

**Resisting the Republic: The Politics of
Commemoration in the Vendée, 1870-1918**

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Declaration of authorship

I, Gareth Simeon Oakland, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

.....14 January 2020.

Acknowledgements

Fifteen years ago, I was sitting in a farmhouse in the small village of Venensault, Vendée, having dinner with Monique and Dominique Favroult. They were smallholders (*nous sommes les paysans*) who had farmed the land there for as long as anyone knew and had sold part of it to my mother-in-law, so that she could have a place to live in France. We were discussing my plans for life after I retired from my career in the accountancy firm PwC and I said I would like to go back to history one day. “Ah, if you want to understand our history,” said Dominique, “you have to know about the war.” Of course, I thought he meant the story of the Flying Fortress crew who, in 1943, had crashed in the woods nearby, been spirited away from the occupying Germans and off to Spain. Or perhaps the sacrifice of so many young men in 1914-1918 commemorated on the memorial at the crossroads in the village. But no, this was a war that I had not heard of, a civil war fought by Mon and Dom’s ancestors against fellow Frenchmen over two hundred years before. The tales of glory and horror passed down by each generation had been burned into their memory. I knew I had to find out more – to understand why this period of history defined these people in a way that nobody else I had met in France had ever been.

I would like to thank both the Society for the Study of French History (SSFH) and The Friendly Hand for funding visits to both regional and national archives. The archivists, local historians and museum curators in the three departments studied were unfailingly helpful in my search for documents and pictures. I have been fortunate to have tested some of the conclusions of the thesis at conferences organised by Manchester Metropolitan University and SSFH. The comments, questions and feedback received on those papers were all helpful. I am grateful to the many academics who have helped me along the path which has led to this work. My first history degree came from Cambridge in 1979; when I returned to university

in 2014, it was to the taught Masters course at Queen Mary University of London where I quickly understood that almost everything had changed. The patience and inspirational teaching particularly of Mark Glancy, Daniel Wildmann and, during my term at University College London, Andrew W.M. Smith, reignited my love for the subject and showed me how to use the new tools that were at my disposal. QMUL's Julian Jackson and Colin Jones were enormously helpful as I put together the proposal that has led to this thesis. They, along with other historians who were as enthusiastic about the project, mentioned a young academic, Rob Priest, at Royal Holloway who might be able to help me. Rob has supervised my work since 2016 and helped me to turn it into something worthwhile. I cannot praise the clarity of his thinking, dedication or kindness highly enough.

My final word of thanks is to the people whose love has been stretched to its limits over the past three years and will probably be glad never to see or hear about another statue. My children, friends (cycling, academic and otherwise) and to Helen Miller, who must have read every word of this document at least four times, all deserve a large glass of Vendée's best cuvée. Thank you.

Gareth Oakland, January 2020.

Abstract

Resisting the Republic: The Politics of Commemoration in the Vendée, 1870-1918.

This thesis considers the way that groups in the Vendée used the memory of the 1793-96 civil war to construct competing regional and national identities between 1870 and 1918. Republicans used the education system, the national press and the commemoration of republican “great men” to achieve their aims. Their conservative opponents, deprived of formal national power, turned to alternative channels such as the regional press, learned journals, pulpit sermons and memorials to the martyrs of the civil war. While many historians have focused on official republican ‘*statuomanie*’ and commemorative culture, this thesis demonstrates how Vendéen conservatives used similar techniques to achieve their cultural and political aims.

After considering the problems of research in a loosely defined *région de mémoire*, and showing that this was more politically contested than normally assumed, the thesis first establishes the emergence of competing historical narratives of the Vendée wars in the Third Republic. The core chapters explore four commemorations: republican statues of Joseph Bara (Palaiseau, 1881) and Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux (Montaigu, 1886), and royalist statues of Henri de La Rochejaquelein (St. Aubin-de-Baubigné, 1895) and Jacques Cathelineau (Le Pin-en-Mauges, 1896). The final chapter considers how nationalism and external threats occasionally provided the spur for reconciliation between the competing ideologies in the region, but these broke down and the memory of the civil war continued to be a resource for ideological conflict. The thesis concludes that the Vendée was a region of political contestation where both republicans and conservatives used the disputed memory of 1793-96. The statues of civil war

heroes had a local significance that was at least as powerful as those erected by the republican state. Despite modern theories that the Republic had hidden the “real” history of the civil war, debates about its causes and consequences were very prominent in the region after 1870.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

List of illustrations

1. Introduction	12
2. The Vendée: Geography, History, Religion and the Politics of Memory	59
3. The Memory of the Vendée Wars in the Academy and the Classroom	92
4. Republican <i>Statuomanie</i> and the Memorial to Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux	125
5. Reactionary Politics in the Vendée and the Memorial to Henri de La Rochejaquelein	151
6. Jacques Cathelineau: A Disputed Memorial	191
7. Reconciliation or Resistance: The Memory of the Vendée Wars, 1896-1918	232
8. Conclusion	273
Bibliography	286
Appendix 1 – Election Data 1881 to 1914	306
Appendix 2 – Members of the Revue de Bas Poitou	310

List of Diagrams and Illustrations

2.1	Map of <i>Région de Mémoire</i>	61
2.2	Map of the electoral balance of Vendée 85 in 1906	62
2.3	Population of France 1801-1911	68
2.4	Share of right-wing votes in legislative elections 1876-1914	84
2.5	Votes cast in legislative elections, Vendée 85, 1881-1914	86
2.6	Number of deputies elected, Vendée 85, 1881-1914	87
3.1	Number of Vendee (85) children registered in school 1879 and 1912	102
3.2	<i>La Mort de Bara</i> by Jacques-Louis David, 1794	112
4.1	Statue of Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux erected June 1885	125
4.2	Statue of Joseph Bara erected in September 1881	130
4.3	Statue of Denis Papin erected in 1880.	132
4.4	Marble bust of Larevellière-Lépeaux by David D'Angers, 1825.	141
4.5	Postcard of the statue of Larevellière-Lépeaux, undated and unattributed	144
5.1	Statue of Henri de la Rochejaquelein erected 1895	151
5.2	Clay pipe and engraving of Henri de La Rochejaquelein	157
5.3	Model for Faguliere's statue of de La Rochejaquelein and bas-relief from the tomb in the church of St. Aubin-de Baubigné	158
5.4	Bonaparte au Pont d'Arcole by Antoine-Jean Gros, 1876	176
5.5	Henri de La Rochejaquelein by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, 1817	176

5.6	Léon Gambetta by Alexandre Falguière, 1884	177
5.7	Stained glass window in the Chapel in Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné	179
6.1	Statue of Jacques Cathelineau, completed 1896	191
6.2	Relationships between families in Le Pin, 1793	197
6.3	The <i>Brevet de Généralisme</i> signed by all the Vendée leaders	202
6.4	Lithograph of original statue of Cathelineau erected in 1827	205
6.5	Lithograph of Jacques Cathelineau by unknown artist and painting by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson	207
6.6	Portrait of Jacques-Joseph Cathelineau compared to the portrait of his father. Both pictures by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson.	208
6.7	Statue of Jacques Cathelineau, now badly damaged and stored in the parish church of Le Pin-en-Mauges	209
6.8	Window in parish church, Le Pin-en-Mauges	210
6.9	Statue of Cathelineau placed on the plinth but still in its box	217
7.1	Statue of George Villebois-Mareuil erected in 1902	232
7.2	Map showing relative resistance to Church Inventories in France	255
7.3	Photograph of the damaged church door of St. Aubin-de-Baubigné	256
7.4	Great War army officers and the saying of de La Rochejaquelein	267

Resisting the Republic: The Politics of Commemoration in the Vendée, 1870-1918

1. Introduction

In early 1894, almost 25 years after France adopted a republican form of government for the third time, a royalist newspaper in the Department of the Vendée informed its readers of plans to construct two memorials:

Several newspapers have already announced the intention of Anjou to have a memorial to General Cathelineau. The Vendée cannot be left behind. We understand that a committee has already been set up to raise money for a statue to Henri de La Rochejaquelein.¹

This newspaper story reveals some of the questions that this thesis sets out to answer. The statue of Jacques Cathelineau would be in Le Pin-en-Mauges, Maine-et-Loire, and would commemorate the story of a peasant who became the first commander-in-chief of the Royal and Catholic Army which fought a bloody civil war in the Vendée against the first French Republic between 1793 and 1796. The second statue, in St. Aubin-de-Baubigné, Deux-Sèvres, would honour the youngest Vendéen War general, the aristocrat Henri de La Rochejaquelein, who had succeeded Cathelineau on his death. Since neither of the planned locations for the statues were actually in the Department of the Vendée, how would their construction stop the Vendée from being 'left behind'? Moreover, the last realistic chance of the restoration of the monarchy had died over ten years earlier in 1883, so why were a royalist newspaper and its supporters

¹ *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, February 11, 1894, 2.

prepared to put their money into memorials of the bloodiest war against the Republic?

A decade before this newspaper report, the republican government had approved and financed the construction of two memorials that told a different story about the same civil war. The first, in his hometown of Palaiseau near Paris in 1881 was of the boy soldier Joseph Bara, who had volunteered to serve in the army of the Republic. Bara had been captured and killed after he had refused to shout "*Vive le Roi!*" The second republican statue, in Montaigu, Vendée in 1886 was of Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux, the First Republic politician who had signed the death warrant of Louis XVI, written the first constitution of the Republic and become the First Minister of France under the Directorate. What was it about these two revolutionary actors, one a child soldier the other a constitutional lawyer, that persuaded republican politicians a century later that they should have statues erected to their memory?²

This thesis considers the way that political groups in the Vendée used the memory of the 1793-96 civil war to construct, reinforce and reconcile competing regional identities in the period between the beginning of the Third Republic in 1870 and the Great War, and it places these memorials at its centre. Feuding between republicans and conservatives over the memory of the Vendée continued almost unabated throughout this period, with only brief moments of reconciliation. Opposing memories of the wars and their bloody aftermath continued to be used to argue for different visions of politics and society. Leading republicans attempted to construct a national identity centred on a common language, shared history and republican values. They used various instruments to achieve these aims: the education system; the press; the army; the national bureaucracy; and commemoration of republican "great men". Their

² These memorials are considered in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

conservative opponents in the Vendée, deprived of formal national power, turned to alternative channels to tell their stories, such as the regional press, learned journals, pulpit sermons and the memorials to the martyrs of the civil war. While previous historians have focused largely on official republican *statuomanie* and commemorative culture, this thesis demonstrates how the traditionalist agents of Vendéen conservatism used similar techniques to achieve their cultural and political aims, and situates these competing memory cultures in the deeper political and cultural context of the period.

Historiography

The thesis brings together and explores a number of areas that historians have studied in depth. First and most obviously, this study contributes to a broader historiography of the early Third Republic between 1870 and 1918. Within this vast literature, four themes are of particular importance for this study: education, religion, political culture and the way that conservative and Catholic culture evolved as France went to war in 1914-1918.

One of the most important aspects of the Third Republic was its emphasis on reform and extension of the country's education system. Numerous historians have studied the changes made during this period and drawn conclusions on their impact on society. Phyllis Stock-Morton, Robert Gildea and Joseph Moody have studied areas such as the development of schools in the provinces, and the way that women's education differed from that of men.³ These historians document the implementation of successive pieces of legislation that extended free, secular school education to all children under the age of thirteen and, as the period went on, to an

³ Joseph Moody, *French Education Since Napoleon* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1978); Phyllis Stock-Morton "Secularism and Women's Education," *French History*, 10, no.3 (1996): 355-374; Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France 1800-1915, A Study of Three Departments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

increasing number of older children. Although the Vendée in this period also saw a rise in the number of children being educated in private religious schools, across France as a whole religious schooling declined.⁴ Historians have also explored the impact of education on literacy rates. From 1901 onwards the census included a question about literacy (“Can you read and write?”) for citizens who were ten years and older. The responses were shown for men and women as well as those failing to respond. In 1901 5.1 million citizens were unable to read and write out of 31 million in the cohort, an illiteracy rate of 16.5%. A further 579,916 people failed to respond (1.8%). Female illiteracy was 19.4% whilst male was 13.5%. By 1911 these rates had fallen to 14.1% for women and 9.7% for men. It was not until the first census after the Second World War, in 1946, that recorded illiteracy fell below 5% (although there were more “non-respondents” in that census than people who were illiterate) for the whole population and in that year male and female illiteracy rates were almost the same at 3.2% and 3.4%.⁵

Chapter 3 of this thesis deals with the way politicians implemented national policies to improve literacy as well to teach secular morality and a republican history of the Vendée wars of 1793-96. It also considers conservative resistance in the Vendée to these policies. It shows that for most of the period, republican changes to the school system had much less impact than school inspectors wished. Chapter 3 also draws on the work of Isabel DiVanna and Pim den Boer on writing history, as my work is concerned with the way that both republican and royalist politicians used history to support

⁴ *Annuaire statistique: Ministère du commerce, de l'industrie, des postes et télégraphes, Office du travail, Statistique générale de la France* of the *Direction de la statistique générale* (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1903), 235. The total number of children in education rose from 4.6 million in 1875 to 5.5 million in 1903 whilst the number in religious schools declined from 1.8 million to 800,000. The overall increase in children in school is partly because of the increase in the population of children surviving to school age and partly due to higher participation rates. Even in the Vendée, absence from school registration declined to almost zero although actual attendance was not guaranteed – see Chapter 3.

⁵ The statistics are drawn from a UNESCO report on the progress of literacy in twenty-six countries. *Progress of Literacy in various countries* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1953).

contemporary ideological arguments.⁶ History textbooks were carefully selected and prescribed for schools. Exam questions based on these texts, for both teachers and students, point clearly to a version of history that taught Vendéen children that their ancestors were mistaken in resisting the Revolution. The myth of the republican boy martyr Joseph Bara was central to school history teaching during this period. Conservatives used a newly formed local history society and also turned to memorials and pulpit sermons to try to counter-balance academic and school history teaching.

Another central area of contestation under the Third Republic was religion. Despite its notable religious pluralism and extensive religious freedom, France remained a nominally Catholic country with over 90% of the population baptised into the Church. A more detailed review of the religious composition of the country is set out in Chapter 2, which calls on a number of studies of the French Catholic Church in the nineteenth century by Norman Ravitch, Austin Gough, Raymond Jonas, Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire, and Maurice Larkin. These present a complex picture of a Church, whose leaders were in 1870 already divided between those determined to resist the state's role in the governance of the Church and those who were reconciled to working with the government, developing their relationship with a sometimes hostile and anti-clerical state.⁷ The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period when French Catholicism also underwent a revival of faith in pilgrimages, prophecies and the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The latter, whilst it represented different aspects of belief at

⁶ Pim den Boer, *History as a profession: The study of history in France (1818-1914)* trans. Arnold J. Pomerans, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Isabel DiVanna, *Writing history in the Third Republic* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010).

⁷ Norman Ravitch, *The Catholic Church and the French nation 1685-1985*. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 90-111; Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse de la France 1880-1914*, (Toulouse: Privat, 2000); Maurice Larkin, *Religion, Politics, and Preferment in France since 1890: La Belle Époque and Its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Austin Gough, *Paris and Rome: The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign 1848-1853* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

different times, was itself a symbol of Vendéen conservative belief.⁸ An understanding of Catholicism is particularly important because of the religious motivations of Vendéen reactionary leaders in both 1793-96 and the 1890s. In the eighteenth century, the war was fought at least partly to restore the traditional church and its priests that had been overthrown by the Revolution. At the end of the nineteenth century the Church in the Vendée was not under the same existential threat but its ability to educate children and influence adults was. The case studies of memorials to Jacques Cathelineau and Henri de La Rochejaquelein illustrate the way that the Church sought to compromise with the Republic in the first case and confront it in the second.

Historians of French political culture in the late nineteenth century have focussed on the establishment of the Third Republic and disputes between and within the factions that made up government and opposition. Studies of conservative politics by historians such as René Rémond, Robert Locke, and Kevin Passmore have considered the complexities of the different strands of royalist politics after 1870 and how they changed over the period covered in this thesis.⁹ Each strand had porous boundaries between their memberships and ideologies, but they all had a common belief in rule by elites, the tradition of the strength of family and the need for moral reform of the masses. Membership of these groups was fluid, with variations over time both in the subjects they agreed upon and the political stance of individuals. By the late 1890s, when conservatives were considering the erection of statues in the Vendée, there were two main royalist traditions: the Legitimists and the Orléanists. Both Legitimists and Orléanists believed that a monarchy should be restored in place of the Republic but they

⁸ The use of the Sacred Heart is considered further in Chapter 2 and see Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart*, Chapter 4 and 7.

⁹ René Rémond, *Les Droites en France* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982); Robert Locke, *French Legitimists and the Politics of Moral Order in the Early Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

differed over who should be king and the extent of the monarch's powers. Other anti-republican groupings, chiefly Bonapartists and Boulangists, had brief spurts of popularity in the Vendée, but very few supporters remained after the Prince Imperial's death in Zululand in 1879 and General Boulanger's suicide in Belgium in 1891, respectively. More detail on Legitimists and Orleanists is included in Chapter 2.

Other historians such as Robert Nye, James Lehning, Bertrand Taithe, Elinor Accampo and Andrea Mansker have focused on different aspects of conservative republican culture.¹⁰ For example, Taithe's study of surgeons and other medical men after the events of 1870-71 discusses the idea that Frenchmen from all sides were so traumatised by the defeat to the Prussians and the violent and destructive overthrow of the Commune that they spent the next twenty years searching for *revanche*, a way to revive and relaunch French greatness and avenge the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. He noted that leaders of the medical profession looking for the causes of national decline believed that "enemies within" – whether opposing politics, or more mundane matters such as alcohol and venereal disease – were to blame. Taithe concluded: "in 1870 ... the sense of defeat undermined all forms of conciliation, politics and peace with oneself."¹¹ Passmore and Nye showed that the leaders of these groups were governed by the code of masculine honour, which Passmore notes had at its root the "duty of the male heir to transmit property and moral worth down the generations ... a predilection for military careers...and the use of the duel to settle

¹⁰ James Lehning, *To be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002); Bertrand Taithe, *Defeated Flesh: Welfare, Warfare and the Making of Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Andrea Mansker, *Sex, Honour and Citizenship in Early Third Republic France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Elinor A. Accampo, "Gender, Social Policy, and the Formation of the Third Republic," in *Gender and the Politics of Social Reform in France, 1870-1914* edited by Elinor A. Accampo, Rachel G. Fuchs, and Mary Lynn Stewart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

¹¹ Taithe, *Defeated Flesh*, 238.

matters of honour.”¹² Accampo and Mansker also explored the role of masculine honour and the impact of gender on the culture of the early Third Republic. These works were particularly useful for this thesis as they revealed the challenges and consequent insecurities of many republican men during this period. Accampo gives examples of male attempts to channel women away from the workforce and into maternity because the *revanche* needed women to produce more (male) children to overcome the advantage that other European countries appeared to have over France. She noted that Germany’s population grew by four million (20%) between 1881 and 1901 whilst France’s only grew by one million (3%). Taken together with a high infant mortality rate, in the years 1890-92 and 1895, the number of deaths in France actually exceeded that of births.¹³

Whilst they provide some excellent insight in to the potential motivations of the men responsible for conservative republican politics, their main focus is on Paris and republican men, rather than the leaders from the royalist opposition. This thesis shows that their conclusions on gender and social policy are just as applicable to the more traditional leaders of reactionary politics as they were to the republican men they have studied. An example of this is the public exchange of letters between Comte Maurice d’Andigné and Comte Xavier de Cathelineau in February and March 1897.¹⁴ Both from long-standing Legitimist families, they each believed that their honour had been damaged by accusations, and their letters spoke of their duty to speak the truth “as a royalist and a Vendéen” and, in the language of the duel, “prenez garde, Monsieur”.¹⁵

¹² Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy*, 32; see also Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*.

¹³ Accampo, “Gender, Social Policy, and the Formation of the Third Republic”, 7; see also Mansker, *Sex, Honour and Citizenship*.

¹⁴ The disputes between d’Andigné and de Cathelineau are discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

¹⁵ Maurice d’Andigné, *Aux Habitants du Pin-en-Mauges*, February 20, 1897 (AdML, Angers, Cathelineau Papers, 4-T-94), 4; and Xavier de Cathelineau, *Aux Vendéens du Pin-en-Mauges*, March 1, 1897 (AdML, Angers, 4-T-94), 3.

