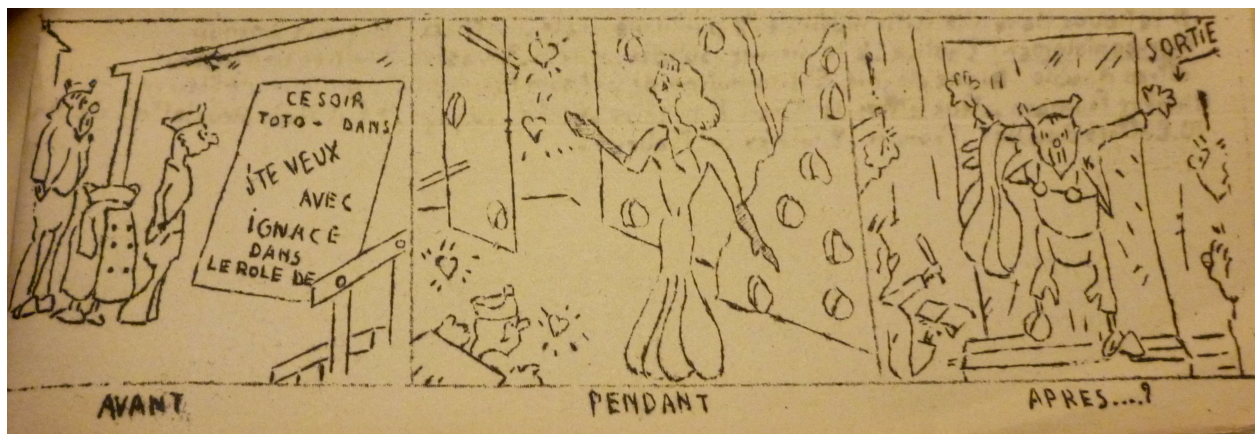
These efforts were not lost on audience members. Indeed, reviews of performances published in camp newspapers and written in private diaries attest to the authenticity of the female impersonators. One anonymous critic, for example, wrote that in one performance at Stalag XVII B, "the difficulties that can arise from feminine roles were surmounted to the point that they seemed to no longer exist."<sup>48</sup> Georges Mongrédien, an officer imprisoned in Oflag IV D, also testified to the quality of the female performers in his diary, writing that a friend was so "perfect" in a new female role that he "truly forgot he was a prisoner for four hours."<sup>49</sup> Another prisoner, reviewing a new performance in Oflag XVII A, wrote that the performance had been so convincing that "it took several instants after the show to realize that the doors didn't open onto Boulevard de Clichy," a busy street in Paris' nightclub district.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the theatre offered not only symbolic means of enacting the male gaze, but the material means as well. When characters like Marcel and Rodolphe invited the audience to measure their sexual power against the figures of Estelle and Véronique, they did so not only through songs and dialogue, but through the exhibition of "real" female bodies.

Yet, paradoxically, the authenticity of these feminine performances undermined the very notion of manliness that the men sought to embrace. Indeed, in the process of inviting men to ogle men dressed as women, the theatre exposed the lie of a stable gender identity, throwing the concepts of essentialized manliness and heterosexual desire into confusion. Indeed, given the believability of the performances, how were soldiers to prevent the destabilization of gender and maintain sex difference? In the process of soliciting heterosexual desire, how were they to prevent their comrades from experiencing homosexual desire? In their attempts to work through the gender trouble that they experienced at the POW theatre, prisoners printed reviews and cartoons in the camp press that reminded prisoners that the women were fakes, that their leading ladies were really just unattractive, unkempt men. For example, in one newspaper review of a variety show, jazz musician Jules Ruwet spoke of being afraid to look underneath the performers bras because he knew he “would find cotton balls.”<sup>51</sup> Another critic, writing for the paper of a work camp, reported that during a female dance solo in the jazz variety show, “Knock,” a prisoner pointed to the stage and shouted “She has hair between her boobs!”<sup>52</sup> Comments about the disappointing character of the “women’s” breasts both reified the desirability of the female body and upheld the notion of a stable interior and exterior manly identity. While the actors could pretend to have breasts, the article suggested, they could never escape their hairy, flat chests: the biological fact of their gender.

A drawing entitled “Avant, Pendant, Après” (“Before, During, After”), published in *Le Chic Os*, the newspaper of Kommando E. 44, offers a rich example of the tension between authenticity and falseness that constrained the rhetoric of prisoners’ theatrical performances.<sup>53</sup> The cartoon chronicles the experiences of prisoners before, during, and after the theatrical performance. In the first frame, the men read an advertisement for “*J’tu Veux*” (“I Want You”) a

performance that features their fellow prisoners, Toto and Ignace, in the leading roles. The next frame depicts the men at the performance, ogling the heroine, a sexy woman dressed in a beautiful, revealing evening gown. In the final frame, the love-struck men wait outside the cast's dressing room, hoping to get the heartthrob's autograph. Their hopes are dashed as their comrade, a featureless, slovenly man dressed in women's undergarments, exits. As the illusion vanishes, the men stand with their jaws agape, readjusting to the reality of their captivity.

Figure 5: “*Avant, Pendant, Après*,” March 1943, Archives Nationales



Here, the artist's humorous interpretation of the theater points to the dual emphasis on believable, but transparent, female impersonations. Representing the men's enjoyment of the show as predicated upon their desire for the authentic "woman" on stage, he disciplines this desire in the third frame by confronting his subjects with the inescapable fact of the starlet's biology. Paradoxically, the cartoon suggests, the believable, authentic female impersonators could only succeed in rehabilitating French masculinity if they were combined with reminders of their falseness, reminders that would close off opportunity for sexual confusion and reinforce the gender hierarchy. Given the prevalence of similar cartoons and reviews, it is no wonder that their



ideology crept into the writings of the prisoners themselves. In the words of Robert Desvernois, an officer imprisoned in Oflag VI A, the impersonations “demanded on the part of the audience a tacit agreement. You had to enter into the game.”<sup>54</sup> Paul Juif echoes this description, documenting that “the prisoners knew well that the chests were empty and that, underneath the shimmering dresses, under the wigs and under the make-up, one would find nothing but a hairy, clumsy friend.”<sup>55</sup> As these testimonies reveal, the newspaper reviews and cartoons worked alongside the performances, eliciting an authentic *feeling* of heterosexual desire while maintaining the integrity of a fixed, essentialized gender system where inner and outer identities always match.

