Les Femmes Tondues: Understanding Gender Relations in Vichy France

by

Laëtitia Marguerite Krisel
Class of 2016

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in History
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Images</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong> From Biology to State Policy: The Origins of Vichy’s Pronatalist Discourse</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong> Female Collaboration: Choice or Obligation?</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong> Les Femmes Tondues: The Consequence of Being A Woman</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

If someone had told me ten years ago that I would be writing a history thesis I would have never believed them. This thesis is proof of how far I’ve come as a student and as a scholar of history. From the very beginning of the thesis writing process, I saw this experience as a way to challenge myself and to put into action the skills I have acquired at Wesleyan University since my freshman year. While it is common for thesis writers to suffer through this grueling and daunting process, I can say that I went to Olin Library everyday with a smile on my face, excited to write my thesis.

Of course, this would not have been possible without the help and support of many different people. I would like to thank the Wesleyan History Department for giving me the confidence and the tools necessary to tackle such an immense project. Your passion for history and your students certainly contributed to my own passion for history and for my thesis topic.

I would also like to thank both professor Grimmer-Solem and professor Greene for being the best thesis advisors I could have asked for. I am so appreciative for the time and energy you gave to my thesis. Thank you for always challenging me and for pushing me to be the best thesis writer that I could be. Without your feedback and suggestions, this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends. Thank you mom for always being so supportive and for always being there whenever I needed both thesis and life advice. Thank you dad for always reading my drafts with care and attention. And thank you to my friends Jordan and Clara for putting up with my complaining and bragging.
You still managed to give me advice even though you had no idea what I was talking about, and I am so grateful for that.
List of Images

**Figure 1:** Photograph of a *femme tondue* taken in Melun, August 26, 1944  
69

**Figure 2:** "La Tondue de Chartres," photograph taken by Robert Capa on August 16, 1944  
71
Introduction

On July 22, 2012 in Paris, France, President François Hollande gave a speech to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Vel d’Hiv Roundup of July 16 and 17 1942, when the French police arrested 13,152 Jewish men, women, and children from Paris and its suburbs, and later deported them to concentration camps. While Hollande did mention in his speech that no German soldiers were involved in the deportation and that it was a crime committed by France, he also remarked:

But the truth is also that the crime of the Vel d’Hiv was committed against France, against her values, against her principles, against her ideal. Honor was saved by the Righteous, by all those who were able to rise up against barbarism. France’s honor was embodied by General de Gaulle, who stood up on June 18, 1940, to continue the struggle. France’s honor was defended by the Resistance, the shadow army that would not resign itself to shame and defeat.¹

This idea that everyone resisted, that France was a victim, and that the blame for collaboration with Nazi Germany should be placed on those who held the power is a view that is very common in French history books. As a child growing up in France and as someone who had been in the French education system until she attended Wesleyan University, I can attest to the fact that the “Gaullist resistancialist myth”² is still prevalent in France. Whenever we discussed Vichy in my history classes, it would usually take only one class session and if we were to remember one thing from that day’s lesson, it would be that “no one collaborated, everyone resisted!”

Although there are many in the postwar that would agree with Hollande’s portrayal of the Occupation, various historians have demonstrated that Vichy leaders actively sought collaboration with Nazi Germany. In his 1972 book on Vichy, Robert Paxton argued that “collaboration was not a German demand to which Frenchmen acceded. Collaboration was a French proposal that Hitler ultimately rejected.”³ The Pétain regime aimed for “a genuine working together” and a “full partnership in the new European order.”⁴ Many in France thought that a German victory was inevitable and that partnering with Germany was the only way to save France. As Pierre Laval, the prime minister of France during the Occupation, explained to Hitler:

It would be a crime against France not to respond to your offer. We shall suffer reprisals from the British; but we must accept every risk to seize the magnificent opportunity which is within France’s reach at the moment. France is at a turning-point. I am convinced that I am defending my country well.⁵

While there were people who resisted Pétain’s bid for partnership with Hitler, it is clear that France attempted to partner with Germany and was not forced or coerced into it.

My original thesis topic was on how Vichy is remembered in France today, especially in the way French writers of historical fiction choose to portray Vichy in their novels. As I was doing research on Vichy and collective memory, I landed on a picture of a group of women with their heads completely shaved, standing naked, and looking dispirited. After doing some research, I learned that these women were femmes tondues, women who were accused of collaborating with the Germans during

---

⁴ Ibid.
the Occupation of France and were punished by having their heads publicly shaved at Liberation. These head shavings, also known as the *tontes*, affected 20,000 women all over France. Historians who write about Liberation use pictures of the *femmes tondues* on their book covers and many historians consider these women to be the symbol of the *Épuration*, or “purge.” Yet, whenever the *femmes tondues* are discussed, they are only mentioned in a few sentences. My surprise at having discovered these women quickly turned into curiosity. Why were these women made a symbol and the face of Liberation if they were never discussed or mentioned in more than a paragraph?

In his essay, “1940-1944: Double-Think in France,” Pierre Laborie argues that the history of Vichy has been manipulated and distorted by ideological agendas. He believes that the French are still oblivious to what actually happened during the Occupation and Liberation, and that historians have focused more on pronouncing judgment than on dealing with the issues and understanding their complexity. Historians tend to classify, categorize, and count, and they also seem to blame or glorify, denounce, demand justice, and seek reparations. The French were not just collaborators and were not just resistant. Rather, Laborie argues that they may have been a little bit of both. This idea of a ‘double-think’ is what inspired me to find out why these women collaborated and why they were punished in such a brutal way.

There is a great lack of evidence in the archives, and many of the victims and perpetrators refused to talk about the events. As such, the *femmes tondues* are only

---

seen as an added element of a much larger, more “important” history. Perhaps this is because the military, political, and diplomatic aspects of World War II have been dominant, or because these victims were women in a man’s world, and their punishment relates to obscene objects, such as the body, pleasure, and suffering. There was also the fear that the tontes would tarnish the glorious view of the Resistance. Many historians who write about the Resistance have a tendency to categorize people in their histories as good or bad. However, the tontes demonstrate how being anti-fascist, patriotic, and resistant did not mean that it was not possible to have carried out certain actions which today would shock people. My interest in this topic stems from the great lack of interest amongst historians of Vichy and Liberation. Through my thesis, I want to give a voice to the women in the infamous photographs, and to show how the history of World War II in France is not so black and white.

There is one book that is dedicated to retelling and analyzing the story of the femmes tondues. Fabrice Virgili’s book, Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France, sheds new light on the tontes and reveals that, contrary to popular belief, a vast number of those women accused were innocent of any sexual involvement with Germans. He also shows how the head shavings began as early as 1943 and in fact occurred in many other European countries both in the twentieth century and earlier. The main questions he asks are: why was this a form of punishment directed specifically at women? Was this punishment really about collaboration, or were contemporary feelings of violence toward the enemy

---

8 Virgili, Shorn Women, 6.
redirected? In his book, Virgili argues that the punishment was directed at ‘horizontal collaboration,’ and that the act of shaving a head was a form of sexual punishment. The public nature of shaving the femininity of a woman was a defense strategy, a way for French men to respond to the violence that occurred during Liberation, and as such, reasserting their masculinity and reestablishing traditional gender roles.9

While Virgili’s argument and his evidence to support that argument are strong, I still wondered how such a form of punishment could have occurred in France. French women were not the only ones to have been punished in such a way. In fact, head shavings after the war occurred in Denmark, Belgium, Greece, and Spain.10 Yet, the extent to which the punishment was carried out in France was unlike anywhere else in Europe. The femmes tondues were forced to undress and walk around their towns completely naked, sometimes covered in coal tar to make them appear dirty and because of its antiseptic quality, and as mentioned earlier, their numbers reached 20,000. Virgili begins his book in 1943, and offers readers no background for why gender relations and a weakening patriarchy are so important to French society. While the claim that the tontes were more than a punishment for collaboration and that it was a reassertion of the patriarchal order is a fascinating one, this argument cannot be understood without looking at how gender was construed in French politics and culture before the years of Occupation and Liberation. It therefore becomes important to look at how France’s pronatalist ideology evolved from the nineteenth century to Vichy.

9 Ibid., 3.
10 Ibid., 212-17.
In this thesis, pronatalism will be defined as an ideology that favors a high birth rate and promotes measures to bring this about. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century France’s population increased, after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, it began to decrease compared to countries like Germany and Great Britain. France had a unique position in the “demographic transition,” because as Joshua Cole explains, “in France, the mortality and fertility declines began almost simultaneously at the end of the eighteenth century, so that for the next hundred years French population growth was very slow.” Even though the fertility decline was caused by economic and political factors, conservative French politicians and natalists blamed women and their decadence as the primary cause of France’s depopulation. They argued that women were being selfish, as they were putting their sexual and economic pleasure before the needs of the country. However, despite their growing concerns, reproduction in the Belle Époque period was still a private concern and was not a major priority of the state.

During World War I and especially during the interwar period, pronatalism became more of a political concern. Women’s patriotism during World War I was grounded in the home and family life, and the sacrificing mother became the symbol of the French nation. A woman’s role was to keep up morale and to reproduce. But the lack of men also demanded that women go into the workforce, so the First World War opened up many opportunities to French women that transformed the social organization of gender. This sudden transformation led to an enormous preoccupation

with the issues of female identity in the interwar period. In her book, *Civilization Without Sexes*, Mary-Louise Roberts shows how the newly blurred boundaries between male and female created fears among the French that theirs was a civilization without sexes. In fact, this gender confusion became a central metaphor for the war’s impact on French culture: France was a weak woman, while Germany was the all-powerful male. This metaphor led to an increase in public debate on female identity and women’s proper role in society.

By arguing that implementing traditional gender roles was a way to control the changes in French society, one can begin to understand Vichy’s traditionalist stance. Indeed, when Pétain came to power as the head of the Vichy regime, one of his primary goals was to restore traditional gender roles. In her book on Vichy and women, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, Francine Muel-Dreyfus notes how Pétain believed that France’s defeat and the Occupation were caused by women’s inability to reproduce. Pétain wanted to revitalize the nation through his slogan of “Travail, Famille, Patrie” as well as through his idealized *femme au foyer*. Muel-Dreyfus demonstrates how Vichy invoked theories of “natural” gender inequality and “eternal” opposition between the masculine and the feminine to justify women’s legal and social subordination, and how these ideologies were incorporated into the French woman’s sense of self. Her concept of the “eternal feminine” implies that women are inherently unequal in nature. It symbolizes a return to the biological foundation of “natural” differences between the sexes as well as to the related idea of an irreducible

---

difference between masculine and feminine enforced by a political regime preoccupied with restoring the natural order.

The traditional view of woman as mother and housewife imposed on women by the Vichy regime is why female collaboration became such a controversial issue at Liberation. The fact that women were encouraged to stay at home actually provided women with a reason to collaborate. The demands of the war and the lack of men forced many French women to collaborate politically, financially, and sexually with the Germans. No matter the extent of their collaboration, women were guilty and would be punished for betraying France. The fact that women played a large role in wartime economic activities brought shame to French men. There was a need for the country and for its men to rediscover their power, and the only way to reclaim masculinity was to reassert themselves by shaving off the femininity of female collaborators. As Michael Kelly argues in his essay, “The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation,” “Liberation was a time when masculine identity was one of the many devastated reaches of French life that had to be reconstructed.”

Kelly sees the shearings as a highly gendered event, as what they symbolically exorcised was experienced and constructed as male humiliation.

The way I see it, the tontes were in fact an affirmation of male domination, and were caused by the anxieties and concerns that began in the nineteenth century about the increasing independence of women and men’s inability to control this independence, that ultimately culminated in the violent and humiliating treatment of


\[^{15}\text{Ibid., 119.}\]
women at Liberation. As such, the main question I will be attempting to answer in this thesis is how did the control of women through the *tontes* become an attempt to solidify the weakening patriarchal gender relations in postwar France? Collaboration was seen in sexual terms, and the struggle against the occupier followed by Liberation allowed men to re-establish links between traditional gender roles.

My thesis is organized into three chapters. The first chapter will discuss the origins of Vichy’s pronatalist ideology, looking at how France’s pronatalist ideology developed and changed from the nineteenth century to 1939, a year before the Occupation. The second chapter will address Vichy’s pronatalism and female collaboration, demonstrating how Vichy’s expectations of women differed from the realities imposed by the war. The hardships inflicted on women by the Occupation led many women to collaborate politically, financially, and sexually. The double standard that French women had to face necessitates a redefinition of collaboration that goes beyond the political and ideological. Finally, the third chapter examines the *femmes tondues* and how the *tontes* confirm how collaboration was highly sexualized. I will provide a brief history of head shaving as a punishment, information on the profile of the *femme tondue*, how and where the event took place through the use of photographs, and why it symbolizes a reassertion of male dominance.

