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The Infected Republic:  
Damaged Masculinity in French Political Journalism  
1934-1938

Emily Ringler

Submitted for Honors in the Department of History

April 30, 2010

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## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1935, the Paris correspondent of the British newspaper the *Manchester Guardian* lamented that it was “no exaggeration to say that this summer will rank as one of the most disgraceful episodes in the history of French newspapers.”<sup>1</sup> This was indeed a serious allegation, for since the *ancien régime*, France has been home to a notoriously hostile, vigorous and highly partisan national press. Known for its use of visceral language and its complex network of allegiances, the French press often rendered the notion of objective reporting all but irrelevant. Yet as contemporary outside observers noted, the situation in the mid 1930s was a new low.

A 1939 article in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* discussed the failure of press reforms in France, noting that despite overwhelming evidence of dubious journalism and blatant libel, the reform movement would never succeed, for it was “victim in large part of political factionalism and of a press which did not relish the idea of being reformed.”<sup>2</sup> The reforms, proposed on November 26, 1936, would have modified the original press laws of 1881 that guaranteed liberty of the press, tightening regulations and increasing fines and prison terms for libel and defamation. This was primarily a response to the suicide in 1936 of the Interior Minister Roger Salengro, which was blamed on the relentless and often outrageous attacks against him in certain extreme right wing newspapers.<sup>3</sup>

However, the suicide of an important French leader was only one incident in an era marred by scandals, corruption and political instability, and while the French press across the political spectrum certainly stretched the limits of objective reporting and journalistic ethics, in such a heated environment sensationalism was in some ways difficult to avoid. By the 1930s, the Third Republic, established after the fall of the Second Empire in 1871, was France’s longest running government since

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Joseph J. Mathews, “Death of Press Reform in France,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (July 1939): 412.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 416. Blum’s press bill also called for the publication of the names of newspaper owners and the newspapers’ sources of income and required them to become share-holding companies subject to examination by government accountants. Roger Salengro was falsely accused of having deserted during World War I, sparking the “affaire Salengro” that ultimately resulted in his suicide.

the *ancien régime*, but its unity was tenuous and its ability to respond to both domestic crises and foreign threats was increasingly doubtful. Though the Depression struck later in France than in other European countries, it hit France in 1931, causing serious unemployment, decreased tax revenue and economic stagnation.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, republican politics were in a deadlock. In 1932 centrist and left-leaning parties held a sizeable parliamentary majority. However, the political party of the center/center-left, the Radical Socialist party (commonly referred to as the Radicals), was trapped in a state of “political schizophrenia”<sup>5</sup> that resulted in seemingly endless government bickering and floundering. This was because the Radicals, though traditionally staunchly Republican, had grown increasingly economically and socially conservative during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, they continued to align themselves with other left-wing parties due to their sentimental attachment to leftist values, despite their inability to reach any kind of political consensus with the left, represented primarily by the Socialist Party (SFIO)<sup>6</sup>. The SFIO, for its part, was unwilling to break with the Radicals for fear of letting in a right-wing government. The result was legislative stagnation, a center-left government that did almost nothing to fight the depression, and five ineffective coalition governments in less than two years.<sup>7</sup>

To make matters worse, the government was embroiled in the Stavisky Affair, a case of blatant corruption in which politicians suspiciously covered up the crimes of a financial swindler, Alexandre Stavisky. This scandal galvanized right wing anti-parliamentary groups and caused the government of Radical Camille Chautemps to resign on January 27, 1934. On February 6, paramilitary *Ligues de droit* (right wing leagues) gathered at the Place de la Concorde in Paris in response to the newly formed government of his successor, Radical Edouard Daladier. A bloody riot broke out, killing fifteen people and wounding over a thousand. The next day, Daladier resigned, the first time a government was

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<sup>4</sup> Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-38* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 20-1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> SFIO stands for *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*

<sup>7</sup> Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, 4.

brought down by street violence in the over 60 years of the Third Republic.<sup>8</sup> Many on the left saw the February riots as a sign that France was going to collapse or succumb to fascism, and responded with renewed unity. French communists and socialists put aside their many differences, and on July 14, 1935, a massive demonstration orchestrated by the Communist Party (PCF) and the SFIO, but supported by the Radicals, marked the birth of the Popular Front, the coalition composed of these three parties.<sup>9</sup>

In May 1936, the Popular Front easily won the elections, and Léon Blum became the first socialist President of France in June. During the next month and a half his government passed several major pieces of workers' rights legislation that are still in place today, and banned the growing right wing leagues. Yet success would be short-lived. Three days after a massive leftist celebration on Bastille Day, the Spanish Popular Front was overthrown by the military and Spain disintegrated into a bloody civil war, deeply dividing the French Popular Front. From then on, left-wing unity was tenuous and increasingly elusive; Blum resigned a year later in June 1937, and the subsequent governments headed by Radicals until the German invasion failed to unify the left in meaningful ways. All the while the burgeoning extreme right wing attracted more and more members as moderate conservative parties grew increasingly irrelevant.

Thus between 1934 and 1938, journals were operating in a climate of high passions, domestic instability, complex political maneuvering, and increasing foreign threats of war. In this context, newspapers on the left and the right sought to express warnings of France's decline into chaos, often mobilizing the medical discourse of contagion and infection, and their inventive efforts resulted in the sensationalist discourse that ushered in calls for press reform. For example, in 1934 the far right wing

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 7. It is important to note that this unity would not have been possible had it not been for the efforts of the PCF. In 1935, the Comintern dramatically shifted its position on political coalitions and decided that communists could align with other left wing parties in parliamentary states to combat fascism. Following this decision, it was the PCF much more than the SFIO that courted Radicals and brought together the Popular Front. Yet though they held 72 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 1936, they did not join the cabinet of Léon Blum, and his government's refusal to aid Spanish republicans infuriated them and in December 1936 they abstained in a vote of no-confidence, effectively announcing their refusal to support the Popular Front. (Jackson, 9-10).

journal *Gringoire* summarized the state of France as such: “Here is the truth... We are paying for the nauseating return of the glorious survivors of the great adventure. We are paying for... jazz-nudists, cocktail orgies, gangster films, bailed-out tricksters...old *garçonnes*, red turkeys, literary pederasts and cheap drugs.”<sup>10</sup> *Gringoire* was one of many *hebdomadaires*, weekly journals that generally had more intellectual or literary leanings and more forcefully and imaginatively promoted specific political positions. Thus they were often more extremist than daily newspapers.

So for this thesis, I look at four such journals—far right wing *Gringoire* and *Je suis partout*, and leftist *Vendredi* and *Marianne*—and examine the different ways in which they mobilized the well-worn political symbol of damaged masculinity in order to articulate their unique fears and anxieties. From the inception of the Third Republic, constructed symbols of ideal and deviant masculinity played a critical role in political and popular discourse. My central argument focuses on how they manifest themselves in the debates of polarized political journalism of the 1930s. Leftist and far right wing publications both emphasized the damaged masculinity of their enemies. However, the left primarily used crowd psychology to describe the right as irrational, effeminate and homosexual, while the right focused the notion of an infiltrating Other to highlight the weakness, impotency and unhealthy body of the left and the Third Republic as a whole. Key to both representations is a very physical definition of masculinity. Indeed, the threatening degradations of the male body portrayed in the journals reflect a larger discourse on infection and disease that has deep roots in the divisions that plagued the Third Republic from its inception. Though their focus and tone vary greatly, all four journals use damaged masculinity as a means of articulating the fear of contagion, infection, eroding boundaries and collapsing structure in mid 1930s France. This lexicon constitutes a means of conveying a tone of degeneration and disintegration in French politics.

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<sup>10</sup> Henri Beraud, “L’Oeuf,” *Gringoire*, April 20, 1934.



The political uses of masculine imagery in Republican France have been studied by many historians, notably Robert A. Nye, Christopher Forth, Judith Surkis and Mary Louise Roberts.<sup>11</sup> While all of their works provide valuable insight into how the relationship between politics and male sexuality developed during the Third Republic, they generally do not focus on its final years, though Surkis does devote some attention to venereal disease in the 1930s. In this sense, I will apply their analyses of masculinity to *Gringoire*, *Je suis partout*, *Vendredi* and *Marianne* and use them to establish the historical context of the discourse of deviant or damaged masculinity in these journals. Additionally, I will focus more on the role of damaged masculinity as a journalistic symbol of infection. Though several historians including Nye do address this usage in a general sense, they do not discuss its role in the singularly volatile political journalism of the mid 1930s.

With regards to this time period and its charged nature however, there is no lack of scholarship. The historiography of this highly unstable, complex moment in French history is divided and complicated, particularly with regards to the extreme French right. Indeed, its connection with fascism and the mythical status of some of its most notorious members—men like Céline, Brasillach and Drieu La Rochelle—have made it one of the most contentiously debated aspects of 20<sup>th</sup> century French history. Because the journalism of the French far right was a critical aspect of its extremism and uniquely vehement, it plays an integral role in the polarized historiography of French fascism. However, while it is a critical subject, I would suggest that this debate has veered somewhat off course in its continual focus on—and in some cases obsession with—this one aspect of extreme right wing journalism. This thesis will therefore use journalistic representations of masculinity as a medium to

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<sup>11</sup> See Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), and *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), and “Enemies Within: Venereal Disease and the Defense of French Masculinity Between the Wars,” in eds. Christopher Forth and Bertrand Taithe, *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 103-122; Christopher Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), and “La Civilisation and its Discontents: Modernity, Manhood and the Body in the Early Third Republic” in *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics*; and Mary Louis Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

establish a more comparative approach that seeks to avoid the divisive and tired issue of fascism's role in the extreme right. Rather, it will reframe right wing journalism in the context of the larger journalistic spectrum, an approach that is generally ignored.

This is partly because right wing journalism in the 1930s was more creative, biting and disturbing than that of the left wing. Leftist party organs such as the communist *L'Humanité* and the socialist *Le Populaire* generally adhered rather strictly to party lines, which made them more earnest and dry. However, less rigid weeklies like *Vendredi* and *Marianne* used masculinity in very interesting ways to attack the right. So I believe that there is a valuable comparison to be made between their rhetoric and far right wing discourse, contributing to understanding of how journalists at both ends of the political spectrum perceived and articulated the crises in France in the 1930s.

In order to make this comparison, the thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter uses secondary sources to address the evolution of understandings of ideal and deviant masculinity in the Third Republic, their political implications, and how they relate to the notion of infection. While often not directly related to the 1930s, establishing this narrative is critical because as I will argue, masculinity held a highly important symbolic place in the Third Republic that requires a detailed definition in order to make sense of the political symbolism in journals of the 1930s. The second chapter discusses representations of damaged masculinity on the far right in *Je suis partout* and *Grignoire*, while the final chapter deals with leftist imagery and discourse in *Vendredi* and *Marianne*. Because there is almost no scholarship comparing the left and the right for this time period, I will discuss the specific historiographies of each movement in more detail in these chapters.

CHAPTER I  
Constructing and Dismantling Ideals of French Masculinity in the Third Republic

*Man and Republic: the Gendering of Citizenship*

In 1899, French republican Ferdinand Buisson, the director of Primary Education in the Third Republic from 1879 to 1896, wrote that the Republic, like an adolescent boy, was “formed but still weak,” requiring “a hygienic regimen that will lend it blood, flesh and muscles” in order to prosper.<sup>12</sup> His assessment inextricably bound the healthy growth of men with the development of a strong, stable French Republic, and aptly captures the fundamental role of gender and the body, particularly masculinity, in the construction of the new republican state. This role has been so well studied that there is a tendency among some historians to see masculinity as uniquely important to France. Indeed, French masculinity was a dominant theme in the Third Republic, but writing about it inevitably requires addressing specific methodological challenges unique to the study of French history.

More than any other country, (except maybe the United States), France has over time developed mythical public narratives of its greatest and darkest moments. From the fall of the Bastille and the executions of Danton and Robespierre, to the Dreyfus Affair, to Vichy and the Resistance, charged moments and themes became French legends that historians have naturally felt obligated to demystify. While Vichy is probably the archetype of this on-going revisionism, it also plays a key role in the historiography of masculinity in the Third Republic, and as I have previously suggested, in debates about fascism in France. While undoubtedly important, I would argue that these particular revisionist narratives are in some ways limited by their continual preoccupation with the original myths. Because of this they become trapped in a sort of vortex of demystification that dictates the nature of their conclusions. Therefore, I use an approach that recognizes and narrates the symbolic role of masculinity in the Third Republic without dwelling on demystification. Thus in this chapter I will

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<sup>12</sup> Ferdinand Buisson, "Le devoir présent de la jeunesse," (1899) in Judith Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 30. Note – all translations in this chapter are made by the author of the secondary source, unless otherwise indicated.

use secondary sources to outline key elements of the construction and dismantling of ideals of masculinity in the Third Republic.

In the context of republican *laïcité* and the increasing legitimacy of modern medicine in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France, hygiene and the idealized healthy body became symbols of the moral health of French society as a whole. As Deputy Martin Nadaud proclaimed in 1888, “I have always remarked that men who keep themselves clean, like those who devote themselves to their work, are nearly all good citizens and heads of households.”<sup>13</sup> Here, physical health, gender norms and citizenship are effortlessly merged, demonstrating the fundamental role of sexuality and gender as political and social symbols in the Third Republic. The state actively promoted prescribed roles for men and women as embodiments of the ideals and responsibilities of citizenship.

This state-sponsored set of virtues was pushed most forcefully in the reformed education system of the Third Republic, but it appeared throughout the public sphere as a means of representing what it meant to be a citizen of the Republic. In the classroom but also in the burgeoning fields of public health, sanitation and psychology, as well as in traditional domains of the state such the military, I argue that a specific set of virtues—reason, honor and restraint—represented both the ideal citizen and the ideal man. This merging of citizenship and masculinity would have a profound effect on notions of masculinity in the decades to come and dictate its use as a symbol in the public sphere.

As Judith Surkis has argued, republican education reformers believed in a liberal education model as a key means of promoting “emancipated, heterosexual masculinity.”<sup>14</sup> This was to be constructed in opposition to the deviant, damaged masculinity inadvertently cultivated in the education system of the Second Empire, both in its confessional primary schools for the lower classes and the *internats*, secondary schools for the upper classes. These military-style boarding schools established

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Nadaud, Remarks made in the Chamber of Deputies on January 25, 1888 in Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 44.

<sup>14</sup> Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 48.

under Napoleon III to educate the elite were known for their harsh, authoritarian discipline and they were increasingly scrutinized for their negative social and psychological effects on boys, the future citizens of the Republic. For critics, their authoritarianism rendered boys either entirely submissive or unreasonably rebellious, and their complete segregation of the sexes inevitably resulted in homosexual deviance.<sup>15</sup> As Surkis argues, this “devirilized excess” produced men “incapable of self-administration and hence proper manhood and citizenship.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus for republicans, a certain reasoned, restrained masculinity was valued over both the effeminate passivity and hyper masculinity cultivated under authoritarian order. As journalist for *Le Temps* wrote in 1889, the goal of public education should be “to prepare the youths of our *collèges* and *lycées* for the free life of a citizen, for the full and active life of the man who is really a man.”<sup>17</sup> In this sense, ideal masculinity was characterized by reason and a certain degree of intellectualism, especially for the bourgeois students of the *lycées*. Christopher Forth has pointed out that liberal and republican politicians and philosophers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “articulated a model of civic manhood largely predicated on reason and morality,”<sup>18</sup> and Annelise Maugeue writes, “intellectual activity unquestionably seems constitutive of male identity.”<sup>19</sup>

However, for the leaders of the Third Republic, constructing this vision of ideal masculinity and citizenship extended beyond the *internat*, the sphere of the social and political elite. The March 28, 1882 law on educational reforms introduced profound changes to primary education intended for the often-volatile working classes, whose men had voting rights in the Third Republic. At the heart of

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<sup>15</sup> Henri Saint-Claire Deville, "L'internat et son influence sur l'éducation et l'instruction de la jeunesse" in *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 48. In *La réforme de l'enseignement secondaire* (1874). Jules Simon, the Minister of Public Instruction in Adolph Thiers' cabinet, aptly summarized Republican objections to the *internats*, writing, “Ten years of this regime [the *internat*] makes men who either abandon themselves to excess, or become excessively rebellious; and there, perhaps, is the psychology of France.” (*Ibid.*, 79).