The complexity of the rhetoric of these female impersonations is perhaps best illustrated in the cartoon “Les Oflagirls,” printed in the newspaper of Oflag III C in July 1941.<sup>56</sup> Depicting the actors as they prepare to perform the female leads, the artist captures the theatre’s delicate balance between enacting believable feminine performances that would elicit heterosexual desire and issuing reminders that the beautiful starlets were really unkempt and unattractive men.

Figure 6: “*Les Oflagirls*,” July 1941, Archives Nationales



Take, for example, the man seated in front of the mirror, applying his makeup while wearing a woman's bra and man's underwear. The beer mug in his hand and the bulge at his pelvis reveal

his true identity, even as he strains to apply his lipstick properly. Seated on a crate in front of him, another actor wears a bra, tutu and ballet shoes; “her” true identity as a man is only made clear by “her” boyish posture and the pipe “she” smokes. The combination of female and male features operates to discipline the prisoners’ desire by reminding them that the performance of female identity is always an illusion, convincing though it may be. Other characters in the drawing, however, have fully executed their gender transformation, becoming women so realistically that they even feel violated by the presence of a man in their dressing room. Indeed, the woman in the background hovers over the male intruder, her hands perched on her hips in a sassy gesture of feminine disapproval. The man clasps his mouth, presumably cowed by the woman’s forceful language and intimidating bearing. This interaction underscores the convincing nature of the female impersonations and the skill with which male actors performed an authentic femininity. When the men completed their transformations, the cartoon suggests, they so masterfully mimicked female behavior that they even adopted womanly subject positions. In all, “Les Oflagirls” makes a forceful argument for the actors’ mastery of an illusion of femininity. Adjusting their wigs, applying makeup, and pulling up their panty hose, the men become women before our very eyes, even adopting a female sense of decorum and privacy. Yet, as the bulging underwear, pipes, and discarded boots reveal, these women are really men, masterfully bringing to life the bodies of women.

### **Virginal Vixens: Idealized Women and Male Desirability**

Not only do the operettas reclaim prisoners’ sense of agency and power through the enactment of the male gaze, but also by grounding manly worth in their male desirability. By creating female characters with healthy libidos and sexual appetites, the prisoners consolidated

their sexual value and self-esteem. Nowhere is this more evident than in “*D’Amour et d’Eau Fraiche*,” an operetta written and performed by the actors of *Cabaret La Haut* (The High Cabaret) in Oflag VI A.<sup>57</sup> The musical tells the story of two young girls living a confined existence in a boarding school, tightly surveilled by their teacher and caretaker, a middle-aged spinster named Mademoiselle Puce. The girls, Arlette and Beatrice, yearn to experience romantic love, much to the consternation and chagrin of Mlle Puce. As the play progresses, we learn that Puce harbors her own romantic desires and also longs for a man despite her advanced age. As night falls, all three women ask Santa to bring them a Prince Charming. When Christmas morning arrives, young Beatrice awakes to find her wish granted. Santa has brought her Francinet Moyen, the “hope of New France.” Due to France’s dire need of children, the two decide to skip the engagement and marry immediately. Mlle. Puce wishes them well, but confesses her doubts that the couple will be happy, living within the restrictions of wartime France. As Francinet and Puce reminisce about the good old days, Santa overhears their complaining and chastises them for missing the point of his gift. Love, Santa tells them, is the only thing anyone needs. Love, he sings, is abundant in France and can never be forbidden or rationed.

At first glance, “*D’Amour et d’Eau Fraiche*” seems an odd operetta for a group of soldiers to create and perform as the story unfolds from the perspective of two young women rather than Francinet, the handsome and desirable Prince Charming. While “*Au Temps des Crinolines*” features the male protagonists Marcel and Rodolphe, this story advances from the point of view of female agents who issue their request to Santa and bring about Francinet’s arrival. Yet, the focus on three “women,” all of whom desire romantic and sexual relationships with men, performed a critical task in the reclamation of the prisoners’ virility. Indeed, the

choice to develop the story from the women's perspective allowed the men to perform a sexualized version of femininity that flattered the prisoners' own egos. In the characters of Beatrice and Arlette, the authors and actors built upon the old stock character of the innocent and naïve ingénue, blending the familiar, fetishized damsel in distress with the modern woman to create their ultimate fantasy—an ignorant sexpot with an obsession with marriage. In turn, these virginal vixens flattered the prisoners' notions of their own sexual prowess and value.

The characterization of Arlette and Beatrice as naïve, traditional women begins early in the operetta. In scene one, the two women reveal themselves to be uneducated in politics and warfare, but considerably dedicated to their training as mothers and wives. Reading a letter from her aunt, Arlette tells Beatrice of her aunt's desires that the girls take advantage of their education. In her correspondence, the aunt expresses regret over her own squandered opportunities, alluding to her ignorance over the geographical location of Tobruk, the site of one of the first and most important Allied victories in North Africa. Beatrice interrupts her roommate in defense of the kind aunt, "there is nothing to be embarrassed about," she interjects, "until now, I thought that Sidi Omar was an Arab leader." Here, the women establish themselves as domestic women with no interest in public life. As evidenced by their ignorance about the city of Sidi Omar, the location of another battle in the North African campaign, Arlette and Beatrice care little for the business of the war, but are very interested in men, an interest the aunt warns against. As young women of sixteen and eighteen, the aunt writes, the girls must "beware of men, especially soldiers" as these are "the dirtiest" ("*les plus dégoûtants*") of all. Here, the aunt's advice casts the prisoners as hypersexual predators whom the two eager girls should avoid. In all, the first scene firmly establishes the main characters as silly, ignorant women while representing

the soldiers as the proud associates of Allied victory and possessors of sexual skill and knowledge.