When I look at the pictures of the *femmes tondues*, I cannot help but ask myself: how did these women end up in this situation and why? They were wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters who had to cope with living in a country that was under foreign occupation. While I don’t know who these women were as individuals, I hope my thesis can provide some answers to who they may have been. By going back to the
nineteenth century and demonstrating how the pronatalist discourse evolved from the Third Republic to Vichy, I hope to offer an explanation as to why these events happened in France. Through this thesis, I want to show how the *tontes* are symptomatic of a deep crisis existing between men and women that was brought into the open by a war. I will be looking at these women, not as individuals, but as representations of a broader gender crisis.
Chapter 1:
From Biology to State Policy: The Origins of Vichy’s Pronatalist Discourse

The Demographic Transition

The idea that a strong and vigorous nation requires a large population has a unique history in modern France. During the last century of the Old Regime, Louis XIV’s elites believed that the ability to procreate was a crucial political resource, as the political, social, and economic order in the kingdom depended on the reproduction and solidification of the natural lines of authority within the conjugal family.\textsuperscript{16} Also, encouraging marriage and reproduction promised to multiply the king’s fiscal and military power. As such, pronatalist policies promoting reproduction were implemented, giving French couples incentives to get married and have larger families. The reasons for such an early emergence of pronatalist policies is that already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was evidence of deliberate family limitation in France.\textsuperscript{17}

Pronatalism can be defined as an ideology that favors a high birth rate and promotes measures to bring this about.\textsuperscript{18} According to Marie-Monique Huss, there are three different factors that motivate pronatalist ideology: a preoccupation with depopulation and the falling number of births, a more social concern with the welfare and health of the family, which, if improved, could lead to more children, and a

\textsuperscript{16} Leslie Tuttle, \textit{Conceiving the Old Regime} (New York Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{18} Huss, "Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France," 40.
moralistic desire to suppress all sexual activity not conducive to procreation.\textsuperscript{19} This is exactly what was happening in seventeenth and eighteenth century France, as traditional ideas about the cosmos and humans’ role in it began to wane. The rise of contemporary Western ideas about the individual and society diminished the importance of divine will and increased the significance of human intervention to shape and improve the quality of human life. Therefore, birth control became much more widely used, which offered more possibilities for women and reduced the power of the patriarchal family.\textsuperscript{20} As French couples were having smaller families, France’s royal government had to initiate policies that would encourage larger ones.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, an increase in the number of immigrants and a desire for more work opportunities brought more people to Paris. According to Joshua Cole, “between 1800 and 1850, Paris doubled in size from half a million to a million people.”\textsuperscript{21} Many economists and sociologists at the time believed that this growth in population is what caused the revolutions in 1830 and 1848, as the people who were coming into the city from rural areas were illiterate, poor, and angry.\textsuperscript{22} For this reason, economists and sociologists such as Adolphe d’Angeville, Louis-René Villermé and Jean-Baptiste Say began to adopt the Malthusian theory of population, which encouraged poorer families to have fewer children so that they would not outgrow their resources. However, by the 1860s, the French population began to decline, and the Malthusian warnings of overpopulation decreased. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 led many men in rural areas to leave France for

\begin{flushright}
19 Ibid.
20 Tuttle, \textit{Conceiving the Old Regime}, 8.
22 Ibid.
\end{flushright}
economic and military reasons: “the fields are in a great measure deserted for the workshop, and large numbers of young men are leaving the country in the hope of realizing a rapid fortune and in order to escape military service." After the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, widespread fears of cultural and national degeneration led many public figures to call once more for increases in the number of births.

The French preoccupation with population was different from other Western countries, as France had a unique position in the “demographic transition.” In countries such as Germany and Great Britain, the decline in mortality preceded the decline in fertility by several generations. In France, however, the mortality and fertility declines began almost simultaneously at the end of the eighteenth century, so that for the next hundred years French population growth was very slow. According to Theodore Zeldin,

In 1800 France had 28 million inhabitants while Great Britain and Ireland together only had 16 million. All the German states put together totaled 22 million, and those of Italy 18 million. But by 1860 the Austrian Empire had caught up with France; in 1870 the new German empire had 5 million more inhabitants than the new Third Republic; in 1900 Britain overtook France and in 1933 even Italy did. So France now came at the bottom of the European league, in fifth place.

While the crude birth rates per 1000 in Germany increased from 35.6 to 39.1 between 1850 and 1875, those of France decreased from 26.7 to 25.4. After 1870, politicians

---

of the Third Republic were horrified by these numbers and never ceased to find ways to increase the birthrate.

The fertility decline was caused by several factors. The advent of individualism and the Enlightenment ideals of human perfection greatly influenced people to think about themselves before they thought of the nation. Emancipation from feudalism and traditional constraints meant that people were becoming more selfish. In 1890, French demographer Arsène Dumont defined this selfishness as “social capillarity,” in which people wanted to better themselves, to rise in the social hierarchy, and to ensure that their children had a better life than they themselves had had. In fact, as society developed, individuals increasingly freed themselves from the collective personality and their diversities increased. As such, individualism led to changes both in family organization and in attitudes toward marriage and sexuality. In fact, a New York Times article from April 5 1873 explains how “dominated by the idea of getting rich, the youths lose all sentiments of religion and patriotism, and all love of family.” Frenchwomen, particularly those in the working-class, started to see traditional femininity as a choice rather than a destiny, and fulfilling their personal satisfaction became more and more of a priority. For this reason, many women married later and had fewer children.

Economic factors also contributed to the fertility decline. The demands of urbanization forced many women to enter the workforce. France had a large proportion of its female population in employment: about 28 percent of the active

---

28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid., 794.  
30 Unknown, "The Depopulation of France."
population were women in 1866, 30 percent in 1872, and 37 percent in 1906.\textsuperscript{31} In the 1860s, child labor laws needed to be modified. The age at which a child could start working increased, as the state forced children to attend school until they reached a later age, and this left the expense of their upkeep to their parents. Children had now become a source of poverty, and the larger families were now the poorest. The responsibility for the fertility decline could also be blamed on the law of property. Many rural families limited the amount of children in order to avoid having to divide the land. The goal was to have a sole heir, who would marry a sole heiress and so continue the process of building up an estate.\textsuperscript{32}

However, for conservative French socialists, republicans, Catholics and natalists, women and their decadence were entirely to blame for the fertility decline. In their opinion, a woman’s body had no integrity of its own except for its reproductive functions. As such, the female body was crucial to the continued survival of the nation and reproduction became a social responsibility. Late nineteenth century natalists focused above all on increasing native fertility: French women were not having enough French babies. Natalist campaigns in the 1890s, led by Jacques Bertillon, a physician and chief demographer for the department of the Seine, expressed how the emergence of an organized feminist movement in France, the spread of knowledge of contraceptive techniques, and a general anxiety produced by the apparent break in the linkage between sexual practice and reproduction were all to blame for the decline in fertility.\textsuperscript{33}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{31} Zeldin, \textit{A History of French Passions, 1848-1945}, 973.  
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 967.  
\textsuperscript{33} Cole, \textit{The Power of Large Numbers}, 185.
French natalists like André-Théodore Brochard and Adolphe Pinard believed that women were being selfish by placing their economic and sexual pleasure before the needs of the country. Brochard, a sociologist and physician, had been appalled by the rise in infant mortality among babies and blamed France’s depopulation on the indifference of mothers. Pinard, a professor of obstetrics at the Paris faculty of Medicine and a member of the Academy of Medicine, shared Brochard’s concern with infant mortality and women’s culpability, and advocated for charitable and governmental assistance to pregnant women. While men were defined in terms of labor, productivity, and paternal authority, women were defined by consumption, reproduction, and nurture.

Until the 1890s, the study of depopulation had remained the concern of doctors, demographers, and economists. Remedies that natalist reformers like Alfred Legoyt, a French statistician, proposed to alleviate depopulation included encouragement of maternal breast-feeding, mandatory maternity leaves for pregnant women, abrogation of the divorce law, fiscal incentives for larger families, and increased penalties for abortion and the sale of contraceptive devices. Despite these laws, prewar attempts to enact natalist legislation had consistently failed.

This situation changed, however, when the census revealed that in 1890, 1891, 1892, and 1895 there had actually been an excess of deaths over births. In 1896, Jacques Bertillon, a French demographer, started the Alliance nationale pour

---

35 Ibid., 653.
37 Ibid., 183.
38 Ibid., 197.
The Alliance published propaganda—brochures and periodicals as well as statistics on demography and studies on possible legislative actions. The aim of the Alliance was to establish official ties with the governmental powers that could realize its aims. Yet, despite Bertillon’s efforts, it wasn’t until the end of World War I that the focus on reproduction was moved from the private to the public sector and became one of the biggest concerns of the French state.

**World War I**

While the Belle Époque represented a time of peace and greater freedom of expression for both men and women in France, this peace came to an end in the summer of 1914. World War I was the first “total war” because it mobilized the entire French population, in occupied and non-occupied France and the empire. If France were to be made whole again, all of society would have to sacrifice on an unprecedented scale. Thus, the work of women was crucial to the war effort. World War I placed women in a double bind, as it offered them some new opportunities to take on roles previously open only to men, but it also led to increasing anxieties that women who assumed men’s responsibilities were becoming either too sexualized and immoral or too much like men.

Both men and women needed to contribute to the war effort, but the nature of their contributions differed greatly. One of the dominant images of women during the war

---

was that of the grieving wife and mother.\textsuperscript{41} While a man’s duty was to become a soldier and die heroically for the nation, a woman’s primary role was to bravely and quietly sacrifice the man she loved most, all while sustaining the family. Soldiery and motherhood represented differently gendered version of the same blood tribute to the state.\textsuperscript{42} Motherhood was a kind of reparation to be paid for male sacrifice during the war. By acting in her role as a moral guardian, the French woman embodied those values—honor, sacrifice, and devotion—for which the war had been fought.\textsuperscript{43} As a result, reproduction became the primary patriotic duty of women.

Yet the reality of war was that in order to sustain their families, French women could not stay in their traditional roles. The number of women in the workforce increased 5 to 20 percent of the working population.\textsuperscript{44} Women worked in munitions factories, served as drivers in the Army Automobile Service, or worked as carpenters for the Army units.\textsuperscript{45} When soldiers returned from the front, they saw their female counterparts assuming traditionally male jobs and family responsibilities. On the streets, women served as tram conductors and train porters; in the schools they replaced the male teachers who had gone to the front.\textsuperscript{46} As Henry Bordeaux, a prominent novelist and member of the Académie Française, put it in 1922: “While the war may have narrowed the horizon of men and limited their studies and culture...by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 136.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Civilization without Sexes, 91.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{44} France and Its Empire since 1870, 137.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 140.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Civilization without Sexes, 8.
\end{itemize}
contrast, it helped to develop intelligence and initiative in women.” Finding themselves buried alive in trenches of death, French men began to resent their women, whom they believed were enjoying their lives and taking advantage of their new roles.

Women were seen as a guarantee of morality, and were made to be the key to keeping up morale. However, it was believed that women who could sustain morale could also easily undermine it. At the risk that women used their sexuality for the wrong reasons, women could also be seen as a threat to the social order. Many soldiers expressed anxiety about reasserting their authority in the home at war’s end.

The trench journal *L’Horizon* asked in December 1918:

The returning victor…will he suffer to find a deserted home where his authority—so dearly paid for—will no longer be recognized? Upon his return, will he be told that there are no longer any political distinctions between men and women, that they are two beings equal in rights, two social units… Can he bear to take part in civil and political battles with a woman? To find in her a rival and competitor for the same jobs that he wants, and that she leads him in obtaining?  

The female worker became one of the most important emblems of the contribution of women to the national effort. As a mother and wife, she was also expected to step into her husband’s shoes. Factory work was viewed as responsible for women’s “immoral behavior” during the war. The quality of a woman’s morality and maternity would either lead France to victory against Germany or to a humiliating defeat.

Even though France did win against Germany, she also faced some of the greatest casualties in all of Europe. As Mary-Louise Roberts explains,

---

49 *France and Its Empire since 1870*, 140.
Between August 1914 and November 1918, an average of 930 Frenchmen were killed every day. France’s casualty rate was the highest in Europe: 16.5 percent compared to 14.7 for Germany. In addition to the estimated 1.5 million casualties, there were 3 million wounded and 1.1 million who suffered permanent disability. It is estimated that during the war period, 40 percent of the expected births were prevented from taking place.\textsuperscript{50}

The First World War initiated a period of sudden, often traumatic transformation. The war accelerated changes, and what seemed like a relatively stable world in 1914 underwent a complete transformation, especially in terms of the social organization of gender.\textsuperscript{51} Preoccupied with the idea that a country’s strength is measured by its high fertility rate, the population issue cut across traditional labels of right and left.\textsuperscript{52} French deputies and legislators on both the extreme Right and the Radical left began to use pronatalism as a way to solve the casualties of war. They argued that the drop in the birthrate was central to France’s loss of political, military, and economic hegemony in Europe and that it resulted from some moral or economic decline in French society.\textsuperscript{53} Consequently, at the end of World War I, depopulation was, more than ever before, an explicitly political construction.

The end of the war limited some of the opportunities that had opened for women in the absence of men. As will be discussed when looking at the interwar period, the shifts in women’s roles while men were at war were temporary. The interwar period was marked by a reaction to the cultural changes that occurred in the 1890s, which were only precipitated during the war. The interwar period restored the model of

\textsuperscript{50} Civilization without Sexes, 95.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{52} Huss, "Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France," 42.
\textsuperscript{53} Roberts, Civilization without Sexes, 97.
female domesticity, emphasizing women’s duty to reproduce and men’s control of both the public and the private domains.