<sup>17</sup> "Commission enseignement secondaire," *Le Temps* (19 November 1889), in *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher E. Forth, “La Civilisation and its Discontents: Modernity, Manhood and the Body in the Early Third Republic,” in *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 86.

<sup>19</sup> Annelise Maugeue, *L'identité masculine en crise au tournant du siècle : 1871-1914* (Paris ; Marseille: Editions Rivages, 1987), 32-3. (Translation mine).

these reforms was the implementation of free, secular and mandatory public primary education, effectively wresting control of education from the Catholic Church and asserting the right of the state to educate its citizens.<sup>20</sup>

The government sought to use education as a means of indoctrinating children in republican citizenship and promoting the gendered virtues associated with it. Similar to the model proposed for the *internats*, the 1882 law advocated liberal, as opposed to authoritarian, forms of instruction and discipline, particularly in the areas of moral and civic education. As stated earlier, this would produce citizens of the Republic possessing moral self-reliance, reason and restraint, rather than the effeminate blind submission to religious authority or deviant, unruly, hyper masculine rebellion against it seen in the confessional education system of the Second Empire.<sup>21</sup> Because to become a man was also to become a citizen, the educational reforms, both of the elite secondary schools and the primary schools, highlight the vision of masculinity that the state sought to realize in all boys and men as citizens of the nation.

However, promoting the vision of ideal masculinity extended beyond education. The state also sought to redefine the army and conscription in a way that conformed to republican masculine norms and combated the forms of sexual deviance commonly associated with military service in the Second Empire, such as rampant venereal disease and homosexuality in the barracks. The Third Republic marked the rise of the citizen-soldier and the notion of “correspondence between a republican ideal of citizenship and the readiness to bear arms in its defense.”<sup>22</sup> Several laws reforming military service, particularly with regards to conscription, were passed before the Great War, and in a general sense,

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<sup>20</sup> Jules Ferry, "Lettre adressée aux instituteurs" (17 November 1883), in Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Morgan, "Militarism and Anti-Militarism: Socialists, Communists and Conscription in France and Britain 1900–1940," *Past and Present* 202 (February 2009): 213.

they sought to reintroduce *fraternité* and *égalité* into the French military.<sup>23</sup> Like the soldiers of the *levée en masse* during the French Revolution, the army of the Third Republic was supposed to be the (masculine) embodiment of the nation, and for this it needed to be strong, healthy and virtuous. In this sense, “the guardians of the Republic, the all-male community of citizen soldiers, had an exceptional status that conferred exceptional responsibilities.”<sup>24</sup> Here again masculinity and citizenship are utterly inextricable, which both reaffirms the exclusively masculine nature of republican citizenship, and places republican virtues such as reason at the heart of masculinity, even in the context of military discipline. At least in theory, during the Third Republic the loss of individual freedom to the collectivity of the army was no longer a symptom of blind obedience, but rather a mark of civic responsibility.

### *Deviance and Degenerates in the Third Republic*

In this sense, if the ideal soldier was the guardian and embodiment of Republican citizenship, the corrupt soldier was a potent symbol of threats to the Third Republic. Whether it was the syphilitic young man of the barracks tempted by prostitution or the alcoholic, diseased colonial soldier dying in the jungles of West Africa, negative images of military masculinity articulated underlying fears about the strength of France, particularly in relation to its highly militarized neighbor and rival, Germany.<sup>25</sup> In a larger sense, if the state actively promoted images of healthy, ideal masculinity represented by the values of reason, honor and restraint, it also mobilized representations of damaged masculinity to highlight the dangers facing the Third Republic. Conversely, these images of deviant and degenerate sexuality were increasingly used to attack the very nature of republican rule and values. Whether it was

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<sup>23</sup> For a history of military reforms in the early Third Republic, see David B. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic: The Place of the Military in the Political Evolution of France, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967).

<sup>24</sup> Kevin Morgan, “Militarism and Anti-Militarism: Socialists, Communists and Conscription in France and Britain 1900–1940,” 109.

<sup>25</sup> See Robert Aldrich, “Colonial Man,” in Christopher E. Forth and Bertrand Taithe, eds., *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 123-140.

the *bachelier* or the *déraciné*, the syphilitic or the vagabond, images that defied the norm of healthy, conjugal sexuality symbolized more than the consequences of damaged masculinity. Threats to the male body represented threats to citizenship and the fate of the French nation. In this context, damaged masculinity was both the perceived cause of the Republic's major issues, and a potent, easily recognizable symbol of the much more complex political problems threatening late 19<sup>th</sup> century France. This cyclical use of representations of damaged masculinity assured its role as a well-established political symbol during the Third Republic.

In *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France*, Robert A. Nye has traced the rise of criminology in the Third Republic and its role in politics of the time. He argues that central to understanding of this concept was the notion of degeneration. Integrating biology, psychology, sociology and morality, it paved the way for male sexuality to become a central preoccupation of the Third Republic. In a general sense, degeneration developed as a means of theorizing the array of social changes that accompanied modernization, from mechanization, urbanization and industrialization, to individual isolation and disease pathology. A clinician named Valentin Magnan was primarily responsible for the definition of the theory. Immensely important, the doctrines that resulted from his work and the work of his contemporaries were the “controlling paradigm in French and European mental medicine from the early 1880s until the eve of World War I.”<sup>26</sup> Magnan wrote that degeneration was:

A pathological state of the organism which, in relation to its most immediate progenitors, is constitutionally weakened in its psychophysical resistance and only realizes in part the biological conditions of the hereditary struggle for life. That weakening, which is revealed in permanent stigmata, is essentially progressive, with only intervening regeneration; when this is lacking, it leads more or less rapidly to the extinction of the species.<sup>27</sup>

His definition emphasizes the role of disease and pathological environments in the formation of so-called degenerates and stipulates that only intervention can prevent an otherwise inevitable

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<sup>26</sup> Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Valentin Magnan and Paul-Maurice LeGrain, *Les Dégénérés* (Paris: Rueff, 1895), in *Ibid.*, 124.



deterioration of society, thus justifying the state's active role in issues relating to hygiene, psychology and sexuality.<sup>28</sup> It also explains the political implications of individual sickness. (physical or psychological), and environmental contagions in French society.

In addition to fueling the study of criminology and the pathology of social diseases, degeneration theory was also applied to several issues related directly to male sexuality, particularly the perceived crisis of depopulation and the spread of syphilis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. I will now briefly examine these issues and the images of masculinity—the *bachelier*, the *déraciné*, the syphilitic, etc.—that came to be associated with them and the degeneration of the Republic as a whole.

“Man is born for sexual union and society induces him to remain for a long time, or definitively, single,” claimed the famous demographer Arsène Dumont in 1902.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the high premium placed on intellectual development as a key component of ideal masculinity had its consequences for certain French men. These so-called *bacheliers*, men whose prolonged and diligent study excluded them from married life, were most often represented in the figure of the *fonctionnaire*, the bureaucrat confined to a sedentary existence devoid of honor in a meaningless urban landscape of departments and offices. As Christopher Forth explains, the state functionary, “if not rendered impotent as a result of his professional life,” still contributed to depopulation, because his “career ambitions would surely encourage him to postpone or forego having children.”<sup>30</sup>

Thus for many republicans, ideals of masculinity were inherently contradictory. *Fonctionnaires*, men educated in a secular system designed to promote reason, honor and restraint, “incarnated... a degraded class paradoxically produced by the republican state itself... Cramped behind desks, deprived of proper lighting, forced to carry out monotonous tasks, the health of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>29</sup> Arsène Dumont, “Rapport sur l'âge au mariage et son influence sur la natalité, in Commission de la dépopulation: Sous-commission de la natalité (1902), in Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 116.

<sup>30</sup> Forth, “La Civilisation and its Discontents: Modernity, Manhood and the Body in the Early Third Republic,” 93.

‘intellectual proletariat’ was precarious.”<sup>31</sup> Novelist and journalist Henry Bérenger referred to their situation as lacking “force of vital resistance.”<sup>32</sup> In this context, the human representatives of the republican state became symbols of abnormal sexual behavior and unhealthy bodies.

Indeed, from the outset of the Third Republic, political opponents used popular images of deviant or damaged masculinity to attack the Republic itself. Maurice Barrès in his 1897 novel *Les déracinés* (the “uprooted ones”) provides an excellent example of this trend. A right-wing conservative and anti-Dreyfusard, Barrès, like left-wing intellectuals, criticized the emasculating effects of the *internats* and believed that they produced either submissive or aggressively over-sexualized deviants. However, for Barrès the critique went much further. Not only the *internats*, but also the republican education system literally “uprooted” boys by severing them from their family and filial devotion, depriving them of honor and worth. A romantic nationalist, Barrès believed in “devotion to a group that exceeded the singular self” and argued that this was undermined by the “rationalist individualism” of the Republic. For him, the sexual deviance and dysfunction of the *déracinés* was “a symptom of both the egotism *and* homogenizing universalism, the liberty and equality, theoretically propagated by republican educational philosophy.”<sup>33</sup>

Here, it is evident that Barrès, liberal and left wing intellectuals disagreed on the fundamental cause of the perpetually single, impotent man devoid of honor. However, they generally agreed on the symptom, and whether their preferred symbol of it was the *bachelier* or the *déraciné*, the image of the degenerate man who eschewed conjugality took on profound political implications in the context of the ongoing preoccupation with depopulation. Here, it is important to distinguish between the notion of the symptom and the disease. For the left and the right, the celibate, doughy, pasty *fonctionnaires* were a negative image, lacking the reason of the *intellectuel*, the strength of the *ouvrier*, or the deep roots of

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<sup>31</sup> Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 111-2.

<sup>32</sup> Henry Bérenger, "La crise du fonctionnarisme en France," in *Les prolétaires intellectuelles en France*, ed. Henry Bérenger (1901), in *Ibid.*, 112..

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

the *paysan*. However, while both sides saw damaged masculinity as a symptom of a larger infection, they did not agree on its pathology. This notion of using comparable symptoms to describe different infections—that is, mobilizing the same imagery to represent fundamentally divergent problems—is critical to understanding the complex role of masculinity as a political symbol and its usage across the political spectrum in the 1930s.

Indeed, their concerns were not unfounded, because demographic statistics did indicate substantial population stagnation during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. While in Germany the population grew by 58 percent from 1872 to 1911, the French population grew by only 10 percent, or 3.5 million, from 36 to 39.5 million people. The birthrate, which stood at 32/1000 per year in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, had fallen to only 20/1000 by the Great War.<sup>34</sup> Considering the demographic catastrophe of the war, this concern for depopulation developed into a major public crisis in the last two decades of the Third Republic. Yet the war merely exacerbated what had already been a major source of concern. Though the crisis may have been overblown at times, the fact is that French population growth really was declining well before the war. And because it fit so perfectly into the framework of degeneration theory, combating depopulation was a priority in Third Republic social policy from the outset. This explains the significant attention devoted to promoting conjugal masculinity as a means of reversing the degeneration of the population.

“Doctors and others in the French political and intellectual elite made use of the medical idea of degeneration to conceptualize the problems the nation faced after 1848,” writes Robert A. Nye. More than individual ills, “suicide and crime, alcoholism, mental illness, venereal disease, and even tuberculosis [were] the behavioral and organic symptoms of a degeneracy infecting the whole population.” Following Valentin Magnan’s definition of degeneration, “Inasmuch as every pathology

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<sup>34</sup> Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 77.

was both a symptom of the national disease *and* a cause of future hereditary decline, there was a perfect circularity in individual and collective disease metaphors, a *grande ronde* of causation.”<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, the sexual abnormality of an individual man was both a symbol of larger, more complex social and political problems, and simultaneously a product of that general societal weakness and decay. In this context, combating deviance and promoting ideals of masculinity and male sexuality were primary concerns of the Third Republic, particularly with regards to reversing this demographic stagnation. As Surkis argues, “Concerns about the birthrate wove together internal and external politics in such a way that domestic problems—and quite literally those related to the family—were directly linked to France’s ability to perpetuate itself in an international arena.”<sup>36</sup> Nye argues that this took on particular significance in the context of France’s continual preoccupation with its status relative to Germany during the Third Republic. France “as it used to be” and contemporary France as it compared to Germany were so often juxtaposed that “no judgment about the stature of France could be made without some reference to the relative stature” of Germany, and the German threat was perceived as the primary evidence of French decadence and decline.<sup>37</sup> In this sense deviant male sexuality was a problem of international politics and prestige that would perhaps culminate in Maréchal Pétain’s infamous radio broadcast to France in June 1940, in which he claimed that France lost to Germany because she had “too few children.”<sup>38</sup>

Here, it is important to note the importance of women’s gender norms and sexuality in this process. While this paper focuses on ideals of masculinity and manhood, concerns about the emancipation of women, their education, their legal rights and their sexuality were prominent in the Third Republic and were greatly exacerbated in the aftermath of World War I. Many natalists did

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>36</sup> Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 113.

<sup>37</sup> Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*, 138.

<sup>38</sup> Phillipe Pétain, Radio broadcast (June 1940), in Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, 80.

blame *la femme moderne* and her refusal to have many children as the root of the depopulation crisis, and Surkis and Mary Louise Roberts both argue that responsibility for this crisis was placed primarily on the increasingly emancipated, modern woman.<sup>39</sup> However, Nye states that both the scientific medical literature of the time and more popular self-help books and pamphlets asserted that “males, more often than not, are the weak link in the generative equation, both with respect to the general problem of low fertility and the specific one of a deficiency of male births in the whole population.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, while it would be overly simplistic to ignore the role of evolving norms of femininity in the development of the natalist movement and the birthrate crisis, I seek to highlight the how representations and ideals of masculinity and male sexuality were involved in understandings of depopulation.

In addition to the *bachelier*, another potent symbol of depopulation and degeneration was the syphilitic. If the bachelor was intended to highlight the negative sides of reason and intellectualism as masculine virtues, the syphilitic was a more direct, literal symbol of damaged masculinity, the decay and disease of the male body and by extension, the degeneration and infection of French society as a whole. From 1890 to 1914, it is estimated that 13 to 15 percent of Parisian males had syphilis, with a total infection rate of 1 million nationwide.<sup>41</sup> While a major aspect of the fight against syphilis addressed female prostitution, the syphilitic man with his weakened, unhealthy body and his inability to fulfill the masculine norms of morality and conjugality was also a major symbol. The *Société française de prophylaxie sanitaire et morale* (SFPSM), founded in 1901, was composed of influential doctors, pharmacists, lawyers and police officers, and sought to combat venereal disease as a hygienic and social problem.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 113. See also Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, 86.

<sup>41</sup> Nye, *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*, 137.