While the girls have little interest in current events, they do wish to know all they can about sex and men. Bemoaning the sheltered and restricted education offered at their boarding school, they complain to their governess, Mlle Puce, about the futility of studying “the care to give to children without having more details on the way in which we bring them into the world.” Singing to the tune of Ray Ventura’s “*Je voudrais en savoir davantage*” (“I would like to know more about it”), the girls give voice to the prisoners’ fantasies about women’s sexual innocence and eagerness:

|                                           |                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| On voudrait en savoir davantage           | We would like to know more about it                          |
| On voudrait qu’on nous renseigne un brin  | We would like someone to teach us a bit                      |
| Sur les secrets du mariage                | About the secrets of marriage                                |
| Dont il est triste, qu’a notre âge        | Which, it’s sad, at our age                                  |
| Nous ne connaissons rien.                 | We know nothing of                                           |
| Quand on pense qu’en parlant des abeilles | When we think that when speaking of the<br>bees              |
| On nous vante les joies du vol nuptial,   | People are boasting about the joys of the<br>nuptial flight, |
| Mais qu’on nous tire les oreilles         | But one really draws our ears                                |
| Quand on remarque, quelle merveille !     | When someone remarks, what a marvel!                         |
| Qu’y a un gros dard chez le male          | There is a big stinger in the male                           |

Here, the girls reveal themselves to be inexperienced, but eager lovers. They want Mlle Puce to teach them about men’s “stingers,” presumably so that they can be ready to fulfill their roles as housewives and mothers. Deploying this representation of the virginal vixen, the operetta fulfills prisoners’ fantasies of the ideal woman—the innocent, lustful siren—and invites them to feel desirable, thus restoring their self-worth.

As the operetta continues, even Mademoiselle Puce, the middle-aged governess, intervenes to stroke the audience’s ego. In her biggest solo, Puce reveals that she “isn’t what one

thinks,” she “isn’t what one says.” While she may appear “stiff and straight,” she has a heart that “burns like a volcano.”

Je rêve souvent d’un beau garçon  
 Qui me donnerait le grand frisson,  
 J’en frémis toute.  
 Il me prendrait sur ses genoux  
 En dirait en me frôlant le cou :  
 Ma grande choucoute

I often dream of a handsome guy  
 Who would give me the big shiver  
 I quiver all over  
 He would take me on his lap  
 Saying as he brushed against my neck:  
 My big pet

In this verse, Puce bemoans the absence of a male lover and fantasizes about the physical pleasure that men provide. She is so desperate to “calm her aspirations” that she has resorted to “a practical solution.” Each night, “instead of correcting your tests,” she admits, “I compose pornographic writings,” a vague reference to what one can only assume is the act of masturbation. For men who feared that their wives and girlfriends were cheating on them in France as they remained in Germany, the invitation to believe in their own sexual worth was seductive. In this song and others, Mlle Puce links male desirability to male dominance, offering sexual prowess as a rationale for patriarchy. Indeed, Puce’s song suggested that women submitted to male authority because to resist meant to go unloved. Men were, after all, the only purveyors of physical love.

Appeals to male desirability resonated well with the prisoners, as they were rooted in the sexual component of French national identity. The historian Fabrice Virgili, in his study of the sexual lives of the prisoners, writes that “the French were generally convinced of the reality of their reputation as seducers and skillful lovers,” a conviction that “constituted one of the rare elements of national pride” upon France’s defeat.<sup>58</sup> Evidence from prisoners’ diaries confirms Virgili’s assessment, suggesting that the belief in a heightened French sexuality was one of the standards by which the men measured their national superiority. Writing from a *frontstalag* in France in August 1940, Robert Christophe described the German authorities’ efforts to contain

allegedly excessive public displays of affection between French prisoners and their beautiful wives. Recounting an incident in which a French doctor was laying in the grass next to his “very pretty, very primped up, and well-dressed” wife, he boasted that the couple gave the voyeuristic Germans “an eyeful.” The next day, Christophe wrote that the Germans had to institute a new policy to facilitate quick goodbyes, because “the French are the most romantic people in the world!”<sup>59</sup> Thus, given the existing connection between French manliness and romantic prowess, the operetta’s appeals to male desirability tapped into a unique source of national pride for the prisoners. By deploying representations of hot and bothered French femininity, the operetta invited the prisoners to reclaim their status as virile Frenchmen.

Yet, Mlle Puce’s solo did not stop at her confession about her sexual desire. In the last chorus, she converts her message about having a stronger libido than people expect to a rallying cry for resistance within the camp. “Don’t always be what people think, don’t always be what people say,” she sings. Urging her audience members to “keep [their] independence” because “liberty doesn’t have a price,” she advises them to carefully pursue clandestine activities, whatever the consequences may be:

|                                        |                                     |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| N’soyez pas toujours ce que l’on pense | Don’t always be what people think   |
| N’soyez pas toujours ce que l’on dit   | Don’t always be what people say     |
| Sachez n’montrer dans l’existence      | Know to show in life                |
| Votre vrai visage qu’à vos amis        | Your true face only to your friends |
| Conservez votre indépendance           | Keep your independence              |
| La liberté, ça n’a pas de prix         | Liberty doesn’t have a price        |
| Et foutez-vous de ce que l’on pense    | And fuck what people think          |
| Et foutez-vous de ce que l’on dit      | And fuck what people say            |

Here, the song moves from a sexual confession to a thinly veiled call for resistance. Having restored the prisoners to the position of virile agents through the figures of Arlette, Beatrice, and Mlle Puce, the operetta channels this power toward support for more openly defiant political activities. Thus, the female impersonations did not simply attempt to alleviate depression and



sadness among emasculated POWs, but attempted to direct their newfound power toward resistant ends.