The disputes between left and right and within factions of the right discussed in the thesis contribute to the continuing debate on the historiography of the inward-facing debate about the “Two Frances” and the idea of European-wide “Culture War” between the forces of modernity and reaction.¹⁶ Nineteenth-century intellectuals and more recent historians have considered the idea of Two Frances: opposing ideologies of republicanism and monarchy, religious belief and secularism, urban and rural culture, or conservatism and socialism. It is certainly the case that Third Republic politicians used the idea of a “true France” juxtaposed against the reality of the republican settlement to debate potential change and the notion of the Two Frances is a helpful framing device for regional histories of the period, such as the work in this thesis, to consider the larger picture of social and cultural conflicts in France. The conservative Vendéen resistance to republican pressures for change provides an example of such conflict and, so long as we appreciate that the protagonists and the content in both national and local debates, change over time, it is a useful lens. The shifting allegiances of the royalists in the Vendée, discussed in Chapter 6, illustrate that even if there were national oppositions of Catholic and Secular that work for some of the period, they do not always capture the complexities of regional politics. Taken together with the case studies in Chapter 7 – which show how some Vendéen politicians on the republican “left” took a conservative view of aspects of anti-semitism, imperialism and nationalism – they suggest that the idea of only Two Frances, is not always sustainable for this period and in this region.

Considering these complex regional disputes and alliances through the lens of a trans-national ideological conflict provides a more helpful model and the “war” in the Vendée in the 1890s and early twentieth-century was certainly fought using cultural rather than

¹⁶ A good summary of this debate is set out in Douglas Johnson, “The Two Frances: the Historical Debate.” *West European Politics*, 1:3 (1978), 3-10.

physical weapons. Clark and Kaiser showed that such battles were fought in print, in the courts, schools and churches rather than on the battlefield. The example that they chose to illustrate France in this period by James McMillan about a dispute between a traditionalist Catholic priest and his secular parishioners in Brittany – reveals some of the difficulties and complexities with the model.¹⁷ McMillan acknowledged that, “black-and-white representations of the *fin-de-siècle* culture war in France are doubtless flawed” and his analysis of late nineteenth century Brittany as “the continuation of la Chouannerie by other means” contrasts sharply with Caroline Ford’s study on the rise of Christian Democracy in the region (discussed later in this chapter).¹⁸ Nevertheless, both McMillan’s study of a clash between a priest and school girl and the case studies explored in this thesis illustrate that the political and religious conflicts of the late nineteenth-century were fought using distinctly cultural tools – that culture was political and politics was cultural. In both the Brittany of McMillan’s essay and the Vendéen case studies in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 we see how the use of theatrical commemorations, partisan newspaper reporting, memorial statues and orations intersected with and were used to influence electoral politics and religious reform. The distinctive feature of the culture wars in the Vendée, as opposed to other parts of France and Europe, was the belligerents’ focus on the memory of a specific set of historical events in the region.

A final important study of political culture is Nicholas Roussellier’s analysis of “rotten boroughs” and electoral pluralism, which helps us provide a new analysis of the contested nature of Vendéen politics. Roussellier showed that up to the 1890s many elections to the national parliament in France were effectively uncontested. For example, he suggested that in 1877, 31.5% of all elections were not real contests, either because there was only one candidate or

¹⁷ Christopher Clark, and Wolfram Kaiser, eds., *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁸ James McMillan, “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the two Frances,’” in *Ibid.*, 77- 101

because the winning margin was so great. From 1877 to 1914, such non-contests became increasingly rare. He believed that uncontested elections resulted from three factors. First, there was the cost of the standing for election. There were no established political parties, so an individual standing for national election in the rural departments of the Vendée would have to find between 20,000 and 40,000 francs at a time when most working people earned less than 1,000 francs a year.¹⁹ The second factor was localism: if a candidate had no local network or was unknown in the district, then unless he was a nationally recognised figure, it was almost impossible to be elected. The final factor was what Rousellier called “social unity”, by which he meant that the role of national and regional authorities was not to provoke a debate but rather to create, or recreate, unity and “public tranquillity” – in effect to depoliticise elections. In the contested region of the Vendée, this last factor became difficult to maintain.²⁰ An example is the increasingly difficult elections of the great-nephew and principal backer of the monument to Henri de la Rochejaquelein in Bressuire, Deux-Sèvres. Julian de La Rochejaquelein was immensely wealthy and had family connections to the area stretching back centuries but Departmental authorities took an increasingly hostile role in attempting to destabilise the royalist vote. As a result the elections in Bressuire went from an effective “rotten borough” to being far more competitive, to the extent that de La Rochejaquelein lost his national assembly seat in 1885. This was one reason why the timing of the memorial to his heroic great-uncle became so important.

The final element of Third Republic historiography that is important for this thesis are studies of how conservative and Catholic culture developed in period immediately before and during the Great War. René Rémond dismissed the events of 1914-1918 as “affecting only

¹⁹ Nicholas Rousellier, “Electoral Pluralism in France from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to 1914,” in *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France*, eds. Julian Wright and H.S. Jones (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 143.

²⁰ Rousellier, “Electoral Pluralism in France”, 144

the surface of the French political situation ... the post-war period smoothly resumed the pre-war developments.”²¹ Passmore provides a more nuanced view, concluding that all strands of conservative politics came together during the *Union Sacrée*, initially to support the left-of-centre republican government and, as unity fragmented by the end of the war, to exclude the socialists and then provide the majority for Clemenceau’s government of 1917.²² Passmore concludes that the divisions both between left and right and within the conservative-Catholics led, by the end of the war, to the emergence of centrist politics, the disorganisation of the extreme-right and victory for conservative republicans of the Bloc National in the first post war elections of 1919. So far as it is possible to see through wartime censorship in the Vendée, Chapter 7 of this thesis supports Passmore’s analysis of the unity of early period. As the war progressed, however, it is clear that, in line with Rémond’s findings, conservatives in the region returned to their pre-war preoccupations about the Revolutionary period. Of course, as John Horne has remarked, republicans such as Alphonse Aulard also used examples from the 1790s to illustrate the continuing relevance of revolutionary republican history to the events of Great War.²³

Two detailed studies of Catholicism and education during the Great War that have also provided important national context to this thesis and further support Rémond’s conclusions. The first by Annette Becker considers the Catholic revival during and immediately after the war, where she argues that French front-line troops turned increasingly to Catholic imagery and prayer as the war progressed.²⁴ The second paper by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau

²¹ René Rémond, *The Right Wing in France from 1815 to De Gaulle*, Translated by James M. Laux (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1966), 254.

²² Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy*, 180-205.

²³ See John Horne’s paper, *Myth or Model? The French Revolution in the Great War*, delivered to Society for the Study of French History on January 14, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64EQLZjZi8M>. Aulard wrote a weekly column in *Le Journal* and then collected the works in to a short book which, he said, illustrated how “the work of national defence can learn from the events of Year II.” Alphonse Aulard, *La Guerre Actuelle Commentée par l’Histoire: Vues et Impressions au jour le jour (1914-1916)* (Paris: Payot 1916).

²⁴ Annette Becker, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930*. Translated by Helen McPhail (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

analyses the way that primary school teaching changed during the war.²⁵ Whilst other historians have suggested that Becker may overstate the extent of the national Catholic revival, the indications this thesis offers about how Vendéens turned to pilgrimages, the cult of the sacred heart and mystic visionaries would appear to support her conclusions.²⁶ Audoin-Rouzeau's study considers mainly republican schooling and the concerted attempt to turn "education tools into another branch of propaganda" that put the war aims of the Republic at the centre of all teaching.²⁷ He notes that this was successful in the early years of the war but that it "failed to maintain the initial tension over four and a half years".²⁸ In the Vendée, where a significant proportion of children continued to be taught in private Catholic schools, even the initial fervour ("we should teach them with a sort of holy patriotism") quickly turned to political partisanship.²⁹ In December 1914, the war was being blamed on "Germanic scientific philosophy, which has had such a malign influence on French republican thinking that 'right' is anything that the individual considers to be conform with universal laws ... these *libre pensées* say that their science and our faith are mutually exclusive".³⁰ "Free Thinkers", for conservatives in the region, was synonymous with the type of atheist and Jacobin republicanism they despised.³¹ By February 1918, with the war in its fourth year, Catholic thinking turned to the sort of education it should provide for Vendéen children in the future. As well as ensuring they were better at remembering their past and that they should be more energetic and less reliant on "French flair", the post-

²⁵ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, "Children and the Primary Schools of France", in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 39-52.

²⁶ See review of *War and Faith* by Robert Gildea in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 114, 459 (November 1999), 1368-1369; and Francis Ryan's review in *The Historian*, Vol. 62, 3 (Spring 200), 680-681.

²⁷ Audoin-Rouzeau, "Children and the Primary Schools of France", 44.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁹ *Bulletin des Écoles Privées du Département de la Vendée*, No.105, November 1914, 335.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, No.106, December 1914, 350-354.

³¹ For example see, *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, July 16, 1914, 1: "free thinking and brotherhood mean only one thing in the Vendée ... the infernal columns sent to burn and destroy."

war child should know “not tolerance (an improper word) but respect ... thinking that has no respect for faith can never be truly free.”³²

National and Community Cultures

At a broader level, this thesis seeks to contribute to the debate over the emergence of modern nationalism and national identity in the modern period. The debates over what constitutes a nation go back until at least the period under consideration in this thesis. Ernest Renan’s famous dictum from 1882 had it that “the essence of a nation is that its people have lots in common with each other and that they have all decided to forget lots of things too.”³³ Max Weber, meanwhile, emphasised the “irreplaceable cultural values, symbols, rituals, ideals and traditions.”³⁴ The meaning of “the nation” itself in French political thought had, by the end of the nineteenth century, been the subject of much intellectual consideration. The terms, for state (*l'état*), nation (*la nation*), fatherland (*la patrie*) had been combined into powerful new meanings by the Revolution as it left behind the old despotic kingdom (*le royaume*).³⁵ Robespierre’s address to the National Convention at the end of the trial of Louis XVI in 1792 summed up the Jacobin view:

You are men of State (*l'État*) and representatives of the nation (*la nation*) ... so you must act for the security of the nation (*la providence nationale*). A dethroned king in the republic is only good for two things: to disturb the peace of the State and disrupt its freedom ... Louis must die because the fatherland (*la patrie*) must live ... he must be denounced from this moment as a traitor to the French nation (*la nation française*).³⁶

³² Ibid., No.138, February 1918, 528.

³³ Ernest Renan, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?'. Quoted in: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). 9.

³⁴ Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, eds. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1947), 176.

³⁵ See David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (London: Harvard, 2001)

³⁶ Albert Laponneraye, *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre Vol.3* (Paris: Self Published, 1840), 5-6, 18.

On the right, the early nineteenth-century search for a system that would bring stability and the revival of French glory leaned on the political theories of Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald. Both believed that an infallible Church, a sovereign absolute monarch and subservient population were the unities required for a successful human society, and that the concept of a nation separate from the monarch was a fundamental error brought about by the Protestant and French revolutions.³⁷ Rémond notes that even the idea of a written constitution was considered sacrilegious and universal doctrines such as the Rights of Man could not exist in different countries “whose differences are the reflections of different histories.”³⁸

Vendéen illustrations of the persistence of this thinking can be found in, for example, the Second Republic’s presidential elections of 1851, when the senator for Deux-Sèvres, nephew of the Vendéen general Henri de La Rochejaquelein, also called Henri, was a candidate against Louis-Napoléon. His manifesto proclaimed: “only he can guarantee the first need of the nation (*le premier besoin de la nation*): legitimate monarchy.”³⁹ By 1884, the Vendéen nobleman Maurice d’Andigné defended the legitimist cause against the claims of the Orleanists, using language that had adopted some republican terminology. He wrote in a letter to *Le Matin* of “national rights guaranteed by parliament ... and the agreement of the nation”.⁴⁰ However, it was not the Third Republic’s Assembly, to which he was appealing but the tradition of the Estates General and decentralised

³⁷ René Rémond, *The Right Wing in France from 1815 to de Gaulle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969) translated James Laux, 44 – 58; John Murray, “The Political Thought of Joseph De Maistre.” *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 1 (1949): 63-86; Alexandre Koyré and Leonora Cohen-Rosenfield, “Louis De Bonald.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 7, no. 1 (1946); and George Fitzgibbon, “De Bonald and De Maistre.” *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 1, no. 3 (1940): 116-24.

³⁸ Rémond, *The Right Wing in France*, 48.

³⁹ Paul-Ernest de Ratier, *M. de la Rochejaquelein, Président de la République. La Candidature Nationale*. See: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5726984w/f38.item.r=nation> accessed May 31, 2020.

⁴⁰ Maurice d’Andigné, *Le Roi Légitime. Discours Prononcés par M. le Cte Maurice d’Andigné, M. Sébastien Laurentie, M. G. Véran et le Général Cathelineau à la Réunion Légitimiste du 27 Juillet 1884*, 187. See: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k3221422/f197.item.r=nation.zoom> accessed May 31, 2020.

provincial power founded on the prestige, patronage and authority of the local aristocracy. The ideal “Nation” for the political philosophers of the right looked backwards, “not to the anonymous, impersonal and administrative State of modern society; but a paternal and patriarchal monarchy whose sovereign was more father than head.”⁴¹

More recently, the past thirty-five years has seen a lively debate amongst historians and political theorists about the formation of national identities. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition*, Ernst Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* were all first published in 1983.⁴² In the French context, Pierre Nora’s seven volumes of *Les Lieux de mémoire*, published between 1984 and 1992, brought together a range of authors to examine individual symbols and sites of memory in the construction of French national identities, including monuments and other artefacts.⁴³

Definitions of nationhood ultimately depend on individuals recognising that they are part of a community called a nation; what Anderson calls “an imagined political community”.⁴⁴ This study draws particularly on Anthony Smith’s work idea of ethnosymbolism: an idea that “invites the historian to enter the inner worlds of nationalism – the memories, myths, traditions and symbols of nations – and to study the changes they undergo as well as the symbolic components that endure”.⁴⁵ Smith concluded that there are likely to be six attributes of a nation: “a collective proper name; a myth of common ancestry; shared historical memories; one or more elements of common culture; an association with a specific homeland; and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the

⁴¹ Rémond, *The Right Wing in France*, 55.

⁴² Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983),

⁴³ Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

⁴⁵ Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History – Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hannover NH: University of New England Press, 2000), 77.

population”. Smith quotes Renan approvingly: “The nation, like the individual is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice and devotion ... Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs for they impose duties and require a common effort.”⁴⁶

The general consensus, then, is that myths, culture, shared historical stories and memories play a significant part in the building of national identities, and that shared suffering may play a more important role in this than shared joy. Groups that have “nationhood” as an aim, such as regional autonomy movements as well as ethnic or religious separatists and sovereigntists, also share some of the same attributes.⁴⁷ The way that cultural stories are developed over time comes through both the formal study and teaching of history (as discussed in Chapter 3) as well as a number of more informal routes, such as oral storytelling, printed literature, newspapers, poetry, theatre, historical reenactments, monuments to the dead, museums and latterly film, radio, television and social media. This study will focus particularly heavily on one of these routes – monuments to heroes of a civil war – and examine how they helped to build the stories on which community identity is founded.

This focus necessitates an exploration of the relationship between national and regional identities, and indeed between nationalism and regionalism as political movements. Within and beyond particular states, many works have examined nineteenth-century communities where at least some political activists had the declared ambition of nationhood. For example, in French historiography, there have been recent studies of the way that groups in Brittany,

⁴⁶ Smith, *The Nation in History*, 12. The quote from Renan is at Ernest Renan, ‘*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*’. Speech given to Sorbonne conference, March 11, 1882 and also reproduced at [http://www.iheal.univ-paris3.fr/sites/www.iheal.univ-paris3.fr/files/Renan - Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation.pdf](http://www.iheal.univ-paris3.fr/sites/www.iheal.univ-paris3.fr/files/Renan_-_Qu'est-ce_qu'une_Nation.pdf).

⁴⁷ See, for example: Julius Friend, *Stateless Nations - Western European Regional Nationalisms and the Old Nations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012); Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000); and Laurence Gourievidis, *The Dynamics of Heritage: History Memory and the Highland Clearances* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

Occitania, Flanders and the Nord Department both resisted and then influenced the centralised state during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁸ Most historians who write about the history of the Third Republic acknowledge the pioneering work of Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen* which had the goal of explaining "how undeveloped France was integrated into the modern world and the official culture... of Paris, of the cities."⁴⁹ This immensely readable book started a wide-ranging debate about the nature of the republican project, the tools used and the impact that they had. Both Ford and Baycroft in their respective studies of Brittany and Flanders used Weber as their starting points to establish that his conclusions, at least as they relate to the peripheral regions that they studied, could not be unambiguously supported.⁵⁰ Whereas Weber considered all non-urban regions as an homogenous block, it is clear from this more recent work that different regions, communities within those regions, and influential individuals had widely differing concerns.

As a result, resistance to "becoming Frenchmen" in the Weber model varied widely from region to region. Caroline Ford's work on the Christian Democrat movement in Brittany in the early twentieth century showed that it was possible to be both Catholic and patriotic, republican and regionalist. Ford concludes that there had to be a more nuanced view of nationalism in opposition to regionalism. As noted above, James McMillan's essay on what he terms the "hot war" in Brittany (although the "heat" was limited to a priest pushing a schoolgirl into a ditch, for which he served a short jail sentence) between the Church and the secular authorities

⁴⁸ Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1993); James McMillan, "'Priest hits girl'; Andrew WM Smith, *Terror and Terroir: The Winegrowers of the Languedoc and Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004); and Stéphane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories & Political Culture in Nineteenth-century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁴⁹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), x.

⁵⁰ See, for example: Caroline Ford, "Peasants into Frenchmen Thirty Years," in *French Culture & Society* 27, 2 (Summer 2009): 89.

provides another example of the complexities of relationships between Paris and the regions.⁵¹ Timothy Baycroft's study of the French-Flemish community of northeast France focused on the question of why it took so long for the region to be integrated. Whilst Ford and Weber concluded that the development of a nationalism oriented around the centralised French state occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Baycroft showed that in Flanders it took much longer; this region was only fully integrated after the Second World War. He concluded that the main reason for the delay was the comparative failure of the regionally very strong Catholic Church to play an integrative role. Stéphane Gerson's work on the interplay between local and national elites in the Department of the Nord shines more light on this complexity. He noted three interconnecting forces were at play. The first was the way that provincial elites sought to integrate national and local loyalties; the "formation of French identity at the juncture of Paris and province".⁵² This was in direct contradiction to the mechanisms of central control that Weber proposed. The second was that, far from imposing control, the state wanted both "pride in place and national pride"; the concept of *petites patries* and *grandes patries* occurred at this stage in national identity formation rather than much later as some have suggested. Finally, this pride depended upon both local and national memories, "diversity and unity."⁵³

Historians of other countries have also explored the formation of nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It has also been helpful to consider the work of Celia Applegate and Alon Confino on the relationship between local and national in Germany in this period.⁵⁴ The idea of *Heimat* (the emotional ties to a homeland) that they explore suggests a very different form of

⁵¹ McMillian, "'Priest hits girl,'" 77.

⁵² Gerson, *The Pride of Place*, 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9, 10.

⁵⁴ Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

regional-national discourse than the French experience. Applegate studied the borderland province of Pfalz (the Palatinate) while Confino took a more general view of the Heimat phenomenon during the period before the Great War. Both agreed that Heimat represented a way of forging a German identity that reconciled local, regional and national perspectives through the lenses of both modernisation (of the new German nation) and nostalgic remembrance of the past (of the disparate parts of the Empire). The acceptance of what Confino called “a flexible and malleable notion” of nationhood by almost every group in Germany is in stark contrast to the conflicting views of reactionaries and republicans in the Vendée, who had opposing views of the nation as explored in the rest of this thesis.⁵⁵

Compared to the work of historians working in regions where there are different languages, there has to date been very little work to establish how regional identity is formed in communities such as the Vendée where political movements have focussed less on the aspiration to greater autonomy, or nationhood, and instead on different sorts of intersections between regional identity and national politics. In my work on the Vendée, we can see both similarities and contrasts with the regions studied by Gerson, Ford, McMillan and Baycroft and the work carried out by Applegate and Confino on Heimat. Historians of the French regions conclude that each reveals a unique set of relationships both within the region and in the way it relates to Paris: this is also true of the Vendée, the “permanent antithesis of France”.⁵⁶ The role that the Catholic Church played is crucial in three French regions: in Ford’s Brittany of the early twentieth century as social driver for a unique form of integration; in Flanders as a disinterested brake on progress: and, in McMillan’s 1870s Brittany as well as parts of Vendée, Catholicism as a reactionary force acting to stop any form of reconciliation with

⁵⁵ Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance*, 36.

⁵⁶ Jean-Clément Martin first used this phrase: Jean-Clément Martin, *La Vendée de la Mémoire 1800-1980* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

the idea of a secular republic. There are also interesting similarities with the Heimat studies. The first is the connection between contemporary ideology and a nostalgic view of the past. This thesis shows that memories of the events of 1793-96 were used extensively, on both sides of the political divide during the late nineteenth century. The second is the way that the extreme right in both countries captured this nostalgic movement. In Germany it was incorporated into the Blood and Soil ideology of the Nazis. In France, from the foundation of Action Française, through the collaboration years of 1940-44 to the contemporary Front National, “The Vendée” became a token of political extremism.