Directing its efforts particularly at soldiers and students, its goal was to prevent sexual deviance in young men. Having syphilis implied an unmanly lack of self-control or mastery of one's desires. The societal impact of this weakness was its spread from deviant men to innocent women and children and by extension to the entire French nation. "It is most often the husband who pays the debt of the boy,"<sup>43</sup> wrote Alfred Fournier, a doctor and founder of the SFPSM. Thus syphilis was seen as a social disease that infected all of France, and the syphilitic male was an especially dangerous degenerate, for he was the carrier who disseminated the disease in larger, healthy society, spreading deviance and degeneration.

The army was seen as a particularly dangerous breeding ground for venereal disease, especially in the colonies. In the 1890s it was estimated that the venereal disease infection rate was twice as high in the colonies as it was in the metropolitan army. Colonial soldiers were thought to be especially lusty and lacking the virtues of conjugality. Alcohol, drugs and prostitutes were supposedly easy to come by, and it was a common belief that intense tropical heat fueled deviant sexual desires. Thus many pamphlets of the time warned against this deviance in military and forcefully emphasized ideal republican masculinity.<sup>44</sup> However, despite concerns about excessive discipline and syphilis, the military did not occupy a particularly polarizing role in Third Republic representations of masculinity until the Dreyfus Affair.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>43</sup> Alfred Fournier, *BSFPSM I* (June 1901), in Surkis, *Sexing The Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*, 200., 163.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Aldrich, "Colonial Man," 133. One 1902 guide for departing colonial soldiers discussed by Aldrich claims, "The true colonial must be intelligent, and thus moral, educated, patient and observant. He must speak well, remained controlled in his actions, and be just in his evaluations, and firm in his decisions... and in this virile scramble—he must combat nature, humans and disease—only strongly cast characters will be able to resist and to impose themselves." (see Aldrich 128-9).

<sup>45</sup> In fact, it was precisely because the Dreyfus Affair concerned an officer of the French Army that it evolved into such an enormous controversy. To many, Capt. Dreyfus's status as a military officer, as opposed to a diplomat or a statesman, rendered the situation particularly volatile, for the accusations against him, and especially his response to those charges, violated the rigid norms of military behavior with regards to order, obedience and honor.

## *The Dreyfus Affair and Schisms in Ideals of Masculinity*

On January 6, 1895, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jewish officer convicted of selling military secrets to Germany, was subject to a degradation ceremony in the courtyard of the *École militaire* in Paris.<sup>46</sup> Deprived of his rank and his honor, Dreyfus's punishment was, in the words of one newspaper, "a thousand times more terrible than death," because the "ceremony of dishonor" represented a "moral death."<sup>47</sup> Perhaps more than any other event prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, the Dreyfus affair brought into sharp relief the increasingly intersecting anxieties of the Third Republic, from race and masculinity to the threat of Germany. It turned general preoccupation with issues such as syphilis and degeneration into tools and symptoms of a highly polarized, divisive nationwide debate that represented far more than the treachery (or lack thereof) and subsequent emasculation of one army officer.

The Dreyfus affair, and particularly its role in the dramatic rise of anti-Semitism in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France, has been subject to substantial and often problematic scholarship, as it undoubtedly was one of those mythical moments of French history. Here, focusing on Christopher Forth's work, I will not address the demystification of the affair, but rather highlight the ways in which Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards mobilized different interpretations of republican ideals of masculinity in order to assert their own manhood and emasculate the opposition. These specific, politicized uses of masculinity can be seen as the foundation for much of the polarizing language and imagery found in the French press decades later. In the 1930s, when newspapers mobilized potent and easily recognizable symbols of masculinity to forcefully articulate their nebulous anxieties, they borrowed heavily from the gender symbolism that appeared in the public debate over Alfred Dreyfus.

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<sup>46</sup> Christopher E. Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>47</sup> "L'Exécution: Dégradation d'Alfred Dreyfus," *Le Petit Journal* (6 January 1895) in *Ibid.*, 23. Another journalist present at the degradation ceremony, wrote, "This man is a coward... Dreyfus is no longer a soldier. He is no longer even a man." (Thomas Grimm, "L'Expiation," *Le Petit Journal* (6 January 1895) in *Ibid.*, 24.

Anti-Dreyfusards did not hesitate to use strongly anti-Semitic imagery to portray Dreyfus as cowardly, treacherous and un-French. However, as Forth points out, “Claims that Dreyfus seemed bereft of honor could be used to illustrate traditional assumptions that Jewish men generally were bookish, weak, cowardly and effeminate, all without explicitly playing the race card,<sup>48</sup> thus employing a “hybrid discourse of race and gender.”<sup>49</sup> This intersection of categories allowed anti-Dreyfusards to extend their realm of attack beyond those racially considered to be Jews. The intellectuals who defended Dreyfus could be accused of having the same damaged masculinity as the Jewish captain, thus attacking their honor, manhood and credibility.<sup>50</sup> In this sense, and particularly in the context of degeneration theory, deviant or impotent Jewish manhood was a contagion infecting France, implying that weak, overly intellectual French men could lose their manhood, succumb to degeneracy, and like the syphilitic or the bachelor (who stereotypically were both more likely to be Jewish), bring down the once-glorious French nation. As Forth writes, “‘Jewishness’ was understood as a set of negative qualities that extended beyond Jewish bodies, thus making it possible for anyone to be metaphorically transformed into a ‘Jew.’”<sup>51</sup> Using the same imagery employed against Jews, Barrès wrote of Dreyfusard intellectuals that these “rebellious pedants are the most sterile of men.”<sup>52</sup> Essentially, anti-Dreyfusards sought not only to emasculate the “traitor,” but also to prevent the spread of his Jewish, un-French disease—that is, his damaged masculinity—to all of France, in order to “reawaken traditional French virility.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>50</sup> Even Dreyfusards were susceptible to this comparison. As one of them put it, “The Jew is the most nervous of men, perhaps because he is the most ‘cerebral,’ because he has lived the most by his brain, it will not take the Christians long to catch up to the Jews in this respect.” (Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *Israel Among the Nations: A Study of the Jews and Anti-Semitism*, trans. Frances Hellman (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904) in Ibid., 41.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>52</sup> Maurice Barrès, *Ce que j'ai vu à Rennes* (Paris: Sansot, 1904) in Ibid., 80.

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Quillard, ed., *Le Monument Henry* (Paris: Stock, 1899), in Ibid., 81.



Although the anti-Dreyfusard wing depicted the damaged masculinity of impotent, effeminate intellectuals as a symptom of the decline of French society, the Dreyfusard *intellectuels* mobilized masculine ideals in a different way to discredit their opponents. By mobilizing popular understandings of crowds and crowd psychology, they attacked the weakened will and individuality of the so-called crowd that abandoned reason and blindly followed anti-Dreyfusard rhetoric. Much like the schoolboys of the *internats* and the confessional schools, anti-Dreyfusards were portrayed as overly submissive and passionate and therefore effeminate. As Forth argues, “becoming part of the crowd implied the forfeiture of willpower and individuality,” and this rhetoric was especially “useful to the Dreyfusards... because it offered a way of thinking about the relationship between failed manhood and devouring femininity that facilitated the emergence of what we might call a ‘Dreyfusard body’ as the only one capable of resisting seduction and suggestion.”<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, this left wing, intellectual position was more than merely rhetoric. As Susanna Barrows argues, during the 1890s, the French new Right—a nationalistic, antiparliamentary movement that overshadowed the traditional monarchial right wing—relied heavily on non-proletarian crowds and mobs, particularly during the Dreyfus Affair. These violent, racist and staunchly nationalistic crowds that Zola referred to as “cannibals” were easy targets for intellectuals who valued reason, restraint and individual thought.<sup>55</sup> Thus this weakness of the right wing crowds was heavily exploited, a trend that would only intensify in the 1930s. To sum up, if the Dreyfusards were portrayed as lacking physical health and honor, the anti-Dreyfusards were depicted as lacking reason and restraint. Both cases represent deviant, abnormal masculinity incapable of healthy sexuality, conjugality and reproduction.

### *Dystopia and Elusive Utopia: Masculinity and Les Années Folles*

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>55</sup> Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 196-7.

Although the Dreyfus Affair did threaten the stability of the Third Republic, the government was relatively strong in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite strikes and periods of social and political unrest. Yet for those who saw evidence of the downward spiral of the French nation in the early Third Republic, the Great War only exacerbated their anxieties. For France, victory came at a high price, and the social and psychological aftermath of four years of brutal, modern war is an extensively studied aspect of the French interwar period. For over four years, France lost an average of 1000 men a day in the bloody trenches that mutilated the forests and fields of its northern territory, and by 1918, 10.5% of the active male population was dead, not to mention the millions—perhaps an entire generation—maimed in one way or another by the war.<sup>56</sup> In this context, several major social issues of the *Belle époque*—such as depopulation, venereal disease, and male impotency—developed from ongoing preoccupations into full-blown crises.

First of all, the experience of total war left few if any soldiers psychologically unaffected. The combat experiences and psychology of Great War veterans is an immense and complex topic, yet in a general sense, the war created a sort of alternate state of being in the trenches, what Leonard V. Smith calls “an affective dystopia” for *les poilus* that utterly transformed their existence and their relation to society. As Smith writes, “the war had reconfigured daily life through warping existing categories, those of space, family, rhythm of action. Indeed, the war created its own seemingly permanent temporality.”<sup>57</sup> Emerging from this “absolute commitment” to the dystopia of total war thus required “absolute redemption,” that is to say utopia, the complete rebirth—politically, socially and psychologically—of a victorious France.<sup>58</sup> This was of course a goal far too lofty for the victorious yet crippled France, and reintegrating *les poilus* in a way that honored the enormity of their commitment to victory proved elusive. Men who gave themselves entirely to their country in the Great War

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<sup>56</sup> Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994).

<sup>57</sup> Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldier's Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 135.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-40.

experienced apathy, fury and disillusionment as they returned to a peacetime society that could not give them the redemption they needed.<sup>59</sup> This trauma of men, of the archetypes of ideal French masculinity, had a profound effect on the decades to follow and became a symbol and an affirmation of a larger malaise plaguing the postwar Republic.

Mary Louise Roberts has extensively studied these 1920s discourses on gender, although she focuses more on femininity. She argues that major social problems such as the intangible redemption of veterans were depicted in a specifically gendered light as a means of making them more easily and potently expressed. As Roberts explains, gender was often much easier to articulate than the real, complex economic, political and psychological problems plaguing postwar French society. “Because gender issues were literally ‘close to home,’ they made the war’s impact in some sense culturally intelligible. By debating issues of gender identity, the French came to terms with a postwar world that threatened to become unrecognizable to them.”<sup>60</sup>

In this context, a popular discourse emerged that portrayed men as traumatized, faded and impotent, and women as emboldened, masculine and transgressing their roles as passive, domestic citizens. Because ideals of masculinity such as moral authority and virility only functioned in conjunction with female submissiveness, domesticity and passion, manhood was perceived as damaged and threatened when faced with *la femme moderne* or *la garçonne*.<sup>61</sup> This was especially problematic because the soldiers of the trenches were supposed to be the embodiments of French manhood, marked by their honor, moral courage, and to a certain extent, their virility. Therefore, a man’s weakness compared to women or his impotency forcefully represented a painful incongruity between the ideal and reality, articulating a void of honor and morality in French society and in the war it created.<sup>62</sup> This general deviance from the ideal of conjugality represented the decline of social order, what Roberts

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927*, 6.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 33. As Roberts quotes a contemporary commentator, “The man demanded his old position, but the woman refused to bow her head any longer, and instead played the part of rival.”

<sup>62</sup> Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927*, 138.

calls—citing Pierre Drieu La Rochelle—“a civilization without sexes.”<sup>63</sup> In this sense, deviant gender norms in the 1920s became yet another confirmation of France’s degeneration, and as such, evolved into even more potent symbols of the process.

The powerful symbol of the weakened or threatened man was strengthened yet again by pervasive concerns about venereal disease and social hygiene following the war. As Judith Surkis argues, “syphilis corporealized perceived threats to the integrity of French masculinity.”<sup>64</sup> While this was built on previously discussed foundations established before the war, in postwar society a particular emphasis was placed on “foreign” men infiltrating France as the agents of infection. In this context, the imagery associated with syphilis illustrated a growing association of “otherness” and outside contagion with French degeneration. As Surkis writes, “By symbolizing the fragile boundary between a corporeally sound, sexually potent French male citizen and threats to that body by implicitly foreign men, the interwar battle against the ‘venereal peril’ articulated and enforced” the growing threat of the “outsider” or the “other” as a deviant social category bringing France down from within.<sup>65</sup>

This symbolic mobilization of syphilis and foreignness cannot be separated from the impact of colonization on representations of French masculinity. As Surkis writes, syphilis and other venereal diseases were “not merely a convenient metaphor for the fragility, permeability and instability of French masculinity. Its figurative possibility, as a sign and symptom of sexual confusion and contagion, anchored diffuse concerns about who could and should qualify as a French man in specific bodies.”<sup>66</sup> In a larger sense, colonialism has impacted notions of French masculinity since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the imagery of *la mission civilisatrice*, to positive and negative representations of the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>64</sup> Judith Surkis, “Enemies Within: Venereal Disease and the Defense of French Masculinity between the Wars,” in *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 104.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 116.

colonial soldier, to images of virile, hyper masculine “natives,” French masculinity has been constructed in relation to a colonial Other.

However in the postwar period, colonial soldiers, massive immigration of young men seeking work to France, and a distinct shortage of French men complicated the distinction between the outsider and normative French masculinity. The number of foreign men living in France increased dramatically in the 1920s, from a high of 1.18 million in 1911 to about 2.98 million in 1931, which totalled 6.6 percent of the entire population.<sup>67</sup> According to the 1931 census, there were over 800,000 Italians and over half a million Poles living in France, in addition to roughly 350,000 Spaniards and 250,000 Belgians, and over 100,000 immigrants from the African colonies.<sup>68</sup> This was in addition to nearly a quarter of a million Chinese, South Asian and North African workers literally imported to augment the depleted labor supply during the war.<sup>69</sup>

However, tensions and racism were widespread concerning non-European foreigners, in part because the vast majority were men. Elisa Camiscioli argues that many European foreigners were welcomed because they were considered capable of assimilating or conforming to French racial and gender norms. Young Spanish, Italian and Polish men were encouraged to integrate—through the norm of conjugality—into French society in order to reinvigorate it with undamaged masculinity and reverse the trend of degeneration.<sup>70</sup> However, other non-European outsiders, particularly from the colonies, were seen as a cause of degeneration, not a solution. As Drs. Georges Forestier and Georges Dequidt, two health experts in the 1920s, wrote, the “future health of the race” depended upon targeted immigration. Certain immigrants—that is to say non-whites—possessed “mental, moral and physical

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<sup>67</sup> Gary S. Cross, “Toward Social Peace and Prosperity: The Politics of Immigration in France during the Era of World War I,” *French Historical Studies* 11, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 610.

<sup>68</sup> Ralph Schor, “Le facteur religieux et l'intégration des étrangers en France (1919-1939),” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 7 (September 1985): 103.

<sup>69</sup> Cross, “Toward Social Peace and Prosperity,” 615.

<sup>70</sup> Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 24.

defects” that would only exacerbate “racial degeneration” and the “nation’s disintegration.”<sup>71</sup> In this context, healthy male sexuality became a means of demarcating the boundaries between the threatening “Other” and the desirable, virile white foreigner. For example, North Africans were portrayed as having “bestial, carnal instincts,”<sup>72</sup> and a colonial administrator claimed that Berbers were inherently promiscuous due to their “rough and roving minds.”<sup>73</sup> In contrast, Italians were, according to one influential journalist and author, “hardworking, frugal, and humble in their desires.”<sup>74</sup> In a sense, depictions of outsiders were a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because non-white “Others” were forbidden—either legally or through social taboos—from integrating into French society through marriage, their inevitable bachelorhood facilitated their symbolic significance of deviant sexuality and its further infestation of a decaying French nation. Thus “Otherness” was a sexualized category, and sexualized representations served to define who combated damaged French masculinity, and who accelerated its demise.