### **No Love Lost: France Reunited with “her” POWs**

Thus far, I have demonstrated the ways in which POW theatre helped to consolidate male power by eliciting the expression of heterosexual desire and testifying to male sexual worth. Yet, as I demonstrate in this section, these representations of sexy men and women served a vital role in the rehabilitation of the prisoners’ relationship to their wives and their nation. By depicting France’s estrangement from the POWs in terms of heteronormative romantic love, the theatre deployed the masculine power derived from men’s sexual difference toward a project of familial and civic belonging. At a time when the prisoners felt increasingly abandoned by the nation and forgotten by their own wives and families, the theatre represented romantic love as an allegory for the POWs’ relationship to France.

In May 1942, the same comrades who brought Oflag VI A the story of sexually repressed Mlle Puce and eager Arlette and Beatrice, debuted their newest operetta, “*Blanche Neige*” (“Snow White”).<sup>60</sup> The tale takes place during wartime, some years after the marriage of Snow White and Prince Charming. Immediately, the operetta makes explicit its allegorical nature, revealing the wicked witch to be none other than a personification of the war itself. The witch has again cursed Snow White, the allegorical representation of both the prisoners’ wives and the nation. The new spell plunges Snow White into a deep sleep every day, but allows her to wake briefly each evening at midnight. The evil witch has also imprisoned Prince Charming in a faraway haunted forest, preventing him from returning to his suffering and beloved Snow White. The seven dwarves accompany the lovers. Bashful, Grumpy, Happy, and Sneezy tend to Snow

White as she sleeps and help her gather flowers to send to the Prince each evening when she wakes. Doc, Dopey, and Sleepy, endure captivity with the Prince, each one representing a strategy for surviving in the terrible forest, far from Snow White. In the end, the witch dies and the lovers reunite to live happily ever after.

Early in the operetta, the dwarves make Snow White's status as a symbol for France explicit, describing the princess as a formerly abundant and fertile land that has now been driven to decay. In scene one, Sneezy laments "seeing her sunk into such weakness . . . she who was so beautiful and so strong before!" He goes on to contrast Snow White's weakened condition to her former days of glory: "she reigned over the earth, the sunniest, the richest, the most fertile, she was like the garden of the world. All the nations envied her, and now, it's been two years since she's been condemned to live no longer . . . it is as if she is dead!" In this passage, Sneezy makes a clear comparison between the slumbering princess and Occupied France. Using Snow White's forced sleep as a metaphor, he suggests that the Nazi Occupation has driven France to a temporary decline. Like Snow White, who can only be saved by Prince Charming, France must wait for her own savior, the prisoners of war. Upon their return, the prisoners' allegory suggests, the nation will embrace the prisoners as its heroes and recapture its former splendor.

The notion that the prisoners were responsible for rescuing France did not originate with the POWs, but was part of Vichy's earliest efforts to explain the purpose of their imprisonment. As historian Sarah Fishman notes, Vichy attempted to give meaning to their capture by positioning the prisoners as those whose suffering would atone for France's former sins. In a tricky discursive pairing, Vichy insisted that even though the prisoners were not to blame for the nation's defeat, they were "defeat's ransom" whose captivity would pay for the irresponsible decadence of the Third Republic.<sup>61</sup> Yet, while Vichy paid lip service to the importance of French

prisoners and their status as national redeemers, the government betrayed a deep ambivalence about their welfare. Indeed, while the Geneva Convention specified that a neutral country should oversee the prisoners of belligerent nations, Vichy declined to designate the United States as the protector of its men and agreed to Germany's suggestion that France maintain responsibility for its own prisoners. As Fishman argues, this decision was not motivated by concern for the POWs, as it was unlikely that defeated France, who held no German prisoners to use as leverage, would be able to forcefully represent the men's interests or intervene on their behalf.<sup>62</sup> The prisoners, from Vichy's perspective, presented another opportunity to demonstrate a good faith effort at collaboration.

Vichy's attempts to demonstrate their willingness to work alongside the Reich not only deprived the prisoners of a powerful, independent watchdog, but also contributed to a crisis of identity for French soldiers. As historian Yves Durand writes, the POWs' struggled to maintain as sense of their national, soldierly pride in the face of France's new relationship to Germany.<sup>63</sup> The armistice meant that France and Germany were no longer belligerent nations, yet the Reich refused to release the defeated nation's men. This inconsistency was unsettling, shrouding the POWs' political and national allegiances in ambiguity. Traditional codes of honor dictated that good soldiers should resist their captivity and attempt escape, yet modern politics asked the prisoners to accept seemingly unnecessary captivity. As these opposing forces vied for the prisoners' loyalty, Vichy alienated them even further through the publication of erroneous reports on their welfare. Representing life in the *oflags* and *stalags* as either a monastic retreat or extended summer camp,<sup>64</sup> Vichy sought to appease the families of captured men and gain public approval for its politics. However, reading these accounts in their camps, French prisoners were horrified by the rosy depiction of their lives. A group of officers from Oflag IV D insisted:

We are neither heroes nor saints . . . The POWs of this Oflag . . . have had enough of this perfectly suffocating life. In short, we dread the rose-colored clichés, the image of conventional prisoners matured by camp life which have led many people to view our captivity as a monastic retreat, a term at the University of Redemption, or a mediation cure.<sup>65</sup>

In all, Vichy's lack of concern for the nation's prisoners, the ambiguous relationship between France and Germany, and the false reports of happy camp life complicated the prisoners' sense of national loyalty and soldierly pride.