Nonetheless, this thesis brings out some significant differences between the Vendée and regions that have been studied by prior historians. Ford, McMillan and Baycroft were working on the periphery in regions that had at some stage in the past been outside France. They had majority populations that spoke different languages and to a greater or lesser extent had separatist tendencies. By contrast, the Vendée population spoke recognisable French even in patois and apart from a tiny minority who wished to be part of a Greater Brittany, had never wished to be separate from France. The Vendée’s attraction to the past was not simply a part of its regional identity, it was at the core of it. Unlike in the case of Heimat, I have seen neither connection to a love of the wild and nature, nor any acceptance by republican elites that the views of a reactionary Vendée had anything to offer national ideology. This thesis demonstrates that whereas both the German notion of Heimat and the French idea of *petites patries*, offered means to unify and modernise European states by bringing diverse cultures together, a region such as the Vendée provides a different perspective. The Vendée, riven by opposing versions of its recent history, provided conservatives with an alternative conception of the nation-state to the republican, secular, democratic future envisioned for it in Paris. This was not, as in Applegate’s Pfalz or Ford’s

Brittany, a region mediating the new nationalism to fit a local viewpoint, but rather one that rejected the modern nation entirely.

Memorials and Public Events

Another central contribution of this thesis is to the historiography of commemoration and public memory. The way that memorials have been used to build national myths, especially in France, has been the subject of numerous studies. Following Maurice Agulhon's ground breaking 1978 article on what he called "statuomanie", historians such as Avner Ben Amos, Daniel Sherman, and Karine Varley have published detailed studies of memorials in the Third Republic.⁵⁷ Agulhon's original paper attempted to outline the extent of the phenomenon of statue building between 1870 and the destruction of many of the monuments after 1940, when Vichy laws required that the metal be used to help the war effort. He realised that just attempting to carry out a census with the tools he had at the time would not result in a complete list, although this has subsequently advanced.⁵⁸ Agulhon studied the relationship between the mania for statue building and three aspects of Third Republic France: ideology, politics and art. By ideology he meant the decisions to erect public statues and use them to push forward the democratic and educational aims of the Republic: these statues would not be kings and saints but ordinary people who had done extraordinary deeds.⁵⁹ For political statues he noted that the Third Republic (in common with the Second Empire) celebrated not just the great men of its current incarnation but also the heroes of those republics that had preceded it.⁶⁰ As for art, he set out as we shall

⁵⁷ Maurice Agulhon, "La « Statuomanie » et l'Histoire," in *Ethnologie Française*, 8(2), 1978; Avner Ben Amos, "Monuments and Memory in French Nationalism" in *History and Memory*, 5(2), 1993; Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870-71 in French Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁵⁸ A web-based tool is now available from ASPM, an association formed to safeguard and promote French nineteenth century public art. It lists over 16,500 monuments and statues in France and elsewhere in the world. See website at: <https://e-monumen.net/> Accessed 18 October 2019.

⁵⁹ Agulhon, "La Statuomanie", 151,

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

see in Chapter 4, the idealised form of the Third Republic statue.⁶¹ This was not always followed in practice; often for cost reasons the statues were made from sub-standard materials and were poor copies of more famous sculptures.

Ben Amos looked principally at the great commemorative sites of Paris and argued that a fourth category, the theatrical production of memorial ceremonies, was required to fully understand these memorial sites.⁶² Sherman, meanwhile, considered the way that France used commemoration to change the collective memory of the Great War, arguing that the “unitary meanings, whether republican, consolatory or Christian” which Agulhon had focused on “risk distracting attention from ... the most lasting legacy to the twentieth century.”⁶³ Specifically, Sherman suggested that these commemorations subsumed individual memories and replaced them with a collective view of the events of the Great War and that such replacement was a deliberate act of power. He noted the Foucauldian contention that such power is multi-faceted and mobile, rather than emerging from a binary opposition between “rulers and ruled”.⁶⁴ Varley’s study of the commemoration of the Franco-Prussian War during the early Third Republic took this approach further still. Her work compared the relationship between various “powers” in memorial construction, which she listed as “mayors, municipal councils, Prefects, central government, the press, religious leaders, and local communities”.⁶⁵ She also considered the theatre of memorial unveiling and stressed the importance of the reception of both the proposal for monuments and their eventual production.

The work of these historians has been enormously valuable in developing the methodology used in this thesis for considering the

⁶¹ Ibid., 161.

⁶² Ben Amos, “Monuments and Memory”, 51

⁶³ Sherman, *The Construction of Memory*, 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁵ Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat*, 17-18.

Vendée memorials. Whilst there is much to admire in Sherman's work, Varley has shown that the beginnings of commemoration of war sacrifice as a way of influencing politics in the Third Republic can be traced much earlier, to the late nineteenth century. As this thesis shows, commemorations of the Vendée wars provided another site for the production and contestation of war sacrifice in this period.

Historians studying Third Republic commemoration have not examined the way that statues, such as those in the Vendée, were used in the construction of an "anti-state" or "alternative state" discourse. This omission is surprising given that, as set out below, Pierre Nora, Jean-Clément Martin and Robert Gildea all registered the presence of conservative statues (even if only in passing). In order to develop a theoretical framework for such memorials of opposition, this thesis also draws on the historiography of the Atlantic slave trade and the American Civil War, both of which continue to be the subject of intense historical debate. For example, Madge Dresser's article on statues constructed in London between 1695 and 1779 that were connected to slavery concludes that, while these were conceived as and executed with a "conservatively self-congratulatory and defensive political agenda", their subsequent meaning "is not set in stone but can be subverted and transformed" by new generations.⁶⁶ She poses questions that are relevant to this study: "How might victims be appropriately portrayed? Do abstract monuments trivialize victims? What messages should such monuments convey?"⁶⁷ It is fascinating that whilst contemporary debates about the Vendée revolve around victimhood and the idea of "genocide" of the population, the nineteenth century commemorations were all of heroic leaders, not martyred victims.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Madge Dresser, "Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London," in *History Workshop Journal* 64 (October 2007): 162-199. Dresser considers six statues of men connected to slavery: Sir John Moore, Sir Robert Clayton, Sir Hans Sloane, Sir John Cass, William Beckford and Thomas Guy.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶⁸ The debate about whether the aftermath of the Vendée Wars should be considered "genocide" began in 1986 with the publication of Reynald Secher's *Le Génocide Franco-Française. La Vendée-*

In 2017, the academic debate over the meaning of American Civil War memorials – mainly constructed for the purposes of reconciling defeated and victorious white populations – became front-page news as their proposed removal resulted in violence on the street of many American cities. Sanford Levinson’s seminal work on Confederate memorials, largely constructed at the same time as the statues considered in this thesis, posed difficult questions about the role that governments (both State and Federal) played in constructing and opposing memorials to “difficult” causes: “Do we, as a society, have to give sacred pride of place to monuments ... to this cause that was racist at its core?”⁶⁹ He comes to two conclusions that are helpful in considering the Vendée memorials. First, that it is impossible to achieve consensus when considering civil war commemoration, because that “requires the existence of a singular public whereas the reality is various publics ... constituted in part by their relationship with conflicting and symbologies.” Second, he concludes, “to commemorate is to declare the reality of heroes worthy of emulation or, less frequently, that an event [was] so terrible that it must be remembered forever after as a cautionary note.”⁷⁰

The historiography of memorials in Third Republic France and of oppositional commemoration in the USA and the UK has helped in the formation of both research questions and the development of a methodology for studying republican and conservative statues in the Vendée. The thesis shows that the models suggested by Varley are as valid for royalist as they are for republican memorials, and that Agulhon’s notion of a single unifying commemorative practice, challenged by Sherman and Levinson, is difficult to sustain when we

Vengé (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986). Subsequent historians have dismissed Secher’s analysis and the debate is discussed further later in this section of the thesis. The *Mémorial de la Vendée* in Les Lucs was opened in 1993 as the first permanent memorial to the victims of the civil wars.

⁶⁹ Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 32.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 130, 132.

consider the way that opposing contemporary political views shaped competing and conflicting cultures of commemoration.

Memorial statues and the visual arts

The statues that form the case studies in Chapters 4-7 form part of a wider Third Republic context where different groups deployed visual culture for the purpose of political debate. Some art historians believe that France in this period used the visual arts for the first time as a modern political tool in a way that was to become a hallmark of twentieth-century European politics.⁷¹ In particular much of this “political art” was influenced by the way republican patrons viewed the technological revolutions in engineering (the Eiffel Tower was opened for the World Fair of 1889), transport (railways opened throughout France, the bicycle expanded ordinary people’s horizons and the Paris Metro, inaugurated for the Universal Exhibition of 1900 and carrying 15 million passengers in its first year), and electric lighting gradually replacing the gaslights of the capital. Art historian Sarah Wilson wrote that Paris became the world centre of modernism at a time when it was “a place of freedom, bohemian lifestyles and café conversation that was so essential a complement to long hours in the studio.”⁷² Nicholas Hewitt considered that the 1889 celebration of the centenary of the Revolution, which left the Eiffel Tower as its lasting memorial and the Universal Exhibition of 1900 were “important tools in the forging of notions of national identity ... aimed at reasserting the prestige of France ... and celebrating the consolidation of the Third Republic as the unchallenged regime of France.”⁷³ This combination of modernism and technical innovation, together with the development of photography and other reproductive techniques for wide publication,

⁷¹ See, for example the introductory essay in Richard Thompson’s, *The Troubled Republic: Visual Culture and Social Debate in France 1889-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1-25.

⁷² Sarah Wilson “The Visual Arts” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern French Culture*, ed. Nicholas Hewitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 290.

⁷³ Nicholas Hewitt “Introduction: French Culture and Society in the Twentieth-Century” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern French Culture*, ed. Nicholas Hewitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18-19.

combined art and politics to portray France as the leader of a forward-looking Europe.⁷⁴ Parisian Catholic artists showed that modernism could even be deployed as a bridge between the Church and conservative republicans, and that “traditional belief could be adapted to the modern world.”⁷⁵ Outside of Paris, French regions struggled to compete with the centralising of culture in Paris. Some provincial republican leaders, such as those in Toulouse, commissioned paintings using more classical techniques such as André Rixen’s 1896 *Toulouse Offering Her Sword to France* to show their city’s devotion to the Republic.⁷⁶

More conservative regions used both classical and modern visual art techniques to look back to a time when church and crown resisted republican politics. Raymond Jonas’s essay on the new stained glass windows of churches in Western France that feature in both of the royalist commemorations studied in this thesis concludes that “they were not yet the illustrated comic or story board of modern cinema ... [but] closer to the illustrated histories for children, young adults and the semi-literate. This convergence with new media suggests an understanding of the power of colourful images to ... drive a narrative unmediated by text.”⁷⁷ Meanwhile the statues studied in Chapters 3 – 7 are all from the classical school and so reflect a closer affinity to the period of the Old Regime that they commemorate. Whilst the Cathelineau statue studied in chapter 6 was considered to be of little artistic merit, those of de La Rochejaquelein studied in chapter 5, Bara and Larevellière-Lépeaux in chapter 4 were all based on or original works of renowned French sculptors: Alexandre Falguière, Pierre-Jean David d’Angers and

⁷⁴ Robert Verhoogt, “Art Reproduction and the Nation: National Perspectives in an International Art Market”, in *Art Crossing Borders: The Internationalisation of the Art Market in the Age of Nation States, 1750-1914*, eds. Jan Baetens and Lyna Dries (Boston: Brill, 2019), 300-326.

⁷⁵ Richard Thomson, *The Troubled Republic: Visual Culture and Social debate in France, 1889-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 118.

⁷⁶ Richard Thomson, “Regionalism versus Nationalism in French Visual Culture, 1889-1900: The Cases of Nancy and Toulouse”. *Studies in the History of Art*, 68, (2005), 208-223.

⁷⁷ Raymond Jonas, “Vox Dei, Vox Populi: Sacred Art and Popular Politics in the French West”, in *Nationalism and Visual Culture* (series title: *Studies in the History of Art*), eds. June Hargrove and Neil McWilliam (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, 2005), 204.

Louis-Albert Lefeuve. Bara's statue and the two royalist statues repurposed heroic paintings of their subjects by prominent artists of the Revolutionary and Restoration periods, Jacques-Louis David, Pierre-Narcisse Guérin and Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson. Perhaps it was inevitable, given the traditional and conservative outlook of the region, that none of the Vendée memorials attempted to embrace contemporary modernism; each looked to classical statuary in an attempt to show their subjects as heroic, glamorous political and military figures.

The Revolutionary Legacy

The specific subject for this study of memory and commemoration is, of course, the Vendée wars of 1793-6, when residents of the west of France resisted the imposition of new forms of government and religion on the region. While this study is not a history of either the French Revolution or the Vendée wars, briefly tracing the evolution of the historiography of the Revolution itself helps us to understand that the counter-revolution has been comparatively neglected, which in turn helps account for the relatively limited literature on its later commemoration.

Academic debate about the Revolution started almost from the time the walls of the Bastille were being demolished and it continues to the present day.⁷⁸ British polemicists such as Edmund Burke (writing between 1790-97), Thomas Carlyle in 1837 and French Restoration memorialists such as the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein in 1814 believed the Revolution was a wholly unnecessary and violent attack on a society that was already moving, perhaps too slowly, towards a different form of liberty.⁷⁹ The first professional historical accounts came during the period studied

⁷⁸ Peter Jones showed that 10% of all historiographical output in France is dedicated to the period 1789-1799, some 2000 items each year: Peter Jones, *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective* (London: Hodder Headline, 1996), ix.

⁷⁹ Burke, Edmund, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1912); Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution. Introduced and Selected by Ruth Scurr* (London: Continuum, 2010).

by this thesis. Chapter 3 discusses the way that four pre-eminent historians of the late nineteenth century, Adolphe Thiers (1797–1897), Hippolyte Taine (1828-93), Ernest Lavisse (1842-1922) and François Aulard (1849-1928), the first Professor of the History of the French Revolution at the Sorbonne, analysed the causes and consequences of the Revolution and its reaction in the Vendée.⁸⁰ Apart from Taine, who believed that cutting the nobility off from leadership of the country set its progress back, the others had little time for the Old Regime and its attempts in the Vendée to halt the republican causes of liberty, equality and universal brotherhood. Aulard and Lavisse were amongst a large number of republican historians, many less famous, who wrote simplified versions of their academic work for use in the classrooms of the Third Republic. These taught millions of French children that the Revolution was an entirely justified popular uprising against a despotic monarchy and aristocracy, both buttressed by the Church, which exploited the people and kept them in ignorance. They argued that the Vendée counter-revolution served only the purposes of France’s enemies. This thesis explores how in the Vendée itself, amateur historians and biographers of the heroes of the Royal and Catholic armies challenged this discourse. Nevertheless the teaching of Aulard and Lavisse became the authorised history of the Revolution, designed to exclude all other narratives up until at least the 1920s.⁸¹

After the Great War, historians who had seen the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and contrasted it with what they considered to be the triumph of a conservative bourgeois class in France increasingly challenged these interpretations. Albert Mathiez (1874-1932), Georges Lefebvre (1874-1959) and Albert Soboul (1914-1982) who each occupied Aulard’s chair at the

⁸⁰ Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Furne et Cie, 1839); Hippolyte Taine, *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1878 – 1893); Ernest Lavisse, *Histoire de France Contemporaine Depuis la Révolution Jusqu’à la Paix de 1919* (Paris: Hachette, 1920); Alphonse Aulard, *Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française, Origines et Développement de la Démocratie et de la République (1789-1804)* (Paris: A. Colin, 1901).

⁸¹ See chapter 3 for a more detailed analysis of the work of these four academic historians and the work of school history textbook authors.

Sorbonne, were members of the French Communist Party and editors of the influential journal *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*. Gary Kates summed up their collective views of the Revolution in an essay in 1998 as “a class struggle in which one class (the nobility) was destroyed, one class was awakened (the sans-culottes), and one class won control of the state (the bourgeoisie).”⁸² As Peter Jones pointed out in 1990, this analysis largely ignored the peasant contribution to the Vendée counter-revolution.⁸³ The *Annales* view of the Revolution went largely unchallenged until the 1960s when a number of non-French historians published articles and books suggesting alternative theories. Alfred Cobban, George Taylor and Colin Lucas all suggested that it was the notables (that is, not some proto-capitalist class but a group who, whilst not being part of the aristocracy, aspired to their social position) that led and ultimately won the Revolution, not the bourgeoisie.⁸⁴ This revisionist position was taken up and expanded on in France particularly by François Furet in the 1970s and 80s, who suggested that the competition between political ideologies rather than class struggle was the prime driver of revolution.⁸⁵ These scholars focussed little of their work on the problems posed by the counter-revolution to their analyses.

It was also during this period that other English-speaking historians “rediscovered” the counter-revolution in western France. The social historians Charles Tilly (1964), Donald Sutherland (1982) and Timothy Le Goff (1983) all argued that amongst the most important causes of the uprising were economic issues of land tenure, taxation and tithes rather than religion, politics or class.⁸⁶ This was

⁸² Gary Kates, “Introduction” in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, ed. Gary Kates (London: Routledge, 2006), 3.

⁸³ Peter M Jones, “Georges Lefebvre and the Peasant Revolution: Fifty Years on,” *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 3 (1990): 658. George V. Taylor, “Non-capitalist Wealth and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (1967): 469-96.

⁸⁴ Colin Lucas, “Nobles, Bourgeois and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *Past & Present*, no. 60 (1973): 84-126.

⁸⁵ David Bien, “François Furet, the Terror, and 1789,” *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 4 (1990): 777-83.

⁸⁶ Charles Tilly, *The Vendée* (London: Arnold, 1964); Donald Sutherland, *The Chouans, the Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770-1796* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982);

also the era when Pierre Nora began to explore the interconnectedness of memory and history through objects and places. Nora contended that the “new” obsession with the history of history “the awakening, quite recent in France, of a historiographical consciousness ... that we study the historiography of the French Revolution, that we reconstitute its myths and legends, implies that we no longer unquestioningly identify with its heritage.”⁸⁷ Jean-Clément Martin took up this work in the study of the memory of the Vendée wars and has subsequently written many works on the Revolution, revolutionaries, and the counter-revolution (see below).

In summary, the republican account of the causes and consequences of the French Revolution (a just cause with worthwhile consequences) and counter-revolution (a betrayal of France by aristocrats and priests) at the end of the nineteenth century has been revised, attacked and augmented by each subsequent generation. This thesis adds a further set of nuances by revealing how, in the same period as Aulard, Lavisse and the new academicians, conservative opponents used the memory of the 1790s to construct an opposing historical narrative of the Vendée wars. These nineteenth-century narratives, both republican and conservative, were more concerned with reinforcing or overturning the causes of the Revolution and counter-revolution than with their consequences, especially concerning the victims of the Terror. Victim and martyr discourse became a much more important part of the local historiography of the Revolution in the later twentieth-century.

T.J.A. Le Goff and D. M. G. Sutherland. "The Social Origins of Counter-Revolution in Western France," *Past & Present* 99 (1983): 65-87.

⁸⁷ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 9-10.

Commemoration of the Vendée Wars

There is a small but important historical literature on the commemoration of the Vendée wars in France. This has been led by Jean-Clément Martin in a number of books and articles, Robert Gildea in *The Past in French History*, and more recently Reynald Secher writing about what he has called the “Franco–French genocide” and its subsequent “*mémoricide*”.⁸⁸ The latter claim has prompted a debate about the role of the current French Republic in attempting to change or obliterate the memory of the reprisals after the wars of 1793-96. Secher’s work uses the traditional conservative explanation for the causes of the war: “a popular war in origin ... a religious war because of the impulses that armed the people ... a political war through the democratic choice of its leadership... a crusade for individual liberty.”⁸⁹ However the fiercest dispute from other historians, especially Martin, concerns his labelling of the aftermath of the wars as a “Franco-French genocide”. The argument between Secher and Martin has at times been vitriolic. Martin’s paper on the debate, published in 2000, explains why he believed it to be so important to the study of the Revolution and the counter-revolution. The principal reason, he stated, was because Secher’s work, like much of conservative research into the Vendée since the nineteenth century, put equal weight on the recollection of popular memories as it did on the official archive. The professionalisation of the study of history from Langlois, Seignobos, Aulard and Lavissee onwards required historians to be able to support their work through detailed archival research. Secher and his supporters (for example Pierre Chaunu,

⁸⁸ Martin, *La Vendée de la Mémoire*; this book was updated and republished in September 2019 as *La Vendée de la mémoire (1800-2018)* but the chapter on the period of the Third Republic is unchanged since 1989; Jean-Clément Martin, *La Vendée et La France* (Paris: Seuil, 1987); Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Reynald Secher, *Vendée: Du Génocide Au Mémoricide: Mécanique D'un Crime Légal Contre L'humanité* (Paris: Cerf, 2011).

⁸⁹ Reynald Secher, *A French Genocide: The Vendée; Translated by George Holloch* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 249-253. Martin’s response to the idea of the pacification being a “genocide” is in *La Vendée et la France*, 312-320 where he calculates the loss of life in the region during the wars to be around 600,000 people or about 20% of the population. He notes that whilst this was an enormous number it represented only the increase in population over the eighteenth century and that the language of the Revolutionary government and the “pacification” methods used by Revolutionary forces were little different from those of the Old Regime.