Interwar Period

Between the 1918 armistice to the beginning of World War Two in 1939, there was an enormous preoccupation on both the Left and the Right with the issues of female identity and women’s proper role. French society was changing very rapidly, and gender was central to how this change was understood. The emergence of the “modern woman,” the instability of French politics in the 1930s, greater female participation in politics, the Depression, the rise of Nazi Germany, and the social and political situation in France all contributed to this change. The preoccupation with female identity during the interwar period demonstrates how men and women in France used it to come to terms with rapid social and cultural change, and how to comprehend a new order of social relationships. This struggle to cope with the changes in gender relations after the First World War is important in understanding why the head shavings occurred at Liberation, as the head shavings demonstrated that French sensibilities about gender had still not come to terms with this societal change.

In 1919, elections produced a large right-wing majority, full of patriotic fervor partly because of the large number of war veterans it contained. Postwar natalism distinguished itself by its inseparability from the moral and sexual anguish of the war. In a speech delivered to the Senate in October 1919, Georges Clemenceau argued that:

54 Huss, "Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France," 42.
The treaty does not specify that France should commit herself to bearing many children, but that is the first thing that should have been written there. This is because if France renounces la famille nombreuse, you can put whatever fine clause in the treaty you want, you can take away all the armaments in Germany, you can do whatever you want, France will be lost because there won’t be any more French people.  

As one can see from Clemenceau’s speech, central to the postwar natalist rhetoric was the natalist figure of la mère de famille nombreuse, the natalist mother of a large family. Only she could help France survive against the resurgence of Germany. As was previously mentioned, since the late 1860s, French fertility had been measured in terms of the female population of childbearing age. As such, women, and not men, were used to explain the decline in fertility.

Despite having won the war against Germany, French politicians and legislators of the Bloc National\(^{56}\) equated victory and national security with a high fertility rate. In fact, propagandists conflated the inability to bear children with the inability to produce or be fertile in other ways.\(^{57}\) Postwar natalist discourse linked depopulation with industrial and agricultural ruin, fiscal and monetary chaos, military vulnerability, German economic development and imperialist aggression, a loss of French international power and prestige, and gender confusion.\(^{58}\) The crisis of depopulation was appealing to most segments of the Right because it provided them with a logical explanation for France’s degradation.

---


\(^{56}\) The Bloc National was primarily made up of conservative right wing parties, such as the Fédération Républicaine, Alliance Démocratique, and Action Libérale.

\(^{57}\) Roberts, Civilization without Sexes, 103.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 107.
In order to get their message across, natalist propagandists such as Fernand Boverat exploited gender images. Fernand Boverat was a conservative who was president of the *Alliance nationale pour l’accroissement de la population française* in 1913. He believed that the depopulation issue was putting France in danger. In his propaganda brochures, Germany was characterized as an angry, greedy aggressor, while France was presented as a defenseless woman.\(^{59}\) Natalist discourse had a rather apocalyptic tone, warning French women that if they did not have more children, damsel France would be at the mercy of a populated, powerful Germany. As Victor Giraud, the literary editor of the conservative newspaper *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, put it: “Let us consider coldly, and in a manly way the prospect of finding ourselves alone once again in a few years, and facing an overpopulated, and militarily, financially restored Germany, quivering all over with the desire for vengeance.”\(^{60}\) For most conservatives, France’s only hope was in the ability of French mothers to produce more children.

One way in which people came to terms with the problem of depopulation was to place women into two separate categories: the mother and the “modern woman.” The image of the mother was especially important in interwar France, and it would continue to be during the Vichy regime. According to Elisa Camiscioli, not only were mothers given the responsibility of solving the depopulation problem, but they also had the duty of protecting French national culture.\(^{61}\) The idea was that the domestic sphere was a site of acculturation, as the French woman transmitted Republican

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 105.  
values to her husband and children. The Republican wife and mother was therefore the guardian of French tradition and culture. Mlle Charrondière, a speaker at the Second Natalist Congress in 1920, explained:

> Choosing to remain at home, where she is upheld as an example of self-sacrifice, the mother is able to struggle effectively against moral wrong, more present today than ever before, and constituting a frenzy of pleasures. By her life of continual self-denial, she becomes a living commentary on the renunciation of the moment, on the kind of self-abnegation that remains the sole and true source of familial and social virtue, the foundation of individual renewal, and the model of collective renewal.\(^{62}\)

While the French soldier sacrificed himself for his wife, the French mother was supposed to make his sacrifice worthwhile by being virtuous and staying at home. Thus, the role of mothers was not only essential in order to rebuild France demographically, but it was also hoped that it would restore a societal ideal. As will be discussed in the following chapter, this image of the sacrificing mother was heavily used by Vichy, and the double standard that it imposed on women would provide them with a reason to collaborate during the Occupation.

If the mother was presented as the answer to the problem, then the “modern woman” was seen as the problem that needed to be resolved. Also known as the garçonne for her short hair and lack of hips and breasts, the “modern woman” continued to be equated with a threat to the well-ordered domestic household.\(^{63}\) Women began wearing shorter skirts and trousers, smoking cigarettes, taking up

\(^{62}\) Mlle Charrondière, "Le Travail Professionnel De La Femme Et La Natalité," Deuxième congrès national de la Natalité (1920).

sports, going to the cinema alone, and dancing to the Charleston.\textsuperscript{64} As a young Parisian law student described her in 1925:

Can one define la jeune fille moderne? No, no more than the waist on the dresses she wears. Young girls of today are difficult to locate precisely. These beings—without breasts, without hips, without “underwear,” who smoke, work, argue, and fight exactly like boys, and who, during the night at the Bois de Boulogne, with their heads swimming under several cocktails, seek out savory and acrobatic pleasures on the plush seats of 5 horsepower Citröens—these aren’t young girls! There aren’t any more young girls! No more women either!\textsuperscript{65}

While the mother symbolized tradition and continuity, the “modern woman” symbolized change and a cultural crisis. As a result of her sexual freedom and promiscuity, the “modern woman” was blamed for the depopulation crisis after the war and was therefore seen as the reason why France lost her hegemony amongst the Western powers. Men began to fear this new woman both publicly, for her desire to be in the workforce, and privately, for her lasciviousness and immorality. The fears that the “modern woman” posed during the war and the interwar period can be viewed as a precursor to the fear of female collaboration at Liberation. The femmes tondues, women who were punished for having sexual relations with the Germans, were perceived as posing a similar threat to the societal order and were also accused of betraying the French nation.

One result of the emergence of the “modern woman” was that women became increasingly more active in political organizations. Even though pressures on women to accede to a maternal self-image were intense in the 1930s, the link between

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{France and Its Empire since 1870}, 165.

women’s family role and their exclusion from public affairs weakened significantly.\textsuperscript{66} As the economic and political crises were becoming increasingly more of a concern, women began to actively take part in the world rather than remaining on the sidelines. On the Left, women were most active both in the Socialist and Communist movements. In its propaganda, the French Communist Party in particular was explicit about its dedication to the liberation of women and adopted a number of policies consistent with this goal.\textsuperscript{67} It actively opposed the 1920 law prohibiting abortion and banning the distribution of information about contraception. It was also the only party to support female suffrage, introducing bills to that effect in 1924, 1927 and 1928.\textsuperscript{68}

Fascist leagues were against the democracy of the Left, and believed in natural hierarchies rather than sexual or class conflicts. Some women joined Fascist groups, which recruited and organized women for their cause. \textit{Action Française} had a women’s group whose leader, Marthe Borély, was as hostile to “modern” ideas like women’s rights as their male counterparts were.\textsuperscript{69} Yet the largest organizations of women in the interwar period were associated with the Catholic Church. The \textit{Ligue des Femmes Françaises} (League of French Women) and the \textit{Ligue Patriotique des Françaises} (Patriotic League of French Women) both grew during the interwar period.\textsuperscript{70} Membership of the LPF increased from 500,000 in 1917 to 1.5 million in 1932.\textsuperscript{71} These Catholic organizations believed that women were destined to be

\textsuperscript{66} Susan K. Foley, \textit{Women in France since 1789} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 185.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 192.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
mothers, but had a responsibility to influence their husbands in the interests of the nation. In their opinion, the main threat to the Republic was secularism. The fact that many women belonged to these Catholic organizations made female suffrage difficult to obtain, as the Third Republic, faithful to the French Revolution, was a firm believer in anti-clericalism. Indeed, an institution like the Catholic Church, based on hierarchy and faith, could not embrace a society informed by the revolutionary principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Therefore, many politicians on both the Left and the Right were afraid that women would vote to put the Church in power.

The presence of all these political parties and organizations made the politics of the 1930s rather complicated. In 1930, there was a struggle between the Left and the Right, which eventually concluded with the establishment of the right-wing Vichy government. By 1932, the Left had returned to power under Herriot. However, Herriot’s government only lasted for two years. By 1934, the regime was made unstable from the many riots that were caused by the Depression, and Gaston Doumergue, a Radical who turned towards the political right in his old age, took power. Yet, by 1936, the Radicals, Communists, and Socialists came together to form the Popular Front, primarily as a way to stop the spread of fascism.

The creation of the Popular Front did not help further women’s rights. With the creation of the Popular Front in 1936, the French Communist Party had adopted a range of policies, including the support of a population increase, which conformed more closely to those of mainstream parties. Women’s rights, and more specifically

---

72 Ibid.
73 France and Its Empire since 1870, 113.
74 Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 355.
the defense of reproductive rights, were therefore sacrificed to unity. As a matter of fact, at the party’s 1937 national congress in Montreuil, Maurice Thorez, the leader of the French Communist party, expressed the Popular Front’s fear of the declining birthrate: “We desire that measures be taken in order to resolve the grave crisis of the declining birthrate that menaces the very existence of our people.” The first Popular Front movement, led by Léon Blum, focused on the working class as well as other social reforms that were needed after the Depression. Under the heading “defense of liberty,” the Popular Front promised to dissolve paramilitary organizations, reform the press, provide equal access for all political organizations to government-run radio, and raise the school-leaving age. While the principle of women’s right to work was included in its reforms, the Popular Front did not take a stance on abortion or female suffrage.

The Popular Front’s encouragement of a population increase was greatly influenced by France’s population decline in the late 1930s. Even more alarming, while France’s population was declining, Germany’s was increasing. Between 1890 and 1940 the population of France had risen from 38 million to 41 million, while that of Germany had risen from 49 million to 69 million. Even though the French government did implement a law in 1920 that imposed repressive measures against abortion and the sale of contraceptives, the threat of the “modern woman” was too

---

75 Foley, Women in France since 1789, 193.
77 France and Its Empire since 1870, 190.
great for the law to work. France’s fertility rate kept on declining, and the mid-thirties therefore became a crucial period for pronatalism.

The increase in Germany’s birthrate was attributed to Hitler’s successful pronatalist policy. Pronatalist policy was an essential part of the measures designed to establish the new National Socialist state. From the beginning of Hitler’s regime, a vigorous propaganda campaign to create a new image of German society and of women’s place in it was put into place. In 1933, the program of marriage loans was intended to encourage childbearing and reduce unemployment. The loan was paid in the form of coupons that could be used to buy furniture and household equipment. Germany also enforced a tax on all single men and women, and used the sums collected to finance a variety of additional grants and allowances for large families. As such, “sexually promiscuous” women faced penalties in the Nazi state. By the early 1940’s, the regime not only denied them medals and restricted their reproduction, but it also institutionalized them, imprisoned them, and sent them to concentration camps.

While there were differences in the rigor with which the legislation was implemented in Germany and in the emphasis on racial policy, France’s pronatalist policy was not so different from Germany’s. In July 1939, the Daladier government enacted the Family Code. In his address to the Radical Party conference in 1938, Daladier argued:

An empty country cannot be a free country. It is an open road to all invasions, an easy victim to others’ covetousness. We will therefore

---

80 Ibid., 63.
follow a pronatalist policy that will allow France to remain as she was in the past. Measures will be taken to support the large family. We will publish…a Code for the Defense of the French Family.  

The Family Code stressed equal assistance to all families, of whatever class, but assistance that in the future would favor families of at least three children, rather than, as had been the case, assistance for each child from the first.  

The Code offered subsidized marriages, loans, family allowances, bounties for children, encouragement for mothers who did not go out to work, aid for rentals paid from a single salary, and lighter inheritance taxes for larger families. The Code encouraged women to have more children by giving them incentives and making motherhood easier for them financially. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the “revolutionary” vision of Republican France that the Code promoted was a foreground to the pronatalist policies enforced by Vichy. While pronatalist discourse was specific to fascism in Germany, it was deeply grounded in French history since the time of Louis XIV, and thus it is not accurate to interpret Vichy’s pronatalist policies as simply an imitation of the specifically fascist pronatalist discourse in Germany. This shows how a gender discourse was already present and ready to be enforced when the Occupation began in 1940.