### *Political Instability and Sexual Symbolism in the 1930s*

This sexualization of otherness only intensified during the 1930s, particularly in right wing circles. As French politics grew increasingly polarized and the center’s influence withered, dramatic, sexualized images and heated rhetoric occupied an increasingly important place in the public sphere. France did face very real and growing foreign threats that jeopardized its tenuous unity. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933; Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 against the orders of the powerless League of Nations; and in 1936, Spain imploded in civil war, dividing Europe along increasingly rigid

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<sup>71</sup> Georges Dequidt and Georges Forestier, "Les aspects sanitaires du problème de l'immigration en France," *Revue d'hygiène* (December 1926), in *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>73</sup> Octave Depont, *L'Algérie du centenaire* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1928), in Surkis, “Enemies Within: Venereal Disease and the Defense of French Masculinity between the Wars,” 112.

<sup>74</sup> Ludovic Nadeau, *La France se regarde: le problème de la natalité* (Paris: Hachette, 1931) in Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century*, 39.

lines. French politics, far from immune to these growing political calamities, were divisive, polarized and complicated. By February 1934, the Third Republic, France's longest continuous government since before the Revolution, was on the verge of collapse. In this context, ideals of masculinity, which had developed over the last 50 years or so into powerful, easily recognizable, multi-faceted symbols of French values, were mobilized to represent the increasing threats to the nation. Images of deviance from masculine gender norms were a means of representing the larger social and political deviance of opposing political groups.

Here, it is important to note that this usage of deviance was not confined to direct references to damaged masculinity or the unhealthy male body. Rather, I have used this section to outline the development of key elements of healthy and damaged masculinity in the Third Republic in order to identify a body of charged imagery and symbolism that, as Christopher Forth points out, is a product of the "interarticulation" of the "social construction of otherness" and deviance.<sup>75</sup> This narrative I have presented of masculinity in the Third Republic is by no means comprehensive, but it establishes the origins and context of the discourse and imagery used in newspapers in the 1930s, and by extension, places these journals—extremist as they may be—in a continuum of political symbolism that developed throughout the Third Republic. In this context, if these political journals do not explicitly reference masculinity or male sexuality, they mobilize a lexicon that had become inextricably associated over the past fifty years with damaged and infected manhood.

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<sup>75</sup> Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood*, 22.

## CHAPTER II

### The Threat of the Other: Representations of Damaged Masculinity on the Right

#### *Defining the Right Through Its Uses of Masculinity*

The most inventive, polarizing and pervasive uses of this lexicon of damaged masculinity—particularly of the degradation of the male body—appeared in extremist right wing journalism in the 1930s. To a greater extent than the far left, the French far right of the 1930s has been qualified as unprecedentedly extremist, and indeed, its journalism is marked by vehemence and ideology that often appears incongruous with the discourse of the early Third Republic. Considered by some scholars to be fundamentally fascist, this large and nebulous political grouping, which I identify as the far right or the extremist right, is subject to substantial and controversial scholarship.

Some historians, notably Robert Soucy and Zeev Sternhell, have argued (though for different reasons), that fascism has deep roots in France and was much more influential and pervasive in the 1930s than major French scholars such as Pierre Milza and René Rémond have described. Others have accepted that some elements of fascism were present or even created in France, but have stopped short of arguing that the major right wing movements of the 1930s were essentially fascist in nature. This ongoing historiographic debate cannot easily be summarized, but at its center is a disagreement over the nature and scope of the French new right that emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and over the definition of fascism.<sup>76</sup> As stated in the introduction, while I do not want to imply that the debate is irrelevant to this thesis, because it is both contentious and well worn, operating within its framework inevitably defines and limits arguments about the extreme right. Therefore, I argue that the journals I focus on are indisputably organs of the nationalistic, racist, avant-garde new right, and while the impact of fascism on this sector is undeniable, it would be overly simplistic and semantically

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<sup>76</sup> For some major analyses of fascism in the French right of the 1930s, see Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, trans. David Maisel (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), and Michel Winock, *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris: Seuil, 1990). For relatively comprehensive but somewhat biased summaries of this historiographic debate, see the Introduction to Soucy's *French Fascism: The Second Wave* (1-25), and Robert O. Paxton's review of Winock's *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France* in *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (Sept. 2000): 814-816.



controversial to refer to them as fascist newspapers. That said, it is undeniable that fascists in France and abroad lent new force and ideology to the extreme right wing, regardless of whether this movements was or was not fundamentally fascist, which I would argue is a distracting question. Still, it is important to recognize that fascist ideology did inform much of the discourse and imagery in *Je suis partout* and *Gringoire*.

Of the two, *Gringoire* was the more popular journal—its circulation was around 640,000 in 1936, making it one of the most widely read *hebdomadaires* of the time. Of all the right wing journals, it had the widest range of contributors and the most diverse readership. Cynical and witty, it was popular and influential, especially among right wing intellectuals. The readership of *Je suis partout* was substantially smaller, only about 40,000 in the same year,<sup>77</sup> yet it was important because its satire was even more vehement than *Gringoire*'s, and because its editor, Robert Brasillach, was one of the most important and controversial members of the far right.<sup>78</sup> Both were literary newspapers with more moderate and more extremist contributors, though of the two *Je suis partout* leaned more towards fascism, and both were deeply and viscerally anti-Republican.

However, I argue that the words and images employed in these journals draw from a deep well of symbolism that has been an integral part of political discourse throughout the Third Republic. Here, I do not wish to enter into the debate on whether this earlier discourse was or was not the origin of fascism in France and abroad. Rather, by focusing specifically on representations of masculinity in the journals, I highlight the continuity of its symbolic uses in France and argue that although these journals use gender as a means of attacking the republican state, their language and imagery illustrate a usage that largely conforms to established republican ideals of masculinity and recognized forms of deviance.

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<sup>77</sup> Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 43.

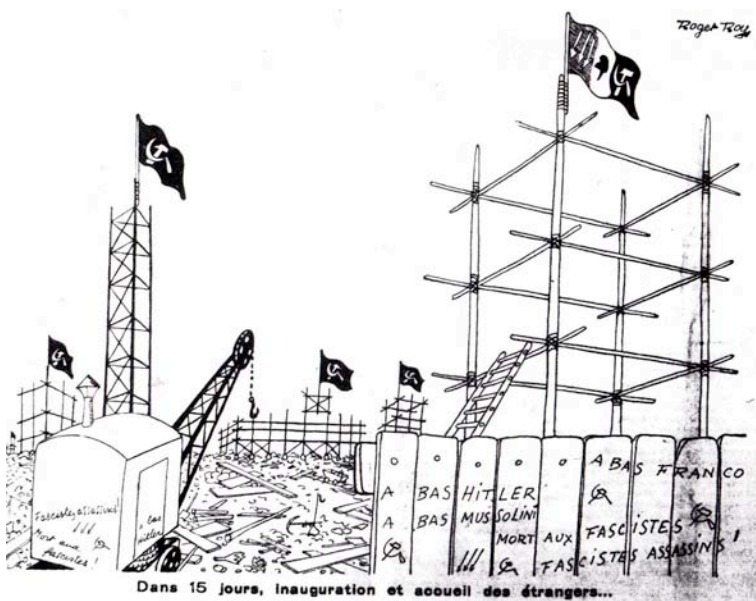
<sup>78</sup> Robert Brasillach, a very young intellectual considered by most of his contemporaries to be gay, was a leading figure on the literary and intellectual far right. Always famous, he became a mythical figure when he was put on trial and executed in the *épuration* (purge) following World War II. He was convicted not for his numerous vulgar, hateful, anti-Semitic diatribes against the Third Republic, but for having written near the end of the war that Frenchman “will have more or less slept with Germany—not without quarrels—and the memory of it will remain sweet for them.” For an excellent analysis of his trial and the culpability of journalists during wars, see Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Their specific uses of representations of masculinity illustrate that though they may have been truly extremist, their positions have deep roots in the divisions, hostility and anxieties that plagued the Third Republic from its inception, specifically its obsession with contagion and degeneration.

In order to demonstrate this, I will examine two distinct, yet closely related, categories of masculine imagery and discourse in *Je suis partout* and *Gringoire*. The first deals directly with the threat of the “Other” in France, the contagion that infects the nation and hastens its degeneration and ultimate demise. These un-French outsiders are represented in language that invokes their damaged masculinity or sexual deviance. The second and arguably more significant category of imagery essentially addresses the effect of the former category on the Republic and its leaders. While not always directly referencing foreigners or outsiders, it implies that their deviance is contagious—and more importantly that the Republic is vulnerable to contagion—causing it to decay and crumble. This collapse from within is literally embodied in representations of the weak, unhealthy male figures of the Republic.

### *Images of the Other*

One of the primary ways in which these journals conveyed this threat is through political



cartoons. Cartoons allowed journalists to popularize their intellectual arguments and infuse them with humor and readily comprehensible visual symbols. For example, the illustration on the left, from the April 16, 1937 issue of *Gringoire*, through its use of space and symbols, powerfully expresses far right wing

“Dans 15 jours, inauguration et accueil des étrangers,”  
(April 16, 1937), *Gringoire*.

objections to the Popular Front. Throughout the 1930s, both *Gringoire* and *Je suis partout* blamed the success of the left and this political coalition of Radicals, socialists and communists on the influence of outsiders, especially Jews, international communists, and free masons. The Popular Front was consistently portrayed as an organ of distinctly un-French forces. A relatively neutral definition of the Front in *Je suis partout* describes it as, “the communist party, the socialist party, the radical party—and behind all three, free masonry.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the cartoon reads, “In fifteen days, inauguration and welcome to foreigners.” The image shows a destroyed France with graffiti scrawled among the ruins saying “Death to the fascists” and “Down with Hitler, Mussolini and Franco.” Communist flags and a *tricolore* corrupted by obvious symbols of outside forces fly from the scaffolding of the new, communist-conquered France, spatially and literally towering over the crumbled nation.<sup>80</sup>



“Les cavaliers de l’Apocalypse sur l’Europe,”  
(February 10, 1934), *Je suis partout*

In other cartoons, the gravity and fearsomeness of this foreign threat was depicted through deviant masculinity. The February 10, 1934 issue of *Je suis partout*, (immediately after the February riots), articulates fears of corruption in the republican government through the cartoon on the left. “Drive out Marxism, or else...” it warns, showing stereotyped images of a Soviet, an African and an Asian descending upon bickering bureaucrats. In this cartoon, threatening ideologies are embodied in frightening, damaged male bodies, and the bureaucrats appear much smaller and weaker in comparison. They are represented as bookish and unmanly, and all of them are

<sup>79</sup> “La duperie du parti S.F.I.O.,” *Je suis partout*, July 20, 1935. *Je suis partout*, July 20, 1935. Note – all translations in this chapter are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>80</sup> “Dans 15 jours, l’inauguration et accueil des étrangers,” *Gringoire*, April 16, 1937.

old, bald, hunched over and ugly.

Indeed, this image aptly illustrates the ways in which these right wing journals used masculinity to define the borders between vulnerable France and the menacing Other. This theme is present in several cartoons from the period, although it was substantially complicated by the election of the Popular Front in May, 1936. As I will discuss in more detail later, the Popular Front's election forced the extreme Right to respond to the reality that a man they considered firmly within a category of Otherness, the Jewish Léon Blum, became president of the nation. They addressed this by altering their boundaries between France and deviant Others, using the notion of infection. In this sense, through examining the progression of cartoons through the latter half of the 1930s, a process of contagion is evident. In some cases, there is a clear demarcation between France—portrayed alternately as pure, threatened or weakened—and the contagion, the deviant outsider.

This was the case of the cartoon

above and this image from *Je suis partout*, which shows a bound and blindfolded Marianne being dragged by an ill, decrepit old man wearing a hat with a red star. Although she is not free, Marianne, the symbol of Republican France, is upright, slender and graceful—an ideal female



form—while her captor is embodied in an unhealthy,

“Jusqu’à quand?” (July 18, 1936), *Je suis partout*.

damaged, decaying male body. “How much longer?” the cartoon asks, implying that if Marianne (i.e. France) could break free from the degenerate forces holding her hostage, she could be healthy again. Here, the unhealthy male body is a potent symbol that encompasses the complex and convoluted association of essentially communism, socialism, Judaism and free masonry that the right despised.

Sexuality is used to establish a border between healthy France (the idealized feminine symbol) and its diseased elements (the damaged masculine symbol.)<sup>81</sup> This inevitably raises the question of the Third Republic's place in the cartoon. La Marianne was the symbol of the Republic, but here is the government part of the healthy element or the diseased element? This ambiguity goes to the heart of the extreme right's use of damaged masculinity and its notion of infection, highlighting its inherent contradictions.

While in the case of this cartoon the message is not necessarily clear, in other cases to be discussed later, cartoons imply that the contagion has infected the Third Republic to a point that the Other and the government are no longer distinguishable. This progression of infection does not appear with precise chronology in the cartoons. Still, far right newspapers responded to the rise of the Popular Front and its "outsider" President Léon Blum by blurring or outright erasing these borders, implying that France was succumbing to the infiltrating disease.

### *The Foreign Other as the Embodiment of Infection*

While cartoons visually provide evidence of the danger of outsiders through images of deformed, menacing bodies, articles exaggerate and manipulate descriptions of threatening foreigners, establishing creative yet shockingly cruel discourse that stretches the limits of what can be considered journalism. On March 23, 1934, *Gringoire* featured an article by Jean Jacoby entitled "Red Childhood in the USSR."<sup>82</sup> Ostensibly an exposé on the strange practices of a foreign country, in reality the narrative serves to dramatize the dangers of communist influence in France. In 1934, PCF membership totaled about 42,000 and was growing rapidly.<sup>83</sup> Since the German communist party's disastrous defeat to the Nazis, the PCF was the most valuable and influential communist party in Western Europe, and

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<sup>81</sup> "Jusqu'à quand?" *Je suis partout*, July 18, 1936.

<sup>82</sup> Jean Jacoby, "L'enfance rouge en U.R.S.S.," *Gringoire*, March 23, 1934.

<sup>83</sup> Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, 219. In 1933 PCF membership stood at 29,000, and by early 1936 it would be over 100,000.

like other European communist movements, was very closely aligned with the Comintern and the USSR. Thus any cultural commentary on the USSR inherently implicated communists in France. This particular piece describes the cruel, inhuman practices of communists towards their children, using gross sexual depravity as its primary means of attack. “The young Kesslavsky, 8 years old, remained sick for ten days without any treatment, except that of a young seven year old girl,” writes Jacoby, hinting at deviant sexual practices in a youth camp. Describing this camp in detail, and using supposed articles from a Soviet newspaper, he writes that children there “shiver from fever, suffer from diarrhea, nobody is concerned... everything is hideously filthy.”<sup>84</sup> Here, hygiene and sexuality are merged into a single discourse on deviance in the USSR.