Jean Tulard and Jean Mayer) believed that the Revolutionary archive was so politically biased that it needed to be counterbalanced by collections of memoirs of the civil war.⁹⁰ This was not only an argument between academics about sources; it became entangled in contemporary political debates. In 1993 the Gaullist president Jacques Chirac and Cardinal Paul Poupard (who was born in the Vendée) organised an exhibition on the Vendée wars in Paris followed swiftly by a conference in La Roche-sur-Yon organised by the regional president and Royalist presidential candidate, Philippe de Villiers. Both events featured Secher, Chaunu and Tulard as keynote speakers.⁹¹ Right-wing newspapers such as the *Figaro* took up Secher's cause and praised his books.⁹² The dispute between Martin and Secher even reached the pages of *Le Monde* in 2011, which noted that Martin omitted Secher's name entirely from his *Dictionnaire de la Contre-Révolution*, a strategy that the paper feared risked "leaving the field free to Vendéen militancy."⁹³

Martin, Emeritus Professor of History at the Sorbonne, has been writing about the Revolution and the Vendée wars since the 1980s, initially in an effort to decipher the "inexplicable" history of the wars themselves.⁹⁴ His PhD thesis in 1987 and subsequent book *La Vendée et La France* argued that studying how the Vendée Wars were remembered resulted in a different and better understanding of the history of the Revolution itself, as well as "the efficiency of the republican model and also the [historical] tourist industry."⁹⁵ Martin then turned to the *région de mémoire* (see Chapter 2, below), in

⁹⁰ Jean-Clément Martin, "A propos du "génocide vendéen". Du recours à la légitimité de l'historien, in" *Sociétés Contemporaines*, 9, (2000): 25

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹² Jean Sévillia, "Vendée: Un Passé qui ne Passe pas, in" *Figaro Magazine*, October 17, 2007. Article accessed October 15, 209, https://www.lefigaro.fr/lefigaromagazine/2006/10/13/01006-20061013ARTMAG90352-vendee_un_passe_qui_ne_passe_pas.php

⁹³ Editorial comment in *Le Monde*, November 24, 2011. Article accessed on December 11, 2017, http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2011/11/24/contre-revolution-verites-et-contre-verites_1608378_3260.html

⁹⁴ Martin, *La Vendée et la France*, 14. Martin explains that whilst this comment about the inexplicable Vendée was originally made by the revolutionary Barère, he "could not have imagined how it would still be applicable two hundred year's later".

⁹⁵ Jean-Clément Martin, *La Vendée de la Mémoire 1800-1980* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), 14, Kindle edition.

which vein he contributed to Pierre Nora's work, coining the memorable phrase "the permanent antithesis of France" when describing the received idea about the Vendée as being rural, archaic, Catholic and reactionary.⁹⁶ Between 1989 and 2017, Martin contributed over thirty works on the war and its impact on modern French society.⁹⁷

Followers of Secher and others on the right of French politics believe Martin to be an apologist for the worst atrocities of the Terror. His last two books, his 2016 work on the "fabrication of the monster" Robespierre and his 2017 debunking of some of the legends of the Terror serve to confirm this view amongst that audience.⁹⁸ Others in the mainstream such as Simon Schama believe him to "a model of reasoned research", which is also this study's view.⁹⁹ Martin's *La Vendée de la Memoire* touches briefly on the commemorations of Cathelineau and de La Rochejaquelein as an example of how these two generals, along with Charette, became the symbolic heroes of the region to the detriment of others. He briefly describes the two inaugurations that this thesis explores in much greater detail.¹⁰⁰ Martin's later work, particularly *La Vendée et la France* attempts to explain the counter-revolution and to bring a measure of rationality to the arguments about the terminology used to describe the consequences.

There are important points where this thesis departs from Martin's work. First, whilst Martin spends some time writing about the way Third Republic actors used memorials, the main focus of his work is on the Revolution and Counter-Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, and the impact of those events on the collective

⁹⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁷ A number of Martin's works are cited in this thesis and more are included in the bibliography.

⁹⁸ Jean-Clément Martin, *Robespierre, la Fabrication d'un Monstre* (Paris: Perrin, 2016) and *La Terreur: Vérités et Légendes* (Paris: Perrin, 2017). For right-wing responses see, for example, Alain Gérard, *Vendée: Les Archives de l'extermination* (La Roche-sur-Yon: Éditions du CVRH, 2017); and Jacques Villemain, *Vendée 1793-1794. Crime de Guerre? Crime Contre l'humanité? Génocide? Une Étude Juridique* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2017).

⁹⁹ Simon Schama, *Citizens* (London: The Folio Society, 2004), 764.

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *La Vendée de la Mémoire*, 146-147.

memory of the region in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As Martin summarises, the “purpose” of his work is “to understand how both France and the Vendée have arrived where they are”.¹⁰¹ A second point of difference is that Martin has concentrated on the conflict between republican and conservative discourses at a national and political level, whereas my research explores the parochial and personal issues that also underpinned local commemorative practices. Finally, Martin understates the closeness of the competition between right and left in the region. Discussing the politics of the Vendée in the Third Republic he notes: “the vote was very structured, each commune voted at least 60% for one camp”.¹⁰² In fact, as this study explores in Chapter 2, throughout the early decades of the Third Republic, some of the most closely contested electoral fights were to be found in this region.

Another major touchstone for research on the Vendée is Robert Gildea’s work on French memory culture, which orbited around the bicentennial of the French Revolution. Gildea sought to understand how the different collective memories of the French had been constructed in order to bring about the political cultures of the different communities in modern France. He argued that through competing collective memories and myths, French political and cultural groups “sought to disqualify or delegitimise their opponents” so that their own set of myths could prevail.¹⁰³ Gildea includes a section on “The Vendée of Memory” in his chapter about different interpretations of the history of the Revolution. He remarks on both the memoirs of the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein (see Chapter 5), which established the conservative side of the story in 1814, and the inauguration of the statue to the Marquise’s brother-in-law, Henri.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰² Ibid., 233

¹⁰³ Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 10.

This thesis departs from Gildea's work in a few ways. Like Martin, his focus is on the way that an idea of the Vendée was used in national political discourse rather than the local and personal issues in the region. His book is also primarily about the development of the political cultures that created twentieth-century France, rather than an examination of the Third Republic on its own terms. A more specific departure concerns Gildea's conclusion on the sequencing of the historiographical debates about the counter-revolution. In his account, "republicans, placed in the dock [and] challenged by this myth of the Vendée, responded by creating their own version of events."¹⁰⁴ Gildea's conclusion is that the memory of the Vendée was essentially a tool used by the Right to "discredit the Left which preached a utopian vision of the Revolution."¹⁰⁵ This thesis will, to some extent, invert Gildea's account of the sequencing. Although Vendéen conservatives had long constructed an alternative historical account of the 1790s, their commemorative and historiographical practices in the 1880s and 1890s were fundamentally responsive: they sought to contest the establishment and propagation of a republican narrative of the events.

Martin and Gildea both have the stated aim of understanding how the memory of the Vendée Wars has defined the identity of the region and of the communities that used those memories in contemporary France at the time they wrote their works. This study attempts something different: to examine the way that memories and memorials built during the 1890s constructed a community identity of the Vendée in opposition to that of the "one and indivisible" Republic, and show how that identity was firmly established before the region was plunged into the Great War. This work also explores the part that individual actors, particularly the descendants of the men being commemorated in the 1890s, played in the creation of the *région de mémoire* myths; the influence of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 61.

local disputes, royalist and Catholic division; and the pursuit of heroic masculine ideals on those myths.

Memory and history

The academic argument between Martin and Secher, together with the work of historians studying national mythmaking considered above, illustrates an important final area of historical debate that this thesis touches on: how memory, and particularly “collective memory”, is used as an important source for historians of the both the Vendée Wars themselves and their political use in the period covered by this thesis.

In 1925, when Maurice Halbwachs set out his thinking on collective memory for the first time, he set in train an academic debate that continues today about how individuals and societies remember the past.¹⁰⁶ There is no doubt that the idea of societies influencing how individuals remember has a much longer history, indeed Nicholas Russell believes that it was the Ancient Greeks who first considered it. This thesis confirms that the idea of “collective” memories of groups of people as well as individuals was considered a valid one during the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ As Russell, Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam describe in their work, the terminology may have changed during the twentieth century but the opposition of “historical science” to “memory and myth” was debated long before Halbwachs.¹⁰⁸ Gedi and Elam also conclude that, “collective memory is but a misleading name for the old familiar ‘myth’ which can be identified in turn with ‘collective’ or ‘social’ stereotypes.

¹⁰⁶ Halbwachs's two books were published in French in 1950 and 1952 after his death in 1945 and translated into English in 1992. The edition used for this thesis is *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Halbwachs does not give a clear definition of the term “collective memory” but concludes that individual memories can only be meaningful and verifiable within social frameworks. See *On Collective Memory*, 167-169.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Russell, Nicolas. “Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs.” *The French Review* 79, no. 4 (2006): 792.

¹⁰⁸ Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, “Collective Memory — What Is It?” *History and Memory* 8, no. 1 (1996): 30-50.

Indeed, collective memory is but a myth.”¹⁰⁹ This thesis shows that the debate was alive in the late nineteenth-century. Both national historians and local intellectuals were aware that pliable memories and myths could be used for political purposes. This is illustrated the views of academic historian Alphonse Aulard as well as the local historians Célestin Port and Abbé Eugène Bossard. In deriding the central memory base for the story of Henri de La Rochejaquelein, the *Mémoires de Madame de La Rochejaquelein* (see Chapter 5), Aulard asks the question, “is this really history”?¹¹⁰ Meanwhile the argument between the archivist Port and the memorialist Bossard over the life and military leadership of Jacques Cathelineau (see Chapter 6) explored the issues of the biased archive that have continued to this day.¹¹¹ One of Bossard’s principal complaints about Port’s work was that he used only those elements of the Revolutionary archive that suited his purposes and ignored the (mainly women) memoir writers who told a different story.¹¹² This thesis argues that the memoir writers, eulogists and hagiographers who drew on individual and collective memories of the Vendée was played as important a role in the production, reception and impact of the political memorials studied here as traditional historical material found in the archives such as official documents, newspapers and government reports.

Methodology

The theoretical underpinning of this study combines several ways of working. The most important of these is that it is archive-led. Using the secondary sources discussed above, it posed a series of open questions about the history of the memorials in the Vendée, following the “first rule” of Langlois and Seignobos, writing in 1898:

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁰ Alphonse Aulard, “Mémoires de la Marquise de La Rochejaquelein,” *La Révolution Française, Revue Historique* 16, (1889), 106.

¹¹¹ Célestin Port, *La Légende de Cathelineau: Ses débuts, son Brevet de Généralissime, son Élection, sa Mort* (Paris: Alcan, 1893); and Eugène Bossard, *Cathelineau, Généralissime de l’Armée Catholique et Royale - Réponse à M. Célestin Port* (Ingrandes-sur-Loire: Vendée militaire, 1893).

¹¹² Bossard, *Cathelineau*, 128.

“history is made with documents ... they are trails left of the thoughts and acts of the men from another time ... nothing can supplant documents and without them there is no history”.¹¹³ I used a number of archives to answer these questions, principally the departmental archives of the Vendée (abbreviated in footnotes as AdV), Deux-Sèvres (AdDS) and Maine-et-Loire (AdML). These were complemented by the smaller archives and museum collections of the towns in which the statues were erected in Montaigu in the Vendée; Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné and Mauléon in Deux-Sèvres; Le Pin-en-Mauges in Maine-et-Loire and Palaiseau to the South of Paris. The private archive of the de La Rochejaquelein family, in Chateau Clisson, Deux-Sèvres, allowed access to a number of original documents from the period and the original manuscript of the *Mémoires de Madame de La Rochejaquelein*. Finally, I used the French National Archives (AN) for ministerial and police documents to ensure that the national picture complemented the view taken of the memorials and their impact from the regions. In particular the ministerial archive of the Ministry of Fine Arts allowed me both to confirm the clear message that the Cathelineau memorial, that is the subject of Chapter 6 of the thesis, was unwelcome and to ascertain the bureaucratic system for approval of monuments outlined in Chapter 4.

In the departmental archives, documents relating to each of the statues considered later in the thesis had been consolidated into a single file and for the most part there was a corresponding file in the AN. These documents included reports and memoranda written by officials in the town hall where the statue was to be erected and prefecture of the department; reports from the gendarmerie and government agents, reports of meeting of memorial committees, correspondence from memorial sponsors to officials and to other interested parties, and clippings from local papers and journals,

¹¹³ Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux Études Historiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1898), 1.

sometimes with comments from prefectural officials. The only statue where this was not the case was that of Henri de La Rochejaquelein for which there was no AN file and the departmental file lacked any correspondence with the Prefect or the authorities in Paris. This could have been material that had simply been misplaced but, given the absence of any record of even a request for permission to erect a statue in any of the town, departmental or ministerial record, it is more likely that nobody thought such official sanction was necessary. A further weakness of the archival record is that many of the reports about conservative opposition to the republic in the Vendée were from local republican informers. Their reports were almost all anonymous and were sometimes badly preserved and difficult to interpret. Apart from the reports on Julien de La Rochejaquelein's movements in Deux-Sèvres, these were therefore not as useful as I had hoped.

One of the most useful collections in all the archives has been local newspapers, especially when considering the reception of the memorials and the continuing relevance of the memory of the events of 1793-96. In this region the number of titles, copies and readership expanded rapidly during the period and both sides of the memory debate used the press to convey their arguments. A detailed review of the regional press is included in Chapter 2 of the thesis. For two of the three departmental archives (Deux-Sèvres and Maine-et-Loire) the newspapers had been conserved in their original form, bound by year or half-year print runs. The Vendée departmental archive has digitised its entire local newspaper collection; and most national newspapers from the period are also now only available in digital form at the AN. The digital archive has the advantage of allowing specific word search and of fast, remote working whilst the original paper records allow for a broader review and feel of the important stories that concerned the editors and owners of the newspapers. In order to understand these concerns, for both the digital and physical archive, I looked at six months of

front pages for at least one left- wing and one right-wing paper in each memorial location on either side of the date of its inauguration. In all cases using the press reports of the time requires care, as discussed in Chapter 2 both national and regional papers were politically partisan, almost always articles were published anonymously and gave very biased accounts of the events studied in the thesis. Fortunately for all the memorials used as case studies there were at least one and often several local newspapers from both sides of the political divide available in the archives and so I was able to explore the interpretation of the same events from multiple ideological perspectives.

A welcome consequence of approaching the archive with open questions is that it often produced surprising new avenues to explore. This study began as an essay on how memorials influenced a specific national political discourse between republicans and those reacting against it, but the archive revealed several fascinating and under- (or un-) reported aspects. The first, and perhaps most obvious – given the work that has been done on other peripheral regions of France during this period – was the impact that contemporary local and regional issues had both on the memorials themselves and the subsequent direction of the cultural myths. A second set of issues related to the personal agendas and concerns, including those of honour and gender, of the men who led or resisted the monuments being constructed. Related to this was the role played by multi-generational family and friendship networks in the region in both elite and peasant society. Third was the way that the issue of race, both slavery and the “Jewish question”, affected what had started as a subject entirely disconnected from such questions. Finally, the role of women both as memorialists and as potential (but absent) subjects of commemoration became important as the extent of their participation was revealed through contemporary documents. At a time when there were intense debates about the impacts of colonial slavery and of women’s

suffrage it is surprising that these latter aspects have not received more attention from either Third Republic or subsequent historians of the Vendée.

The second methodology that informs the study is the Reception Approach suggested by Janet Staiger in her and others work on various forms of media, including statues and landscapes. Staiger and other media scholars used the work of 1960s literary theoretician Hans Robert Jauss, who asserted that the historical character of an artwork would not be captured only by describing it or examining its production but would be best understood as a dialogue between the artist and the audience. Jauss said that the audience itself could only be understood in the context of its social and cultural history.¹¹⁴ Staiger notes that “finding evidence for reception that has taken place in the past is difficult ... [as] audiences often left no material traces of their thoughts or feelings.”¹¹⁵ But she developed a model that allowed the researcher to explore the context of reception through contemporary reviews in newspapers and periodicals. Martin Shingler summarised this as an approach which “aims to relate the events portrayed ... and the comments of reviewers to wider cultural concerns at the time of its initial release”.¹¹⁶

The growing academic discipline of Heritage Studies suggests that reception of monuments is also often hotly contested. As Laurajane Smith has pointed out: “they are not inherently safe and conflict free.”¹¹⁷ This has been particularly true of the many Nazi Holocaust memorials and monuments established since 1945. For example Israeli sociologist Irit Dekel’s recent study of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial attempted “a shift away from traditional and established

¹¹⁴ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception; Translation from German by Timothy Bahti; Introduction by Paul De Man* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 39.

¹¹⁵ Janet Staiger, *Media Reception Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 14.

¹¹⁶ Martin Shingler, “Interpreting All About Eve: A Study in Historical Perspective”, in *Hollywood Spectatorship, Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, eds. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), 47.

¹¹⁷ Laurajane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 31.

approaches to memorial sites [which] tend to focus analytically on debates concerning construction and operation”; instead, she focused on “the visitor’s experience of the memorial.”¹¹⁸ Dekel achieved this through undertaking visitor surveys and her own changing perceptions of the memorial. Ian Dull’s work on how monuments are used to contribute to the collective imaginations of communities referenced Benedict Anderson’s work when he wrote that studies of memorials should “explore how [they] are used to draw lines between people – the memorial becomes a way of making claims about one’s past”.¹¹⁹

John Dixon Hunt’s work on the history of landscape architecture and gardens shows that such ideas are transportable to different spaces. Hunt noted that “no single experience of a garden, as no reading of a text, can exhaust its full potential... as historians we have a double opportunity to recover this potential in an existing site, one is by our own actual visits and responses; the other by accumulating the reports of others who have been there at other times and other circumstances that we may not even imagine until we listen to them attentively”.¹²⁰ On the subject of inscriptions on statues and elsewhere in gardens (the statues in this thesis have such inscriptions), Hunt observed that throughout history architecture has often included verbal prompts. There are multiple Roman and Renaissance monuments through to the Winter Gardens in New York City, restored after 9/11 with inscriptions from famous New York authors. Hunt concluded, “writing something down, especially where the medium is in stone, teak, granite or marble lends the words more than usual importance. We look and

¹¹⁸ Irit Dekel, *Mediation at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 3.

¹¹⁹ Ian Dull, “Sketching Heritage Studies”, in, *Heritage Studies: Stories in the Making*, ed. Meghan Bowe (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 6.

¹²⁰ John Dixon Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 17.

attend perhaps more so when the place we find writing does not automatically suggest itself as a locus of communication”.¹²¹

Whilst the thesis is not a pure “reception” study, these works provide a useful means of helping to understand how monuments contribute to the stories and myths that make up community identity. From the work discussed above, a four-part methodology for consideration of the memorials has been devised. Firstly, we study three periods: those of the events being commemorated, the erection of the memorial and any subsequent changes to the statue. By looking at each of these periods we should be able to uncover the *motives* for erecting and managing the statue. Secondly, we consider the *content* of the memorial itself, the materials that it uses, the style of the figure (standing, sitting, riding, a full body or a bust, carrying arms, flags, badges), the artist’s status, any inscriptions or other written clues. Linked to this is the proximity to the statue of the mortal remains of the person being commemorated. Ben-Amos suggests that the “physical presence of the dead body ... indicated that the function of the hero’s corpse was more than pedagogical ... the body, the monument and the nation merged and became one and indivisible.”¹²² Thirdly, we review the *positioning* of the statue, both in the town or city and in relation to other historical markers such as the church, the town hall or commemorations to other events such as war memorials. When addressing this element – the conversation between the monument and its environment – we also consider subsequent relocation if that has occurred. Finally, the *reception* of the monument at the time and subsequently allows us to understand the way that contemporaries understood the commemoration and illustrate the disputed nature of memory that helped to form the identity of the region. Each of the case studies in this thesis follows this multi-step approach.

¹²¹ Ibid., 97.