The promise of "*Blanche Neige*" was its ability to ease complex worries over the prisoners' national standing through the allegory of romantic love. By recasting the nation as a female lover, the operetta invited the prisoners to see themselves as indispensable to the nation's health, just as "*D'amour et d'Eau Fraiche*" argued that they were indispensable to the satisfaction of feminine desire. In one song, for example, Sneezy sings of the relationship between Snow White and the Prince before the war, painting a portrait of domestic bliss. Apparently, "if they argued at night, Grumpy was always the cause." Each night, "when the delicious instant would come/where, in their little bed, they would go to stretch out/they would chase Sleepy and call Happy." Here, Sneezy alludes to the act of sex in order to deploy prisoners' sexualized self-worth to the project of redeeming their national significance. Just as Snow White's well-being requires the love of the Prince, France's rebirth requires the return of its prisoners. In another song, Snow White herself sings of her desire to tell the prince all the "secrets that one cannot write . . . the ineffable words/ that one only whispers cuddled up in bed." Here, again, the operetta uses heterosexual love as a metaphor for the prisoners' importance to France. As the "lover" of France, the prisoners lay claim to a civic position of possessive dominance. They are only men who can satisfy the nation's needs.

Anecdotes recorded in prisoners' diaries reveal that, consciously or otherwise, prisoners drew upon this metaphor of heterosexual love to understand their unique claim and continued significance to France. In his diary, for example, Paul Juif described an incident in which a German officer visited the theatre's female wardrobe room and unfolded "the silk dresses and frilly undergarments with a sort of crook's pleasure." As he indulged in touching the women's garments, the German guard whispered "Just like Paris." For the German, the theatre's believable female impersonators worked all too well, eliciting fantasies not only about French women, but about the nation itself. Indeed, commenting on the nature of Paris while caressing women's costumes, the guard conflates French women with the French nation, a confusion made more resonant by centuries of allegorical depictions of France as beautiful Marianne. Juif noted the German's lust in his diary, ending his description of the encounter in a possessive huff: "When they speak of Paris, one doesn't know whether it's the capital of romance or the capital of world thought—they are full of a respect that bothers me a bit, because I have the impression that *their* Paris doesn't have much to do with *my* Paris."<sup>66</sup> Here, Juif responds to the German's desire for France by denying his ability to know it. Differentiating *his* Paris from the guard's Paris, Juif refutes Germany's domination of France. Relegating the officer to the status of an ignorant foreigner, an outsider who will never understand the true nature of French women or culture, Juif lays claim to knowledge of and access to France rooted in his native status. He and his fellow Frenchmen alone know what women's fashions are "just like Paris" and have a natural, consensual relationship with their women and their nation.

## Conclusion

I sum, I have argued that the operettas written and performed by French prisoners of war from 1940 to 1945 helped to combat the emasculating nature of their defeat and captivity. By giving POWs visual access to convincing “female” bodies, the operettas encouraged men to participate in the consumption and objectification of women, a process that helped them to measure their sexual power. Reacting to the ways in which the female impersonations destabilized the boundary between homosexual and heterosexual desire, prisoners published reviews and cartoons in camp newspapers that worked to police homoerotic behavior and maintain the integrity of the gender hierarchy. By simultaneously applauding the believability of the starlets and underscoring their falseness, these discourses attempted to rehabilitate the notion of an essential gender identity that grounded French virility. The operettas also appealed to the men’s own sexual appeal, inviting them to ground their self-worth in male sexual prowess. By deploying representations of what I have called the virginal vixen, operettas encouraged men to see themselves as the sole purveyors of female sexual satisfaction. As the war continued, these efforts to construct prisoners as virile Frenchmen became useful ways to reassure the men of their national worth. Alienated by Vichy’s politics of collaboration and increasingly worried about their wives’ fidelity, the prisoners looked to the theatre to ease their anxieties about returning to the nation. Operettas like “*Blanche Neige*” asked men to measure their civic worth in terms of their sexual value and to experience themselves as possessive and dominant national patriarchs.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For histories of POW theatre, see Alon Rachamimov, "The Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans)Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914-1920," *The American Historical Review* 111:2 (2006): 362-382; David A. Boxwell, "The Follies of War: Cross Dressing and Popular Theatre on the British Front Lines, 1914-1918," *MODERNISM/modernity* 9:1 (January 2002): 1-20.

<sup>2</sup> According to Gascar, the prisoners, many of whom had been professional architects and tailors before the war, took great satisfaction in designing sets, costumes, and wigs out of scraps of fabric and frayed bits of string. Transforming these discarded materials into convincing and beautiful sets and props, he writes, gave "proof to a cleverness that stupefied the Germans" and helped to distract the men from their imprisonment. The caliber of the performances was so high that prisoners temporarily forgot their status as POWs. In his diary, for example, POW Rene Lahaye attested to impressive quality of the performances, remembering that "Honestly, we would've believed ourselves to be in a real theatre in a big city . . . the play was magnificently performed." See Pierre Gascar, *Histoire de la Captivité des Français en Allemagne* (Gallimard, 1967), 161 and Yves Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre dans les Stalags, les Oflag, et les Kommandos, 1939-1945* (Paris: Hachette, 1987), 186.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in Oflag XVII A, the same camp that produced the film *Sous le Manteau*, prisoners used a set of fake shrubs to disguise a tunnel they were digging behind the theatre's walls. See Andreas Kusternig, "Entre université et résistance: les officiers français prisonniers au camp XVII A à Edelbach," in *La Captivité des prisonniers de guerre (1939-1945): Histoire, art et mémoire. Pour une approche européenne*, ed. Jean-Claude Catherine (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 66.