By looking at the discourse on gender in France, one can begin to understand French society as a whole. The way some French politicians and natalists constructed ideas of gender and what it meant to be male and female allows one to comprehend how they dealt with other aspects of its society, such as politics, economics, and

---

83 Ibid.  
culture. This reveals how central gender was to defining France’s identity and sense of self in the years leading up to World War Two. In fact, the way French politicians and natalists associated gender with morality and war in the years before the Second World War can provide insights as to why French women who had sexual relations with Germans were punished so brutally at Liberation. Vichy’s pronatalist policy sought to validate itself by combining the old with the new. By mimicking the Third Republic, Vichy also promised a future that would glorify a past where women had no other purpose than to be mothers and housewives.
Chapter 2  
Female Collaboration: Choice or Obligation?

Vichy’s Pronatalist Policy

Like the Third Republic, Vichy also emphasized the fecundity and the importance of the French family. Much of the regime’s family policy program was a continuation of Daladier’s 1939 Family Code. However, while Daladier’s program was pragmatic in its approach, Vichy family policy rested on a much franker organicist social theory.\(^{85}\) The government’s propaganda blamed the defeat of France on the disorder of the interwar years. According to Marshal Pétain, the impact of modernism on sexual identity blurred the traditional gender roles, leading to a decline in the birth rate and France’s defeat against the Germans: “The spirit of pleasure has won out over the spirit of sacrifice. […] Too few babies, too few weapons, too few allies, those are the causes of our defeat.”\(^{86}\) For Pétain, the only way to fix the decadence of the Third Republic was to end the individualism that was brought about by the French Revolution, which enticed the French people to succumb to such evils as the “modern woman,” alcoholism, and prostitution. The remedy was a replacement of republican individualism with a reemphasis upon organic social units, rooted in the biological and social nature of things.\(^{87}\)

The solution came in the form of Pétain’s National Revolution. Through its slogan of “Travail, Famille, Patrie,” the regime’s goal was to restore France to a more

\(^{85}\) Paxton, *Vichy France*, 166.  
\(^{86}\) Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, 63.  
\(^{87}\) Paxton, *Vichy France*, 167.
“natural” community, where women stayed at home and men tilled the soil. As such, the reestablishment of traditional gender roles would be the answer to their problems, and women were responsible for solving them: “if we want to escape the decadence and death that threaten us, one of the primordial conditions of our salvation will be the restoration of woman to her role as mother, as force of conservation, as force of continuation.” By going back to being good mothers and wives, not only would women make France healthy again, but men would also be dominant once again. The reconstruction of masculine domination led to women’s exclusion from society. Women were to have no voice, and were meant to obey their fathers and husbands. In her diary, Agnès Humbert explains how even though women were just as much a part of the events of the Occupation as were men, together they were “the tiny, insignificant characters in these illustrations to a ‘footnote of history.’”

Motherhood was one of the ways in which the National Revolution implemented its family policy. Women were not only supposed to be mothers, but they were also encouraged to become the ideal femme au foyer. According to Miranda Pollard, “Vichy’s ideal woman was portrayed not glamorously dressed but in a housecoat; not surrounded by men or in public space but with children and with other mothers, in a world apart, of domestic order and innocence.” Vichy rewarded mothers of larger families with supplementary rations and medals. It also favored fathers of larger

families by giving them priority within the workplace, while single men were more often penalized. Mothers were glorified by the entire country, as can be observed through the celebration of la fête des mères. In his speech for Mother’s Day of 1941, Pétain thanked mothers for their dedication to France: “Mothers of France, hear this long cry of love that rises toward you. Mothers of our [war] dead, mothers of our cities who give your lives to save your children from hunger; I extend to you today all the appreciation of France.” In Pétain’s eyes, mothering under his government was therefore endowed with both personal and national significance.

Marriage was another way that Vichy could control its women. Indeed, “marriage was a privileged institution not only because it provided a key element of social bonding and stability, but also because it constituted the exclusive legal and moral unit within which human reproduction was encouraged and legitimated.” The man would be the head of the household, while the woman would obey her husband and take care of the children. A woman’s success and usefulness was therefore determined by her marriage. Jean Ybarnégaray, the minister of Youth and Family, believed that divorce was to blame for the decrease in births. In an interview with the New York Times, he remarked how since 1920, there have been 20,000 divorces a year, and 600,000 unhappy marriages in France since 1910. As Ybarnégaray explained, “the government is determined to do its utmost to restore the attractiveness of family. From now on, no woman will have misgivings over the future of her

92 Ibid., 24.  
94 Pollard, Reign of Virtue, 62.  
child."  

As such, the regime passed a law in April 1941 making divorce more difficult during the first three years of marriage.  

Adultery was an even bigger concern for the regime. Adultery constituted a “social danger,” and the government tried its best to prevent such illicit behavior, implementing a more severe policy on adultery.  

In December 1942, a law was passed that punished adultery with the wife of a prisoner of war with jail terms of three months to three years and fines of 1,500 to 2,500 francs.  

The difficulty in obtaining a divorce and the severe consequences of committing adultery demonstrate the importance of marriage for Vichy in ensuring the durability of the nation.

Finally, the government also controlled women by limiting their involvement in the workforce. On October 11 1940, the regime made an important step in the direction of returning women to the home. The law was wide ranging: it banned the recruitment of married women into public service and it established a quota of how many female employees a company could have.  

Any work was acceptable as long as it did not interfere with a woman’s primary duties as a housewife and a mother. As Fernand Maroni reports, “the government here continues to take measures to deal with unemployment, such as the ruling against women working in industry, especially married women whose husbands are earning an adequate living.”  

The regime also enacted a single-wage benefit that became law on March 29 1941 that was designed

---

96 Ibid.
98 Pollard, Reign of Virtue.
100 Pollard, Reign of Virtue, 153.
to encourage women in urban areas not to take paid employment but to stay at home.\textsuperscript{102} This was not only supported by the idea that women needed to stay at home, but it was also justified by the argument of unemployment: fewer women in the workforce meant more employment opportunities for men.

**Realities for Women in France**

As demonstrated above, motherhood glorified women through Vichy’s ideal feminine image. However, living in an occupied country made it nearly impossible for women to adhere to this ideal. While Pétain believed that “the family is the essential cell; it is the very foundation of the social edifice; on it we must build…” in the new order we are instituting, the family will be honored, protected, aided,” the protection and aid offered by his government was not enough to ensure the survival of women and their families.\textsuperscript{103} In fact, Pétain’s insistence on instilling traditional gender roles, which aimed to bring women back to the home, actually did the opposite. With fewer French men in France, women had to find ways to survive outside of the home and had to deal with the daily struggles on their own. They had to sacrifice everything, even their lives, to ensure the safety and survival of their families. Even though this matched with Vichy’s ideal of the sacrificing mother, most women could not do it by simply staying at home.

Women were therefore being pulled in opposite directions by the demands they had to meet and Pétain’s promotion of an ideal family that they simply could not fulfill. Starting in the fall of 1940, things got steadily worse. The most pressing


\textsuperscript{103} Philippe Pétain, *Paroles Aux Français* (Lyon: Lardanchet, 1941), 78.
external exigency for women was economic.\textsuperscript{104} Despite Vichy’s economic benefits, the little state support provided by the government was inadequate and actually forced women to find employment. Although the single-wage benefit that was enforced in March of 1941 was meant to encourage women to stay at home, it most favored women who had large families and a husband to take care of them. In reality, the families that were in most need of help, such as single mothers, qualified neither for family benefits nor for the single-wage benefit unless they found paid employment.\textsuperscript{105}

As a result, women represented over a third of the labor force, and at least a third of these women were married.\textsuperscript{106} A woman industrial worker in the Paris region was out of her home for 71 hours a week, or about 12 hours everyday, six days a week.\textsuperscript{107} The ambitious aspirations of the National Revolution, with its politics of \textit{la femme au foyer}, contrasted starkly with the daily repeated crisis to survive. The \textit{Revue de l'Alliance Nationale} pointed out this dichotomy in its issue of April 1942: “when the woman is not earning… the family does not have the income to purchase the bare essentials. The inequality between families where the mother works and those where she does not is therefore very marked.”\textsuperscript{108} By September 1942, the government had to repeal the law of October 11 1940 that prevented women from going to work. The image of \textit{la femme au foyer} became a tragic parody, as most women were the heads of urban and rural households, were employed, and were living more outside of the family than inside of it.

\textsuperscript{104} Fishman, "Waiting for the Captive Sons of France," 183.
\textsuperscript{106} Pollard, \textit{Reign of Virtue}, 149.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 135.
In addition to being responsible for earning an income for their families, the lack of food and rationing made their hard-earned money less useful. Shortages defined life during the Occupation, and Germany embarked on a systematic milking of the French economy.\footnote{Julian Jackson, \textit{France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944} (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 186.} The meager rations were mentioned in a wireless to the New York Times: “certainly there is no famine in France—yet. But certainly people in many parts are living on short rations. Hygienists and educators are beginning to express fears for the young generation.”\footnote{Unknown, "Vichy Is Haunted by Food Problem," \textit{The New York Times} June 17 1941.} Quickly Germany began siphoning off huge quantities of French agricultural production, wheat, milk, meat, and other food staples. In addition, France lost access to overseas sources of products like sugar, coffee, and tobacco.

To avoid urban starvation, in September 1940 France instituted a rationing system.\footnote{\textit{France and Its Empire since 1870}, 224.} People belonged to one of eight different ration categories according to their age and type of work.\footnote{Diamond, \textit{Women and the Second World War in France, 1939-48}.} A woman had to juggle a long, busy day at work and as well as waiting in line for food that often ran out once it was her turn in line. In her memoir, Claire Chevrillon notes the struggles that rationing caused: “French people drew ration tickets each month—and had to stand in line for them. There were eight categories of tickets: infant, youth, adult, elderly, manual laborer, and so forth. A ration ticket didn’t mean there was food to be bought. Often you’d spend a half-hour in line only to hear, “Finished! There’s nothing left!” And the line would then break...
up in silence. Everyone lost weight.”

Agnès Humbert also described the difficulties that came with waiting in ration queues: “never will he know how long I had to queue in the freezing cold outside that wretched charcuterie on rue des Cinq-Diamants before I eventually managed to carry off that miserable lump of black pudding—tasteless and fatless, but ‘off-rations’…”.

The inability of women to help their family survive was very difficult for them, leading them to find other, more informal, ways to find food.

Indeed, such conditions led many women to participate in an active black market. Despite efforts to ensure that everyone met minimal food needs, French caloric intake during the war was the lowest in Western Europe except Italy—a dramatic change for a nation that had been Western Europe’s richest agricultural producer.

According to Alice Conklin, “caloric intake in France averaged 1,500 calories a day; in the winter of 1942-1943, official rations dropped below 1,200 calories a day. Bread rations varied from 275 to 350 grams a day, and meat rations declined in January 1942 to an average of 4 to 6 ounces a week.”

The black market was developed for food, cigarettes, wine, and just about everything else. Items were traded without tickets, under the table, at inflated prices, and having money to spare and the right connections always made a difference. As such, many women in the occupied zone, as well as the unoccupied zone beginning in November 1942, turned to German soldiers to find these much needed connections.

---

113 Claire Chevrillon, *Code Name Christine Clouet* (College Station [Tex.]: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 23.
115 *France and Its Empire since 1870*, 224.
116 Ibid.
The lack of men in France was another reality that made Pétain’s ideal family an impossible objective. In terms of numbers, 790,000 prisoners left wives, and 616,200 of them with children, to fend for themselves in France. As Claire Chevrillon notes in her diary, the French POW camps were essentially a zone that the armistice had created, and they encompassed “1.8 million men behind barbed wire.” George Barrett, a reporter to the New York Times, estimates that “the captive toll is almost two-thirds of that totaled during the four years of the First World War.” The Germans held these men as hostages to assure good behavior from Pétain’s government. On top of having to make a living for their families and waiting in line for food, women had to do everything without the help of the men in their lives. It therefore became even more difficult for women to fulfill their role as mothers without their husbands around, especially for single women with no children. Most men did not return until 1945, leaving married women with no hope to reunite with their husbands and leaving young, unmarried women with no hope to ever find a husband. The hardships faced by women during the Occupation and the pressure that was forced on them by the Vichy regime left many women with no other choice but to collaborate with the enemy.

Defining Collaboration

Before discussing the ways in which women collaborated, it is important to define the concept of “collaboration.” Defining “collaboration” has been a topic of debate among various historians. Gerhard Hirschfeld argues that “collaboration was seen as a

117 Fishman, "Waiting for the Captive Sons of France," 182.
118 Chevrillon, Code Name Christine Clouet, 26.
political arrangement between two nations: the victorious one which had occupied foreign territory and the defeated nation which tried to preserve as much independence as possible.” According to Julian Jackson, for Pétain, “collaboration was a way of securing improvements in the conditions of daily life in France.” As such, most historians have focused on the political and ideological aspects of collaboration.