¹²² Ben Amos, “Monuments and Memory”, 61

Michel de Certeau's work on writing history has also assisted in the formulation of the research programme for this thesis, in particular his conclusions on "fragmentation for production", which complement Foucault's ideas about the diverse types and structures of power. These concepts challenge the historian to consider how knowledge is acquired and used, the way that archive material has been stored and retrieved, as well as the motives of both the historical actors and the historians who have written about them. Certeau's work helped me move from relying on a narrative thread to crafting an analysis of motivation and impact; and to consider the personal, the network, the village and region alongside the national discourses that make up most of the history of the subject and the period.¹²³

Finally, this study uses a range of statistical data collected between 1870 and 1914 in two distinct fields: voting/representation and education attendance/attainment.¹²⁴ This allows some quantitative analysis to understand how attitudes to the political and cultural concerns changed over time. Whilst each of the changes revealed in the data sets were the result of complex social, political and cultural forces rather than the simple impact of memorials, taken together they reveal a pattern of changing beliefs and behaviours that reflect changes in the region. In particular, the election data provided at least part of the answer to why regional politics was so contested, and data about attendance at different types of schools to why the education and history debates continued into the twentieth century. The rationale for using these data sets is that

¹²³ Michel de Certeau translated by Tom Conley, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

¹²⁴ The data sets for literacy rates and population are taken from the *Annuaire Statistique: Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie, des Postes et Télégraphes, Office du Travail, Statistique Générale de la France* of the *Direction de la Statistique Générale* (Paris: Imprimerie National). Local educational attainment statistics are drawn from the annual inspection reports included in *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, a monthly publication issued in the Vendée Department. National voting trends are in Odile Rudelle's *La République Absolue: aux Origines de l'Instabilité Constitutionnelle de la France Républicaine 1870-1889* (Paris: Université de Paris-I, 1982). Local election statistics for the Vendée region were reported in the local newspapers by *circonscription*. Figures are taken from the *Journal des Sables et de la Vendée* for early years and *L'Étoile de la Vendée* for the later years. For elections outside the Vendée Department, the National Assembly database of all deputies provides some relevant election data, see: <http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/recherche>

they were easily available for most of the period and that existing work assisted in the interpretation of the raw statistics.

Structure

The thesis begins by considering the problems associated with research in a loosely defined *région de mémoire*. It defines the geographical scope of the work and provides context about France and the region in this period. It then establishes how, contrary to the accepted story of the Vendée being a conservative bastion, it had some of the most closely contested elections in France. Republicans and conservatives used the memory of the civil war as a weapon both to establish cultural hegemony and to win electoral advantage.

The core research chapters (3 to 7) begin by establishing how academic historians and the new public school system established and disseminated an approved republican version of the history of the Vendée Wars in the early decades of the Third Republic. It examines how Catholic schools in the region as well as amateur historians in a new learned society resisted this narrative by providing alternative versions of the history of the 1790s. Using a case study approach, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 address how both secular republicans and Catholic royalists in the region used memorials of their war heroes to deliver contemporary political messages. Chapter 7 considers how nationalism, colonial glory and external threats led to truces in the political battles and the potential for reconciliation between the competing ideologies. It discusses how the truces broke down and how people in the Vendée continued to use the memory of the civil war in their competing discourses.

Chapter 8 concludes that the Vendée was a region of political contestation where republicans and conservatives used the

disputed memory of 1793-96 to establish political identities in the early Third Republic. It shows that the Catholic-conservative group had a range of complex and sometimes competing agendas. Anti-state actors in the region used the same commemorative techniques as those studied by historians of both the *statuomanie* period and later war memorials. The statues of civil war heroes, especially those banned by the state, had an impact as least as great as those erected by the Republic. It discusses how the findings from the thesis contribute to the debates about memory and history, the politics of the Third Republic and the way that debates about the history of the civil war have taken place almost continuously from the nineteenth century onwards.

2. The Vendée: Geography, History, Religion and the Politics of Memory

Writing about the history of the Vendée poses a number of difficulties of definition that have to be addressed in order to establish the context for this thesis. This chapter considers problems of geography, history, religion and politics of the Vendée region and how they related to the rest of France. It begins with an analysis of the differences between the geographical area of the Department of the Vendée and the *Vendée région de mémoire* and sets out a pragmatic approach for dealing these differences. Second, it looks briefly at the events of the civil war in the region in 1793-96 that provide the foundation for the contested memories that are studied in the rest of the thesis. Third, it sets out some comparative data between France and the Vendée at the end of the nineteenth century to illustrate how different the region was in particular to the rapidly developing parts of urban France. Fourth, it considers the changing role of newspapers in the country and in the Vendée. Competing newspaper reporting provides much of the evidence for the way that the memory of the 1790s was used and so it is important to understand how they were established, owned and used in the region. The final two sections discuss the complexities of the Catholic Church and the political right, and the roles they played in the contest for cultural and political hegemony in the region.

Vendée: The Department and the *Région de Mémoire*

The Vendée Department is situated some 450 kilometres southwest of Paris on the west coast of France. The National Constituent Assembly created it in 1790 alongside the other 83 Departments of the time (89 in the period covered by this thesis and 101 today), each of which was numbered in alphabetical order. Vendée is 85. It

was named after a small stream in the south of the Department and was formed, along with Vienne and Deux-Sèvres out of Bas-Poitou, one of the regions of the Old Regime. After some dispute, its capital was situated in Fontenay-le-Comte until 1805 when Napoleon moved the capital to La Roche-sur-Yon and renamed it Napoléonville.¹²⁵ Unlike Brittany or Normandy to the north it had no history of independent political rule and unlike Departments situated near mountain ranges (the Alps, Pyrenees) or major rivers (Loire, Rhone or Seine) it had no obvious central geographical reference point. The Department was sparsely populated at the end of the nineteenth century (see below) - most of the population lived in small villages and hamlets. It contained no large cities.

The political entity Department 85 is not the same region that Jean-Clément Martin called the *région de mémoire*, but many historians confuse the two and give surprisingly little attention to the geographical conundrum that is the Vendée.¹²⁶ Vendée 85 was also not a region that many contemporaries recognised as legitimate at the time of the war or in its immediate aftermath, and the political claim for an alternative set of boundaries was an early demand of regional conservatives. In her *Mémoires* (discussed in Chapter 5), Mme de La Rochejaquelein wrote that one of the few war aims of the Royal and Catholic Army was the establishment of a new political entity encompassing the Bocage in the north-east of Vendée, the Mauges in the south of Maine-et-Loire and Loire Inférieure, and Bressuire in the north of Deux-Sèvres.¹²⁷ Napoleon Bonaparte wrote about “les Vendées” when he discussed the civil war.¹²⁸ The mayor and council of Châtillon-sur-Sèvre, Deux-Sèvres,

¹²⁵ Marie-Vic Ozouf-Marignier, *La Formation des Départements: La Représentation du Territoire Français à la fin du 18e Siècle* (Paris: École Des Hautes Etudies En Sciences Sociales, 1989). Marcel Faucheu, “Comment fut formé le département de la Vendée”, in *Annuaire Départementale de la Société d’Emulation de la Vendée*, 1951, 27-37.

¹²⁶ For the difficulties of defining “Vendée” see Jean-Clément Martin, *La Vendée et la Révolution: Accepter la Mémoire pour Écrire l’Histoire*, (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 16.

¹²⁷ Marie Louise Victorine Du Vergier De La Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires De Mme La Marquise De La Rochejaquelein* (Paris: Hachette, 1822) 30-31.

¹²⁸ Letter from Napoleon to his brother Joseph, quoted in Alain Gérard, *Mémoires De La Marquise De La Rochejaquelein: Édition Critique Etablie et Présentée par Alain Gérard* (La Roche-sur-Yon: Centre Vendéen De Recherches Historiques, 2010) 12.

wrote to Louis XVIII on his restoration asking for exemption from the reparations for the Revolution required by each department except Vendée 85 because they had resisted so bravely. They pointed out that Châtillon-sur-Sèvre was the military capital of the insurrection: “Sire, the Vendée rests heavily on its name but allow us to remind your majesty that the Vendée was not only the department.”¹²⁹

By including some of the adjoining departments’ political constituencies, we can attempt to construct a political map of the *région de mémoire*, as it existed at the end of the nineteenth century:

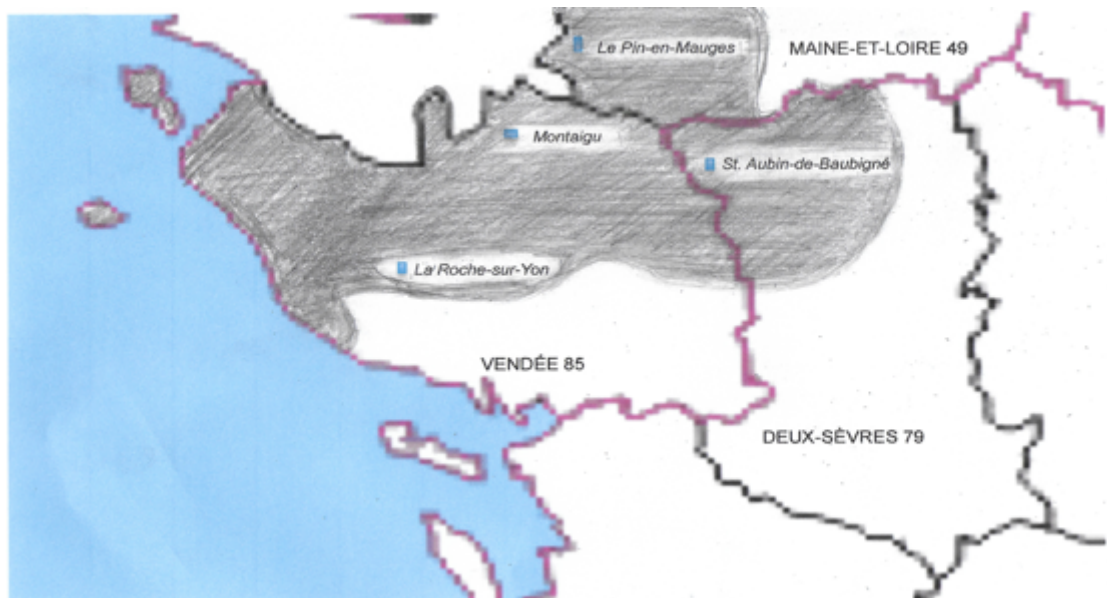


Diagram 2.1: Map of *Région de Mémoire* including the north of Vendée (85), west of Deux-Sèvres (79) and south of Maine-et Loire (49). The towns of Le Pin-en-Mauges, Montaigu and St. Aubin de Baubigné are the locations of the memorial statues discussed later in the thesis.

130

To the east of Vendée 85 is Deux-Sèvres 79, which was the home of Henri de La Rochejaquelein (see Chapter 5) and site of his memorial in St. Aubin-de-Baubigné. St. Aubin is situated in the Bressuire electoral district (*circonscription*), which returned royalist deputies to the National Assembly throughout the period. To the

¹²⁹ “Adresse du Canton de Châtillon au Roi, 12 septembre 1815,” reprinted in *Les Carnets du Pays Mauléonnais, Bulletin d’Histoire Locale*, no. 19, (2009): 28.

¹³⁰ Author’s map – the shaded areas are the electoral districts that returned monarchist or conservative candidates throughout the period and so give a nineteenth century approximation of the *région de mémoire*.

north of Vendée 85, in the southern part of Maine-et-Loire 49, was the birthplace of Jacques Cathelineau (see Chapter 6) and the site of his memorial in Le Pin-en-Mauges. This is situated in Cholet, the closest *circonscription* to Vendée 85. From 1876 to 1914 right-wing candidates were elected in this *circonscription*, either by large majorities or unopposed.

There is a further complication to the use of Vendée 85 as the nexus of historical memory studies: the single administrative Department does not have a consistent culture or collective memory, and nor did it in the period of this study. In 1913, the geographer André Siegfried produced over 102 maps of the west of France setting out how different Departments voted for the first ten elections of the Third Republic (between 1876 and 1910). One of these maps is reproduced below:

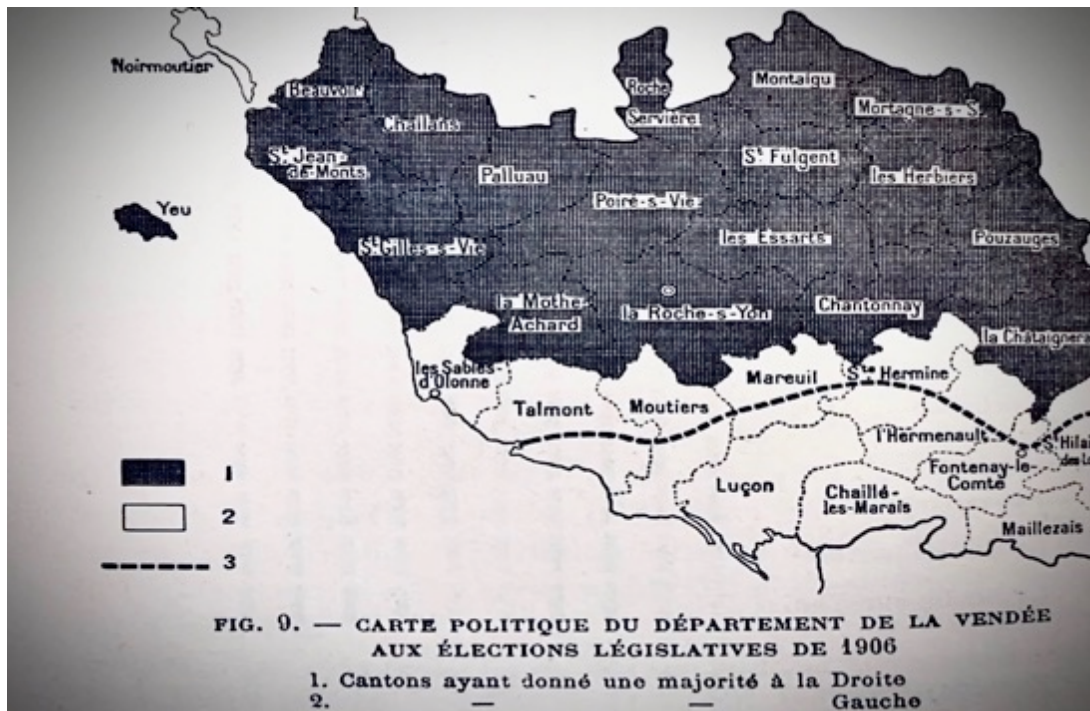


Diagram 2.2: Map of the electoral balance of Vendée 85 in 1906.

131

¹³¹ André Siegfried, *Tableau Politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1913), 34.

As this map shows, in 1906 as in other elections during this period, the south of the Department, known as the *Plaine*, voted for the left while the rest, the *Bocage*, voted for the right. As befits a geographer, Siegfried's work concluded that the difference in voting patterns could only be explained by the underlying geology: chalk and sandy soil in the south of the region, more fertile loams in the north. He believed that this resulted in different land tenure: large property owners in the north with mostly tenant farmers who were more likely to vote in accordance with the wishes of their landlord, small owner occupied and worked farms in the *Plaine* resulting in more independence. This in turn led to different concentrations of population: scarce in the *Bocage*, denser in the *Plaine*. As we shall see, this oversimplifies the voting patterns, but it does illustrate one of the dangers of using only Vendée 85 as the object of a study.

There are two reasons why almost all historians writing about “the Vendée” may do so without challenging its validity as a geographical entity. First, ease of archival access: the most easily accessible data relating to the Vendée's history is available at the level of the Department, and the departmental archives of Vendée 85 are the largest and best organised for students of the civil war. Second, the *idea* of the Vendée has become so implanted in the memory of both Vendée 85's inhabitants and the rest of France that the Department as it is currently defined, and its associated “tourist history”, has made it difficult to think back to earlier regional differences and similarities.¹³² While this thesis will, where appropriate, use the political demarcation of Vendée 85, it will also take a broader conception of the idea of “the Vendée” that takes into account evidence from contemporaries and suggests the existence of a broader *région de mémoire*. For this reason, much of the

¹³² The present day Vendée Department has many well sign-posted heritage sites, museums, and “*historials*” as well as the hugely popular *Puy du Fou* theme park that focuses on reconstructions of royalist and catholic events in the region including the events of the civil war. In contrast, the small towns and villages of adjoining departments have no references to the Vendée wars. The two royalist statues studied in Chapters 5 and 6 have been moved from their original central locations and have no signposting to direct tourists to them.

material for studying the royalist and conservative memorials being considered – which, crucially, both lay outside Vendée 85 – is drawn from local and regional archives in adjoining departments of Deux-Sèvres and Maine-et-Loire. Where information taken solely from the Department is used in this thesis, it will be marked as “Vendée 85”.

The Civil War in the Vendée 1793-96

This thesis centres on the contested memory of the events of 1793–96. In these years a civil war was fought between the supporters of the new regime in Paris – described at the end of nineteenth century variously as “revolutionaries”, “republicans”, “blues” and “Jacobins” – and followers of the Old Regime of king, church and aristocracy – termed “reactionaries”, “Royal and Catholic”, or “whites”.¹³³ There have been arguments amongst historians for two hundred years about the motivations, events and consequences of the wars. They have occupied thousands of pages of print and so to summarise them in a few paragraphs presents a significant challenge. Most agree that the war erupted in Mauges area on the border of Deux-Sèvres and Vendée 85 in March 1793.¹³⁴ A riot against the conscription of 300,000 men for the republican army being sent to face an alliance of Britain, Austria, Spain and Prussia on France’s eastern border ended with the republican recruiting sergeants and their men dead and the local peasants convinced that they would face brutal reprisals. The Vendéens marched on Cholet, a nearby town, overcame the largely untrained National Guard and captured weapons and men. From there the peasant force joined up with other groups and eventually was led (or was taken over, depending on which side of the debate you are on) by trained aristocratic officers to form a Royal and Catholic army. Its war aims included the restoration of the monarchy and its traditional

¹³³ Martin, *La Vendée et la Révolution*, 40.

¹³⁴ See Chapter 1 for the historiography of the counter-revolution.

hierarchical social order, and the reestablishment of the Catholic Church. A number of battles and sieges ensued. It is important to distinguish between this war with its opposing armies and set-piece battles and the guerrilla campaign known as the *Chouannerie* which took place to the north in Brittany.¹³⁵ Once Paris had won victories over its external enemies in the east and could send a trained force to the region, the Royal and Catholic army was eventually defeated. Those aristocratic leaders who had not died in the fighting were executed.

The original riot was built on resentment emerging from a period of disruption to the social order following the first phase of the Revolution, particularly the closure of churches and the exiling or execution of priests.¹³⁶ As with most civil wars, both the ideological and religious wars before 1793 and those that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were contemporary and subsequent claims of massacres and extreme cruelty on both sides. After the war had ended the region was “pacified” (in reality a violent destruction, by twelve columns of republican soldiers, of much of the countryside and large numbers of its population that was anything but pacific).¹³⁷

This last stage of the conflict – pacification – is the most disputed part of the history of the war and the one on which local memories of victimhood or martyrdom became based. Revolutionary, republican, Marxist and eventually the mainstream of professional historians from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day considered “the pacification” to be an awful but typical consequence

¹³⁵ Donald Sutherland, *The Chouans, the Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770-1796* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

¹³⁶ Martin, *La Vendée et la Révolution*, 4.

¹³⁷ There are many good histories of the Vendée wars: see the discussion in Chapter I on historiography and Chapter III on the nineteenth century historical disputes about the causes and repercussions of the wars. A good overview of both the war and the pacification is in David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 154-185. Bell and Jean-Clément Martin believe that some 200,000 people died as a result of the wars and the pacification.

of European warfare at the end of the eighteenth century.¹³⁸ By contrast, local historians and memoir writers, royalist and conservative historians have labelled the massacres and “burning of the Vendée” as the first European genocide – an attempt by the French state to erase a whole people and their way of life.¹³⁹ The establishment and embellishment of many of these disputed stories can be traced to the nineteenth century, when the political future of the region – and of France – was balanced finely between competing demands: on the one hand, for revolutionary change and republican government, and on the other for a return to the crown, aristocracy and Catholic Church.

The Early Third Republic: France and the Vendée, 1870-1918

At the end of the nineteenth century, France was undergoing rapid change but remained a predominantly rural and agricultural country.¹⁴⁰ Population had grown considerably between the Revolution and 1870 but, as can be seen in table 2.1, between 1870 and 1911 the growth rates had slowed markedly as fewer people married, fewer children were born and average mortality only increased very slowly. The slowing of population growth, especially in comparison with Germany and Great Britain was a cause of concern for political leaders mainly because they feared their comparative military strength would be diminished.

¹³⁸ See Chapter 3 for nineteenth century historians and the historiography section of Chapter 1 for a list of later historians who have written about the civil war.

¹³⁹ The main historian to take this line is Reynald Secher; see the historiography section of Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁰ The data in the tables in this section are extracted from the *Annuaire Statistique: Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie, des Postes et Télégraphes, Office du Travail, Statistique Générale de la France* of the *Direction de la Statistique Générale* (Paris: Imprimerie National) – abbreviated as AS Year, page number. The population numbers are from census data taken over the period. In general the French state attempted a census every ten years but because of political events these were often delayed. There was a census in 1801, in 1846, 1866, 1872, 1891, 1901 and 1911. Etienne Van De Walle's work on the French census suggests that the data is not entirely reliable in the early years but for the purpose both of his work and this thesis, the error rates are likely to be relatively small (+/- 2%), Etienne Van De Walle, *The Female Population of France in the Nineteenth Century. A Reconstruction of 82 Departments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). The years selected for review in this section are used to illustrate, as closely as possible, the beginning, middle and end of the period covered by this thesis.