<sup>4</sup> Here, I draw from Turner's observation that "In this hall of mirrors the reflections are multiple, some magnifying, some diminishing, some distorting the faces peering into them, but in such a way as to provoke not merely thought, but also powerful feelings and the will to modify everyday matters in the minds of the gazers. See Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 104-5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> In the bimonthly newspaper of Oflag IID, *Ecrire sur le Sable*, an anonymous theatre critic argued for the importance of original productions: "J'avoue ma préférence pour les spectacles dont le texte a été écrit par nous. S'ils sont bons, ils sont mieux adaptés à notre désir" ("I confess my preference for the plays whose text is written by us. If they are good, they are better adapted to our desire.") See "Monsieur Le Trouhadec saisi par la débauche," *Ecrire sur le Sable*, March 25, 1941. Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2901.

<sup>7</sup> These quotations are drawn from the following passage: "Le théâtre se trouve être ainsi un puissant agent de diffusion de l'hellénisme et, par conséquent, de toutes les idées et de tous les sentiments qui s'y attachent. Dans un mouvement, en apparence contraire, le théâtre grec a aidé à

l'affranchissement de l'homme. C'est en ce sens un théâtre moraliste, mais moraliste au sens noble, non point un théâtre qui moralise mais un théâtre qui construit l'homme et, en l'espèce, l'homme moderne. » Paul Juif, *Théâtre et Musique des Temps de Misère* (La Pensée Universitaire, 1958), 50.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Folliet, "Pour Comprendre les Prisonniers," 1943, 22-5. Archives Nationales, Paris, Box 72AJ/2633.

<sup>9</sup> *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*, ed. Lesley Ferris (London and NY: Routledge, 1993), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 158.

<sup>11</sup> Here, I paraphrase Ned Rorem, quoted in Frith, *Performing Rites*, 170.

<sup>12</sup> Early composers of operetta, the most famous of whom are Hervé and Offenbach, wrote humorous, but scathing critiques of the Second Republic and often featured saucy, vulgar jokes delivered by all-female choruses in very revealing costumes. In the late nineteenth century, after the Franco-Prussian war began, librettists began to soften their political critiques and devote their energies toward writing great love stories. For more information about operetta, see Sterling Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera* (Philadelphia: David McKay Company, 1927); Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1983) and Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From H.M.S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> In their studies of American female impersonators, both Sharon Ullman and Marybeth Hamilton maintain that these actors did not aim to mock femininity, but to craft believable performances that paid tribute to womanhood. See Sharon R. Ullman, *Sex Seen: The Emergence of Modern Sexuality in America* (Berkeley, LA, and London: University of California Press, 1997); Marybeth Hamilton, "'I'm the Queen of the Bitches': Female Impersonation and Mae West's *Pleasure Man*," in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*, ed. Lesley Ferris (London and NY: Routledge, 1993), 107-119.

<sup>14</sup> Jill Dolan, quoted in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*, ed. Lesley Ferris (London and NY: Routledge, 1993), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ullman, *Sex Seen*, 53.

<sup>16</sup> Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 38.

<sup>17</sup> Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 50.



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<sup>18</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 174-5.

<sup>19</sup> The gendered nature of France's defeat has been well documented in histories of the era. See, e.g., Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) and Luc Capdevila, "The Quest for Masculinity in a Defeated France, 1940-1945," *Contemporary European History* 10: 3 (Nov. 2001): 423-445.

<sup>20</sup> Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Vidalenc, quoted in Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Yves Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre*, 11. Durand notes that only one-third as many French soldiers were captured during WWI as in WWII.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre*, 40.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Henri, and Francois Mitterand, quoted in Sarah Fishman, "Grand Delusions: The Unintended Consequences of Vichy France's Prisoner of War Propaganda," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991): 243.

<sup>27</sup> Captain Arnoult, quoted in Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Sergent Depoux, quoted in Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Durand, *Prisonniers de guerre*, 47.

<sup>30</sup> Fabrice Virgili, *Naitre Ennemi: Les enfants de couples franco-allemands nés pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Payot: Paris, 2009), 31.

<sup>31</sup> This anecdote comes from Mongrédien's account, entitled "Le Saint-Barthémely des Poux," Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, Paris, Fonds Georges Mongrédien, Box Causeries Familiers.

<sup>32</sup> Memoir of François Eugène Jean Pierre Lalin, recorded in 1956. Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, Paris, Box 72AJ.290.Captivité.

<sup>33</sup> Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 66.

<sup>34</sup> "Nostalgie," drawing from Oflag III C, Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2909.

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<sup>35</sup> Diary of Georges Mongrédien, February 16, 1941, Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, Paris, Fonds Georges Mongrédien.

<sup>36</sup> Virgili, *Naitre Ennemi*, 43.

<sup>37</sup> This excerpt comes from a portion of Christophe's wartime journal, published in Marcelle and Robert Christophe, *Une Famille dans la Guerre: 1940-1945* (Harmattan, 1995), 93.

<sup>38</sup> Folliet, "Pour Comprendre les Prisonniers," 1943, 20.

<sup>39</sup> "Theatre," *Confins*, January-February 1944, Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2893.

<sup>40</sup> "Au Temps des Crinolines," Archives Nationales, Paris, Box 72 AJ/2633.

<sup>41</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16:3 (1975): 11.

<sup>42</sup> While "*Au Temps des Crinolines*" is the only script that I discovered which makes reference to France's imperial past, prisoners' writings reveal that other plays and operettas contained similar colonial references. Paul Juif, for example, describes a scene from the play "Casonova" in which a female allegorical representation of France stands surrounded by "representatives of the Empire, dressed in exotic costumes." See Juif, *Théâtre et Musique*, 67.

<sup>43</sup> For more on the consolidation of colonial power, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>44</sup> While Said's study of Orientalism references the representation of colonial women in western art, his analysis does not attend fully to the ways in which gender and sexuality operate in the West's subordination of the East. For more on the exoticism and subordination of the indigenous female body, see Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> Paul Juif describes one particularly demanding director who fined actors who did not shave their legs before a performance. Juif, *Théâtre et Musique*, 65.

<sup>46</sup> Archives Nationales, Paris, Box 72 AJ/2636.

