

Chronicling the War, Re-imagining French-ness: Memoirs of the French external Resistance

One-day workshop, University of Manchester, Friday 14 June 2019.

Keynote speaker: Prof. Guillaume Piketty (Sciences Po Paris): "The madonnas of exile: reflections on the emotional life of French external resisters".

Organisers: Dr. Charlotte Faucher (University of Manchester), Dr. Frances Houghton (University of Manchester) and Dr. Laure Humbert (University of Manchester).

The study of wartime and post-war life-writing is integral to the history of the French external Resistance, which we define broadly to include members of Free France and subsequent Gaullist committees, as well as those men and women living outside France who did not directly belong to Gaullist movements but still considered themselves as resisters (such as the Jean Jaures Group in London) or shifted from being supporters to challengers of de Gaulle (such as the Admiral Muselier or the journalist and writer Pierre Bourdan). Some resisters put pen to paper out of a desire to honor the memory of their deceased comrades and pass on their story to the next generation. Others, by contrast, refused to write their wartime stories, either in reaction to the commemorative practices of First World War *poilus* and/or the various post-war political appropriations of the Resistance (Roumette, 2014). In recent years, historians have been increasingly attentive to the silences and distortions in resisters' accounts, exploring how gendering and 'whitening' of wartime and post-war public narratives impacted on resisters' communication of their wartime experiences. Laurent Douzou has highlighted the gender-specific forms in which women's experiences within the Resistance were articulated, expressed and repressed. Likewise, Sebastien Albertelli has shown how 'shared experiences' amongst the Allies largely remained in distinct 'narrative models' that developed in each post-war national culture (Douzou, 1995; Albertelli, 2013). In addition, a growing body of scholarship has recently repositioned the personal written narrative as pivotal to understanding the subjective experience of war and identity-making (Piketty, 2009; Roper, 2010; Largeaud, 2012; Summerfield, 2018; Woodward and Jenkins, 2018; Houghton, 2019). This methodological shift is stimulating historians to explore resistant fighters' subjective experiences, retrospective remembrance, and understanding of the movement to develop the history of the French external Resistance in exciting new ways (Piketty, 2011 and 2018; Gildea, 2015; Jennings, 2014). For example, the forthcoming conference on 'E Pluribus Unum? Plurality and Identity of the Free French', organised by the Fondation de la France Libre and the Musée des Armées (November 2019, Paris), will reconsider the diversity of motivations and objectives within the various Free French social worlds and signals the important expansion of this area of study.

The aim of this one-day workshop is therefore to showcase and discuss the new approaches that historians are adopting towards the life-writing of members of the French external Resistance and Allied personnel and combatants who encountered Free French Resistance fighters during the war. Our workshop will encourage participants to reflect on the texts themselves and adopt a cultural approach to studying them, asking: How have Free French combatants and non-combatants lived, remembered, and recorded their experience of wartime combat and exile? What was the motivation for these acts of life-writing, and who were the intended audiences? If the author intended to publish their narrative, how did the publishing process shape or revise their testimony? What silences, fragilities, and creativities might shape narratives of memory of the external French Resistance fighter? In what ways did French wartime accounts of military campaigns (in the Middle East, Africa, Europe) resemble or differ from those of British and American soldiers and veterans? How far did Free French memoirs become 'sites of contest', which sought to challenge public representations

of the Second World War in France? The aims of this workshop are thus to reflect on how historians of the French external Resistance approach memoirs and histories of the self, and to facilitate discussion of creative methodologies, in order to open up productive new directions in the study of personal testimonies of the members of the French external Resistance.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- How did members of the French external Resistance express their belonging to the French nation in their personal writings? How was this belonging articulated in relation to gender, race, regional identity but also with regard to new attachments to host nations or communities (and in some cases, the imperial or colonial situation)?
- How did French external resisters communicate their affective attachments to France and home, when the latter was located in France but also when it was not? In wartime, what made their 'home' – was home an absent space, a missing set of material artefacts, or a more intangible 'feeling'?
- How did French external Resistance fighters document their presence in, and occupation of, landscapes of war? What relationship did they build with their spatial environment/s? How did they write about their fighting, and about the possibility of being wounded or even dying away from home? How did they depict the German enemy: as *Nazi*, '*boche*' and/or 'German'?
- How did individuals who were often considered at the periphery of official Resistance groups (international medics and aid workers, non-French brothers in arms, be they enlisted in the Free French Forces or members of allied units, civil servants, writers, who somewhere in the world, meet these members of the external French Resistance) record their encounters with the external French Resistance? How far did they possess a unique perspective as chroniclers of war?
- What can external resisters' accounts reveal about resisters' political, ideological, philosophical views? To what extent did their overseas experience impact on their understandings of French politics and important post-war debates about France's values and principles?

General queries and abstracts of no more than 300 words should be sent to Dr Charlotte Faucher (charlotte.faucher@manchester.ac.uk), Dr Frances Houghton (frances.houghton@manchester.ac.uk) and Dr Laure Humbert (laure.humbert@manchester.ac.uk) by 30 March 2019. Please include a brief biography outlining your research expertise as well as your name, organization/institution (if applicable), one-page CV and contact email.

Authors of proposals will be informed of the conveners' decision on their submission by 12 April 2019 and the final program will be released on 26 April 2019. The papers will be pre-circulated 3 weeks before the workshop in order to allow participants to reflect on each other's work and provide detailed and critical feedback on the day.

The workshop is generously funded by the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France as well as the Society for the Study of French history.