In the forty years between 1872 and 1911, France's population grew by 10% whilst Germany's grew at 58% and Great Britain's by 43%.¹⁴¹

	Population 000s	% increase since 1801
1801	27,349	
1866	38,067	39% (27%)
1872*	36,103	32% (36%)
1891	38,343	40% (38%)
1911	39,602	45%

*After the loss of Alsace-Lorraine: the percentage increase in parentheses are those calculated by the *Annuaire Statistique* for the increase in population of France without Alsace-Lorraine.

Table 2.1: Population Increase, France 1801-1911.¹⁴²

There was a significant trend towards urbanisation: in 1846, 24.4% of population lived in towns with more than 10,000 people, by 1891 this had increased to 37%. There was a large shift of population to the major cities up to 1911, especially the two biggest cities, Paris and Lyon, which grew at a much greater rate than the national population:

	1891	1911	
France population	38,343,192	39,601,599	3.3% increase
Paris population	2,447,757	2,833,351	15.8% increase
Lyon population	438,077	502,213	14.6% increase

Table 2.2: Increase in Urban Population 1891-1911.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, 77-78.

¹⁴² AS 1878, 5; AS 1901, 3, AS 1913, 3.

¹⁴³ AS 1913, 4.

This may be summarised in the graph below:

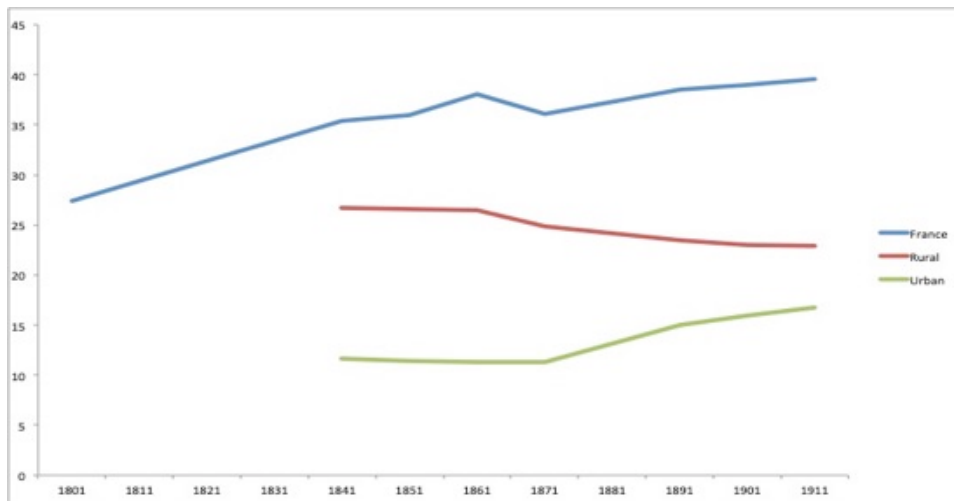


Diagram 2.3: Population of France in millions 1801-1911 showing increasing urbanisation from 1861 census onwards.¹⁴⁴

While Paris dominated the political and cultural life of the French elites, regional capitals remained comparatively small. The largest town in the *région de mémoire* was Cholet in the south of the Department of Maine-et-Loire, which in 1911 had a population of just 19,313 (although it had doubled in size since 1851): less than a hundredth the size of Paris.¹⁴⁵ The whole electoral district of Bressuire, Deux-Sèvres, the home of the de La Rochejaquelein family, contained a mere 80,600 people with only 3,500 people in the town itself in 1878.¹⁴⁶ The departments of the Vendée *région de mémoire* were sparsely populated and agricultural in comparison to the large industrial populations of Paris, Lyon and the North:

	Population'000/density	Rural %
Seine (Paris)	4,254 (8664/ha)	0
Rhone (Lyon)	915 (322/ha)	30
Nord (Lille)	1,961 (339/ha)	35
Maine-et-Loire	508 (70/ha)	73
Deux-Sèvres	337(56/ha)	86
Vendée	438 (63/ha)	88

Table 2.3: Comparative population density and rural nature of Vendée region, 1911.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Data taken from graph in AS1896, 9; supplemented by AS 1903, 5; and AS 1913, 10.

¹⁴⁵ AS 1913, 5.

¹⁴⁶ AS 1878, 21.

¹⁴⁷ AS 1913, 3.

Vendée was also distinctive from other regions in terms of its population composition. In 1911, immigrants made up 3% of the population of France (1.1 million), three quarters of them from neighbouring Belgium, Italy and Switzerland. By contrast, Vendée 85 was home to a mere 207 foreigners (including 46 Swiss, 36 Belgians and 24 British), less than 0.5% of the total population.¹⁴⁸

In the latter part of the period working people organised into unions. In 1884 there were only 175 unions in the whole of France, whilst by 1913 there were 11,332 industrial and 6,178 agricultural unions with almost 2.5 million members. Vendée 85 had 67 industrial and agricultural unions with a total of 12,452 members. As a proportion of the population of France and Vendée 85 this represents a unionisation rate of 9.5% and 2.8% respectively. Unionisation led to demands for better pay and many more strikes: in 1898 there were 378 recorded strikes in France and 1,077 in 1913. This did not lead to significant increase in the average pay for workers. For example, in the French textile industry, the daily wage for a ten-hour day in 1913 was 4.35 francs for men and 2.35 francs for women. This had risen from 3.10 francs and 1.90 francs respectively in 1875, an annualised increase of less than 1% for men and 0.5% for women.¹⁴⁹ Most people worked a six-day week so the average annual wage in this industry was approximately 1,300 francs for men and 730 francs for women.¹⁵⁰ When we consider that the minimum cost of standing in an election was 20,000 francs and Julien de La Rochejaquelein's wife brought a dowry of 250,000 francs (see Chapter 5) we may conclude that republican France remained a deeply unequal society.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ AS 1913, 221.

¹⁴⁹ AS 1875, 388.

¹⁵⁰ AS 1913, 103 and 142. AS 1898 221 for comparative strike reports.

¹⁵¹ Nicholas Rousellier, "Electoral Pluralism in France".

France was also changing rapidly in the way it used travel and communication technology. The first part of the period saw a rapid rise in railway travel and the use of telegrams. In 1870 there were 26,000 km of railway track, in 1893, 48,000 and 1913, 68,000 including local lines.¹⁵² Between 1893 and 1913 there had also been a massive investment in road transport, so that 38,000km of the new *Routes Nationales* (tarmacked roads) between towns and cities had been built by 1913: a network almost as large as the mainline railway network.¹⁵³ From almost no civilian use in 1870, by 1893 almost 33 million telegrams were sent in 1893 and 45 million in France together with 5 million abroad in 1913.¹⁵⁴ The new telephone technology had also brought instant communication outside Paris. In 1888 there were fewer than 2,000 telephones, almost all in Paris, and by 1893 there were 25,000. Notably, in 1893, none of these were in Vendée 85, Maine-et-Loire or Deux-Sèvres. By 1913 the telephone network had reached across the country with 310,00 phones connected and over 430 million calls made. The Vendée region adopted these new technologies slowly and as a result remained less well-connected and more inward looking than the industrial and urban areas of the rest of France.

¹⁵² AS 1913, 157.

¹⁵³ AS 1913, 153.

¹⁵⁴ AS 193, 175.

In Chapter 3 we will look in more detail at how the major educational reforms of the period played out in the region. A good general illustration is the literacy levels of the conscripts who made up the “classes” of 1874, 1897 and 1912, which give the percentage of the class who could either not read or write or could only sign their name:

Class of:	1874	1897	1912
France	18%	6%	5%
Seine (Paris)	8%	2%	1%
Vendee 85	24%	7%	5%

Table 2.4: Comparative illiteracy rates, France, Paris, Vendée, 1874-1912.¹⁵⁵

The table illustrates the remarkable progress of the country towards an almost entirely literate (male) population, as well the relative position of the Vendée.

What emerges from these statistical comparisons is an image of the Vendée *région de mémoire* that was very different from the rapidly industrialising, cosmopolitan and increasingly urbanised parts of the North and around Paris. Even when compared to the national averages of a still largely rural society, the region remained strikingly agricultural, slow to adapt new technology or social practice, and also had a lower average level of formal education.

The Changing Role of the Press

One of the most significant changes of the period covered by this thesis was the way that the press in the Vendée *région de mémoire* expanded and became more focused on partisan politics. Newspapers were vitally important in rural society, even where

¹⁵⁵ AS 1875, 313; AS 1898, 593; and AS 1913, 316.

literacy rates were low. As Christophe Charle has concluded in his study of the regional press: “for the majority of people in the enclosed spaces of rural France, links to the region and the nation came only through the unique and central role of the newspapers ... papers were read aloud in cafés and bars and stories discussed at length amongst family and friends.”¹⁵⁶

At the national level, groups of politicians founded or used existing newspapers to tell the electorate both what they intended to do and to report regularly on their activities and those of their opponents. The best example was the most famous Vendéen of the early twentieth-century, republican politician-journalist-newspaper owner, Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929). He owned a newspaper, *La Justice*, which began publication in 1880, but he released a more radical title *L’Aurore* (Dawn) in 1897, which became known to posterity as the vehicle for Emile Zola’s “J’accuse!”. Clemenceau was at the forefront of the political attempts to defend Zola and clear Dreyfus through his newspapers and he eventually used them to assist his own return to politics as the Senator (an indirectly elected position) for the Var. It was from the Senate, an institution that he had fought to abolish in the 1870s, that he joined the government for the first time in 1906 as Interior Minister. He went on to become Prime Minister before the war, losing his post in 1913 but recalled to lead the government in the darkest days of 1917. As well as his earlier newspaper career, Clemenceau published a wartime paper *L’Homme Libre*, with himself as editor. It was later renamed *L’Homme Enchaîné*, after it became subject to wartime censorship because of its criticisms of the government.¹⁵⁷

Other national groupings and politicians increasingly used the national press to put forward their views. One example was the

¹⁵⁶ Christophe Charle, *Le Siècle De La Presse, 1830-1939* (Paris: Univers Historique, Seuil, 2004), 15.

¹⁵⁷ There are hundreds of books relating the life of Clemenceau. The principal source for these basic facts about his political life are taken from Gregor Dallas’s biography, *At the Heart of a Tiger: Clemenceau and his World, 1841-1929* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

ultra-Catholics and Legitimists who used *La Croix*, run by the Assumptionist religious order until its closure in 1902, to attack republican governments and support the anti-Dreyfusard and antisemitic positions taken by many conservatives in the 1890s. Less fervent Catholics and conservatives, who became reconciled to the republic, used the equally anti-Dreyfusard but less antisemitic newspaper *l'Univers*. Politicians such as Charles Maurras and ex-military men such as George de Villebois-Mareuil, who sought a new, more nationalist, approach after the downfall of Boulanger and the pardon for Dreyfus, launched a new bi-monthly journal in 1899: *Action Française* (AF). The journal became a daily newspaper of the same name in 1908 and supported a political movement that challenged and later absorbed much of the traditional right.¹⁵⁸ AF adopted the royalist view of the Vendée wars and used it frequently in support of its political aims. For example in one of the last journal editions, Maurras' article "Yes, a coup is possible" discussed how Talleyrand had only been able to overthrow Bonaparte because the country remembered the courage of the Vendée and the Chouannerie.¹⁵⁹ In 1911, whilst reporting on the inauguration of a memorial cross to the Vendéen general François-Athanase de Charette de la Contrie, AF set out clearly their view of both the importance of the Vendée mythology and how it applied to contemporary politics, under the headline "Two conceptions of Patriotism":

Those who opposed the Vendéens were called 'the patriots' and today they are considered to be the only defender of the country (*la patrie*), but should history ratify this judgement? *La patrie* was once closely united to the race of kings, who made it. The Revolution broke up this union, hitherto so strong and fruitful ... If the Vendée had been victorious, we

¹⁵⁸ National newspapers from the period are available on line via <https://gallica.bnf.fr>, which also contains brief explanations of ownership and political leaning. Claude Bellanger et al, *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française: De 1815 à 1870*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969) provides more biographical detail.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Maurras and Henri Dutrait-Crozon, "Si, le Coup de Force est Possible" in *L'Action Française*, XXXI, 206, January 15 1908, 135.

would not have had three subsequent foreign invasions, would not have had an overstong Germany and Italy on our borders, Alsace-Lorraine would still be French, she would still be the eldest daughter of the Church and remain in her rightful place at the head of all nations (*des nations*).¹⁶⁰

The fusion of politics and journalism was also apparent in Vendée 85. In the 1870s and 1880s the regional newspapers were largely focused on local issues and local personalities.¹⁶¹ On the right, *La Vendée* (fd. 1881, Fontenay-le Comte) and *L'Étoile de la Vendée* (fd. 1886, Les Sables de l'Onne) appeared to be much more interested in the revival of Catholicism than national political discourse, believing that monarchism and right-wing politics were a means to spiritual and moral renewal not an end in itself.¹⁶² They were also very focused on Freemasonry, which they painted as a conspiratorial secular religion. *L'Étoile's* banner headline ran: "Freemasonry: there is the enemy", an inversion of Gambetta's war cry about clericalism. Both newspapers sourced their national stories almost exclusively from *l'Univers* and *La Croix*.

On the left, *L'Avenir et l'Indicateur* (fd. 1885, Fontenay) and *La Vendée Républicaine* (fd. 1886, Sables) were also independent of local politicians and more focused on policy and how to get their preferred candidates elected. They were, in line with the prevailing republican ideology, very anti-clerical and often carried scurrilous stories about priests from other republican papers in other regions of France.¹⁶³ Their national political stories were taken from a wider

¹⁶⁰ Leon Daudet, *L'Action Française*, August 13, 1911, 3.

¹⁶¹ Vendée 85 newspapers from the period are available on line. The website also provides detailed biographical detail about ownership and political leaning. <http://www.archives.vendee.fr/Consulter/Archives-numerisees>

¹⁶² The first edition of *La Vendée* of June 5, 1881 set out its mission in a front-page editorial as, "to defend our civilization against a radical sect ... fighting for the family, against all religious outrage, for justice ... with God's help we will prove that the Vendée remains courageous and patriotic – a fortress of faith, order and liberty." *L'Étoile de la Vendée* set out its position on page 1 of its October 14, 1886 edition: "Our society is entirely the work of the Church and its clergy and there is nothing more legitimate than the social action of the Church and clergy."

¹⁶³ For example *L'Avenir et l'Indicateur* published a story on April 25, 1895 about the arrest of a priest in Perpignan, 750 kilometres away, for "obscene and unnatural practices with young boys which the

variety of republican press sources. Both papers had *feuilletons* or part-stories on their front pages, and funny and scandalous local (and not so local) stories about their political enemies in “fait divers”. Both printed statements of support for candidates in parliamentary elections and then denunciations of the way that priests and aristocrats used the political process in their aftermath.¹⁶⁴ As we shall see, coverage of the memorial inaugurations and local reactions to them were extremely partisan and often patently false.

More newspapers were launched in the period after 1896 as printing technology improved and raw materials became cheaper. As literacy rates improved even in the countryside, the market for cheap reading material grew. On the left, *L’Avenir et l’Indicateur* – which was taken over and re-launched by aspiring politician, Loup Bertroz – took an antisemitic line and supported independent, anti-Dreyfusard republicans.¹⁶⁵ Gaston Guillemet launched *Le Patriote de la Vendée* (fd. 1897, Fontenay-le-Comte) to support his political ambitions as a radical, Clemenceau-supporting republican. Both these newspapers, as well as *La Vendée Républicaine*, began to publish stories and editorial pieces attacking the threat of enemies to the left (socialists, communists, anarchists) as well as the traditional right.¹⁶⁶

On the right, *La Vendéen* (fd. 1896, La Roche-sur-Yon) was established and edited by Raymond de Fontaines to support his political ambitions; *La Croix Vendéenne* (an offshoot of the national

religious authorities had known about for many years.” It warned parents to keep their children away from all such dangerous priests.

¹⁶⁴ In advance of elections on August 20, 1893, *L’Avenir et l’Indicateur* published statements from both republican candidates in Sables d’Olonnes, the first from George Batiot on August 5 and then Arthur Voisin’s on August 12. Batiot won his election defeated the sitting conservative but Voisin was beaten by almost 5,000 votes. On August 26 the front page of the paper noted that he 3,000 votes had shown enormous courage in the face of “a process of tyranny and intimidation” carried out by his opponent.

¹⁶⁵ In an “Open letter to Zola” on the front page of *L’Avenir et l’Indicateur* of January 16, 1898 (three days after Zola’s *J’accuse* letter was published), Bertroz called Zola “mistaken ... it is your campaign in favour of the traitor Dreyfus that will darken your own star” and on January 23, also on the front page, he wrote “we must now form an alliance of patriotic Frenchmen against the defenders of Dreyfus”.

¹⁶⁶ For example *Le Patriote de la Vendée*, October 21, 1897, 2: “We are not socialist revolutionaries, we disagree with them about everything – property, family, law, the state, the police and the administration.”

La Croix, originally published in Nantes and then in La Roche) started in 1897. Both these papers took an ultramontane Catholic line. *Le Réveil Populaire* (fd. 1907, La Roche-sur-Yon) an explicitly antisemitic paper; and *L'Autize* (fd. 1909, in the very small town of Nieul-sur-l'Autize), were much more focussed on local political and social issues whilst taking a conservative moral viewpoint and support of right wing candidates.¹⁶⁷

In general, the local right-wing press became more nationalistic, militaristic and antisemitic. Their original preoccupation with Freemasons gave way to a greater focus anti-Jewish coverage in the period after Dreyfus. This may have been because Freemasonry, whilst influential at a national level, was less so in rural departments like Vendée: Maurice Larkin suggested that even at the height of masonic power in 1902, when Emile Combes's cabinet was made up entirely of Freemasons, there were only 24,000 lodge members in the whole of France.¹⁶⁸ Of course there were almost no Jews in the Vendée either, and the portrayal of "the other" took place almost entirely in the realm of imaginary threats. Nevertheless, in the early years of the twentieth century there were attempts to link the Jewish "other" to economic problems faced by Vendéen peasants and tenants. As with the left-wing newspapers in the early years of the twentieth century, the threat to traditional reactionary politicians from new forms of right-wing politics meant that stories about the "splitters" of Action Française began to emerge.

¹⁶⁷ For example, *Le Réveil Populaire*, December 17, 1910, 2 published a story condemning "Jewish speculators and vandals who ... have destroyed over 750,000 hectares of our woodlands" and so worsened the impact of the floods on agricultural production of the northern Vendée.

¹⁶⁸ Maurice Larkin, *Religion, Politics and Preferment in France since 1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 119.

The Catholic Church in the Vendée

Monarchists in the Vendée, as in the rest of France, had long been associated with the Catholic Church, both because the institutions represented conservative continuity and because they had been the focus of joint attacks by republicans since the Revolution. France had a long history of religious disputes, from the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion through to the revolutionary anti-clericalism at the end of the eighteenth. Napoleon's 1801 Concordat with Rome had restored the Catholic Church to a central, if diminished, role in French political life. The church was a key player under successive Legitimist, Orleanist, Republican and Bonapartist governments, although tensions continued particularly over the joint appointment of bishops by Rome and Paris, and relationships with the Papal States as they confronted the emergent Kingdom of Italy.¹⁶⁹ During the Third Republic, disputes arose over education (as discussed in Chapter 3), the expulsion of religious orders such as the Jesuits and Assumptionists, and the final abrogation of the Concordat through the separation of the church from state in 1905.¹⁷⁰

The church was not a monolith. Many ultramontane Catholics, including Cardinal Pie of Poitiers (1815-1880), a close confidante of the de La Rochejaquelein family, never accepted the full authority of the French state, even under the restored monarchies. After the fall of the Second Empire, many of these people wished for the return of a legitimate king from the Bourbon family so that the moral order of traditional authority and closer allegiance to the Pope could be

¹⁶⁹ Many young Vendéen men, as well as seasoned officers such as Athanase de Charette, later General in the French army, served in the Papal Zouaves, a force dedicated to the defence of the Papal States against the forces trying to establish a unified Italy. See Carol Harrison, "Zouave Stories: Gender, Catholic Spirituality, and French Responses to the Roman Question," in *The Journal of Modern History*, 79(2), 2007: 274-305; and Richard D.E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁰ There are a number of excellent studies of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century, works used in this section are: Norman Ravitch, *The Catholic Church and the French nation 1685-1985*. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 90-111; Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse de la France 1880-1914*, (Toulouse: Privat, 2000); Maurice Larkin, *Religion, Politics, and Preferment in France since 1890: La Belle Époque and Its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Austin Gough, *Paris and Rome: The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign 1848-1853* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

restored. The Legitimist pretender, Henri V, the Comte de Chambord, was also a believer in this type of Catholicism, indeed Austin Gough suggests that “the Legitimist concept of monarchy and the ultramontane concept of papacy developed [so that] there was a virtual fusion of ideas on 1873.”¹⁷¹ Many Vendéen Catholics believed, as the *Étoile de la Vendée* set out, that Fallen Man and Woman were inherently evil and needed the “all seeing eye of God” to control their base desires.¹⁷² Lucien Brun (1822-1898), the lawyer whom the Comte de Chambord wanted for his Prime Minister, summarised Catholic conservative philosophy in a lecture on social order: “every society needs authority, if it is legitimate it comes from God and all other authority is only an accident of violence and usurpation...there is no society without hierarchy sanctioned by God.”¹⁷³ Mgr. Cabrières, the eulogist at the inauguration of Henri de La Rochejaquelein’s statue (Chapter 5), was a disciple of this form of Catholicism.