The article continues to describe the depravity of Soviets in increasingly graphic, disturbing terms, often claiming to cite Soviet sources. “A young girl testified before a court: her parents cut the throat of her two sisters in front of her, cut them up and ate them. ‘I saw in the oven a head that I recognized as belonging to my little sister,’” the article claims. Further on, “A father rapes his fourteen year old daughter; when she gives birth, he throws the infant in the fire. ‘At first, I was indifferent,’ confessed the young mother, ‘then I had a bit of pain... When I was able to get up, I gathered up the ashes and, since there were no remains, I used them for my laundry.’”<sup>85</sup>

It is important to note that the primary purpose of these “observations” is pure shock value, and the author clearly presents the most grotesque scenarios possible. So, rather than imagine these stories as sources of genuine concern to the author, they can be understood as extremely potent dramatizations of the perceived threats and dangers of a communist lifestyle, and in this context, sexuality and deviance are the most forceful medium of conveying the menace. If *Gringoire* had actually wanted to expose the hardships of life in the Soviet Union, there would have been no shortage of gross human rights violations and brutal repressions to describe. Yet its purpose was not so straightforward, and the

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<sup>84</sup> Jacoby, “L'enfance rouge en U.R.S.S..”

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

article's vulgarity is more than mere sensationalism; it is an inventive (though highly distasteful) journalistic tool, a means of forcefully communicating an uncertain threat—communism in France—in graphic terms chosen specifically to resonate with French readers.

Although the article addresses both male and female sexual and moral depravity, the underlying themes of the article are related to concerns about masculinity that dominated the Third Republic. In the sections quoted above, women and girls, while not innocent, are generally presented as powerless, passive and indifferent, which in an indirect way conforms to many of the ideals of femininity promoted by the Third Republic. It is the men who grossly defy norms of behavior, and thus it is through deviant masculinity that Jacoby articulates the greatest horrors of Soviet communism.

This emphasis on masculinity is strengthened by his focus on education. He claims that in Soviet youth centers, “97 percent of young girls less than sixteen years old and eight percent of little girls less than 8 were found to be deflowered; almost all of the children were suffering from venereal disease.”<sup>86</sup> Again, this does not deal directly with masculinity, yet throughout the Third Republic sexual deviance of boys at school was an ongoing concern. Therefore the focus of this article—the corruption of children, especially at schools and camps—plays into the larger narrative discussed in the first chapter of education in France, a debate that focused almost exclusively on boys. Digging deep into the lexicon of masculine deviance that developed in the Third Republic, *Grignoire* presents the depravity of the Soviets as the most extreme variation of a category of deviance already present in French discourse, and a harbinger of the direction France would take should communists take power.

Continuing to write about the youth centers he argues, “children enter healthy and leave contaminated; the promiscuity of both sexes, the incredible precocity of this red youth, and the appetites of seducers early on have transformed a little girl into a conscious and syphilitic citizen.”<sup>87</sup> Rhetorically perverting the child's passage through state education, it suggests a process of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

succumbing to communism that resonated with the notion of communist infiltration in France. This anecdote of an innocent girl indoctrinated and corrupted by the USSR can be interpreted as a warning of how easily France too could fall. Thus the article politicizes seeming observations on a distant and barbaric culture, transforming them into a threat to France. Particular depictions of damaged masculinity are mobilized in order to establish a link between representations of foreign deviance and specifically French issues and concerns. By focusing on victimized, corrupted girls and deviant boys, the article does more than simply identify a dangerous foreign Other, it uses specific discourse to establish the Other as the embodiment of an infection infiltrating France.

### *Sexualizing Jewish Otherness*

Notions of infection and diseased masculinity figured even more prominently in portrayals of Jews in France. Indeed, representations of Jewish men as unmanly played a critical role in the anti-Semitism of far right-wing journals, a trend that intensified as the decade progressed. It goes without saying that both *Gringoire* and *Je suis partout* were violently anti-Semitic, yet during the 1930s, they generally did not adhere strictly to the scientific racism of Nazism, a stance that would change during the occupation.<sup>88</sup> The hatred of Jews expounded in these newspapers exemplifies a uniquely French anti-Semitism spread by the new French right since the Dreyfus affair. Romantic and nationalist yet not biological, the new French right saw Jews as un-French, weak and decadent outsiders who had infiltrated the true nation and corrupted it. Yet mirroring their anti-Dreyfusard counterparts, they initially avoided scientific racial discourse, opting instead to demean Jewish manhood.<sup>89</sup> While the reasons behind the new French right's avoidance of strictly scientific racism are complex, I would

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<sup>88</sup> Soucy, *French Fascism*, 281.

<sup>89</sup> There are important exceptions to this trend. Louis Ferdinand Céline was the furious and cynical yet at times brilliant author of one of the greatest French works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. But he also wrote one of the most disgusting, *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, a veritable tirade of vehement hatred against Jews that went far beyond the positions of even other extremists such as Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach. However, in the end these writers too veered increasingly towards scientific Nazi racism near the end of the 1930s, and during WWII they both wrote Nazi propaganda.



suggest that it relates to Christopher Forth's notion of the "interarticulation" of the "social construction of otherness."<sup>90</sup> That is, violent anti-Semitism was more likely to resonate with the readership if it was intertwined with other images of deviance, such as the weakened masculinity of the intellectual or the bureaucrat. In this context, as Forth has argued, "Jewishness" as a form of deviance could be extended to anyone who embodied so-called Jewish weaknesses, regardless of their race, especially members of the Popular Front government.<sup>91</sup> In this sense, attacks on Jewish masculinity acted as simpler, more effective rhetorical substitutes for blatant racial hatred, and allowed the journals to use the metaphor of contagious disease to describe Jewish influence in France.

On April 18, 1938, *Je suis partout* devoted an entire edition to "*la question juive*." The front page article written by Robert Brasillach, (which features an Eye of Providence drawn next to the opening words), claims to be an "impartial, documented and objective" examination of anti-Semitism around the world. In reality and unsurprisingly, the entire edition is scathingly anti-Semitic, though even as late as 1938, it stopped short of endorsing Nazi racial theory. For example, multiple articles point to statistics about lackluster and cowardly Jewish participation in the Great War. Brasillach writes that he respects the Jewish soldiers, "killed defending the land that shelters them. A gratitude all the greater," he adds, "considering there were not many. There are less Jews of France killed—1700—than men of the cloth—5000."<sup>92</sup> Here, Brasillach uses lack of courage and honor to distinguish Jews living in "the land that shelters them," from real French men, excluding them from the French body through their damaged masculinity.

Written four months before *Je suis partout*'s "Jewish question" edition, Lucien Rebatet's glowing review of *Bagatelles pour un massacre*—Céline's ferociously anti-Semitic pamphlet—invokes similar statistics to attack Jewish manhood and thus justify Céline's anti-Semitism. Rebatet, a

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<sup>90</sup> Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood*, 22.

<sup>91</sup> As Forth explains, "'Jewishness' was understood as a set of negative qualities that extended beyond Jewish bodies, thus making it possible for anyone to be metaphorically transformed into a 'Jew.'" (Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* 63).

<sup>92</sup> Robert Brasillach, "La question juive," *Je suis partout*, April 18, 1938.

frequent contributor to *Je suis partout*, was also a journalist for *Action française*, another intellectual far-right journal with a more royalist, conservative tone.<sup>93</sup> Even more than Brasillach, Rebatet was extremely anti-Semitic, (one almost has to be to even tolerate reading *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, let alone to agree with it). His article primarily discusses potential ways to “dike against invading Jews” (*endiguer la juiverie envahissante*). Rebatet explains and supports a proposal made by Céline, using war participation—not genetics—as grounds for exclusion. “French killed [in the Great War]: 1,750,000 (1 of 3 [mobilized])<sup>94</sup>—Jews killed: 1,350 (1 of 33 [mobilized]). In proportion, that represents one Jew for 1,300 Frenchmen killed. This 1/1,300 ratio... I believe represents exactly the extent of Jewish rights on our territory.”<sup>95</sup> Jews are portrayed as extremely cowardly and unmanly as compared to “true” Frenchmen, thus justifying prejudice against them.

In addition to cowardice, the article also uses symbols of disease and contamination, (“dike against invading Jews”), to emasculate Jewish men and illustrate their threat to the French nation, a common trend in both journals. The April 18, 1938 edition features an article entitled “Jewish Infiltration in Medicine” that provides statistics demonstrating the dangerously high number of Jewish doctors in France and lists the names of Jewish candidates for the national medical certification exam. Jewish doctors are literally a threat to the French body, and as the article states, “the medical

profession is today the most dangerously threatened by the Jewish invasion.”<sup>96</sup>



“Les Juifs en Palestine” and “Le proletaire socialiste esclave du Juif,” (18 April 1938), *Je suis partout*.

<sup>93</sup> Soucy, *French Fascism*, 42.

<sup>94</sup> Whether knowingly or not, Céline exaggerated the number. There were approximately 1.3 million Frenchmen killed in the Great War, not 1.75 million.

<sup>95</sup> Lucien Rebatet, “Bagatelles pour un massacre,” *Je suis partout*, January 21, 1938.

<sup>96</sup> “L’infiltration juive dans la médecine,” *Je suis partout*, April 18, 1938.

Cartoons also mobilize the male body as a means excluding Jews from the French nation. Images such as these of Jewish men portray them as unhealthy, degenerate and weak. In the first cartoon, two Jewish men, one of whom is wearing women's shoes, are incapable of manual labor. They are sweating, hunched over, and scrawny, an image in direct opposition to strong, ideal manhood. In this cartoon, the weak, effeminate bodies are a means of characterizing and identifying an excluded category. In the second cartoon, a comparison is made between the Jew, the excluded outsider, and the worker, an accepted, even idealized male figure. This image is especially interesting because even in an extreme right-wing newspaper, a socialist worker is represented as strong and healthy in comparison to the smaller, weaker, lurking man behind him. "The proletarian socialist" is a "slave of the Jew" who appears to deviously manipulate an honorable man. Here, the Other, in this case the Jew, quite literally threatens the French workforce, and the basis for his exclusion from it is established using normal and deviant manhood as indicators—otherness is demonstrated through damaged masculinity.

*The Infected Republic: The Disease of the Other and the Decline of the Nation*

These sexualized representations of excluded social categories are only one facet of the extreme right wing's use of gendered symbols as political tools. As previously discussed, the process of contagion, or the increasing influence of the Other in France, blurred the boundaries between deviant outsiders and the corrupted Third Republic. Indeed the more dominant theme in these journals is not the deviance of the Other, but the fact that the French Republic was too weak to resist this deviance and was thus infected by it. This interpretation of degeneration can be traced back to far right wing arguments throughout the Third Republic, and like their earlier counterparts, *Gringoire* and *Je suis partout* used damaged masculinity as the rhetorical tool that proved the link between the deviant Other and the decaying nation. However, I would argue that the extreme right of the 1930s went much farther. While Maurice Barrès might have seen the Third Republic as nurturing the spread of the

disease plaguing France, he never advocated overthrowing the government, as did many members of the extreme right in the 1930s. In this sense, for the extreme right the Third Republic was infected by



“Parlementaires en vacances,” (March 30, 1934), *Gringoire*.

outside contagion to the extent that it actually became the disease.

This cartoon from March 1934, just under two months after the February riots, illustrates this notion. Here, the comical, ugly, damaged male forms are not Jews, Africans or Soviets, but members of parliament, the embodiments of the Third Republic. Unlike the other cartoons examined so far, in this instance the process

of contagion is more advanced; there is no demarcation between the Republic and what threatens it. Again, I reiterate that this development is not chronological. Early 1934 was a low point for the Republican government, marred by corruption, a floundering Radical party in the center, and parliamentary hesitation bordering at times on incompetence. Thus it is logical that right wing journalists would reflect popular sentiment of the time (on both the right and the left), and mock members of the government by portraying them as utterly unmanly, foolish and degenerate.

Therefore, in the political cartoons of these journals, three major categories of imagery are usually present: The deviant Other, the Third Republic in varying stages of disease with varying distinction from the Other, and “true” France. Cartoons and articles use masculinity to establish the difference and identify borders between the Republic and the true nation. Again, this illustrates the ambiguous place of the government in the far right’s assessment of France. Although the journalists used Republican symbolism, they were mostly antiparliamentary and increasingly portrayed the Republic as the infection threatening the nation. In early 1934, just after the February riots and the

collapse of Daladier's government, Pierre Gaxotte, an anti-parliamentary but slightly more moderate journalist, wrote in *Je suis partout* of a "complete divorce that separates the nation and the regime."<sup>97</sup> In his article, the government of the Third Republic no longer represents France, and its separation from the nation is portrayed in sexualized terms that highlight the damaged masculinity of the government. Writing about the February riots, he claims, "Two cabinets assured of parliamentary majority fell in quick succession because popular opinion did not want them. Thus sovereign Parliament is belittled (*rabaissé*) before his master." This represents above all the "death of the fiction of a legal country claiming to dominate the country through the force of lies, demagoguery, unfulfilled promises, squandering and stimulations (*excitations*)."<sup>98</sup>

Here, like the cartoon image of the withered old man dragging the bound Marianne, the government becomes the outsider, the deviant Other that corrupts France. In this case, political weakness is merged with unmanly behavior; demagoguery is grouped with deviant sexuality and political unpopularity with an effeminate, subordinate position. The development of this point is part of a long succession of right wing protests against the decadence and corruption of the Third Republic, centering on the unmanly vulnerability of the government to deviant contagion. Yet there is a transition evident from the weakness and vulnerability to outright infection in the 1930s. Later articles emphasize the Popular Front disease and inability to repel dangerous outside threats.

'The diseased man'... is no longer the Ottoman Empire of the past, but the French Republic of today. From now on, everyone seems to flee the handshake of France like they avoid the fondling of the contagious. Gnawed at by the Bolshevik microbe, incapable of any vigorous response, nourishing its horrific malady through fear of treating it, our unfortunate country will end up dying in an empty room that even its last servants will have deserted.<sup>99</sup>

This article entitled "The Diseased Man" from the April 16, 1937 issue of *Gringoire* aptly and vehemently illustrates the usage of the unhealthy French body as a political symbol by invoking the

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<sup>97</sup> Pierre Gaxotte, "La nation et le régime," *Je suis partout*, February 10, 1934.

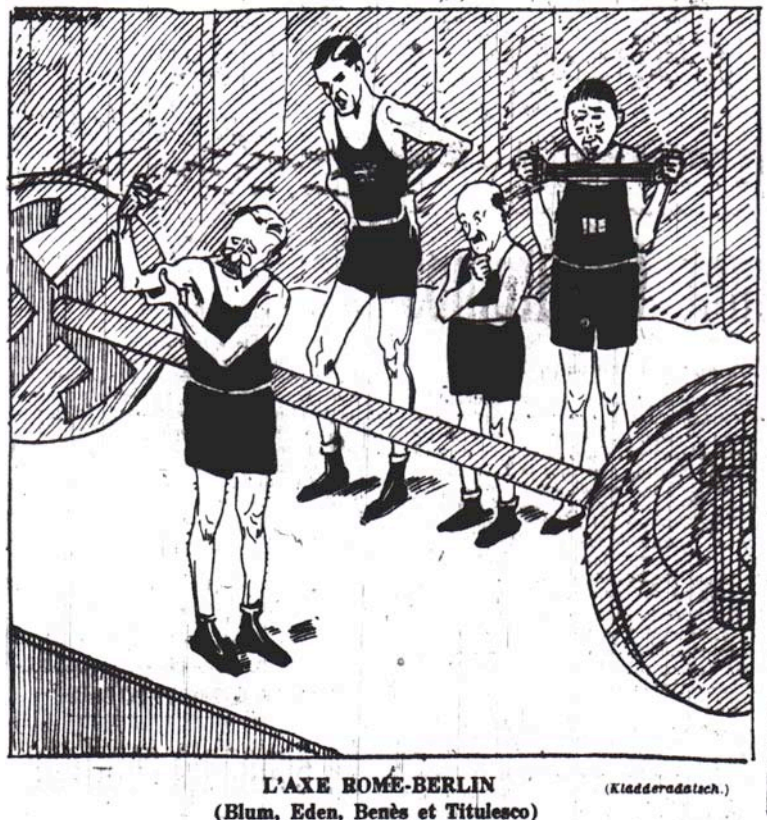
<sup>98</sup> Ibid. *Excitations* has a sexual connotation in French, implying sexual stimulation and arousal. Gaxotte is suggesting that the government tried to seduce the French people, signifying deviant behavior.

