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Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France during the German Occupation*. New York: Picador, 2002. xx + 507 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$17.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-312-42359-4.

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With *Marianne in Chains*, Robert Gildea adds to the growing literature focusing on local histories and daily life in France during the Second World War.[1] His exhaustive study of the Loire Valley under German Occupation challenges the dominant narratives of the war years emerging after the liberation while recognizing the effects these interpretations continue to have on French society. Through work in French national, departmental, municipal, church, and German military archives, Gildea reconstructs the complex community relationships in the region to argue convincingly that the French were not simply heroic resisters, committed collaborators, or passive victims during the war. Instead, Gildea asserts, "What is most striking about the French under the Occupation is not how heroic or villainous they were but how imaginative, creative, and resourceful they were in pursuit of a better life" (p. 16).

His attempt to "break out of the straitjacket of interpretations based on the Resistance/collaboration version of events" (p. 403) is not new in and of itself. Scholars such as Philippe Burrin, John F. Sweets, and Lynne Taylor have argued for more nuanced definitions of collaboration and resistance.[2] What Gildea does is effectively show the contradictions between traditional interpretations and individual experience, the complexity of local Franco-German dynamics, the existence and flourishing of civil society during the Occupation, and the divisions within French society which all defy simple categorization as resistance or collaboration. His choice of a "typical region of occupied France" (p. 13) allows him to focus on community and ordinary French men and women in ways that cannot be done in a study of France as a whole while recognizing that each region, and even each town, experienced the war differently. The Loire Valley provides Gildea with a diverse geographical region to study including the seaport of Saint-Nazaire, cities such as Nantes, Angers, and Tours, and isolated rural villages. Socially and politically diverse, the region also provides a cross-section of French society for comparison. The result is a nuanced study that shows the diversity of daily experience under German occupation.

Gildea traces the ways the French negotiated with their German occupiers from the first days of the invasion in June 1940 until the surrender of the last troops in the Saint-Nazaire pocket on 11 May 1945, concluding that "Franco-German relations under the Occupation were not always as brutal or even as one-sided as they have often been portrayed" (p. 404). Using the term "cohabitation" to describe the relationship between the French and Germans, Gildea describes the important role of local notables in mediating between the local population, the occupying authorities, and the Vichy regime. His study goes beyond politics and discusses things such as the billeting of German soldiers on French families, commonalities between the French and Germans, sexual relationships between German troops and French women, economic transactions between the parties, and relations between the Catholic Church and the German authorities.

Gildea concludes that in the Loire Valley, where many small towns and villages never saw German troops except at the beginning and end of the Occupation, the Germans were content to allow the French to have some autonomy as long as German security was assured. Collaboration during the war meant "maintaining good relations between French and Germans, whether at the public or private

levels, in order to benefit all concerned" (p. 242). By approaching politics on the local level, Gildea discovers that some left-wing mayors remained in office and concludes that initially, "what mattered was open endorsement of the regime and tested authority over the local population" (p. 168) rather than political affiliation. With the Russian entrance into the war and the subsequent rise in Communist Resistance activity, Gildea traces the shift from "indirect rule" to rule by *Diktat*. While Gildea provides persuasive evidence to support his argument that the shift in the Loire Valley came with the assassination of the *Feldkommandant* of Nantes in October 1941, his claim that June 1941 was a fundamental turning point in Franco-German relations is not supported fully. A synthesis of local studies and the shift from the negotiation to the imposition of terms in each area is needed to learn when both the Germans and the French became more repressive.