At the other end of the church to the ultramontane wing were the liberal and Gallican Catholics, who were friendlier to accommodation with the French state.¹⁷⁴ From the “Social Catholic” wings of liberal Catholicism, particularly in the industrial cities of the North and the poorer parts of Paris, grew an early form of political Christian Democracy, the Sillon movement of Marc Sangnier (which was soon condemned and stalled).¹⁷⁵ By contrast with these politically committed groups, many French laypeople were, as Maurice Larkin puts it, “practising Catholics’... [whose] nominal membership entailed little personal inconvenience and compatibility with a wide range of life-styles and political opinions.”¹⁷⁶ These

¹⁷¹ Gough, *Paris and Rome*, 67.

¹⁷² *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, September 29, 1895, 2.

¹⁷³ Emmanuel Lucien-Brun, *Introduction à l'Étude du Droit 2e édition* (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1887), 287-288.

¹⁷⁴ Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse*, 48. The “Gallican” church to which they refer is that of pre-revolutionary France when the church operated more independently from Vatican control than it did after the restoration of the monarchy in 1815. Gough estimated that in 1850 almost half of the French archbishops and 40% of bishops were Gallican in temperament, with only two (out of sixteen) archbishops and fifteen (out of sixty-five) bishops on the ultramontane wing.

¹⁷⁵ Ronald E.M Irving, *Christian Democracy in France*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 30-50.

¹⁷⁶ Maurice Larkin, *Religion, Politics*, 4.

Catholics probably made up the majority of the population and ranged from those who went to mass on most Sundays and always for the great Christian festivals, to those whose religion extended no further than catechising their children and the rituals of birth, marriage and death. Politically, most Catholics fell into step with Pope Leo XIII, who in his 1892 *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* instructed the church to compromise with the Republic, and focus on trying to influence the morality of its citizens and education of its children.¹⁷⁷ These *ralliés* or reconcilers included Mgr. Luçon the bishop who preached the eulogy at the celebration of Jacques Cathelineau's life in 1896 (Chapter 6).

Religious observance in the Vendée continued to be high, even among republicans. Although questions about religion were included in the national census up until 1872, this was discontinued under the Third Republic and so precise data on religious observance is difficult to reconstruct. Cholvy and Hilaire estimated religious observance in the region in the late 1890s as:

Parishioners in Vendée 85 attending daily services	25%
Communicants on All Saints Day in Vendée 85	50%
Communicants on Christmas Day in Vendée 85	66%
Communicants on Easter Day in:	
Luçon (the diocesan capital of the region that included most of Vendée 85)	66%
La Roche sur Yon (administrative capital of Vendée 85)	77%
Cholet (capital of <i>Vendée Militaire</i> in 1793 and in the centre of the <i>région de mémoire</i> in the nineteenth century)	94%

Table 2.5: Comparative religious observance in the Vendée region.

¹⁷⁷ *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*, (In the Midst of Anxieties) was as a papal encyclical published in French and addressed to the faithful in France. It discussed the different forms of temporal government in France over the previous century and concluded, "When new governments representing this immutable power are constituted, their acceptance is not only permissible but even obligatory, being imposed by the need of the social good which has made and which upholds them. This is all the more imperative because an insurrection stirs up hatred among citizens, provokes civil war, and may throw a nation into chaos and anarchy." See: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_16021892_au-milieu-des-sollicitudes.html, ch.9. Accessed May 7, 2019.

Of these they estimate that 81% of women in La Roche and 86% in Cholet attended Easter mass. By contrast, religious practice had declined rapidly in neighbouring large cities such as Le Mans to the north and Poitiers to the southeast, where the estimated attendance at Easter mass to be less than a third in 1908 and 1914 respectively.¹⁷⁸ Larkin suggests that for the rest of France in the 1890s, whilst over 90% of the population were baptised into the church, perhaps only 20% went regularly to mass at Easter.¹⁷⁹

Religious trends in the Vendée were remarkably persistent. A 1960 survey by Fernand Boulard and Jean Rémy found that, in the *région de mémoire*, practising Catholics were still a majority, seventy years after the statues to Cathelineau and de La Rochejaquelein had been erected.¹⁸⁰ Cholvy and Hilaire attribute this “obstinate refusal to change” to three local factors: firstly, the memory of the war between republicans and royalists in the 1790s; secondly the traditional hierarchy where “noble and clergy remained at the top of the pyramid”; and thirdly a stubborn attachment to the traditional forms of the Gallican church.¹⁸¹ Whilst it seems unlikely that most churchgoing Vendéens during the 1890s were overly concerned with the theological debates between followers of Cabrières and Luçon, these different strands of Catholicism had important political implications on a major issue in Vendéen conservatism: the extent to which one should resist or reconcile with the Republic.

¹⁷⁸ Gérard Cholvy and Yves-Marie Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse*, 135-7. The dates for Luçon and La Roche are between 1894 and 1896, whilst for Cholet (which was in the diocese of Angers) they are between 1898 and 1904.

¹⁷⁹ Larkin, *Religion, Politics*, 5.

¹⁸⁰ Fernand Boulard and Jean Rémy, *Pratique Religieuse Urbaine et Régions Culturelles* (Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1968).

¹⁸¹ Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse*, 137.

Vendée Politics in the Early Third Republic

The Third Republic would, in the words of Louis-Adolphe Thiers, the first Chief Executive and then President of the Republic, be a “conservative republic or it would be no republic at all”.¹⁸² Many historians have reviewed the complexities of the political landscape in the first forty years of the Republic and the consensus view is that, in the early years, the major political battles were about the continued existence of this type of conservative republic.¹⁸³ The alternatives included a return to the revolutionary republicanism that many contemporaries associated with the Paris Commune of 1871, the restoration of one of the competing dynasties to the throne, or autocratic rule by a monarch or military leader. For simplicity, political historians of the period have categorized those who believed in republican values as “left” and those who did not as “right”.¹⁸⁴ The reality was more complicated. At the start of the period the left encompassed men who called themselves communards, radicals, republicans, liberals, and by the end the left consisted of a wide range of radicals and socialists prepared to serve in governments, and anarchists and communists who wished to see the end of the Republic. The political right, which is the focus of much of this thesis, was perhaps even more complex.

Historians of the French right in the late nineteenth century agree that multiple groups composed the opposition to the Third Republic.¹⁸⁵ Membership of these groups was fluid, with variations over time both in the subjects they agreed upon and the political stance of individuals. By the late 1890s there were two main royalist traditions: the Legitimists and the Orléanists. Legitimists traced their

¹⁸² Thiers' speech to the National Assembly, November 3, 1872, reported in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, November 14, 1872, 6981.

¹⁸³ See for example, Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Society and the Making of the Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and Robert Gildea, *The Third Republic From 1870-1914* (London: Longman, 1988).

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, the work of André Siegfried, François Goguel and Odile Rudelle below.

¹⁸⁵ See Chapter 1 for historiography of the political right, in particular Rémond, *Les Droites en France*; Locke, *French Legitimists*; and Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France*.

political philosophy to the era before the Revolution when kings of France were appointed by and answerable only to God and so ruled as absolute monarchs. On this reading, monarchs' descent was only legitimate through the male line of the Bourbon family, and the last direct descendant to claim the throne was Henri, the grandson of Charles X, the so called "miracle child" of the Duc de Berry, born after his father's assassination. Known as Henri V (1820-1883) in Legitimist circles, he was given the titles the Duc de Bordeaux and his preferred name, the Comte de Chambord. The ten-year old Henri briefly became king after Charles X abdicated, only for his cousin, Louis-Philippe of Orleans, to overthrow the monarchy and send the Bourbon family into exile, first in England and then Germany. Chambord expected to become king after the fall of Napoleon III in 1870 and the first elections of 1871 returned a significant majority of deputies who were in favour of his restoration. He was offered the crown but set a number of conditions: a return to absolutism with rule by executive decree; the acceptance by the National Assembly that he took the throne because it was his by right, not something that was theirs to offer him; and the final stumbling block, the use of the white royalist flag as the national flag rather than the revolutionary tricolore. These conditions proved impossible for even the conservative dominated Assembly and Chambord died in 1883, still in exile and with no children. He had recognised the Duc d'Orléans as his successor even though there were male descendants of Louis XV who had emigrated to Spain and were now part of the Spanish aristocracy.

Since the Revolution, Orleanists had taken a more pragmatic approach to the rise of representative government. Louis-Philippe, who had overthrown the young Henri (V) Bourbon to become "King of the French" in 1830, established a government modelled on the British constitutional monarchy. Louis-Philippe's father had renounced his title to be known as Louis Egalité during the Revolution. He had voted for the death of Louis XVI, a decision that

continues to resonate amongst royalists to this day. The Orleanist king was himself overthrown by the revolution of 1848 that ushered in the Second Republic and the subsequent Second Empire. The Orleans family went into exile in England and only returned to France after the fall of Napoleon III in 1870. The Orleans pretenders attempted to unite royalist and conservative supporters after the death of Chambord in 1883 with some success, but the personality of the Duc d'Orléans – he was considered by conservative contemporaries to be a dilettante rather than a serious politician – contributed to the fact that conservatives began to look for other solutions. Amongst these were General Boulanger, who failed in a coup attempt in 1889, and General Roget who decided at the last moment not to lead a coup in 1899 after the sudden death of president Félix Faure.¹⁸⁶

Within this complex and evolving political context, Vendée 85 exhibited some distinctive characteristics. The graph below shows the share of the vote for those parties that have been defined as “right” by three historians of this period (Siegfried, François Goguel and Odile Rudelle) who have published works on elections for the lower house of Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies:

¹⁸⁶ Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France*.

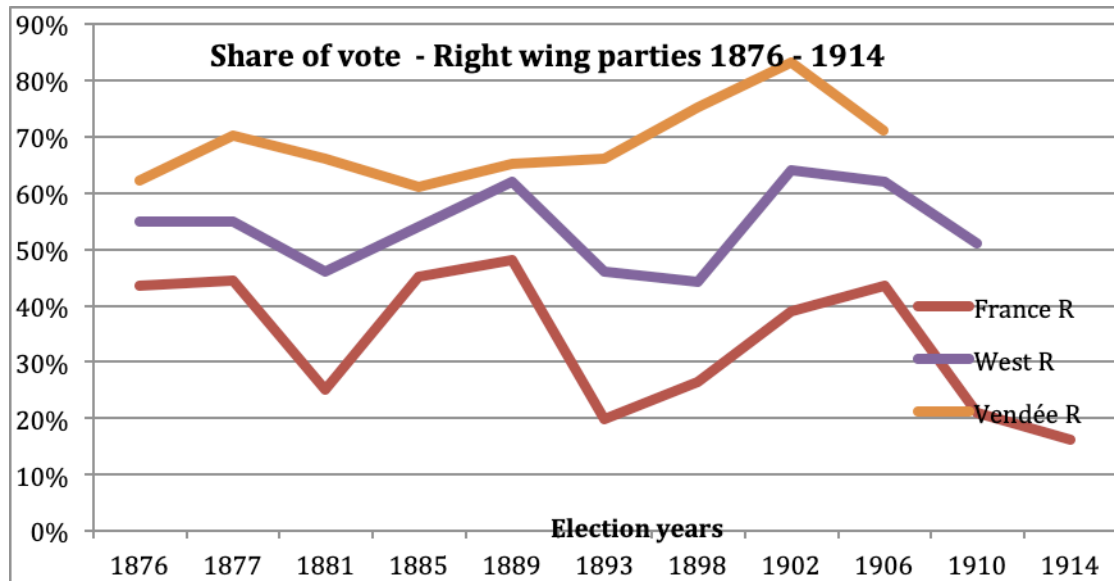


Diagram 2.4: Share of right-wing votes in legislative elections to the Chamber of Deputies 1876-1914.¹⁸⁷

Goguel noted, incorrectly, that in the period from 1870 to 1914 Vendée 85 returned only one deputy of the left to the Chamber of Deputies. In fact the electoral divisions in Vendée 85 shifted several times, so whilst the majority of people voting in the Department were always in favour of right-wing candidates, several republican deputies were actually elected.¹⁸⁸ For example, in the May 1898 elections the Fontenay-le-Comte electoral district returned the republican Guillemet with a very marginal majority of 51% (9,817 votes) over his conservative opponent (9,283 votes), whilst the newly formed Luçon district also elected a republican, Deshays,

¹⁸⁷ The statistics for this graph come from a variety of sources – those for the Vendée and the West are drawn from Siegfried's *Tableau Politique de la France de l'Ouest*, as confirmed in Rudelle's *La République Absolue*, from where the statistics for the National Vote are also obtained. Siegfried uses the proportion of votes cast after taking into account abstentions (usually about 20% of registered voters did not vote), I have grossed-up the numbers to make them comparable to the way that Rudelle classified voting patterns – so these are proportions of the voters who actually voted.

¹⁸⁸ The system for elections to the Chamber of Deputies for most of this period was to divide each Department into electoral regions (*circonscriptions*) of approximately 20,000 voters (all men over the age of 21). In Vendée (85) this resulted in six regions which, for example, in the 1893 elections had a voting population of 124,201 which was split into six regions of 16644, 18840, 20623, 25268, 21513 and 21313 voters. In that election there was an 81% turnout and the Right took 50,624 votes compared to the Left's 45,993. However because of the way the electoral districts were allocated, in that election, four republican candidates, Guillimet, Deshayes, Georges and Aristide Baitot were elected alongside only two Royalist candidates, de Baudry-d'Asson and Bourgeois. The exception to this *circonscription* system was the election of 1885 when a different method was used, *votes de liste à la majorité*. In principal each of these systems had two rounds of voting but in practice only one was ever needed in Vendée because the winning candidate always gained more than 50% of the vote.

with a 58% majority (10,547 to 7,893).¹⁸⁹ The tables below show the relative electoral position of right and left across eight elections in Vendée 85:

Year (<i>rev</i> = revised)	Right - votes	Left - votes	Right majority	Right %	Left %
1881**	46,522	34,817	11,705	57%	43%
1881 <i>rev</i>	39,252	34,817	4,435	53%	47%
1885*	51,912	39,568	12,344	57%	43%
1889***	57,844	32,086	25,398	64%	36%
1889 <i>rev</i>	34,460	32,086	2,374	52%	48%
1893	50,624	48,133	2,491	51%	49%
1898**	59,433	40,024	19,409	60%	40%
1898 <i>rev</i>	45,820	40,024	5,796	53%	47%
1902**	64,724	43,591	21,133	60%	40%
1902 <i>rev</i>	47,615	43,591	4,023	52%	48%
1910	60,310	53,813	6,497	53%	47%
1914	61,464	48,295	13,169	56%	44%

Table 2.6: Number and proportions of votes cast in legislative elections, Vendée 85, 1881-1914. Vote percentages highlighted are the votes in each year after controlling for “rotten boroughs”.

* 1885 was a “winner takes all” list election.

** In these three years there was one constituency where the right candidate was unopposed (see Nicholas Roussellier’s explanation of “rotten boroughs” in the Third Republic).¹⁹⁰ The figures below that year (*rev*) show the impact of removing the right’s numbers for the rotten borough from their totals.

*** In 1889 there were two rotten boroughs where the right was unopposed, the revised totals remove their votes for these constituencies.

¹⁸⁹ The voting patterns and statistics for Vendée 85 were reported in the local newspapers by *circonscription*. These figures are taken from the *Journal des Sables et de la Vendée* of 1881, 1885, 1893 and 1898, and *Étoile de la Vendée* for the later years.

¹⁹⁰ Nicholas Roussellier, “Electoral Pluralism in France”.

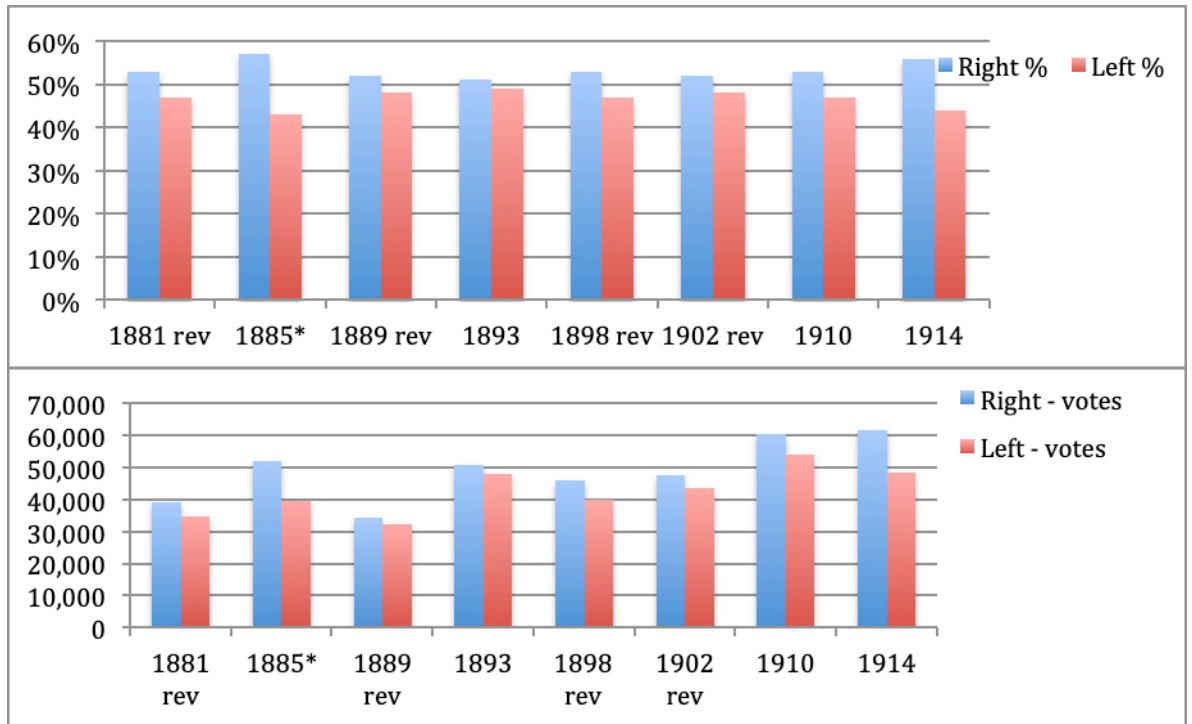


Diagram 2.5: Number and proportions of votes cast in legislative elections, Vendée 85, 1881-1914.

Year	Deputies - Right	Deputies – Left
1881	5	1
1885	6	0
1889	5	1
1893	2	4
1898	5	1
1902	5	1
1910	2	4
1914	4	2

Table 2.7: Number of deputies elected in legislative elections, Vendée 85, 1881-1914.

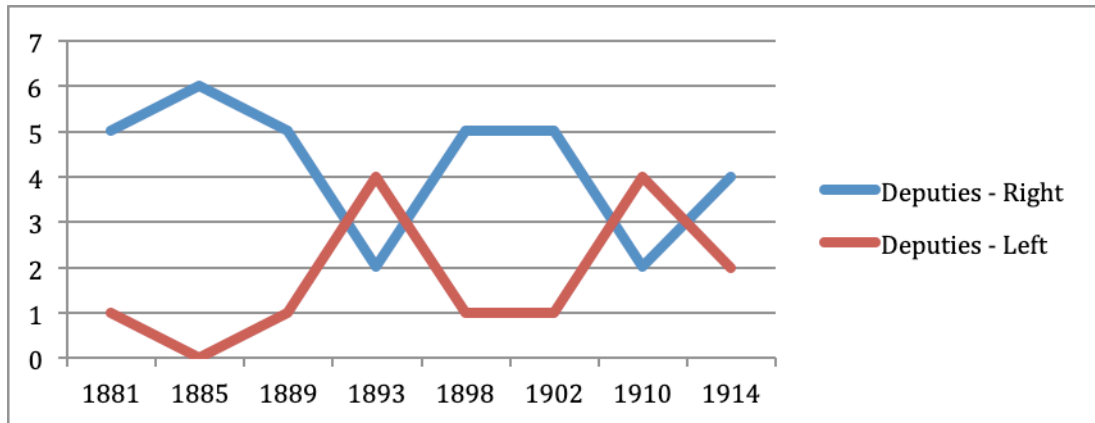


Diagram: 2.6: Number of deputies elected in legislative elections, Vendée 85, 1881-1914.