<sup>99</sup> "L'homme malade," *Gringoire*, April 16, 1937.

ultimate symbol decay and decadence, the Ottoman Empire, in comparison with France. Here, the “Bolshevik microbe”—the threatening Other—is only dangerous because France is too weak to fight it, invoking the damaged masculinity of the Republic. On a secondary and subtler level, the article refers directly to deviant male sexuality by using the phrase “the fondling of the contagious.” Political avoidance of France is compared to sexual avoidance of the advances of someone infected with venereal disease. Again, Republican social and scientific discourse concerning masculinity is effortlessly merged with extremist politics in order to infuse the political message with potent, accessible and easily recognizable symbols and rhetoric.

This vulnerability of the Republic is emphasized through portrayals of republican politicians as bookish and effeminate, like the members of parliament in the previous cartoon. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century bureaucrats were often depicted as

impotent, flabby, isolated and divirilized as a means of criticizing the republican state and education system. During the Dreyfus Affair, this image was mobilized to connect them with Jews, an excluded social category, to further highlight their damaged masculinity. During the 1930s, this well-worn image was again invoked for similar purposes, to emphasize the weakness of the Republic faced with dangerous outside threats. Because it was so easily recognizable, it was the simplest means of expressing the decline and corruption of the Republican state.



In this cartoon from the July 16, 1937 issue of *Je suis partout*, the Rome-Berlin axis is depicted as a weight that is far too heavy for the scrawny bodies of Republican leaders. Their perceived political

ineptitude is embodied in their weak, damaged bodies. They are unhealthy and lacking the strength required to face outside threats. Additionally, this image is interesting because it is another example of the blurring of boundaries between the three categories (the Other, the Third Republic and true France). In this case, the (Jewish) Other and the Third Republic are completely merged. In other cartoons, such as the February 1934 cartoon “Drive out Marxism, or else...” (see page 34), there is a more obvious boundary between France and threatening foreigners, a differentiation that is made through divergent norms of masculinity. Here, norms of masculinity are used not to identify differences, but to highlight dangerous similarities.

The principal medium through which these categories are merged is the figure of Léon Blum, pictured on the far left in the image on the previous page. In these journals, Blum’s identity as a French Jew made representations of him a potent means of depicting the perceived “invasion” of Jews into French society. Sexualized depictions of him—which are numerous and visceral—serve as embodiments of the falling boundaries between the dangerous Other and the damaged Republic.

In this cartoon on the right, Joan of Arc asks, “What do you have against me, Mr. Blum? I forgive you for your pornographies. Forgive me for my purity!”<sup>100</sup> This is another example of how Blum’s damaged masculinity is used to separate him from “true France” and classify him as an infiltrating Other. In the image, he is hunched over and ill looking, while Joan of Arc, like



“Jeanne d’Arc,” (August 6, 1937), *Je suis partout*.

<sup>100</sup> “Jeanne d’Arc,” *Je suis partout*, August 6, 1937. Besides being discriminated against simply for being Jewish, Blum was ruthlessly attacked by the far right for his progressive views on gender relations as exemplified in his 1907 essay “*Du mariage*,” which advocated some sexual freedom before marriage, including for women, as a means of combating venereal disease. This work was relentlessly invoked and berated in the right wing press while he was President, and helps to explain why representations of Blum were particularly sexualized.

Marianne in other images, is embodied in an ideal female form. Moreover, the caption makes perfectly clear the degenerative influence of Blum on France's "purity." Here, the cartoon is not overtly anti-Semitic, yet it uses Blum's masculinity to make a larger, implicit racial critique. In this sense, employing gender ideals and deviance was a means for these journals to tacitly express much more substantial prejudices against those they wished to exclude from France.

This usage binds them to a long history of gendered political symbolism in France, for since the *ancien régime* symbols of sexuality and gender were efficient yet potent mediums for the dissemination of complex political positions to the population. Yet in order for this symbolism to function, these right wing journals had to adhere to accepted symbols of ideal and deviant male sexuality. Thus they manipulated values of the Third Republic to serve their own political ends. In the image below from July 1937, the government's continual preoccupation with health and hygiene is



— Il s'est exposé trop longtemps aux rayons ultra-rouges.

"Il s'est exposé trop longtemps aux rayons ultra-rouges,"  
(July 16, 1937), *Je suis partout*.

used against it. Below this cartoon of a withered and sunburned Léon Blum, the caption reads: "He's spent too much time exposed to ultra-red rays."

*Conclusion: Republicanism on the extreme right?*

This pervasive imagery and discourse of damaged Republican masculinity nonetheless conforms in somewhat contradictory ways to Republican ideals. Indeed, even the most extreme elements of the right wing, (with a few exceptions like Céline), recognized the rhetorical value of using Republican symbols



and ideology, such as La Marianne, medicine, hygiene, physical health, and the proletarian worker. As discussed in the first chapter, these elements were part of a vast body of virtues and symbols that the Third Republic sought to cultivate in its citizens. Journalists took this recognizable lexicon and exploited and manipulated it to express their disgust with the Republic and its decadence. Yet in doing so, they revealed themselves to be deeply influenced by the public discourse of the Third Republic and its fight—led by republicans—against contagion, disease and degeneration in all forms. Thus in somewhat surprising ways, journalists of the extreme Right identified many of the same symptoms of France’s disease as journalists on the left, such as collapsing structure and eroding boundaries, and they represented these problems using the metaphor of contagion and infection, which was perfectly in line with Third Republic positions on medicine and hygiene. By this, I do not mean to imply that extremists like Robert Brasillach and Lucien Rebatet were Republican at heart. They manipulated Republican imagery to suggest that the Third Republic itself was in fact the infection it so often warned against. Still, I argue that in their capacity as journalists, they recognized elements of a lexicon of masculinity established during and often times by the Third Republic that they could use to articulate their hatred of that very government, assuring that their positions would resonate as forcefully as possible with French citizens.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Threat of the Crowd: Representations of Damaged Masculinity on the Left

##### *Crowd Psychology in the Third Republic*

Contrarily to the extreme right, left wing newspapers were almost universally Republican, so this contradictory use of Republican symbolism did not apply to them.<sup>101</sup> Still, the French left found their own ways to mobilize gendered Republican language and imagery to construct attacks against the right. Rather than using deviant masculinity as a symbol of infiltrating outsiders, left wing journals cast it as a sign of degeneration and dangerous, excessive conformity. However, the symbolism on both sides suggests a fear of dangerously eroding boundaries between social categories and individuals in France. I argue that the left represented right wing behavior as effeminate and homoerotic through using the republican ideals of reason, honor and restraint. By reframing discourse of the body in the context of contemporary psychology, left wing journals invoked popular Third Republic notions of crowd psychology to highlight the overly passionate conformity and sexual deviance of the right wing. They imply that the right has lost reason, self-control and individuality, key attributes of French masculinity.

In “Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism, 1929-1945,” Mark Myers argues that French antifascists drew comparisons between fascists and crowds in order to highlight the dangers of fascism in sexualized terms.<sup>102</sup> I present a similar argument, but while Myers focuses largely on pamphlets and popular publications and intellectual works of the era, I seek to show how similar—if perhaps less explicit—representations became part of journalistic discourse. The works that Myers analyzes are studies (though some more academic than others) of fascism, mostly antifascist publications written against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. I use these

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<sup>101</sup> The major exception to this statement is *L'Humanité*, the organ of the PCF, which was anti-parliamentary until 1935, when the Comintern changed its position on leftist coalition governments. (See footnote, page 6). Although the SFIO struggled for decades with its Republican identity and role in parliamentary politics, in the 1930s it had little room to maneuver between Radicals and Communists and had thus become staunchly, if perhaps grudgingly, republican.

<sup>102</sup> Mark Myers, “Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism. 1929-1945,” *French Historical Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 109-142.

works and Myers' analysis of them as a means of providing the context in which two somewhat unconventional left wing journals, *Vendredi* and *Marianne*, operated.<sup>103</sup> That is, I present it as a lexicon that they could mobilize and transform for the purposes of journalism. In this sense, while Myers is interested in the arguments of staunch antifascist writers and intellectuals, I am more interested in how antifascist journalists were able to use these arguments to present politics and current events in a particular light, thus contributing to a larger understanding of sexualized political symbolism at both ends of the political spectrum. Particularly, I am interested in the ways in which crowd psychology is related to the popular notions of contagion and infection in France, a link that Myers does not address.

Finally, the notion of antifascism that Myers discusses raises complex questions about the nature and scope of fascism in France as an identifiable category. In the mid to late 1930s, there were prominent self-identified fascists in France, yet as I have already discussed, the French far right was a nebulous, evolving group comprised of individuals with often ambiguous political beliefs. Just as historians have hotly debated application of this category in the French context, contemporary writers also recognized its charged nature. In this sense, when left wing journals identified an individual or group as fascist, they were implicitly associating it with a specific body of imagery of deviance related specifically to fascism, such as hysterics and homosexuality, among other characteristics.

As Myers has pointed out, articulating this body of fascist deviance relies on crowd psychology, a theory that originally enjoyed popularity across the political spectrum during the Third Republic. It is important to note that crowd psychology first developed in a very different context than the 1930s, and for this reason its greatest supporters at first tended to be conservatives reacting against the dangers of mass democracy, not leftists concerned with right wing leagues and fascism. In 1895,

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<sup>103</sup> *Vendredi* and *Marianne* are interesting case studies because they were not party organs, although *Vendredi* was closely aligned with the Popular Front. The official journals of the PCF (*L'Humanité*) and the SFIO (*Le Populaire*) were more rigidly Marxist and less intellectual in nature, and subject to the needs of their respective parties. *Vendredi* and *Marianne* operated more independently and thus with more journalistic liberty, generally resulting in more unorthodox arguments, though *Vendredi* eventually folded more or less in unison with the Popular Front.

Gustav Le Bon, a conservative intellectual, wrote *La psychologie des foules*, a pseudo-scientific, sociological text on the dark nature of the crowd (*les foules*). Reacting primarily against the Paris commune of 1871, populist-nationalist Boulangism, and seething urban masses, his book sought to highlight the dangers of mass democracy.

One of his principal mediums of achieving this was to emphasize the eroding social and sexual boundaries brought about by the crowd. While the mob had long been an object of fear and hatred among the upper classes in France, Third Republic social science and gender roles made possible Le Bon's psychological critique. As Robert A. Nye explains, in this context, "the worship of reason and the emphasis on sexual continence and self-restraint justified the male suspicion of those groups which he perceived to be dominated largely by an unregulated sensuality and emotionalism... his own self-mastery and 'logical behavior' justified and legitimized his dominant role in society."<sup>104</sup> In turn, because Le Bon, (among other supporters of the theory), portrayed the crowd as "an organic unity modelled on the individual mind," there was an implicit comparison between the collective deviance of the crowd and the darker, baser instincts of the individual.<sup>105</sup>

*La psychologie des foules* was a profoundly successful work because it resonated with the fears and doubts of the republican elite while using the discourse of social science that they promoted. Although Le Bon was by no means the only one to write of the political dangers of the crowd in sexualized terms—thinkers from conservative Hippolyte Taine to staunch republicans like Zola and Durkheim also pointed out its apparent deviant tendencies<sup>106</sup>—his text remains one of the most influential. Even though its psychological theories were largely dismissed by the 1930s, its representation of the crowd as a passive, effeminate hysterical body erasing the boundaries between

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<sup>104</sup> Robert A. Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave Le Bon and the Crisis of Mass Democracy in the Third Republic* (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1975), 168.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. For another detailed analysis of crowd psychology and its diverse supporters, see Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France*.

<sup>106</sup> Myers, "Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism. 1929-1945," 113.

individual men resonated with conservatives and republicans alike. Thus as the new French right became more and more associated with mass politics, it became a key rhetorical tool of the left.<sup>107</sup>

On some levels this is unexpected, for by their very nature socialism and communism rely on mass politics, and seem equally if not more vulnerable than the new French right to a crowd psychologist's critique. However, I would suggest that for several reasons, crowd psychology provided the ideal medium for left wing journals to attack the extreme right. First of all, the theory makes an implicit comparison between individual psychological problems and collective, societal deviance by presenting the crowd as "an organic unity." In this sense, it provided the link between the behavior of individual men in the right wing leagues and the degeneration of French society as a whole, facilitating the usage of the notion of infection as a means of articulating the right wing threat.

Secondly, it was a highly versatile theory that pertained to diverse phenomena, from strikes to sports to mass media. Indeed, as *La psychologie des foules* grew in popularity, its theories were applied in numerous other contexts, for as Myers writes, "its conceptual framework could easily be extended to make sense of almost any collective or collectivizing phenomenon."<sup>108</sup> In fact, the importance of medicine to the theory led to a reexamination of historical events such as the storming of the Bastille in 1789 taking into account the medical pathology of crowd psychology.<sup>109</sup> However, during the late 1920s and 1930s, crowd psychology became more applicable not as a critique of mass democracy, but as means of delegitimizing new forms of authoritarianism, not only because it was versatile, but also because it appealed to the center. In the context of the tenuous unity of the left in the mid 1930s, left wing journalists, especially communists and socialists, had to find ways to appeal to a wide swath of readers, from pro-parliamentary conservatives to Stalinists, and crowd psychology provided a framework that allowed for this.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave Le Bon and the Crisis of Mass Democracy in the Third Republic*, 174.

In 1939, Serge Tchakhotine, a Russian social psychologist living in France, wrote *Le viol des foules par la propagande politique*.<sup>110</sup> A liberal centrist, he was nonetheless censored by the government of Radical Edouard Daladier and unable to publish until after World War II. Still, his work reflects the more academic, scientific branch of antifascist crowd psychology.<sup>111</sup> He writes that crowds have “their roots in bestiality”<sup>112</sup> and that they “become docile instruments in the hands of dictators.”<sup>113</sup> Here, he challenges fascist virility by reframing it as “bestiality,” which due its simple crudeness is easily manipulated and vulnerable to seduction. He continues to reduce fascist virility to simultaneously effeminate and barbarous emotionality, and invoking imagery of the body, he writes that crowds, “far from instilling a new vigor in the social body, are nothing but spasms of an evil that gnaws at it and are symptoms of its temporary or definitive decomposition... they provoke panic... hysterical behavior and outbreaks of violence.”<sup>114</sup> In this sense, Tchakhotine emasculates the notion of brutality by portraying it as a display of psychic intoxication.

*L’Opéra politique*, a 1937 study of fascism by Henri Pollès, a novelist and contributor to *Vendredi*, also highlights the anti-masculine nature of fascist crowds. Pollès was a leftist who strongly supported Léon Blum, but like many in the Popular Front, he was not a strict Marxist and he believed that Marxist analyses of fascism did not truly capture the dangers of the ideology.<sup>115</sup> In this sense, in many ways Pollès is the perfect representative of the newspaper he wrote for. *Vendredi* was a weekly newspaper founded in November 1935 and closely linked to the Popular Front. Less Marxist than the SFIO’s *Le Populaire* or the PCF’s *L’Humanité*, *Vendredi* was instead a “literary periodical founded...