However, by only focusing on the political collaboration between Nazi Germany and Vichy France, much of the responsibility is put on the government and those in France who truly believed in the German victory. Looking at economic and social collaboration allows for the inclusion of members of society who are often overlooked. This especially concerns women, who are not always included in discussions of collaboration. When looking at female collaborators, it would be wrong to consider collaboration only on a political and ideological level. As Hirschfeld clearly puts it, it is necessary to consider the “idea that every fascist has inevitably been a collaborator, but that not every collaborator has been a fascist.” While some French women were committed to Vichy’s ideals and did participate in political collaboration, the majority of French women were forced to collaborate, either for reasons of survival or because they were coerced into it. The realities of war

122 *Collaborationnisme* (collaborationism) should be distinguished from collaboration. Collaboration refers to those that collaborated with the Germans for whatever reason whereas collaborationism refers to those, mostly from the fascist right, who embraced the goal of a German victory as France’s victory. Examples of such people are Jacques Doriot, the leader of the Parti Populaire Française (PPF), writer Robert Brasillach, and French socialist politician Marcel Déat.
discussed in the previous section left most women with no other choice than to make “unpatriotic” decisions.

Based on the accusations made against female collaborators at Liberation, it was believed that female collaboration was deployed in all aspects of women’s daily lives, so financial and sexual collaboration therefore made up the majority of the kinds of collaboration that women were accused of. For this reason, it is important to rethink how one defines collaboration. As Pierre Laborie argues,

"Using solidly established and over-rigid typologies—Pétainists, resisters, collaborationists, fence-sitters, criminals, accomplices, etc.—people want to classify, categorize, and count. They also seek to blame or glorify, denounce, demand justice and seek reparation." 124

To comprehend female collaboration, it is necessary to remove these categories and break away from the myth that all the French were resisters. The tontes demonstrate how being anti-fascist, patriotic, and resistant did not mean that it was not possible to have carried out certain actions which today would shock people. Collaboration was not simply about helping the enemy or betraying France. In the case of women, collaboration could also mean survival, familial ties, or love. By rethinking the definition of collaboration and providing an explanation for women’s actions during the Occupation, it becomes clear that the tontes were more than just a punishment for collaboration.

**Political Collaboration**

When a woman was accused of political collaboration, this meant that she had belonged to a collaborationist organization, had held opinions in favor of the enemy, or had shown opposition to the Resistance and to the Allied forces. Philippe Burrin

remarks that women’s participation in these groups was at 15 per cent. Some of these groups included the Service d’Ordre Légionnaire, the Milice, the group Collaboration, the Légion des Volontaires Française, the Légion Tricolore, and many more. Most of the women who belonged to these groups were young and uneducated. Women who were fully fledged members of collaborationist groups and associations during the Occupation were the most politically committed to the collaborationist cause. In 1942, the Milice, the paramilitary police who became a French version of the SS, opened its ranks to women, and women could become German intelligence agents, belong to the Gestapo or the Abwehr and be involved in military espionage and counter-espionage. Other than being politically committed, women also joined because they were bored and wanted something to do, or because the organizations promised to help their husbands in Germany, or because the financial gains were considerable.

The ‘social’ role that women adopted within collaborationist groups shows how women’s political involvement was expressed through traditional caring roles, which were integrated into their everyday lives. Women more often had roles as secretaries or as head of the women’s or young girls’ sections. This sort of maternal and feminine activity was a way for women to be politically active and to gain a certain status within the collaborationist groups. Indeed, in her memoir,

127 According to Hanna Diamond, for women who were employed as radio agents, the financial gains could be considerable—one was paid as much as 6,000 francs a month.
129 Ibid., 92.
Corinne Luchaire wrote that “I was never interested in politics. I know I did not read the newspapers well. And all of a sudden, I found myself mixed up in events beyond my control, because one day I dined with this or that political figure, that I was received in this or that house.” This higher status within society also led women to join these groups for economic reasons. Many women believed that joining one of these groups would improve their chances of getting paid employment with the Occupier or would even give them access to better food rations.

Family and social milieu probably accounted for the vast majority of women, mothers, daughters, and sisters who were brought into the groups by their men, husbands, fathers, and brothers. Indeed, the influence of the family led many women to join collaborationist groups. Even if women did not have a political commitment to fascism, they were still considered collaborators if their family members were openly supportive of the Vichy government. Indeed, women could be arrested if their husbands were collaborators, as marriage implied complicity and therefore led to similar punishments. In her memoir, Corinne Luchaire recalls how she would follow her father, who was a member of a collaborationist group, with the adoration and trust that a daughter was supposed to have for her father. She recalls how “something in me, at that moment, told me it was dangerous and that Papa risked a lot. And then I chased away this idea, thinking that my father could not do anything bad, that he had much more experience than me in these things.”

Luchaire’s case, as was the case with so many other women, familial ties were a big factor in encouraging women to join collaborationist groups.

_Délation_, or denunciations, were another way that women collaborated politically. Denunciation was often seen as being a patriotic act, bringing to the attention of authorities illegalities, disloyalties, and threats to the state that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.\(^{134}\) Denunciations represented about 6.5 per cent of the collaborative acts of which women were accused of at the Liberation.\(^{135}\) Women would write letters to Pétain or to the German authorities denouncing other members of their communities, and these denunciations were so numerous and so exaggerated that the German officials questioned their legitimacy and ultimately stopped relying on them. One reason why women wrote these letters was for financial rewards. Another reason was that “it gave extraordinary powers to the weaker members of the community, in particular women.”\(^{136}\) For women, political collaboration went beyond simply having an affinity for the Vichy regime or Nazism. Rather, it was a way to make money and ultimately, to gain status and a sense of purpose in a society where they were often considered subordinate to men.

**Financial Collaboration**

When a woman was accused of financial collaboration, it was because she had benefited from professional or business contacts with the Germans. Until 1944, women who worked for the Germans often did so voluntarily. One way a woman could be accused of financial collaboration was if she worked for the Germans in


\(^{135}\) Virgili, _Shorn Women_, 11.

\(^{136}\) Gildea, _Marianne in Chains_, 53.
France. Working for the Germans was more common in the northern zone, as the Germans were there longer than in the southern zone, where it became more widespread after November 1942. Indeed, Pierre Laval, the Chief of Government, ordered that unoccupied France furnish one-quarter of the skilled workers to be sent to Germany” and that the unoccupied zone furnish its share of workers “as rapidly as possible.”

The Vichy regime therefore repealed the October 1941 law that prevented mothers from working, and most of the work positions that were available to women in France happened to be with the Germans. In fact, there were considerable work opportunities for French women. They were cleaners, housekeepers, cooks, and laundry workers. Some women provided secretarial skills in the offices of the occupying forces. In such offices, they could work as typists, telephone operators and translators.

Prostitution was also another way that women could work for the Germans. Levels of prostitution increased significantly during the war. In 1935, there were an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 prostitutes in the country and only 1,235 registered brothels with a few thousand prostitutes working in them. In 1940, in Paris alone, there was an explosion of an estimated 100,000 street prostitutes, while only about 2,000 prostitutes worked in brothels. Hanna Diamond argues that this large number was most likely due to the increase in the number of clients.

---

139 Ibid., 39.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid., 40.
However, the defeat of the German army at Stalingrad in early 1943 caused a change in Germany’s labor demands. The losses from the battle had led once more to a serious manpower shortage. According to Ulrich Herbert, “by the first half of 1943, the German war economy was lacking some 1.5 million workers.” By 1944, women were forced by law to work for the Germans. The Law of February 1, 1944 extended the 1942 law on compulsory labor for men, to include single and married women with no children, aged between 18 and 45, specifying that they were to be placed in jobs in France. If there weren’t enough job opportunities within France, another way that a woman could be accused of financial collaboration was if she went to Germany to find employment. In fact, German records suggest that there were around 80,000 [women] and that they made up about a third of all French volunteer workers in Germany. There are several reasons why women chose to work in Germany. Some women were coerced, as Vichy propaganda would often tell women that if they worked in Germany, they could be closer to their husbands. Other women were used to working for the Germans in France, and went for better opportunities. Most of the time, however, women went to Germany because they needed money to support their families.

When volunteers returned from Germany, they were often treated with disdain. Even though political commitment among those who worked for the Germans was rare, for the men at Liberation who accused women of financial collaboration, this did

not matter. In fact, Richard Vinen mentions how “though women made up around a third of those who volunteered to work in Germany during the occupation, they often made up more than half of those who were investigated by the police on their return.”\footnote{Ibid., 179.} Women who had volunteered to work in Nazi Germany were sometimes shaved on their return. In fact, nearly a tenth of them had proceedings brought against them for “having worked for the Germans” or “willingly gone to Germany.”\footnote{Virgili, \textit{Shorn Women}, 179.}

**Sexual Collaboration**

Sexual collaboration became the main form of accusation toward women at Liberation. It is estimated that 57 per cent of women whose heads were shaved for acts of collaboration were accused of having intimate relationships with Germans.\footnote{Ibid., 15.} Sexual collaboration was judged on how visible these relationships were. There was not one single form of sexual collaboration. Rather, sexual collaboration can be divided into three different categories. A woman could have collaborated sexually through work, through a discreet relationship with a German soldier whom she met by chance, or simply because she sympathized with Nazi ideology.

The fact that so many French women worked for the Germans inevitably led to more personal and intimate relationships between the occupied and the occupier. In her article on women in France during World War II, Victoria Harrison describes a seventeen year-old girl named Odette B. who worked as a housekeeper at the Braconne camp, which brought her in contact with soldiers on a daily basis. She admitted “having laughed” with them but denied having had any sexual contact.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Sexual Collaboration}
\item Sexual collaboration became the main form of accusation toward women at Liberation. It is estimated that 57 per cent of women whose heads were shaved for acts of collaboration were accused of having intimate relationships with Germans. Sexual collaboration was judged on how visible these relationships were. There was not one single form of sexual collaboration. Rather, sexual collaboration can be divided into three different categories. A woman could have collaborated sexually through work, through a discreet relationship with a German soldier whom she met by chance, or simply because she sympathized with Nazi ideology.
\item The fact that so many French women worked for the Germans inevitably led to more personal and intimate relationships between the occupied and the occupier. In her article on women in France during World War II, Victoria Harrison describes a seventeen year-old girl named Odette B. who worked as a housekeeper at the Braconne camp, which brought her in contact with soldiers on a daily basis. She admitted “having laughed” with them but denied having had any sexual contact.
\end{itemize}
However, “the report concludes that she undoubtedly had had sex with the Germans and that she had admitted she was no longer a virgin.”\textsuperscript{148} Harrison also tells the story of a twenty-one-year-old Odette D. who was suspected of having intimate relations with Germans while working in her café.\textsuperscript{149} She finally admitted to having had sex with a German soldier and was sent to a concentration camp after having had her head shaved.\textsuperscript{150} In addition to women having sexual relationships with Germans in the workplace, prostitutes were big targets for this kind of accusation. At Liberation, a distinction was made between professional prostitutes and those who were prostituting themselves illegally. For the men who were punishing these women, it did not matter to them how women were finding themselves in these situations. Rather, simply the act of talking to a German could lead to an accusation of sexual collaboration.

In most of the accounts of the period dealing with relationships with Germans, women were considered motivated solely by immorality, desire, thoughtlessness, or a love of Germany.\textsuperscript{151} At Liberation, women’s actions were always justified by the idea that women represent the ‘weaker sex,’ and that they can be easily enticed to collaborate. Several testimonies of women who collaborated, even of women in the Resistance, mention how handsome and kind the German soldiers were towards them. In 1944, Christiane Peugeot, a sixteen-year-old French girl whose family had to house Germans, writes in her diary how even though “they are ‘Boches’,” “they are still

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Virgili, \textit{Shorn Women}, 27.
men and apart from the language, are no different to us!”\textsuperscript{152} In her diary entry in June 1941, Micheline Bood explains her dilemma at having to label all Germans as bad: “I have always hated the ‘Boch’ in their entirety and in their horror. But can you hate someone who you don’t know? Or can you know someone when it is only based on stories from many years ago? The Germans, if you take them as individuals, are very nice, usually well brought-up and behave correctly.”\textsuperscript{153} The lack of French men in France drew women to the good looks and manners of the German soldiers, and many could not resist this temptation.

Some women had sexual relations with German men for the power and the luxuries of such relationships. Richard Vinen argues how associating with Germans gave women who were excluded from respectable French society an opportunity for revenge, as they could display themselves with people who were deemed powerful by the French.\textsuperscript{154} It was known among the French that the Germans had access to luxuries that were difficult to come by. As such, women would frequent German men to obtain such luxuries. For example, one woman remembers “a German officer named Hubert who used to visit the dentist’s wife in a white convertible, bringing her all sorts of delicacies, such as game.”\textsuperscript{155} Cases like this one contributed to the two differing images of the Occupation at Liberation: on the one hand, there were those who suffered and lived a life of poverty and hunger; on the other hand, there were those who lived a carefree life and did not have to worry about the misery of the next

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{152} Christiane Peugeot, \textit{Libérez Peugeot! Journal De Jeunesse} (Paris: AkR, 2006), 98.
\item \textsuperscript{154} Vinen, \textit{The Unfree French}, 181.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Gildea, \textit{Marianne in Chains}, 51.
\end{footnotes}
day. Such an argument is what provided the head-shavers with a justification for their brutal actions.