The increase in armed resistance after 1941 not only changed Franco-German relations, but also affected French police actions against the country's own people. Gildea examines administrative reactions to demonstrations and to "sinners" including Gypsies, foreigners, Jews, Communists, and Freemasons. In order to appease the Germans and maintain "indirect rule," French authorities initially responded to armed resistance with a stronger commitment to collaboration. As Gildea shows, however, attacks on German troops changed the nature of collaboration and led to more terror. French police forces began doing the "dirty work of the SS" (p. 255) in its attempt to maintain autonomy and Jews were soon included on the list of hostages to be shot in reprisal for assaults on the Germans. Gildea compares the experience of Communists with that of Jews in order to understand administrative and popular attitudes towards both groups. Much of what Gildea outlines is not new information: the French police were "enthusiastic stooges of the German police" (p. 257) during roundups, the majority of the population reacted with indifference to *raffles*, and indifference turned to shock when Jewish children and parents were separated during the deportation process. His study is more illuminating on the roundups that occurred in the Occupied Zone on 15-16 July 1942, one day before the *Vel d'Hiver* roundups in Paris. 824 Jews were deported directly from Angers to Auschwitz on 20 July 1942 and 201 of them were French. Rather than exempting French Jews as was done in Paris and many other regions, authorities in the Loire Valley made no distinction between French and foreign Jews, and by the end of October prefects throughout the region reported there were no Jews left in their departments.

Gildea's treatment of the Jews in his book is a problematic aspect of his study. He concludes that the general public lost interest in the fate of the Jews because the Gestapo began to arbitrarily arrest "ordinary" French citizens. While arrests of prominent community leaders such as teachers, right-wing leaders, or shopkeepers certainly added to the atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, Gildea's statement that "everybody was at risk: they were all Jews now" (p. 270) ignores significant differences in policies towards Gentiles and Jews. Perhaps the general population no longer publicly voiced their disapproval because they no longer saw Jews being arrested as most of them had already been deported. In the chapter on "Sinners," Gildea uses a few examples of economic Aryanization to assert, "Anti-Semitism, the evidence firmly shows, was not confined to the Vichy regime" (p. 228). Few would question that there were anti-Semites outside the Vichy administration. A brief mention in the "Terror" chapter of assistance from non-Jews which allowed some Jews to escape the roundups suggests that anti-Semitism also failed to fully take hold. A fuller discussion of anti-Semitism in the region including the forms it took beyond Aryanization, its limits, the difference in attitudes towards French and foreign Jews, and distinctions between ideological, religious, economic, and self-interested anti-Semitism would strengthen this aspect of Gildea's study.

While the discussion of Jews is missing some details, this may be attributed to one of the strengths of the book. Gildea is careful not to ignore any group living in the Loire Valley, and there is a nuanced discussion of the many divisions within society. Rather than focusing solely on resisters versus collaborators, or local authorities and the German occupiers, the author has also included urban-rural

tensions, problems among refugees and host communities, and differences between charitable organizations. The Catholic Church, POWs, women, workers, peasants, Communists, Jews, Germans, notables, and youth are all groups that appear repeatedly in the text. His attention to social groups is commendable, but understandably some experts may find details lacking. Overall, this does not take away from the effectiveness of the book, but rather adds to the texture Gildea hopes to achieve in his “account of what the German Occupation was like in the small towns and villages of France” (p. 12).<sup>[3]</sup>

Central to the author’s discussion of these groups is the definition of morality during the war. Throughout the book, Gildea demonstrates that the residents of the Loire Valley created their own definitions of morality under the Occupation that differed from the definitions imposed after the Liberation. He concludes that “Informal rules were devised by the French governing what was legitimate and what illegitimate in Franco-German relations. As a rule of thumb, actions that undermined the family, community, or nation were illegitimate” (p. 405). But certain allowances were made. A factory could accept German contracts as long as the employer did not force workers to go to Germany or to work too zealously. Small exchanges on the black market showed the ability of the French to get by while larger profiteering was viewed as immoral. A Frenchman or woman could have a drink with a German or flirt with one, but inviting one to dinner or having an affair was generally frowned upon.<sup>[4]</sup> By continuing the story of the war years into the post-Liberation period, Gildea is able to trace these differences and the ways morality was defined differently in both periods. He also explores the political ruptures and continuities through post-war election patterns and discusses the joys, disappointments, and continuing memories of the war.