<sup>47</sup> Ullman, *Sex Seen*, 51–55, quoted in Rachamimov, "The Disruptive Comforts of Drag," 377.

<sup>48</sup> *Le Gai Mat*, April 15, 1942. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. RES 4-LC6-493.

<sup>49</sup> Diary of Georges Mongrédien, May 4, 1941, Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, Paris, Fonds Georges Mongrédien.

<sup>50</sup> *Le Canard en KG*, January 31, 1942. Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2901.

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- <sup>51</sup> *Confins*, Mars-Avril, 1944. Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2893.
- <sup>52</sup> *Le Bebe du BB*, October 1942. Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2901.
- <sup>53</sup> *Le Chic Os*, March 1943, Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2893.
- <sup>54</sup> Robert Desvernois, "Théâtre Libre" Archives Nationales, Paris, Box 72 AJ 1798.
- <sup>55</sup> Juif, *Théâtre et Musique*, 22-3.
- <sup>56</sup> "Les Oflagirls," drawing from Oflag III C, Archives Nationales, Paris, Box F/9/2909.
- <sup>57</sup> "D'Amour et d'Eau Fraiche," Archives Nationales, Paris, 72 AJ 1798.
- <sup>58</sup> Fabrice Virgili, *Naitre Ennemi*, 33.
- <sup>59</sup> Robert Christophe, *Les Années Perdues: Journal de Guerre, 1939-1945* (Editions Anovi, 2008), 135-7.
- <sup>60</sup> "Blanche-Neige," Archives Nationales, Paris, Box 72 AJ/2633.
- <sup>61</sup> Sarah Fishman, "Grand Delusions: The Unintended Consequences of Vichy France's Prisoner of War Propaganda," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991): 234.
- <sup>62</sup> Fishman, *We Will Wait*, 31-2.
- <sup>63</sup> Durand, *Prisonniers de Guerre*, 14.
- <sup>64</sup> Fishman, "Grand Delusions," 236.
- <sup>65</sup> *L'Ame des camps. Exposition de la vie intellectuelle, spirituelle et sociale dans les camps de prisonniers* (Paris, 1944), quoted in Fishman, "Grand Delusions," 242.
- <sup>66</sup> Juif, *Théâtre et Musique*, 48.

## Conclusion

Shortly before the liberation of Paris in the summer of 1944, humorist Pierre Dac aired his parody of famous singer Maurice Chevalier's wartime hit, "Et tout ça, ça fait d'excellents français" ("And all that, that makes for some excellent Frenchmen") on Radio Londres, the BBC's French station. Recorded during the escalation of the threat of German attack in 1937, Chevalier's original song told the tale of Frenchmen from a variety of different professions and political parties, banding together to fight in defense of the Republic. However, in the new parody, "Et tout ça, ça fait de mauvais français" ("And all that, that makes for some bad Frenchmen"), Dac reversed the tale of moral and upright Frenchmen, telling instead the story of the opportunistic singers and musicians who collaborated with Vichy and the Reich. Making direct reference to Chevalier, Dac sang that "The creator of this little song/ used to pass for a true *chevalier* (knight)." However, instead of behaving with patriotism, Chevalier and his musician friends "smiled at the Germans" while padding their wallets and "safeguarding their interests." The song closes by praising the Resistance, who "without reproach and fear, fought so that France will always be in the vanguard of honor."

While Dac's song appears to have only played over the airwaves for a brief time, it set off a long and, for Chevalier, painful investigation of his politics during the Occupation. In his memoirs, the singer described how extensively the rumors traveled, writing that "the horrible accusation spread everywhere, through all the cities and villages."<sup>1</sup> Soon, radio stations across Germany, London, Algeria, and Paris were even announcing that the *maquis* had assassinated him. In Périgueux, city officials added his name to their list of *fusillés*, or traitors who had been executed by a firing squad. Publically denounced as a collaborationist, Chevalier went into hiding with friends in the Dordogne, but was eventually found and arrested. During his

interrogation, he argued that he was innocent of collaboration, swearing that he only had only performed once in Germany, for a group of POWs imprisoned in the same camp as he had been held during the First World War. “After the recital, instead of money,” he testified, “I asked for the freedom of ten prisoners, which was promised to me.” The German propaganda machine, he added, was responsible for spinning his visit into a “German tour.” Chevalier swore that he had always behaved as a loyal Frenchman, citing evidence that since his concert in Germany, he had “abstained from singing at galas, soirées, and performances that had any political tendencies” and had even refused to appear in films.<sup>2</sup> Despite his testimony, and his previous military service, suspicion of Chevalier’s collaborationist activities continued. After his interrogation, the singer fled to in Toulouse where he waited for public opinion to turn. It was not until 1949 that his name was officially cleared.

Chevalier’s story accounts for a small portion of the barrage of criticism against the nation’s musicians, artists, and journalists at the end of the Occupation. During a period of time known as the *épuration sauvage* (savage purification), Resistance members and sympathizers—whose numbers increased dramatically after the liberation—rounded up scores of French citizens who had purportedly committed crimes against the nation and doled out an array of punishments ranging from the shearing of hair to public execution. While the editors and journalists of collaborationist newspapers like *Au Pilon* and *Je Suis Partout* were the first to be targeted, artists and musicians, the most popular celebrities of the era, were subjected to particular scrutiny. In his memoirs, Chevalier remembers that “every day the radio announced numerous arrests of collaborators. Almost every artistic field, the stars above all, are treated to dishonor” (“*sont à l’honneur du déshonneur*”).<sup>3</sup> Playwright and filmmaker Jean Cocteau described the “terrible epidemic” in his diary, writing that “one must learn to live inside a nightmare that is more and

more incredible . . . The hatred of the early days was but a cruel child's game beside what is now taking place.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, while military leaders and important Vichy politicians remained safely in their homes, singers like Arletty, Tino Rossi, and Maurice Chevalier were arrested and charged with grave offenses.<sup>5</sup>