There were women who did fall in love with Germans, and were not involved with them for economic or political reasons. The story of Jeanne*, a young woman from the small town of Saint-Malo, shows how romantic relationships did exist despite the difficult circumstances between French women and German soldiers. Jeanne was a seamstress, and she met a German soldier named Helmut* after dropping off some clothes at the laundry station. She was shocked by how nice he was to her, and she “appreciated the young German,” as he was “funny and rather handsome.”156 Jeanne was “happy,” and Helmut was like “a ray of sunshine in her austere world.”157 Helmut did not spoil her with a nice car or other material benefits, and Jeanne was not attracted to him for any ideological reasons. She simply fell in love with him as a person, rather than for the fact that he was German. She became pregnant with his child, and did not care about the inappropriateness of the situation. At Liberation, Helmut was back in Germany and Jeanne was left to fend for herself. She was accused of ‘horizontal collaboration’ and had her head shaved.

Between August 1944 and May 1945, French men and women found themselves in an uncertain situation of being no longer at war but not yet at peace. As Megan Koreman remarks, “the Liberation brought not peace but an odd limbolike state that

156 Gilles Perrault, *Femmes Tondues* (Broché, 2006), 47.
157 Ibid.
was neither war nor peace and that provided neither justice nor plenty.”158 In his memoirs, Charles de Gaulle recounts,

At one blow, the people were released from that psychology of silence into which the constraints of four years’ occupation had plunged them. Overnight, they could speak out, meet anyone they chose, come and go as they liked! But at the same time, many permitted themselves illusions which were the cause of as many more misunderstandings.159

The Resistance’s victory over Vichy shifted the moral hierarchy: resisters were the heroes while collaborators were the traitors. From the very beginning of Liberation, the greatest task would be the purge of collaborators. The people of France decided to take matters into their own hands by fighting those that made the previous four years a difficult and terrifying time. As a New York Times article from August 30 1944 described: “but the nation knows also what distance separates it from the goal that it wants to and can reach. It is aware of the necessity to act in such a way that the enemy will be completely and irretrievably beaten and that the French part in the final triumph may be the largest possible one.”160 Once France was cleansed of the foreign enemy, the Resistance would turn to its internal enemy.

During Liberation, when the courts were punishing collaborators, not one of the six types of crime of “national unworthiness” envisaged included sexual relationships with Germans.161 Proof was difficult to establish, and it was hard to distinguish between a woman who had openly taken a German soldier as a partner and one that

161 Virgili, Shorn Women, 19.
did it for professional reasons. The French authorities were mainly concerned with legality and did not want the épuration to go completely out of hand. Without sufficient proof, the courts could not bring these women to trial. Therefore, it was up to the men of France to obtain the justice they believed they so rightly deserved.

Consequently, the purges were a way for the Resistance to seek revenge on their own terms. As De Gaulle remembers in his memoirs, “as could have been foretold, the liberation was not going to bring any immediate material relief to a generally drained and dismembered nation.”162 Unimpressed by the legal purges, Resistance members in small towns conducted their own purges, known as “extralegal” or “local” purges. The head shavings were one of the ways in which local Resistance members chose to punish sexual collaboration, which was not included in the court’s definition of collaboration. The Resistance members who were in towns and villages and exercising local authority acted according to the conceptions of betrayal that grew out of the local, and not the national, context.163 De Gaulle made this clear when he explained how “any force which was not a part of the Army or the police was to be dissolved at once—if need be, by the authorities. It was forbidden, under penalty of severe punishments, to be in possession of arms without the warranted authorization of the prefects.”164 Although “the French are doing all that men can do to free themselves”165 and that both the national and local purgers agreed on the necessity of the purge, they parted ways over the fundamental questions of how to define and determine guilt.

163 Koreman, The Expectation of Justice, 96.
In thinking about the meaning of the concept of ‘collaboration,’ the fact that women could be accused of various forms of collaboration shows how wide the definition of the crime committed could be. While both men and women could be accused of political and financial collaboration, sexual collaboration is the form of collaboration that is associated with women.\(^\text{166}\) Even if a woman was never actually a prostitute, she was almost always designated as such at Liberation. This demonstrates that the type of collaboration is what causes an initial division between the sexes.

When looking at female collaboration, collaboration went beyond just simply being a threat to the rest of the population. Sexual collaboration had no influence on how the war developed or on the daily circumstances of the Occupation. There clearly was a gap between the reality of the events and what the rest of society perceived to be the reality. Men at Liberation considered women’s autonomy during the Occupation and their capability to survive without them an outrage and a betrayal of their masculinity. ‘Horizontal collaboration’ was not simply sexual, but sexist, and offers us a greater understanding of how a society dealt with the consequences of war. The tendency to view collaboration as a political issue obscures the fact that it was actually sexist. The tontes were therefore not a punishment for collaboration, but rather a punishment of femininity and sexuality.

Chapter 3

Les Femmes Tondues: The Consequence of Being a Woman

The Symbolism of Hair and Head Shaving

In his analysis of hair as a private asset and public symbol, Raymond Firth argues that “hair has a number of qualities which recommend it as an instrument for social action. And it is associative, tending to call up important social ideas, especially concerning sex.”\(^{167}\) Even though both men and women have hair, it is a very personal and private thing. It is attached to one’s own body, and is therefore a personal asset that can be changed and altered as each individual desires. Yet hair is also detachable, renewable, and easily manipulated in many contexts, so it can also be treated as an independent object. Female hair in particular has a special significance, as it is a symbol of a contrast in character: it represents both the weakness of a woman as well as the strength of her femininity through its power to move male desire and love.\(^{168}\)

The importance of female hair has been a topic of discussion since early Christianity. For the early church fathers, hair was seen as a woman’s glory and her ornament of femininity, and Scripture also supports the more specific view that a woman’s hair was her ‘instrument of seduction.’\(^{169}\) In fact, Church father Tertullian (c. 160-225 C.E.) believed that women, because of Eve’s transgression, were responsible for destroying man, initiating the suffering of all mankind, and causing

---

\(^{168}\) Ibid., 268.
the death of Christ, and they should therefore try to make themselves look as ugly as possible every day.\textsuperscript{170}

During early Christianity as during Liberation in France, the shaving of the head was a way for men to control women’s power. In Raymond Firth’s opinion,

Shaving of the head is a sign of \textit{tristitia}, of diminution of the self, whether in terms of status or of relation to the world and human affairs. The hair of the head is an intimate element of the personality, and to remove it by intention is in effect a reduction or at least a change in the personality.\textsuperscript{171}

Cutting a woman’s hair is therefore a method of social control. Biblical narratives portray the shaving of the head and body as a cleansing ritual, or a way to purify the individual. In the Old Testament, lepers were supposed to either shave their heads or wear their hair loose to warn others that they were unclean. Head shaving could also be a type of punishment that brought shame on the body. In the book of Numbers, God told the men of Israel what they should do if a man believed that his wife might have been unfaithful and “defiled herself by having intercourse with another man.”\textsuperscript{172}

God told them to “loosen the woman’s hair and put the offering of flour in her hands.”\textsuperscript{173} As will be examined in more detail later, men at Liberation used the same arguments of decontamination and masculine betrayal to justify the punishment they inflicted on French women.

A Brief History of Head Shaving

\begin{figure}
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\end{center}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{171} Firth, "Hair as Private Asset and Public Symbol," 290.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
Head shaving has been a traditional punishment for adulterous women in France. One example was the suspected adulteress Queen Marguerite of Burgundy, who ruled from 1290 to 1315, and was shorn and strangled on the orders of Louis X. Older Parisians who had experienced the siege of 1871 recalled that “les filles publiques” who had been seen in the company of a Prussian general on the Champs-Elysées were publicly spanked. During the First World War, screaming French women who were accused of sleeping with German soldiers were seen being shorn on the Place du Marché at Renaix in Flanders on 11 November 1918. These instances suggest that the tontes at Liberation were not a unique event in French history, and that it is an ancient type of reaction.

It is important to note that the practice of shaving the heads of women based on sex can be found equally in a number of different European societies, especially in the early twentieth century. In each case, the practice took place in situations when the country was in a state of crisis. During the Liberation of Belgium in 1944, there were at least twenty towns and villages where women had their heads shaved. In August 1943 and then at Liberation, several tens of thousands of Danish women who had relationships with German soldiers had their heads shaved. In Italy, shorn women were known as the donne rapate. Throughout the Spanish Civil war (1936-1939), women were shorn for having given birth to Republican children and for taking the

---

176 Ibid.
177 Virgili, Shorn Women.
178 Ibid., 214.
side of the Republicans. While these events are very similar to the events that occurred in France at Liberation, they are not enough to establish any links between them. Yet, as will be discussed throughout the rest of this chapter, when one considers how many women had their heads shaved and how in many cases their punishment extended beyond a simple head shaving, this form of punishment had a distinct meaning in French society that was unlike any other country in Europe.

The Early Signs

Usually, the practice of shaving heads is associated with the moment when Liberation occurred in France. This could not be further from the truth. In fact, archives show us that it lasted for three years: it began in 1943 during the Occupation and finished in 1946 immediately after the war had ended.179 From 1943 to the Liberation few tontes occurred—42 cases or 6.6 per cent of the total number of head shavings.180 However, these numbers show the French Resistance clearly anticipated the purges that were to come, and are evidence of the particularly harsh conditions of the Occupation.181 The practice of shaving heads was widely known, as it was mentioned in newspapers at the time. In a February 1942 article published in Défense de la France, a Resistance newspaper created by a group of young Resistance members known as Défense de la France, there was a warning to French women who frequented Germans:

179 Ibid., 61.
180 Ibid., 64.
181 Head shavings prior to Liberation were mainly performed by the Mouvements Unis de la Résistance (MUR), which included Resistance groups such as “Défense de la France,” “Résistance,” and “Lorraine.” This group eventually came to be known as the Mouvement de Libération Nationale (MLN). Francs-Tireurs et Partisans (FTP) was another group that performed head shavings. The FTP was an internal resistance group directed by the Parti Communiste Français (PCF).
You so-called French women who have given your bodies to Germans, will have your heads shaved and you will have a notice put on your backs: ‘Sold to the enemy.’ You too, you unworthy creatures who flirt with the Germans will have your head shaved and you will be whipped, and on all your foreheads the swastika will be branded with a red hot iron.\textsuperscript{182}

The violence described in this article was meant to be a warning, and the practice of head shaving became a way for the Resistance to spread fear, of letting women know that any form of collaboration would be punished and that the price would be shame and pain. By Liberation, head shaving was already a common practice. It was not the spontaneous event that many believe it had been.

\textbf{Statistics of the \textit{Tontes}}

The \textit{tontes} were most often performed in front of the entire town or village. The locations chosen to shave the women’s heads were areas where a community would often come together, such as the street (42%), a public square (21%) or the city hall (20%).\textsuperscript{183} Thus, the locations were chosen for their accessibility and their capacity to bring a crowd together. Each French community had the need to shave the head of at least one woman, yet the number of \textit{femmes tondues} at Liberation and the manifestation of the event in several places does not help in determining the geographic extent of the event. The \textit{tontes} were more likely to occur in small villages or towns, where a community could more easily recognize a female collaborator. The \textit{tontes} were most frequent in three French departments: the Oise, the Côtes-du-Nord, and the Indre. They were the places where the practice was most carried out, and in the coastal area of the Côtes-du-Nord, the industrial area of the Oise and the military

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{182} Défense de la France 15 February 1942.
\textsuperscript{183} Julie Desmarais, Femme Tondues, (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval 2010). 25.
\end{flushright}
base at Martinerie in the Indre, there had been strong German presence. What is important to note is that the Indre was in the non-occupied zone until 1942, which shows how the Occupation was not the most determining factor when it came to the events of the tontes. It would appear that the place, its size, and its characteristics have less significance than the social links that existed within a community.

Close to 20,000 women had their heads shaved at the time of Liberation. Who were these women? Was there a profile of la femme tondue?

There was not one type of femme tondue, as they were all of different ages, social classes, and careers. Women who had their heads shaved came from every section of society. What can be said is that the women who had their heads shaved were on the whole young and usually single. Fabrice Virgili reports that

Out of the 586 women whose heads were shaved and whose name is known, the ages of 290 of them is also known: three young girls of 15 years had their heads shaved, 20 per cent were minors less than 21; at the other end of the scale the oldest woman was 69 and if there were only two of them who were more than 60, nearly 10 per cent were over 50. Over 20 per cent of the women were between the ages of 20 and 25. As far as marital status is concerned, the number of married women among those who had their heads shaved is lower than the population of France as a whole: 35.5 per cent against 55.5 per cent. Finally, 35.7 per cent of these women had a trade, and professions were mostly in public and health services in administration and in intellectual

---

184 Virgili, Shorn Women, 39.
185 Desmarais, Femme Tondues. 1.
186 Virgili, Shorn Women, 177.
187 Ibid., 178.
188 Ibid.
Differences in professions were important, as what mattered was how close the women were to the enemy.