Gildea’s study does not end with his chapter “Liberation” or even with the following chapter, “Disappointment.” One of the many strengths of the book is the lengthy chapter on “Memories.” The use of oral history and interviews throughout *Marianne in Chains* provides the reader with a richness and insights often unavailable in other sources. Aware of the hesitancy of some to accept oral history, Gildea discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the source in the introduction. Through approximately fifty interviews with French men and women who experienced the Occupation, the author finds the ruptures in carefully constructed stories and it is these ruptures that most interest him. By skillfully combining the interviews with his extensive archival research, Gildea makes a significant contribution to our understanding of civil society during the war.

One of the most interesting places where we see this rupture between the dominant narrative and individual memories is in the discussion of civil society, associative life, and entertainment opportunities. Gildea found associations for sports, games, gardening, reading, music, mutual aid, charity, foreigners, agriculture, and trade unions throughout the towns and villages in the Loire region. The chapter dedicated to these associations (“Circuses”) and other forms of entertainment including clandestine dances, the cinema, and hunting supports his argument that “the monolithic concept of *les années noires* needs to be nuanced” (p. 408). Rather than seeing the “poor French” suffering from cold, hunger, and fear—a theme that has emerged in recent historiography—Gildea demonstrates the ways in which civil society flourished and “ordinary French life continued under the Occupation” (p. 140).<sup>[5]</sup> Again, his archival work is supported in this chapter by the memories of men and women who spent their youth under occupation, as well as in the chapter on “Memories.” Gildea is careful to not go too far, however. He shows the nuances and contradictions in daily life without ever losing sight of the brutality of the Occupation and the hardships and deprivations of the war years. Instead, we learn that despite the heartbreak, dangers, hunger, and fear, there were opportunities for creativity and ingenuity, and for life to go on.

The result of Gildea’s research is a well-written, well-supported, and even-handed examination of the war years in one French region. He asks us to go beyond the dominant myths of collaboration,

resistance, and victimization and provides a view into daily life that demonstrates the multiplicity of experiences and the complexity of the Occupation. Readers will gain details about life in the Loire Valley and the ways French society adapted to and survived the Second World War.

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## NOTES

[1] See the local studies of John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi Occupation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at War: Religion, Politics, and Public Opinion in the Gard, 1938-1944* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); and Lynne Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration: Popular Protest in Northern France, 1940-45* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000). For daily life, see, especially, Dominique Veillon, *Vivre et survivre en France 1939-1947* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1995).

[2] Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise*, translated by Janet Lloyd (New York: The New Press, 1996); John F. Sweets "Hold that Pendulum! Redefining Fascism, Collaborationism and Resistance in France" *French Historical Studies* 15:4 (Fall 1988): 731-58; Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration*. See also part two in Sarah Fishman, et. al. eds., *France at War: Vichy and the Historians* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000).

[3] For scholars and students interested in more focused studies on particular groups, Gildea's endnotes and bibliography provide references to these works. For example, on the Church, Michèle Cointet, *L'Église sous Vichy, 1940-1945* (Paris: Perrin, 1998) and W.D. Halls, *Politics, Society, and Christianity in Vichy France* (Oxford and Providence: Berg, 1995); on POWs and women, see Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991); on women and gender, Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy et l'éternel féminin* (Paris: Seuil, 1996) and Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); on youth, Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) and Fishman, *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime, and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[4] Megan Koreman's study of the Liberation also shows how local ideas of justice and morality differed from the national government. See *The Expectation of Justice: France, 1944-1946* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

[5] Gildea cites Veillon, *Vivre et survivre*; Henry Rousso, *Les Années noires: Vivre sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); Jean-Pierre Azéma and François Bédarida, *La France des années noires*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1993); and Julian Jackson, *The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) as examples of the use of the "Dark Years" and "poor French."

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