Given the presence of so many fascist politicians—men who were indisputably pro-Nazi—the nation's obsessive need to discern the political allegiances of its artists seems hard to understand. Why did the behavior of French entertainers, and particularly musicians, matter to those who lived through the Occupation? What was it that seemed particularly disgraceful about artistic collaboration? Why were these entertainers sentenced to death while men who carried out the deportations of the nation's Jews and foreigners avoided public scrutiny? Although relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the trials of musicians and entertainers during the *épuration*, debate over the politics of these artists resurfaces perennially in the popular press.<sup>6</sup> Those who do comment on the nation's impulse to denounce artists and performers explain the phenomenon in economic terms. While a whole nation went hungry and without warm clothes, this line of reasoning goes, Tino Rossi and Maurice Chevalier were buying steak and champagne with the money they earned from performances in Germany or on behalf of Vichy. Those who defend the artists' activity argue that these entertainers behaved no differently than other French people. Like the average French tailor, butcher, or teacher, entertainers navigated the grey area between resistance and collaboration as they tried to make a living and continue working in an increasingly tense political climate.

My study of music and rhetoric during the Occupation suggests one explanation for the nation's need to identify and punish those musicians who collaborated—that citizens recognized culture, and music especially, as a powerful resource for resistance. As I have argued, by 1940

the act of singing had been imbued with republican meaning, established by soldiers of the Revolutionary and Great Wars as a democratic mode of communication available to all people. Decades of cultural debate over musical genres made the act of singing even more nationalistic, as it identified *chanson* as the true musical expression of the French nation while resigning jazz to the periphery of a traditional, inward looking France. Armed with this unique cultural history, French citizens living through the Occupation seized upon the relationship between nationalism and music, appropriating *chanson* and jazz alike into new rhetorics of nationhood that contested the politics of collaboration. While Resistance fighters and POWs borrowed from *chanson* to envision a virile, republican France, Parisian teenagers drew from “degenerate” jazz in order to imagine a cosmopolitan, modern France, blurring the lines of racial belonging and transgressing normative gender. Ultimately, music helped the French to resist Nazi Germany and Vichy’s rearticulation of their national identity and insist upon different versions of a free, republican France. In light of these creative musical repurposings, it makes sense that musicians who did not actively participate in resistance activities would come under fire. Indeed, perhaps the vitriol against Chevalier was not just about profiting while most people suffered, but about the singer’s missed opportunities to defy Nazi and Vichy control. Certainly, the nation’s severe treatment of its artists makes more sense when viewed in light of the rich and abundant resources that music provided for the subversion of collaboration.

While this dissertation makes a considerable contribution to the cultural history of wartime France, it also intervenes into ongoing conversations about appropriate methodologies for the study of rhetoric and music. In light of recent criticisms of the textual approach to musical analysis, my study demonstrates that studying the rhetoric of music requires blending traditional close reading with more interdisciplinary methodologies geared toward the nontextual

dimensions of music in action. By reconnecting music with the people who performed it, my analysis underscores the strategic alterations people made to the lyrics and melodies they used. Reading these creative appropriations has required me to rely on my skill with carefully contextualized close textual analysis. Yet, this focus on music in use has also expanded the scope of my analysis beyond the text itself. Indeed, as the case of the zazous so beautifully demonstrates, doing music does not always involve singing, but can manifest in the clothes one puts on in the morning. Without an analysis of the visual and embodied discourses that accompanied the jazz hits of the 1940s, we would miss the rhetoricity of these teenagers' zoot suits, short skirts, and yellow stars, all inspired by the industry of jazz music. Ultimately, then, my dissertation offers a model of rhetorical analysis of music that operates within and beyond traditional methods of close reading.

Finally, this study draws rhetoricians' attention to the ways in which music opens new resources for the construction of national identity. As the lyricist Maurice Druon astutely observed, World War II was not "the first time in history that a song served as a moral weapon. Since the dawn of time, all armies—both national and revolutionary—have sung."<sup>7</sup> An ephemeral mode of communication particularly well-suited to the material constraints of war, the performance of music offers soldiers and civilians alike the opportunity to constitute themselves as members of the national community. Freed from the centralized hierarchy of spoken discourse and capable of transforming emotions into symbolic form, songs are participatory performative events through which singers contribute to the construction of national identity while deriving unique interpretations of it. Songs and their performance, therefore, offer the critic invaluable insight into to how people understand, constitute, and represent their nations. If one of our collective efforts is to illuminate the ways people use rhetoric not only to interpret the world



around them, but to select their very realities, I hope that this dissertation draws the field to examine music's considerable power to express nationalism, occupation, and resistance.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Chevalier, *Ma route et mes chansons* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 565.

<sup>2</sup> Chevalier, *Ma route et mes chansons*, 575.

<sup>3</sup> Chevalier, *Ma route et mes chansons*, 578.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Cocteau, quoted in Frederic Spotts, *The Shameful Peace: How French Artists and Intellectuals Survived the Nazi Occupation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Spotts, *The Shameful Peace*, 230. For a list of entertainers who were arrested, see Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years*, 589.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Guillaume Sbalchiero's recent online interview with Jaques Pessis, editor of a new, abridged version of Chevalier's memoirs. In the interview, published by the newspaper *L'Express*, Pessis argues that Chevalier never took a political position during the war, continuing to sing only to offer comfort to the French nation. "Maurice Chevalier collabo: "Une rumeur montée par les nazis," last modified December 1, 2012, [http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/maurice-chevalier-collabo-une-rumeur-montee-par-les-nazis\\_1070330.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/maurice-chevalier-collabo-une-rumeur-montee-par-les-nazis_1070330.html).

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Druon, quoted in Raskin, "'Le Chant des Partisans:' Functions of a Wartime Song," *Folklore* 102:1 (1991): 75.

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