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<sup>110</sup> The literal translation of the title is “The rape of crowds by political propaganda,” though the French *viol* also means “violation” in English. Because of its double meaning, *viol* is a less charged word than the English “rape,” but the title does suggest that crowds were sexually violated by the political propaganda forced upon them.

<sup>111</sup> Myers, “Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism. 1929-1945,” 132.

<sup>112</sup> Serge Tchakhotine, *Le viol des foules par la propagande politique*, 22nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 139. Note - all translations in this chapter are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>115</sup> Myers, “Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism. 1929-1945,” 109.

to provide a forum for the intellectuals who supported the Popular Front.”<sup>116</sup> It was ostensibly “an instrument of political ecumenicalism” and *fraternité* concerned with “happiness and restoring human dignity”.<sup>117</sup> However, the newspaper folded only three years later in November 1938, a victim of the growing factionalism within the Popular Front.

Though its circulation did not reach the levels of some comparable right wing journals like *Gringoire*—it never had a readership higher than 100,000<sup>118</sup>—it was the most influential left wing weekly of its short-lived time, and a perfect representation of the promise and shortcomings of the Popular Front. As Julian Jackson notes, “its existence had been almost exactly coeval with that of the Popular Front—testimony to the lyrical illusions of 1936 and to the disappointments of 1938.”<sup>119</sup>

Pollès and his *L'Opéra politique* reflect this nebulous, literary approach to leftist politics. Less scientific than Tchakhotine’s work, *L'Opéra politique* is a more direct attack on fascist masculinity that uses republican gender norms to depict fascism as deviant. Like Tchakhotine, Pollès reframes fascist virility as brutish, barbaric and contrary to true masculinity. “It is not so much man that is exalted by these politics, the truly virile man—but the male... There are two ways to be male: one easy and crude: make war and destroy, as the fascists do, urging on their desires; or construct.”<sup>120</sup> Specifically, the crowds of fascism become key symbols of fascist brutishness and deviance that are contrary to ideal republican masculinity. According to Pollès, fascists “accept everything that the tyrant says like dogs,”<sup>121</sup> and this lack of reason, honor and individuality renders their displays of strength irrelevant. Additionally, as Myers argues, their submissiveness to the leader invokes a certain homoeroticism or femininity of fascism that functions as another attack on virility.<sup>122</sup>

Fascists as a whole resemble a dilettante who masturbates his sense of life... the somber voice of the prophetess drunk on herbs nourishes their dynamism with the magnificent poetry of desire; never has the

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<sup>116</sup> Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, 116.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>120</sup> Henri Pollès, *L'opéra politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), 183-4.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>122</sup> Myers, “Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism. 1929-1945,” 132.

word ‘galvanize’ had a fuller sense. The repetition of the goose step makes them feel gloriously their life and their soul all together as one, at the same time as their muscles. The parades compose for them a magical existence of orgies of exaltation.<sup>123</sup>

Here, Pollès merges deviant sexual behavior, homoeroticism and excessive virility, using the crowds as evidence of emasculation. Yet he also attacks fascist leaders, again highlighting the gender deviance of the relation between the leader and the crowd. He writes, “Tyrants are males who play with crowds as they would a woman, but they flatter them like a woman flatters a man she wants to seduce... like women, they reserve their decisions, then they reveal them to be sudden, furious, and unpredictable.”<sup>124</sup> The crowd is effeminate, hysterical and submissive, while the leader as well displays unmanly, deviant behavior through his seduction of the crowd. In this sense, the relation between individual and collective deviance is evident. Members of the crowd compromise their individual agency, and in doing so, empower the inevitably deviant behavior of the crowd itself, which acts as an individual entity. Yet those individuals who do not succumb to the crowd can either combat it or manipulate it, and in doing the latter, they act not as strong, dominant men, but as seductive women, thus further merging the notions of individual and societal deviance. In his conclusion, Pollès discusses the risk of spreading crowds and predicts that France will collapse, either to fascists or communists. A leftist who did view the USSR somewhat favorably, Pollès was still deeply committed to Republicanism and believed in its preservation. Echoing the prevalent theme of contagion and eroding boundaries, he concludes that France is greatly threatened and that “we have a lot to fear in the great fascist contagion.”<sup>125</sup>

### *The Threat of Fascist Contagion in Leftist Journals*

Left-wing newspapers echoed this fear of “fascist contagion” in France. Because of their journalistic nature, as expected they generally do not examine it to the same extent that analytic works

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<sup>123</sup> Pollès, *L'opéra politique*, 201.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.



such as *Le viol des foules par la propagande politique* and *L'Opéra politique*. Yet they do use the popular theories outlined in these works in order to articulate representations of the right wing as infected with the physical and psychological disease of fascism, effeminately seduced by its leaders and rabidly bringing France down from within. By framing depictions of events and individuals in the context of the popularly accepted, well-known “scientific” discourse of crowd psychology, they mobilized a discourse of damaged masculinity that articulated a pervasive fear of infection, eroding boundaries and disappearing republican values. In doing so, journalists delegitimized the notions of new order and rebirth of a true France expressed by the right wing in its own rhetoric.

Just as the right wing sought to demonize the French left by highlighting the deviance of foreign socialists and communists, left-wing newspapers established particular descriptions of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in order to describe foreign dangers, but also to imply the dangerous and damaged nature of any Frenchman that supported them. In their reports on fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, they use imagery associated with crowd psychology to negatively portray these states. For example, the March 10, 1937 issue of *Marianne* featured an article written by Jean Dumont regarding a major government meeting in Italy.

*Marianne*, like *Vendredi*, was a political and literary left wing *hebdo*, founded in 1932 by the publishing house Gallimard to provide a mass publication forum for leftist intellectual debate. Created specifically to compete with *Gringoire* and *Candide*, (another far right wing journal), it strove to be witty, eclectic and open to opinions of non-traditional leftists, from Malraux and Aragon to (early on) Drieu La Rochelle and Céline. For three years it was the most popular left wing weekly in France, yet it was steadily eclipsed by *Vendredi* beginning in 1935, sold by Gallimard in 1937 and shut down definitively at the start of World War II.<sup>126</sup>

The main difference between the two left wing journals, and in fact, one of the principal reasons that *Vendredi* grew more popular than *Marianne*, was that *Marianne* was fundamentally

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<sup>126</sup> Bernard Laguerre, ““Marianne” et “Vendredi”: Deux générations?,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 22 (June 1989): 39-40.

pacifist in nature. Pacifism in the Third Republic, especially in the interwar years, was a complex philosophical and political position that was much more nuanced than universal objection to war. As Mona Siegel argues, responding to unanimous cries of “*plus jamais de guerre!*” republican education in France after the Great War was profoundly pacifist, yet this did not exclude it from also being patriotic. Indeed, a discourse of republican moral disarmament emerged that highlighted France’s *mission civilatrice* and its role as a beacon of peaceful international diplomacy. Thus the pacifism of journals like *Marianne* was a political position that combined a sense of Republican moral superiority with pride in the power of diplomacy and the memory of the horrors of the Great War.<sup>127</sup> However, as the 1930s progressed this position grew increasingly untenable as the effectiveness of diplomacy waned, and readers and writers alike responded by gravitating towards the more militant *Vendredi*.

Still, *Marianne* remained an influential journal, and though its arguments were less forceful than *Vendredi*’s, it also used representations of masculinity to articulate the dangers of fascism and attack the nature of the violent extreme French right. In fact, masculinity was a particularly useful symbol for *Marianne* because it allowed journalists to tacitly express disapproval of these movements without betraying their pacifism. Returning to Jean Dumont’s 1937 article, it deals in part with Italian politics and also describes the crowds of people waiting outside of the palace where the meeting took place, hoping to catch a glimpse of Mussolini. “There are young men especially, very few women... They all know that sometimes, when the teeming masses at the gates of the palace of Venice become dense and make their clamor of cheers loud enough, the dictator could appear and greet his fanatics.”<sup>128</sup>

Here, the dual deviance of the crowd and charismatic leader, such as described by Pollès, is used to underline the disturbing nature of fascism. Using phrases like “teeming masses,” “dense,” and

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<sup>127</sup> See Mona L Siegel, *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940*, (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>128</sup> Jean Dumont, “Quand siège le grand conseil fasciste...,” *Marianne*, March 10, 1937.

“clamor” taps into the lexicon of crowd psychology, invoking unmanly behavior through crumbling borders between individuals and effeminate emotionality. Moreover, the more that the young “fanatics” of fascism deviate from prescribed masculine behavior by succumbing to the crowd, the more likely that the seductive leader will satisfy their urges with his presence, illustrating his sexual deviance as well.

*Marianne* also presents ways in which fascism in a larger sense damages masculinity by indoctrinating children in unmanly practices. Comparable to “Red childhood” from *Gringoire*, yet far less disturbingly explicit, “Intoxication of the German Youth” by Jean-Pierre Bloch from July 14, 1937, has a similar purpose—to highlight the threat of the foreign ideology through deviant gender norms. Bloch, who was a socialist Deputy and a member of the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism, does not use the shock tactics that *Gringoire* so often employed.<sup>129</sup> He writes, “it is not doing a disservice to peace to show what methods Hitler’s dictatorship employs to accustom children, from school on, to absolute submission to military discipline, to hatred of foreigners, and to passion.”<sup>130</sup> Here Bloch, who was Jewish and much more aggressively critical of Nazi Germany than *Marianne*, uses damaged masculinity by invoking the very opposite of ideal Third Republic education and citizenry, to illustrate the dangers of Nazism. In this sense, damaged masculinity is a rhetorical tool that allowed Bloch to articulate his hatred of Nazism in language that resonated with the pacifist readership of *Marianne*. Especially by emphasizing complete submission and excess passion—two fundamental elements of crowd psychology—the article challenges Nazi masculinity and through that implicitly criticizes its politics.

A similar article in the November 8, 1935 issue of *Vendredi* indirectly attacks Italian fascism by comparing sports in the USSR and in Italy. By focusing on a leisure or social activity and

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<sup>129</sup> Jean-Pierre Bloch also wrote regularly for *Le Populaire* and would become famous as a leading member of the French Resistance. He is also known as one of only a few French politicians to reject the Munich Accords with Germany in 1938. The fact that he contributed to the staunchly pacifist *Marianne* a year earlier illustrates the journal’s willingness to publish a diverse range of authors that did not necessarily agree with its official stance.

<sup>130</sup> Pierre Bloch, “L’Intoxication de la jeunesse allemande,” *Marianne*, July 14, 1937.

portraying Italian sports in a particular manner, the author, Georges Soria, has a more readily accessible means of commenting on the dangers of fascism, particularly on the ways in which the fascist dictatorship damages masculinity. Of sports in the USSR, he writes, “It seems to me that sports lead to the emancipation of the physical man and of the moral individual... the individual can dedicate himself to sports which teach him about effort, loyalty and moral will.”<sup>131</sup> Contrarily in Italy, the “athlete finds himself face to face with constitutive powers in a state of strict obedience.” Writing of the Italian runner Mario Lanzi, he claims that should he have “the least bit of imagination, for example to wish to stop running, for personal reasons, in eight days he would be in Eritrea, pure and simple.”<sup>132</sup> Complete obedience and lack of individuality and free will counteract the positive masculinity of athleticism and repute the claim of fascist virility.

#### *Crowd Psychology and the Deviance of the Leagues*

However, these articles focus on foreign fascism. While they are important because the French right was often implicated by comparison to Italian fascism and Nazism, there were other ways in which left wing journals used norms of masculinity to attack the politics of the French right. The sexualized critique of crowds as deviant bodies was used against the nature and actions of the *Ligues de droit* (right wing leagues), rendering their paramilitary movements and groups unmanly, homoerotic, and un-French. In a larger sense, this gendered imagery contributes to political journalism by potently communicating the notion of contagion, falling boundaries and collapse of social order in France.

Following the February riots of 1934, left-wing journals reacted strongly against the organized violence and increasing popularity of extreme right wing groups. On February 14, 1934, *Marianne*

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<sup>131</sup> Considering the brutality of Stalinism in 1935, one must question the earnestness of Soria’s description of the nature of sports in the USSR. Depending on the extent of Soria’s allegiance to the Comintern, his statement can be taken as potentially ironic. Regardless of his position on the USSR, his description of fascist Italy clearly uses damaged masculinity to challenge fascist virility.

<sup>132</sup> Georges Soria, “Sport et société,” *Vendredi*, November 8, 1935.

published “Death of Democracy?,” an article condemning the violence. The article states, “Fascism has well trained troops in the capital who are not lacking in courage or audacity. Sure, they are lacking a leader and a doctrine. But they know that they have had enough, and they are polarizing the masses of malcontents of the Bourgeoisie and the middle class.”<sup>133</sup> Here, there is no overt attack on fascist masculinity. However, the article uses the language of crowd psychology to express the dangers of fascism in terms that relate to damaged masculinity, referring to angry “masses of malcontents” that have no reasoned structure, merely their passion. The article uses the homogenizing effect of the *Ligues* to employ frightening imagery of French societal collapse. “The antiparliamentary wave is crashing in earnest. Take notice: its flow won’t only take national representation; it will sweep away political liberty with the same crash!”<sup>134</sup> Staunchly republican, the article depicts the fascist and extremist protesters as harbingers of the dark times to come, writing that in the dictatorships of Europe, “the disappearance of representative institutions ushered in the forging of the first chains of slavery.”<sup>135</sup>

Another article from the same issue addressed the psychology of the protesters. Although “Jeune France” does not specifically refer to the *Ligues*, published immediately following the February riots, the intended subject is clear. It describes the members of the protesting *Ligues* as:

Young men pressed against each other, not knowing very well what they wanted or for what purpose they were brought together, but happy still to be brought together, and perhaps, as indignant as they were, still happy that their new friendship was sealed in sacrifices suffered communally, by the blood spilled for each other.<sup>136</sup>

This description is somewhat bizarre and does not seem overtly negative in tone, yet in expressing the seductive and homoerotic power of the crowd over young men, and taken in the larger

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<sup>133</sup> L.O. Frossard, “Mort de la Démocratie?,” *Marianne*, February 14, 1934.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. This metaphor of a crashing wave does not translate particularly well to English. I have done my best to accurately convey the author’s intended imagery, but the original French is as follows: “La vague antiparlementaire déferle à plein. Qu’on y prend garde: dans ses flots elle n’y emportera pas que la représentation nationale, elle balaiera aussi du même coup les libertés politiques.”

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Emmanuel Berl, “Jeune France,” *Marianne*, February 14, 1934.

context of the political chaos surrounding the riots, it illustrates the dangerous appeal of fascism and its threat to France. Key to the menacing nature of this passage is the lack of reason of these “indignant” young men, “not knowing very well what they wanted or for what purpose they were brought together.” It describes a spontaneous outburst of passion and the young men who took pleasure in it without understanding why. “Pressed against each other,” they were seduced by the power of the crowd, intoxicated by what Pollès referred to as the “magical existence of orgies of exaltation.”<sup>137</sup> In this sense, the passage takes on a more sinister tone, for it is implied that these young men are giving up their individuality and their reason—key attributes of ideal republican masculinity—to succumb to the power of the crowd.