Like the *femmes tondues*, little is known about the men who shaved their heads. It is argued that most of the *tondeurs* were barbers, “last minute” Resisters, or irresponsible young men who used the *tontes* to exercise some kind of authority. As Valentine Schulmeister remarks in her diary: “The result was the birth of groups of so-called Resisters, who were for the most part crazy and undisciplined, who thought they were heroes, and whose actions, which in reality were not efficient, had the main task of inspiring the suspicion of the victors for the rest of the population.”

Most of those responsible for shearing were men, most often young *maquisards* who were anxious to prove their allegiance to the Resistance. Madame Antoinette, a witness from Toulouse, observed that

> There were those who did it out of personal revenge, a large number of them…and those who wanted to cleanse themselves politically, who had reasons for reproaching themselves, who had had more or less collaborationist relations and shaved the heads of other women in order to prove that they were patriots.

At Liberation, one of the aims was to gather and encourage the largest number of people to join the Resistance. Therefore, anyone could join the Resistance at Liberation. This often blurred the lines on the intentions of the men who shaved the

---

189 Ibid., 179.
women’s heads. The *tontes* were most often an act of patriotism, but they could also have been an act of personal revenge. All that is available are the photographs, which show men that were relatively young, and happy to hold a pair of scissors in their hands.

**Mise En Scène**

As targets of rumors and personal revenge, the house of a *femme tondue* is where the event usually started. The house of a *femme tondue* was the place where the alleged crime had been committed, as it was a place that German soldiers had occupied and it therefore had to be freed and purged. It was mostly a group of men, generally carrying arms, who went to find the women in their homes. The men would often threaten and insult the women, as Mlle X, a twenty-four year old French woman, remembers:

Towards 20:00 hrs three young men unknown to us came to knock at our door and said: ‘Open up. It is the maquis police.’ Having opened the door they then said: ‘You are more Boche than French. We’ve known your house for a long time. Tomorrow at first light you will know what it’s all cost you.’

The men would then bring the women to a public place, often surrounded by a jeering crowd, and have them sit on a chair to have their heads shaved in front of the entire town. The hair would often be cut unevenly and the *tondeurs* would sometimes cut some of the skin off, making the women bleed.

While the *tontes* are most known for the head shavings, the events often went much further than just a simple head shaving. Some *femmes tondues* were marked

---

with a swastika, which could either be branded with a hot iron rod or could be painted on their foreheads or their breasts. The goal in doing this was to clearly identify the women who frequented the Germans during the Occupation. The women could also be forced to undress and walk around their towns completely naked, sometimes covered in coal tar to make them appear dirty and because of its antiseptic quality. A complaint lodged for indecent assault to the épuration committee noted:

On 30 August 1944 R and B, two market gardeners claiming they belonged to the FFI, went to the home of Miss M. where in the presence of her invalid mother they stripped and tore her clothes into pieces and then led her naked to Jacques who had her hair cut off. This woman had to remain entirely naked in front of children and young girls for several hours and then return home only half dressed.

The crowd was an important element in carrying out the events. The crowd would express its joys, its impatience, and its hatred toward the women. The violence inflicted on the femmes tondues was therefore communal and involved not just the men who shaved the women’s heads, but the entire community.

The violence and the embarrassment inflicted on the femmes tondues completely silenced them. Many of the women have refused to talk about their experiences, and it is therefore difficult to know their names or who they were individually. Since the tontes were often carried out much the same way throughout France, and since most of the women were accused of the same crime, their identities and experiences are often retold as a collective group. The only type of source that can help understand the meaning of the events for those that did not witness the tontes first-hand is the

195 Desmarais, Femme Tondues. 31.
196 Complaint Lodged for Indecent Assault to the Épuration Committee, (Hérault: Departmental Archives, 137 W 14, 5 December 1944).
197 Femme Tondues. 32.
photograph of the *femme tondue*. Indeed, many books use photographs of the *femmes tondues* as representations of collaboration and Liberation. The emphasis is on the visual, and attention is paid less on the identity of the victims. As such, Alison Moore argues, the photos of the *tondues* need to be examined as texts in their own right, texts in which “something essential is revealed about the relationship between gender, visuality, and historical memory.” Consequently, the visual image of the *tondue* stands alone as a representation of the experience of the victim.

![Figure 1: Photograph of a femme tondue taken in Melun, August 26, 1944.](image)

The image above is of a woman from Melun, a southeastern suburb of Paris in north-central France, who had her head shaved on August 26, 1944. The image clearly demonstrates that the public spectacle aspect of the *tontes* was an essential

---

198 Alison M. Moore, "History, Memory and Trauma in Photography of the Tondues," *Gender & History* 17, no. 3 (2005): 658.
199 Ibid., 666.
component of the practice. The head shaving is meant to be a show for the crowd, as the event appears to be located in the center of the town while the woman is seated on a stage in her undergarments for the whole town to see and enjoy. The tondeur, a man, is dressed in a barber’s frock. The armband around his arm and his hat are proof that he is a proud member of the Resistance. The crowd, which includes not just men but also women and children, stares at the woman with a look of joy and satisfaction on their faces. This photograph supports a vision of the tontes, not just as a symbol of violence against women committed by men, but rather of a communal consensus to punish a woman deemed diseased and an enemy of the nation. For instance, in its first issue, the newspaper of the CDL of Savoie reported a “just punishment—A certain number of women and girls who had trafficked in their charms with the late occupiers have been severely corrected. The arrest of these black sheep was followed by a radical shearing.”

201 The photograph confirms the idea that Resistance is male, and that Collaboration is female, that men are heroic, and that women are guilty.

---

201 Unknown, *La Savoie française* 26 August 1944.
Robert Capa took this next image on August 16, 1944 in Chartres, and it has been used repeatedly in the histories of the Liberation, which suggests that one version of the *tondue* story has dominated the post-war era both within France and beyond. Capa was one of the six photographers hired by *Life* magazine to cover the allied landings in Normandy, and he took several photographs of the *femmes tondues*. *Life* magazine covered the events in Chartres, and according to Jack Belden’s article, there were three kinds of women: those that got their heads shaved for having had sexual relations with Germans, those that applauded the head shavings, and those that flirted with the Americans. The image is of a woman named Simone Touseau, who was twenty-three years old at the time. In a police report from February 19 1945, the police chief Paul Prades noted:

> The one named Touseau Simone is accused of having denounced French people to the Germans. In addition, she volunteered to go work in Germany. Having become pregnant with a German, she was sent

---

202 Moore, "History, Memory and Trauma in Photography of the Tondues," 673.
back to France. She admitted herself that the father of her child was a German.\textsuperscript{204}

Her head was completely shaved and her forehead was marked with two circles. She is carrying a baby, fathered by a German soldier named Erich Göz. To her right is her father, Georges Touseau, and behind him is her mother Germaine, who also had her head shaved.

Like the photo of the woman from Melun, Simone is also at the center of the photograph. She is surrounded by a crowd, comprised of all genders and ages, which is following her through the streets of Chartres and observing her with scorn and attention. A woman named Yvonne Le C., who is at Simone’s right in the photographs, recalls how “the crowd insulted her and she was crying.”\textsuperscript{205} However, unlike most of the photographs of the \textit{femme tondue}, there is no nudity, no apparent sexual violation, no physical damage or forceful coercion. Most importantly, Simone is carrying a baby. The presence of the baby presents a conflicting and ambiguous narrative that both feeds and problematizes the discourse on the \textit{femme tondue}. The baby is evidence of Simone’s sexual collaboration with a German and her alleged betrayal of the French nation. Yet, the presence of the baby can also counter this image of betrayal and portray Simone as a woman who was simply in love. What is most striking about this image is the role of other women in encouraging the \textit{tontes}. This image demonstrates that the violence committed against these women did not only involve men. Rather, it involved the entire community and was thus done in the spirit of the nationalism expressed at Liberation. As the most used image in the

\textsuperscript{204} Philippe Frétigné et Gérard Leray, \textit{La Tondue 1944-1947} (Broché, 2013), 111.  
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 96.
histories of the Liberation, this image marks a moment of post-war retribution in which all participated willingly and played out their respective roles for the benefit of a collective purge.\(^{206}\)

These photographs are helpful to the historian in that they provide an understanding of how the feminine was used politically and how particular visions of the feminine are written into the mythology of the Liberation.\(^{207}\) In contrast to the images of women in Vichy’s propaganda, who are depicted as virtuous mothers and housewives, the images of the *femmes tondues* at Liberation depict the sexually and politically deviant woman who has been singled out and punished. As such, the photographs of the *tontes* are gendered, as the female body is made culpable in a sexually marked way, “linking the political with the erotic.”\(^{208}\)

The photographs of the *tontes* can say a lot about how France chose to remember its past. In fact, the photography creates implications for the role of women and female sexuality in the historical memory of the Vichy regime. The choice to represent French collaboration as feminine takes the blame away from the right-wing regime that was Vichy France. The Occupation was thus a feminized moment of weakness in which the French nation ‘got into bed with the Germans.’\(^{209}\) Without any testimonies or information on the names and identities of these women, the medium of photography has become an important tool that historians can use to understand the events. Through these photographs, the women could be silenced and made passive.

\(^{206}\) Moore, "History, Memory and Trauma in Photography of the Tondues," 676.

\(^{207}\) Claire Duchen, *When the War Was Over* (Continuum International Publishing 2010), 240.

\(^{208}\) Ibid.

\(^{209}\) Moore, "History, Memory and Trauma in Photography of the Tondues," 658.
They were no longer seen as individuals with distinct stories, but rather were placed in one group. The photographs documented them as emblematic of collaboration and guilt, and the women could therefore easily be blamed for the suffering they endured during the years of Occupation. These photographic images make this image of collaboration permanent, and enable future generations to continue to blame women for France’s humiliation.

The Tontes as a Symbol of Renewal

In his study of the ritual process, Victor Turner argues that all rites of passage “are marked by three phases: separation, margin, and aggregation.” While separation is the detachment from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, the margin is more ambiguous, as a society passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or the coming state. In aggregation, the passage is consummated; society is in a relatively stable state once more and has rights and obligations that are clearly defined and structured. When this model is applied to France, the separation represents the Vichy regime, the margin represents Liberation, and aggregation represents post-war France. Having this in mind, it is important to note the meaning of the term Épuration, as it meant a lot more than just a purge. It connoted purity, renewal, and elimination. It meant the end of one era, and the beginning of a new one.

Many Frenchmen used the Épuration as a blank slate. Anyone who took part in the tontes could erase his or her past actions and reconstruct his or her individual identity.

---

211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.
There was also the sense that people could come together as a group once again, and could use the *Épuration* to fight for a collective freedom. In the Var, a primary school teacher made a declaration about the shaving of the heads of three of his colleagues in which he had taken part: “On the day of the Liberation I behaved as a FRENCHMAN and no more; it was simply my being FRENCH which dictated my attitude towards them. At the Liberation I no longer behaved as a primary school teacher, but as a patriot and a soldier.” The *tontes* provided Frenchmen with features of both individual and collective experiences, and allowed them to rediscover themselves and their communities.

Indeed, the Liberation was a time of self-affirmation and of coming together as each individual took part in the reconstruction at local and national levels. More than just a re-appropriation of the past and the future, the practice of the *tontes* belonged to the present, a time of shared patriotism for all. The Liberation was a key moment of transition, as it belonged neither to the past nor to the future, but to both. It was both exhilarating in its celebrations and vicious in its violence. Despite all the chaos, people wanted order and closure. The head shavings therefore took place in what Victor Turner called a “liminal” space, a space with its own rules and in which a new community could take shape. The Liberation was as much a preparation for the future as it was reparation of the past. The *femmes tondues* provided the French with the clean slate they were looking for, as the head shavings contributed to the re-establishment of a masculine order and a new national identity.

---

213 Unknown, *Declaration Made on 10 October 1944 to the Épuration Committee Investigating Education.* (National Archives, F17 16734, 10 October 1944). ‘FRANCAIS’ appears in capital letters in the original text.

A Punishment For Women Only

The phenomenon of the *tonte* raises the question of why female collaborators were treated differently than male collaborators at Liberation. Clearly, the vast majority of French people who committed acts of collaboration with Germany during the war were men rather than women. Furthermore, the acts committed by men constituted a more serious threat to the Resistance than those committed by women. Although many Frenchmen would later be tried and convicted of treason in the years following Liberation, only a handful of French male collaborators were subjected to acts of public humiliation at Liberation. Fabrice Virgili estimates that between 35 and 50 men had their heads shaved for acts such as leaving the army without permission or voluntarily working in Germany.\(^{215}\) Male head shavings targeted men’s courage and virility, and therefore did not correspond to the same sexualized accusations that were directed toward women. The difference between 50 men and 20,000 women demonstrates that the *tondues* were women and that the purges were sexualized. It will be argued below that the *tontes* can best be understood as a symbolic attack on female sexuality in which the driving force was a desire to humiliate sexually independent women rather than to punish collaborators.