Yet as the works of Tchakhotine and Pollès illustrate, the gender deviance of this crowd is only one side of the equation. The infection caused by crowds involves not only the “young men pressed against each other,” but also the charismatic leader who seduces them and emasculates them through their complete submission to him. According to the theory, these leaders act as individuals, but they engage in a relationship with the crowd like a woman would, as if the crowd were also a single psychology to be seduced. In this context, not only did crowd psychology challenge the authority of dictators like Mussolini and Hitler, it also provided a medium for emphasizing the deviance of French admiration of Germany. By associating admirers of fascist leaders with the seduced and infected crowd, it reinforced the lost individuality and damaged manhood of French men who viewed foreign fascists favorably. Additionally, the homoerotic implications of this theory are evident. If French praise of Germany was in fact homosexual infatuation, left wing journals not only reiterated that Germany was dangerous, but also implied that the deviance of damaged French men could result in France’s complete collapse at the hands of Germany.

An article from the August 18, 1937 issue of *Marianne* illustrates this trend and also exemplifies how literary intellectualism and journalism were often merged in French weeklies. This

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<sup>137</sup> Pollès, *L'opéra politique*, 201.

particular article, written by J.N. Faure-Biguet, is a review of Alphonse de Châteaubriant's recently published *La Gerbe des forces*, an adoring portrait of Nazi Germany that advocated amity and collaboration between France and its primary enemy.<sup>138</sup> Châteaubriant, who won the Prix Goncourt in 1911 for his first novel, *Monsieur des Lourdines*, and the Prix de l'Académie française for his second, *La Brière*, was well known, respected and older than the more avant-garde young right wing of men like Brasillach and Drieu La Rochelle. During World War II, he would become one of the most notorious collaborators in France,<sup>139</sup> and even fellow right wing extremists found *La Gerbe des forces* distasteful. Brasillach, reviewing it in *Action française*, dismissed it as a "frightening example" of a "failure of intelligence."<sup>140</sup> The novel reflects Châteaubriant's traditionalist and spiritual beliefs, yet Faure-Biguet cites extensively from the book to discredit it by demonstrating its undeniably homoerotic nature. Choosing a particularly revealing section about Hitler, Faure-Biguet quotes Châteaubriant:

His body vibrates, without escaping for a second the curve of his uniform; the movement of his head is youthful, the nape of his neck is hot. His back is one that has not been dented by the dirty passions of politics: he is solid and pure like an organ pipe. His delicate hand is alive, supple, intelligent, and feminine. Yes, without a doubt, there is, there remains womanhood in that man. Fortunately!<sup>141</sup>

"Alright, alright, let's not overdo it," writes Faure-Biguet, following a longer version of this citation, but he makes his point rather clearly. Still, it must have been hard for the left to resist going after works like *La Gerbe des forces*. As Faure-Biguet's sparse commentary illustrates, in this particular case the extremely homoerotic writing more or less made the left's argument for them.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Alphonse de Châteaubriant, *La gerbe des forces* (Paris: B. Grasset), 1937.

<sup>139</sup> Kay Chadwick, "Alphonse de Chateaubriant, Collaborator on Retrial: Un Non-lieu individuel d'une portée nationale," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 1064.

<sup>140</sup> Brasillach as quoted in Richard J. Golsan, *French Writers and the Politics of Complicity: Crises of Democracy in the 1940s and 1990s*, 1st ed. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 58.

<sup>141</sup> J.N. Faure-Biguet, "La nouvelle trahison des clercs: La gerbe des confusions," *Marianne*, August 18, 1937.

Indeed, the more difficult task for left wing journalists was challenging the authority of the charismatic leaders who provoked this kind of deviant behavior. Hitler and Mussolini may have been easy enough targets, but the leaders who controlled the most frightening French crowds, the *Ligues de droit*, were more respected in France, and were imposing figures who presented themselves as strong, honorable and respectable embodiments of ideal masculinity. An excellent example of this is Colonel François de La Rocque. The leader of the largest and most fearsome paramilitary league, *Croix de feu* (Cross of fire), Colonel de La Rocque was a controversial figure in the French public sphere, respected for his successful military career and strong imposing persona, yet either strongly praised or sharply despised—depending on one’s political persuasion—for his conservative, militaristic, highly ordered vision for France. As Robert Soucy notes, La Rocque “had a visceral dislike of unruly mobs” and “warned against rabble-rousers who might incite an audience to lost its self-control.”<sup>143</sup> For this reason, descriptions of him in *Vendredi* and *Marianne* illustrate the numerous challenges that faced left wing journals attempting to delegitimize the authority of strong, intimidating far right leaders.

The March 14, 1934 edition of *Marianne* devoted several articles to the leagues, including one entitled “The Hour of the Leagues? The *Croix de feu*” by Philippe Boegner featuring an interview with its leader, La Rocque. Boegner refers to the Colonel as “dry,” but polite and gentlemanly and in fact seems to be attempting to counteract the notion of La Rocque as a deviant leader of fascists. He praises his war record and quotes the Colonel as saying that the *Croix de feu* is “deeply republican.” La Rocque addresses the accusation of fascism directly, stating, “Just do not go say... that we are fascists... contrarily, everyone should know that we are strong.” At the end of his article, Boegner

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<sup>142</sup> While this is perhaps one of the most blatant examples, there was no absence of homoeroticism in the works of other major literary figures of the French far right, notably Céline, Drieu La Rochelle, and Brasillach, who in the end paid for it with his life. (see footnote, page 32).

<sup>143</sup> Soucy, *French Fascism*, 105. Soucy argues that *Croix de feu* was essentially a fascist movement because La Rocque “demanded total obedience” and “blind faith in his leadership” (106) while advocating deeply conservative economics and professing hatred for communism, Bolshevism and the Popular Front, the latter of which he saw as infected with the former two. However, though his Republican credentials may have been dubious, he always identified himself as pro-Republican, and with estimates of CF membership between half a million and 1.2 million in the mid to late 1930s, (114) it seems that had he been truly “fascist” at heart, he had the military expertise and the manpower to orchestrate a coup.



writes that upon leaving the Colonel, he felt as if he had “followed like a sheep the public opinion” of La Rocque, and that in reality he “seemed capable of great things.”<sup>144</sup>

This seemingly uncharacteristic assessment of an extreme right leader by a left wing journal can be interpreted in multiple ways. First of all, it may in fact be the case that Boegner was favorably impressed by La Rocque and genuinely sought to disprove certain left-wing opinions of him as a dangerous fascist deviant. *Marianne* was often an unorthodox journal, and although it was one of the most influential left wing weeklies, it did not hesitate to take positions that were incongruous with the traditional party lines of the Radicals, the SFIO and the PCF. Just a few weeks earlier it published an admiring article on Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, who by that time had drifted far from his socialist roots, and would end up one of France’s most notorious unrepentant fascists.<sup>145</sup>

However, it is also possible that the article was in fact using a more subtle approach to crowd psychology to assess the dangers of La Rocque. The fact that Boegner is so easily won over by this strong, charismatic personality and that he refers to himself as a “sheep” can be interpreted as a warning against the ease with which weak-willed men can be swayed by strong ones, and that this latter category will use its powers of seduction on the masses. Indeed, although La Rocque’s personality did not lend itself to sexualized critiques as easily as Hitler’s or Mussolini’s, republicans objected to his authoritarianism because like other charismatic leaders he required men to become absolutely obedient and submissive to him and to give up their reason, honor and manhood. He sought to control the collectivity as a single entity and in doing so, he emasculated his recruits. Through damaging their manhood, he injured his own masculinity. Therefore, regardless of his austere personality, because of the discourse of crowd psychology La Rocque was equally vulnerable to this sort of attack. Thus while Boegner’s argument is not obvious, it does fit nicely into the mold of crowd psychologists’ objection to dangerously strong, authoritarian leaders.

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<sup>144</sup> Philippe Boegner, “L’Heure des ligues? Les Croix de feu,” *Marianne*, March 14, 1934.

<sup>145</sup> Claudine Chomez, “Sous la lampe: Drieu La Rochelle,” *Marianne*, February 28, 1934.

Unsurprisingly, *Vendredi* takes a much more direct approach. A November 1935 article entitled “The fatal slope” addresses La Rocque’s recent discourse of “national reconciliation.”

We do not doubt that among the intolerable fanatics... there are in the *Croix de feu* loads of brave people who really want this reconciliation. Only M. de La Rocque does not have the right to speak in their name. He has done everything possible to train these brave men in the strictest discipline. They are no longer there for anything except to obey. Therefore it is not whatever the members (*dispos*)<sup>146</sup> or the national volunteers think or desire that matters to us, but rather what the colonel thinks and wants.<sup>147</sup>

Here again, *Vendredi* effectively implies that La Rocque emasculates recruits in the *Croix de feu* by reducing their masculine virtues to strict obedience, to the extent that their thoughts are no longer relevant. He engages with them as a homogenous unit lacking borders between individuals; *Dispos* act as one on his whim. While the republican government desired order and obedience, this is a much more serious allegation, considering that Third Republic masculinity is at its core based upon the notion of reasoned citizenship.<sup>148</sup> According to *Vendredi*, by depriving members of the fundamental right of citizens to think for themselves, La Rocque is taking away their manhood; no longer brave, they are repressed and damaged by the Colonel. Thus *Vendredi* reframes the greatest asset of the *Croix de feu*—its intimidating force—as a sign of damaged masculinity, using the rhetoric of crowd psychology to challenge the rising strength and popularity of this extremist, paramilitary group.

Therefore, the greatest asset of crowd psychology was that it effectively fused compromised individuality and homosexuality, creating a potent and accessible image of deviance that left wing journalists could mobilize against the extreme right. As Faure-Biguet writes in his review of *La Gerbe des forces*, “M. de Châteaubriant absolutely has the right to put himself in a state of adoration... but if

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<sup>146</sup> *Dispos* is an abbreviation for *les disponibles*, which roughly translates to “the available ones.” The *dispos* were essentially a paramilitary militia under the command of La Rocque, but officially they were simply the members of the CF.

<sup>147</sup> *Vendredi* 15 November 1935

<sup>148</sup> It may seem that the theory of crowd psychology could in this sense be just as easily applied to criticism of military discipline, which few Republicans in the 1930s would depict as homoerotic or deviant. While I do not deny that this is an apparent weakness in the use of crowd psychology to attack the far right, it is important to recall that Republicans did in fact react against the excessive military obedience of the Second Empire—often in sexualized terms—during the early Third Republic. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter I, Republican military reforms sought to reintegrate reason into the army, and because of this, La Rocque’s approach can be seen as a return to deviance, another sign of degeneration in France.

the novelist... invites us throughout 350 pages to kneel down and adore with him, I refuse to do it without a total absence of critique.”<sup>149</sup> Although ostensibly only a book review, the article uses Châteaubriant’s infatuation with Hitler as a jumping off point to warn against the consequences of aligning oneself with Germany, and of losing oneself and one’s masculinity in the spreading crowds. In this sense, homoeroticism and collective passivity become part of a larger discourse on male deviance and damaged masculinity that *Marianne* and *Vendredi* employed to delegitimize fascists and the extreme French right. Châteaubriant’s infatuation was just one facet of the intoxication and infection that threatened France. As Faure-Biguet eloquently summarizes:

It is quite true that the unstable period we are living in can give momentary success and sporadic victories to standardized and military organizations; it is quite true again that the majority of a people [are] made of a sum of fairly weak individualities, it is sometimes prudent to group and reinforce shoulder to shoulder these majorities of weakness. But we refuse to see here anything but empirical means of temporary governments and we do not want at any price the establishment of a doctrine of goose-step regimentation of our powers of liberty, which constitute the essential value of man.<sup>150</sup>

*Conclusion: Infection and the Threat of the Crowd*

More than anything else, Faure-Biguet’s conclusion honors the importance of individuality, and because of this, it in many ways accurately summarizes the vast and multifaceted arguments of these two somewhat unorthodox, intellectual journals. Despite the instability of left, and its spectacular rise and collapse between 1934 and 1938, these journals remained dedicated to the Third Republic and its ideals of citizenry. Defending the Republic against a vehement and articulate extreme Right required the mobilization of political symbols that would resonate with readers and persuade them of the strength of the Republic. Therefore journalists went to the core of Republican values—reason, honor and free will of the individual man—to remind readers that behind their ordered marching rows, their authoritarian leaders and their witty, satiric commentary, the French right had foregone the ideals of

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<sup>149</sup> Faure-Biguet, “La nouvelle trahison des clercs: La gerbe des confusions.”

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

manhood. Seduced and deceived, they emasculated themselves by succumbing to the contagion of fascism, crowds and the charismatic leaders that manipulated them.

## CONCLUSION

This usage of crowd psychology raises critical questions about the nature of the threat the left wing perceived in the extreme right. While it is clear that both *Marianne* and *Vendredi* portrayed the growing popularity of this movement like the spread of an infection within the Republic, less obvious is their opinion on root of the disease. Certainly, crowd psychology was a highly effective means of articulating its transmission. Individual men, seduced by the irresistible pleasure of losing oneself in the energy of a crowd, became intoxicated and infected by the crowd, fusing together until their individual identities succumbed entirely to the collective will of the crowd or more precisely to whoever—from Mussolini to Colonel de La Rocque—manipulated it. Deprived of the honor and reason of true masculinity, like the anti-Dreyfusards of the 1890s they brought France down from within. They became the contagion that infected the Republic, and in this sense, they were an extremely potent symbol that journalists could use to express their fears concerning France's perilous state.

However, crowd psychology focused primarily on the spread of a contagion. Indeed, the notion of a specific pathology is much clearer in the arguments of the extreme right. While the left used the damaged masculinity of crowds to emasculate the extreme right, the far right mobilized the metaphor of infection in the context of an infiltrating Other that illustrated the Third Republic's poor health. Infected with un-French, outside contagions, for the extreme right the Third Republic in turn became the disease infecting France—not the embodiment of the nation, but the embodiment of the disease that brought about its degeneration. In this sense, the notion of the “infected Republic” articulates both the similarities and the divergences between extreme right and left wing uses of damaged masculinity as a journalistic tool.

Indeed, the discourse of infection—both of individual men and of French society as a whole—played a pivotal role in articulating France’s perceived degeneration throughout the Third Republic, from the venereal disease crisis to the rabid anti-Dreyfusard mobs. Thus it is unsurprising that both sides used it in the 1930s, perhaps to appeal more to the center, or perhaps simply to ground their extreme positions in discourse that few could challenge. This in and of itself is significant, for it is a reminder that while it is tempting to label the far right as “fascist” and the far left as “Marxist,” both movements were in fact profoundly French and inextricably linked to the evolution of the Third Republic, not to mention to each other.

However, I would argue that the “infected Republic” is more valuable as a means of understanding the fundamental differences between the far left and right in the 1930s, differences that I have tried to show cannot be reduced to easy, charged labels. For the left wing journals of *Marianne* and *Vendredi*, the Third Republic was infected, and the contagion came from within the nation, from the spreading weakness of individual French men. Though sickly, the Republic was at its core a healthy body that could be cured of its disease. While it is optimistic and admirable, this view was inherently problematic, for it offered no obvious cures for the infection and was crippled by the profound divides on the left. Indeed, even at the apex of the Popular Front’s success, arguably the only glue holding the left together was its faith—sometimes grudging—in the Third Republic. For many, this faith was born out of necessity, an imperfect compromise that could never have provided the unified strength needed to reinforce the Republic and protect it against internal infection and real foreign threats. Contrarily, the extreme right did not see the infection as plaguing the Republic, but rather the disease of the Republic ravaging France. Thus for the extreme right, the pathology of the disease, and its cure, were obvious: the Third Republic had to fall.

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*I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this Thesis.*