Indeed, the symbolic value attributed to collaboration was often greater than the reality. Even though women only got their heads shaved and the punishments did not go as far as killing them, hair is not simply a temporal symbol of femininity. Rather, it was considered to be an incarnation of “the weapon used in horizontal collaboration.” In the department of the Oise, what remained of “opulent heads of

\(^{215}\) Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 79.
feminine hair have been sacrificed to the avenging scissors. A plentiful harvest of brown and blonde curls has been the ransom paid for the emotional and rational weaknesses of a few and shameful individuals. As one can see, to shave the head was a way of showing women to be entirely responsible for their guilt, of having them act out their betrayal.

When her hair was completely shaved off, a woman’s appearance was drastically modified, which caused the practice to become a focal point in a system involving the whole body. The fact that women were forced to undress and that their bodies were branded shifts the idea of women as collaborators to the specific role played by their bodies. The female ‘collaborator’s body was appropriated by the community, and all sexuality was henceforth forbidden. The women were sometimes forced to carry signs on their bodies, with words such as ‘we are sorry our Germans are gone,’ ‘I slept with the Boche!’, ‘I slept with the Germans,’ ‘shame on these women who are in love with the mark,’ ‘sold to the enemy,’ ‘a prostitute bearing a swastika,’ and ‘hair set in Nazi style.’ As such, the enemy and women’s sexuality were always linked. The common definition of collaboration as political took second place, while seduction and bodily collaboration took center stage.

Viewed more broadly, the female body was used to symbolize the French nation, and by claiming ownership of women’s bodies, men were taking away the act of

---

216 Unknown, *L’Oise républicaine* 10 January 1945.
218 Ibid., 186.
betrayal and cleansing France of its German disease. According to Adeline Masquelier,

The bodily surface, through its ability to transgress embodied conventions, turns out to be an effective instrument for contesting the production of moral order. Because purity and pollution suitably encompass two of the most basic and antithetical definitions of womanhood, women who cannot circumscribe their sexuality or who transgress the boundaries of domesticity to engage in male activities are often labeled dangerous, anomalous, or tainted.\textsuperscript{220}

Thus, the elimination of the German disease had a symbolic significance associated with disorder and moral impurity. The \textit{femmes tondues} were what Victor Turner calls “neophytes, a blank slate on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status.”\textsuperscript{221} The humiliations to which the neophytes are subjected represent a destruction of the previous status in order to prepare them for their new responsibilities and to restrain them from abusing the privileges of Liberation.

The act of purging the body externally was also meant to purge the women internally. The women had to be shown that they were nothing, and could be easily shaped into the ideal mother and housewife. As the \textit{femmes tondues} demonstrate, the body belongs both to the individual and to the community, and it can therefore signify inclusion in the community as well as separation or deviation from it. Until their hair grew back, the \textit{femmes tondues} were outsiders of the French nation, both as citizens and as women. A \textit{Life} magazine article from July 17 1944 on the head shavings of Corsican women explains how “the local men act on a contempt that is physical as

\textsuperscript{220} Adeline Marie Masquelier, \textit{Dirt, Undress, and Difference} (Indiana Indiana University Press, 2005), 8-13.

\textsuperscript{221} Turner, \textit{The Ritual Process}, 103.
well as patriotic. They disenfranchise the woman not only as a citizen but also as a woman.”²²² As such, their bodies remained evidence of betrayal until they could finally be reabsorbed into their communities. When Valentine Schulmeister was accused of sexual collaboration, her accuser explained: “We need to shave their hair off. That way they will not be able to hide the shame of their acts during the Occupation.”²²³ Even though sexual collaboration has been the main focus of the head shavings, the tontes were above all a specific form of punishment directed at women to remove their weapon of seduction.

A Betrayal of the Patriarchal Order

As in all historical moments that represent the transition from an old era to a new one, Liberation was also a transition from greater female participation in all sectors of society to female subordination. The Occupation was a period when masculine identity was one of the many devastated reaches of French life that had to be reconstructed. Since women could not vote or stand for election until 1944, politics were mostly a man’s world. As such, the Occupation was a male humiliation, as it represented the defeat of the political, military, and economic domains. As Michael Kelly observes, masculinity had been affected in two ways: they had been humiliated in work and war, and they failed to protect their country or their women.²²⁴ The fact that women played a significant role in both economic activities and the Resistance

---
²²³ Schulmeister, J'ai Failli Être Tondue, 102.
“It faut les tondre. Ainsi elles ne pourront pas cacher la honte de leur comportement pendant l’occupation.”
movements made the problem even more of an issue. Having failed to fulfill their major roles during the War, French male identity was plunged into crisis.\textsuperscript{225}

For most of the men at Liberation, horizontal collaboration became one of the most unbearable types of collaboration. Since the French nation is personified as a woman, such as when she is compared to Marianne or Joan of Arc, women were seen as having the capacity to transmit French identity and could assure the prosperity of their country by giving birth.\textsuperscript{226} Under these notions it was assumed that women would reserve their bodies for those men who belonged to the nation. Thus, relations between German soldiers and French women were seen as national treason. By sleeping with a German, women had failed to fulfill their assigned roles and were guilty of propagating an alien culture, language and nation. Even more catastrophic to French men, sexual collaboration made the defeat go all the way to a French man’s incapacity in the bedroom.\textsuperscript{227} Even those who still felt patriotic in the face of this were obliged to register a sense of sexual humiliation.\textsuperscript{228} Writing in 1942, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry suggested that all Frenchmen were tainted by an unavoidable feeling of being cuckolded by the war: “does a husband go from house to house crying out to his neighbors that his wife is a strumpet? Is it thus that he can preserve his honor?”\textsuperscript{229} French men thus felt justified in attacking and humiliating women who were accused of sexual collaboration.

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 120.  
\textsuperscript{226} Desmarais, \textit{Femme Tondues}. 67.  
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.  
In *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell remarks that in times of crisis, men feel a need to restore their dominant masculinity.\(^{230}\) They believe they are justified in attacking women, that they are exercising their rights, and that they are authorized by an ideology of supremacy. The struggle against the occupier followed by the Liberation allowed men to reassert their masculinity, thereby re-establishing the links between traditional gender roles in times of war.\(^{231}\) By victimizing the *femmes tondues*, men were reasserting their dominance and control over them. Women had to realize that the male patriarchal order was being reestablished. Men in France saw the *tontes* as a way to finally take action after four years of emasculation.

The head shavings were a gender-specific type of punishment that was largely imposed on the women by men. Consequently, the *tontes* serve as a way to understand the strained gender relations that have attended French society since the mid-nineteenth century. A French woman’s only role in French society was to reproduce and transmit French values to her children. Especially in times of war and crisis, as was the case after World War One and at Liberation, this ideology becomes even more crucial. The majority of the *femmes tondues* were young, single, and childless. As such, not only were they the opposite of what the “good” French woman was supposed to be, but they also dared to have sexual relations with the enemy. French men at Liberation refused to see how women had suffered during the Occupation, and used the same argument from the nineteenth century that women’s frivolity and decadence were at the root of France’s defeat. Whether a French woman

\(^{231}\) Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 240.
lived in 1890 or in 1944, her identity had to be defined by a largely male-dominated society. The *tontes* are therefore a tragic result of the dangerous and unresolved cycle of the strained gender relations in France.
Conclusion

The head shavings of female collaborators at Liberation cannot be fully comprehended without understanding how gender was construed in France in the years preceding the Occupation. From the late nineteenth century to the Vichy regime, gender relations served as a way to shape identity and power in French politics. In the nineteenth century, concerns about depopulation were primarily directed towards women, as the fertility decline was blamed on women’s decadence and selfishness. As a result, domesticity defined female identity in terms of women’s roles as mothers and wives. Gender was also used as a way to confront the war experience, which was evident in the specific roles given to men and women during World War I. Indeed, while men were strengthening France through weapons in the trenches, women were strengthening France through reproduction in the household.

During the Interwar Period, the opposing images of the mother and the “modern woman” were predominant in French political discourse. While the mother represented continuity with the past, the “modern woman” represented a rupture that brought on societal changes and a political crisis.

Like the politicians during the interwar period, Pétain also blamed women for France’s loss of power in the Western world. He believed that one of the reasons why France lost to Germany was because women were incapable of increasing France’s declining population. Pétain’s slogan of “Travail, Famille, Patrie” was viewed as a way to remedy the damage that women’s thoughtlessness had inflicted upon the Third Republic. By encouraging women to go back to the home and to have larger families, the Vichy regime hoped to restore the traditional gender relations, reinforcing the idea
that women were inherently unequal in society. However, the years of Occupation imposed a double standard for women. As men were being sent to Germany to work in factories, there were no men to support their families. Women could no longer remain at home and be devoted mothers and wives, as they needed to find ways to survive. As a result, the demands of war pushed many women out of the home and into the workforce. The reality was that Vichy’s “Travail, Famille, Patrie” provided women with reasons to collaborate, as the need to survive and maintain the image of the mother often led women to frequent the German occupants. Collaboration was therefore not just about ideology or politics. Women’s lives during the Occupation demonstrate that collaboration could also take on many other forms, such as financial and sexual collaboration. No matter the extent of their collaboration, women were guilty and would be punished for betraying France.

As such, the *tontes* at Liberation were an affirmation of male domination. The *tontes* were a form of punishment directed specifically at women. The sexist nature of the punishment was evidence of an *épuration* that was not only exclusively the result of political issues, but also the result of different perceptions of the relationships between the sexes. This can be seen by the fact that only women were accused of “horizontal collaboration,” and how their bodies were stripped and attacked. There was a shift from seeing the role of women as collaborators to the role played by their bodies. Indeed, hair was the weapon of collaboration. Therefore, collaboration took second place, while sexuality and femininity took center stage. Women had to be punished for sleeping with the enemy, as men were left feeling defiled and contaminated. This traitorous act had to be purged to make France healthy once
again. The *tontes* reflected a national purge, and were a step in the rediscovery of national identity.

The end of the Second World War and Liberation were both moments of great change in the status of French women. Women were finally granted the right to vote and to run for public office, and the Constitution of the Fourth Republic enshrined the right to work in its articles. At the same time, however, Liberation was also a time when the expectations of workers and their families needed to be met. Postwar social programs emphasized women’s family roles, and women’s right to work was implemented more as a way to help men than to provide women with true equality. Pronatalism was still heavily used in the postwar, and women were still being encouraged to have more children. As a result, instead of addressing women as citizen-individuals, they were addressed as citizen-mothers. Even though women had the universal right to vote, the fact that women were still considered reproducers made them appear as different.

By looking at how women were viewed in French society after Liberation, it becomes evident that there were not many significant changes for women in France. Despite having been granted the vote in 1944, many historians argue that Liberation was not a watershed for women. Rather, even though the Occupation was an interruption of the normal gender relations, it only served to reinforce women’s subordinate role in the postwar years. In addition, the reasons for granting women

---

233 Ibid., 273.
right to vote were often based on women’s deservedness.\textsuperscript{235} By granting them the vote, women were being rewarded for their sacrifice during the war, both as devoted wives and as members of the Resistance. Yet, if citizenship was granted based on sacrifice and being a member of the Resistance, where did this leave the \textit{femmes tondues}?

It is interesting to note that the \textit{tontes} were happening at the same time as women were being granted the right to vote. This only serves to reinforce the opposing images of women in France. However, rather than the opposition between the “modern woman” and the mother, the year 1944 saw the opposition between the \textit{femmes tondues} and the citizen.\textsuperscript{236} Many of the \textit{femmes tondues} were banned from their towns for a certain number of years, and a few were even deprived of their newly granted right to vote.\textsuperscript{237} While the \textit{femmes tondues} were political during the Occupation, the postwar years saw many of these women retreat from public life. Although one would think that the granting of the vote to women would have been a moment of celebration, the humiliation imposed on the \textit{femmes tondues} made them fearful and only served to emphasize the feeling that they were not deserving of their new rights.

As a result of these feelings, most of the \textit{femmes tondues} never wanted to speak about what happened at Liberation. The lack of evidence has made it difficult to know how they felt about the head shavings or about the Occupation and Liberation in general. As the years go by, these women are getting older and many are passing

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 484. \\
\textsuperscript{236} Virgili, \textit{Shorn Women}, 247. \\
\end{flushleft}
away, making it even more of a challenge to study and write about the tontes. Despite the lack of sources, I have tried my best to make sense of these events throughout my thesis. I hope my thesis has provided readers with a greater understanding of how important gender is to the formation of French identity, and how an event such as the tontes was the result of the tenuous relationship between the sexes. Most importantly, I hope my thesis will stimulate further research on the femmes tondues and will serve as a reminder that one should not heed to judging individuals without fully understanding their circumstances.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

. Défense de la France, 15 February 1942.
Complaint Lodged for Indecent Assault to the Épuration Committee. Hérault: Departmental Archives, 137 W 14, 5 December 1944.
Unknown. L'Oise républicaine, 10 January 1945.
———. La Savoie française, 26 August 1944.
———. Declaration Made on 10 October 1944 to the Épuration Committee Investigating Education. National Archives, F17 16734, 10 October 1944.

Secondary Sources

Duchen, Claire. When the War Was Over. Continuum International Publishing 2010.


Moore, Alison M. "History, Memory and Trauma in Photography of the Tondues." *Gender & History* 17, no. 3 (2005): 657-81.