These diagrams and tables show that the electoral politics of Vendée 85 were actually far closer than previous historians have suggested. By controlling for “rotten boroughs”, the overall proportion of votes cast for rightist candidates never exceeded 60%, and, in six of the eight years surveyed, the proportion was under 53%. It is also clear that republicans focused their efforts on winning seats where the contests were likely to be closest. In two elections, they won four out of six seats. In 1893 they won both Fontenay-le-Comte seats which in the previous election they had lost by only 6% and 5%, a matter of fewer than 2,000 votes across the two constituencies. In the 1902 election, republicans won La Roche-sur-Yon One by 150 votes, Sables d’Olonne One by 142 and Fontenay-le-Comte One by only nine votes.

The Department varied internally in its degree of political contestation. In the six electoral districts surveyed across seven elections (excluding the 1885 “list” election), La Roche Two, which is the most north-easterly and so most firmly situated in the *région de mémoire*, elected no republican deputies and never voted less than 67% in favour of conservative candidates. The two Sables d’Olonne districts include the rest of the western Bocage as well as the coastal regions. These were more closely fought, even if they

mainly returned conservatives, and had an average conservative vote of 56%. To the south, some distance from the *région de mémoire* are the two Fontenay–le-Comte districts which over the seven elections (fourteen seats in total) returned eight republicans and where the conservative margin in winning the other six seats was 3%, 1%, 5%, 1%, 3% and 7%. La Roche-sur-Yon One was the capital of Department 85, with its population of civil servants, professors at the new teacher training college, employees at the police and army headquarters (although it also had a hinterland that stretched in to the *région de mémoire*): this district elected four conservatives and three republicans with an average winning margin for either side never greater than 3%.

The other departments belonging to the *région de mémoire* saw similar results. Between 1870 and 1918 Deux-Sèvres, the home of the de La Rochejaquelein family, was a Department with a majority of left-wing voters. However the *circonscriptions* of Bressuire and Pathenay elected candidates from the right including the royalist Marquis de La Rochejaquelein and Marquis de Maussabré-Beufvier, throughout the period to 1914.¹⁹¹ There was only one occasion when that was not the case, when the “list system” was used in 1885 and Deux-Sèvres elected a republican list.¹⁹² Whilst Bressuire, the nearer of the two to the Vendée 85 border returned large majorities for royalists up to 1914 (in that year the vote was 72% in favour of the right), the more distant Pathenay was closely fought (1898, 52% right; 1902, 50.4% right; and 1906 54% left). In the southern part of Maine-et-Loire, the birthplace of Jacques Cathelineau, a number of royalists such as Comte de la Jumellière

¹⁹¹ These statistics come from the archives of the Assemblée Nationale, which are organised by Department and then by individual deputy. Some of the biographies of the deputies are incomplete and there is no easy way to construct results by *circonscription*. The information about the Maussabré-Beufvier is at [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/5132](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/5132); for de La Rochejaquelein at [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/4187](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/4187); de la Jumellière de Maillé at [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/4903](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/4903); de la Bourdonnaye at [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/4172](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/4172); and de Blacas d'Aulps at [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/836](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/836).

¹⁹² The system for electing deputies to the lower house of the National Assembly is set out later in this chapter. The terms “left” and “right” in French politics of the time are complex and are also explored later in this chapter.

de Maillé in the first Cholet electoral district and Comte de la Bourdonnaye and the Duc de Blacas d'Aulps in Cholet Two were elected by large majorities or were unopposed from 1876 to 1902. Further north in Angers there were harder fought battles: the second *circonscription* of Angers for example had a deputy from the right in 1876 (50.4%) but from the left in 1881 (54%). The right won the list election of 1885 and a conservative was returned again in 1889. By the end of the period, however, Angers was firmly in the hands of the left.

From this analysis, we can conclude that the central part of the *région de mémoire* was loyal to the conservatives and royalists, whilst its borderlands were intensely contested throughout the period studied. A number of explanations have been put forward for the pattern of voting in the *région de mémoire*: Siegfried's analysis of land-holding and tenure (the Vendée was a region which at this time was almost entirely given over to agricultural production); social class structures carried over from the *Ancien Régime*; a lack of modern transportation links to large cities; the continuing hold of the Catholic Church over the population; and the different means of production for the agricultural produce compared to other predominantly agricultural regions.¹⁹³ Vendée 85 also lagged significantly behind other majority French speaking departments in literacy as measured by the number of conscripts who were unable to read when they started basic training.¹⁹⁴

The two most common explanations of the Vendée's electoral conservatism – whether in modern historiography or amongst nineteenth-century commentators – were, firstly, respect for the aristocracy based on fear of social disgrace, corruption and a less than secret voting process, and secondly the hold of the Catholic

¹⁹³ William Brustein's *Social Origins*, was a Marxist interpretation of the way that the Vendée voted uses a series of complex mathematical models to "prove" that the differences between the agricultural regions of the Mediterranean and the West (Right and Left respectively) are entirely explained by the mode of production of their respective crops and the differential material gains that accrued to the population by voting in the way that they did between 1870 and, in this case, 1984.

¹⁹⁴ Further work on literacy is included in Chapter 3.

Church. Certainly candidates with *noms à particule* (those who had a “de” in them) did consistently well in this period. While Robert Gildea dismissed the nobility of the Third Republic as being “a social force but of no consequence politically”, in the Vendée they retained a measure of both social and political power.¹⁹⁵ For example, three deputies elected in Vendée 85 in 1914 were de Fontaines, de Lavrignais and the Marquis de Baudry-D’Asson. De Fontaines was a cavalry officer whilst de Lavrignais and de Baudry-D’Asson were both aristocratic landowners. As to religion, as noted above the Vendée was one of the most unambiguously Catholic regions of France. Whether measured by attendance at church, amounts raised in church contributions, the proportion of children (and particularly girls) educated in religious schools, or the continuing belief in witchcraft, the region is consistently in the highest category.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

While many reasons have been put forward for the unique nature of the Vendée, none appear to stand up individually to comparative scrutiny. As with any discussion of historical causation, it is not possible to entirely disentangle the cumulative, comparative effects on different regions that result from geology, agricultural means of production, transportation, class structures, aristocratic leadership and religion, among many other factors.¹⁹⁷ The one thing that marks out the Vendée as what Jean-Clément Martin called the “permanent antithesis of France” is the collective memory of the events of 1793-1796, and the way that memory became fixed in the minds of the community during the late nineteenth century.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Gildea, *The Third Republic*, 32.

¹⁹⁶ Will Pooley (@willpooley), “a mocked up heat map of criminal trials involving witchcraft in France 1790-1940 by department,” Twitter, 6 August, 2018, <https://twitter.com/willpooley/status/1026383307230113792>.

¹⁹⁷ Goguel concludes that other regions such as Savoie and Nord were equally as religious and so: “it is impossible to conclude that the geography of religious observance provides the key to political opinions. Françoise Goguel, *Géographie des Élections Françaises de 1870 à 1951* (Paris: A Colin, 1951), 32.

¹⁹⁸ Martin quoted in Richard Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 129.

Siegfried, Goguel and Rudelle's conclusions that whilst most regions in France shifted their voting pattern over the period, the West was the only region of France to remain loyal to the right, is only true if the measure used is the overall votes at the level of the Department. A more nuanced set of conclusions emerges from looking within the three Departments, which reveals the very close electoral mathematics at the borders of the *région de mémoire* and the deep conservatism at its centre (that intensified over the period). The battle over the meaning and memory of the Vendée wars was fought at a time when there were real political gains to be made on both the left and the right. This provided additional motivation for politicians on both sides to use and adapt for their purposes the tools of academic and school history teaching, the new local and more established national press, as well as newly reinvigorated and reimagined ways of creating or manipulating memories through the pulpit sermon, storytelling, monuments and commemorative events.

3. The Memory of the Vendée Wars in the Academy and the Classroom

This chapter explores how the education system of the Third Republic used the history of the Revolution and First Republic to help construct an idea of the French nation, and how conservatives in the Vendée resisted the republican version of their past. It looks first at the way that republican intellectuals established an “authorised” history in the professional academic circles of the university and the impact they had on society. Second, it considers how the classrooms of Vendée 85 used history as part of the wider education reforms to influence the future citizens of that region.¹⁹⁹ The mythology of the republican boy-soldier Joseph Bara, killed in the Vendée in 1793, provides an illustration of the way schools used conflicting versions of the past. Finally, the chapter explores how the burgeoning local history societies allowed and encouraged amateur historians to devise and disseminate a different set of discourses of the history of their region to an adult audience.

The early years of the Third Republic were dominated by concerns over the character of the state and the form that the nation would take. Many of these concerns found their way into the study of history in universities, and into primary and secondary school classrooms, as the early leaders of the Republic used the education system to attempt to impose certain ideas about society on the population. The rationale for a new type of education was set out in ministerial speeches and reports from the Ministry of Public Instruction. In February 1885 the National Director of Primary Education, Ferdinand Buisson (1841-1932),²⁰⁰ stated that primary

¹⁹⁹ Vendée 85 is used in this chapter because the Department collected education reports and statistics and Vendée 85 contains the largest number of schools in the *région de mémoire* and so is likely to be representative of the rest of the region.

²⁰⁰ Buisson was a liberal protestant who had exiled himself during the Second Empire, he was appointed by Jules Ferry as Director of Primary Education in 1879, and he went on to become Professor of Education at the Sorbonne in 1890 and the president of the Parliamentary commission that oversaw the separation of church and state in 1905. (From: Pierre Nora, "Le Dictionnaire de

education must not simply teach people to “read, write, count”; rather, “a republican school must add that which is indispensable to the future French citizen: an understanding of their rights and duties as citizens”.²⁰¹

Ten years later, in July 1895, an instruction letter from the Minister of Education to his delegates in the Vendée reinforced the importance of:

National, secular, free and obligatory primary education that ... serves as the link between school, family and society. We have established republican education against the most violent attacks ... and it has to be the most important social institution, a sort of national workshop preparing our young people to become the citizens, workers, soldiers who thirty years from now will hold in their hands the destiny of our country.²⁰²

It was, in fact, only twenty years later that those citizens were indeed fighting for France in the trenches of the Great War.

Academic History of the Revolution

For the Republic’s leaders, the history of the Revolution, the Terror, First Republic and the internal and external revolutionary wars provided an important set of lenses through which to view the society that was being built after 1870. According to Isabel Norona-DiVanna, the early leaders of the Republic wanted it to be a participatory democracy that needed an educated and informed electorate. Intellectuals and politicians in the Third Republic “believed that history was at the centre of the Republic ... its

Pédagogie de Ferdinand Buisson, Cathédrale de l'École Primaire”, in *Les Lieux de Mémoire. I - La République*, ed. P. Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 327-347. In later life he became a supporter of the idea of the Union Sacrée during the Great War, see Ferdinand Buisson, “Le Vrai Sens de l'Union Sacrée.” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 23, no. 4 (1916): 633-56

²⁰¹ *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, February 1885, 8.

²⁰² *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, July 1895, 147.

unification depended on it ... the university was the place to teach and promote it as a science".²⁰³ The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of professional historians in France; men determined to take the "scientific" methods pioneered in Germany by Leopold von Ranke and use them to construct a new type of history. Four historians dominated the academic history of the Revolution during this period, and they provided different accounts of the causes of the Vendée wars between 1793 and 1796 as well as their aftermath. The first was Adolphe Thiers (1797 – 1897) who was also the first president of the Third Republic, having first been a minister under the monarchy of Charles X. Thiers believed that republicanism was the only system of government "strong enough to be effectively conservative".²⁰⁴ His conservative *History of the French Revolution* published between 1823 and 1827 was a popular success, selling over 80,000 copies of the ten-volume set.²⁰⁵ Hippolyte Taine (1828 – 1893) was a polymath – his friend Friedrich Nietzsche called him "the greatest living historian" – but he was better known to contemporaries as a philosopher and literary critic.²⁰⁶ His *Origins of Contemporary France* contained five volumes, three of them dedicated to the Revolution. Ernest Lavisse (1841 – 1922) was a professor of history at the Sorbonne from 1880 although he is now mainly remembered for his impact on the teaching of history and other subjects in schools (see below). He was a republican, Protestant and Freemason as well as a good friend of leading politicians such as Jules Ferry, Jules Grévy and Louis Liard. He was the editor of the massive *History of Contemporary France*, published in nine volumes between 1920 and 1922. Finally, Alphonse Aulard (1849-1928) who was a radical republican, appointed professor of history at the Sorbonne in 1885 having published a number of books and articles on the Revolution.

²⁰³ Isabel DiVanna, *Writing History in the Third Republic* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 6-8.

²⁰⁴ Robert Tombs, "Making the Revolution History: Adolphe Thiers, 1823-73," in *Historicising the French Revolution*, eds. Carolina Armenteros et al (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 92.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁰⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond, Good and Evil* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), 214.

He gathered these pieces together in the four-volume *Political History of the French Revolution*, published in 1901.

Taine was the only academic historian who was unequivocal in his condemnation of the terrible consequences of the Revolution: “the Jacobin’s objective is first of all the destruction of his adversaries, avowed or presumed, probable or possible”.²⁰⁷ First amongst these was the nobility, which he praised as having dignity and charm, and considered to be the natural leaders of the country: “outside of their heads, the other 26 million brains contained little other than dangerous and barren formulas. They were the only ones who understood men tolerably well and the only ones who were not completely disqualified for their management.”²⁰⁸ The other three historians considered the horror visited on the Vendée to be regrettable but justified. To Thiers “the character of the war was well known, the forces of rebellion consisted of a population that was impossible to distinguish between peasant and soldier. It had long been asserted that the only way to reduce that unfortunate country was not to fight it but to destroy it.”²⁰⁹ Lavissee believed that the aftermath of the wars had been exaggerated: “perhaps as few as 20,000 victims in Paris and in the provinces.”²¹⁰ He thought that the Vendéen war had between 200,000 and 500,000 victims (and that the lower number seemed to him to be much more reasonable), and moreover that it was worth having the reprisals to ensure that a much worse general civil war did not erupt throughout France. He continued, “without doubt, in the great scheme of the revolution, the criminal tribunals of the West were relatively moderate.”²¹¹ Lavissee compared the Infernal Columns which “burned the Vendée” to a famine or the usual result of warfare, and the infamous drownings in

²⁰⁷ Hippolyte Taine, *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (Paris: Hachette, 1878 - 1893) v.3, 291.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, v.3, 309.

²⁰⁹ Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Furne et Cie, 1839) v. 3, 117.

²¹⁰ Ernest Lavissee, *Histoire de France Contemporaine depuis la Révolution jusqu’à la Paix de 1919* (Paris: Hachette, 1920), 200. Although this edition was published after the Great War, only the chapters concerning the period from 1906-1919 are new, previous editions containing the chapters about the Revolution had been published up to 1906.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

the Loire at Nantes to the loss of life from sickness in the city's prisons.²¹² Aulard also justified the reprisals as necessary: "the insurrections were defeated by the centralising and integrating movement of France, consolidating herself as a nation under the auspices of Paris and opposed to the invader...at the moment of greatest danger, the republicans made a supreme effort by means of the Terror and that effort was victorious."²¹³

Of the four, only Taine wrote nothing specifically about the Vendée. This was not because he was wholly preoccupied with Paris, although over three-quarters of his three books dealing with the Revolution focused on events in the capital. When Taine ventured outside Paris, his focus was on the East (where he was born and is buried), Toulon in Provence and Toulouse in the South West.²¹⁴ Aulard believed that the Vendée peasantry initially supported the Revolution. For example, he wrote that after the execution of the king, the country was so clearly anti-royalist that:

not one region protested and many of them felt compelled to congratulate the convention, including the Vendée ... there was perhaps here and there, a little stupor, a certain amount of fear where there had been royalist propaganda carried out by the priests and nobles ... but from that time forward the peasantry were no longer royalist.²¹⁵

Lavissee took the same view, writing that the local peasantry had no great love for nobles or royalty. He wrote that in the local patois the nobility were called "noblet" which, he said meant "lazy bullocks".²¹⁶ Thiers wrote that the Vendée before the Revolution was an idyllic, pre-lapsarian region of kindly masters and pure priests: "the

²¹² Ibid., 203.

²¹³ Alphonse Aulard, *Histoire politique de la Révolution Française, Origines et Développement de la Démocratie et de la République (1789-1804)* (Paris: A. Colin, 1901) v. 2, 303.

²¹⁴ See, for example, Taine, *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, .

²¹⁵ Ibid., v.2, 310.

²¹⁶ Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, 78.

influence of time was least felt; the feudal system had acquired a truly patriarchal character ... the people submitted to the authority of the seigneur and believed the word of the curé because there was no oppression in the one and no scandal in the other”.²¹⁷

When it came to examining the causes of the civil war, Thiers placed the blame squarely on the priests who misled “this obstinate but heroic people [and] fanned the flames of discontent and insurrection ... the peasants, obliged to take arms, chose to fight against the Republic rather than for it”.²¹⁸ Lavissee attributed the war’s causes to a population that wanted only “good priests, no conscription, down with bureaucracy!”²¹⁹ He also placed the blame for the first war crimes on the Vendéens: “the first victims were the new priests, patriots, the bourgeois and republican peasants (there were some!) – they were arrested, robbed and killed.”²²⁰ He noted that, in one case in the Mauges, republican prisoners were placed in the first line of battle to form a palisade and were killed both from the front and the rear. Aulard concluded that defeats by Spain, England and Austria allowed the “royalists to once again raise their heads and to organise a terrible civil war” allowing France’s foreign enemies to invade France: “it is a classic saying, but a true one, that the Republic was stabbed in the back by the Vendée.” Aulard placed most of the blame for the counter-revolution on the priests: “the priest stirred the peasantry to anger and presided over the first massacres of republicans.” The nobles “affected an exalted piety” and took over the rebellion but the peasantry only started shouting “*Vive le Roi*: because the nobles told them that only the king would restore their priests”.²²¹

²¹⁷ Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Furne et Cie, 1839) v. 2, 305.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 2, 307.

²¹⁹ “les bons prêtres! pas de milices! à bas les administrations! voilà, au bref, tout le credo du Vendéen” Lavissee, *Histoire de France*, 79.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

²²¹ Alphonse Aulard, *Histoire Politique de la Révolution* v. 2, 305.

In summary, Aulard, Lavissee and Thiers all agreed about the causes of the Vendée War. They believed that it was not that peasants longed for the restoration of the *Ancien Régime*, but rather that the priests roused them and then nobles and émigrés took over their cause. As for the reprisals that make up much of the “stories of great loss” required for a national identity, the historians agreed that they were probably exaggerated, but nevertheless justified in the national interest, since they saved France from a much worse general civil war.

What impact did these historians have on the way that people in the Third Republic thought about the memory of the Vendée Wars and their impact on community identity? Pim den Boer has shown that the years between 1870 and 1914 saw an explosion in interest in all forms of historical writing. At the end of the seventeenth century there were a mere 1,723 books about the history of France in the Royal Library, compared to 279,406 in the National Library by 1897. Whilst the population of France grew from 26 million in 1789 to 40 million in 1914, den Boer calculates that expenditure by the state on all forms of historians (including archivists, museum personnel, teachers and academics) increased six times in that period, from the equivalent of 531 million francs to 3,300 million francs. Even during the Third Republic, the amount spent only on education increased from 24 million francs (or 2.8% of the annual budget) in 1870 to 344 million (10%) in 1914. Local history societies also grew rapidly during this period so that by 1896 only five of the 89 department capitals did not have one.²²² There is no doubt that, from the beginning of the Third Republic, a massive increase in both monetary and human resources was directed at local and national level to the political articulation of the past.

²²² Boer, *History as a Profession*, 11- 48.

Although one of the Third Republic's aims was to put a single historical discourse at the centre of its national project, disseminated through this massive investment, den Boer dismissed the importance of the academic history in the formation of national identity at this period. He concluded that, even by 1900, there were perhaps only one million (out of 40 million) who had the ability to contribute to such work.²²³ This largely comprised half a million civil servants and other professional men, an estimated 136,000 clergy and noblemen and some 300,000 *rentiers* or people who had no need to work because of their wealth.²²⁴ He concluded:

in the absence of any form of historical understanding, of memories and reminiscences, human identity is inconceivable. But historiography meets this fundamental human need to a very limited extent only. The identity of the rural masses of France was not forged by it. Their historical need was patently satisfied in a different way.²²⁵

Whilst den Boer is clearly correct that few peasants in the Vendée read any of the works of Thiers, Taine, Lavissee or Aulard, the people who both formed and deployed bureaucratic and education power did. Moreover the academic history set the parameters for the history lessons taught in the schools. Republican attempts to build a single, central set of national myths depended on (re)educating the rural population of the Vendée about their own history.

The Struggle for Dominance in the Classroom

A theme of the early Third Republic was successive governments' attempts to displace Catholic dominance of primary education. The

²²³ Ibid., 48.

²²⁴ These numbers are largely drawn by den Boer from the work of the work of Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La France et les Français, 1900-1914*, (Paris: Editions Richelieu, 1972).

²²⁵ Ibid., 11.

struggle for a supposedly modern, secular and centralised French identity to supplant the various regional identities (such as Breton, Alsatian, Flemish, Occitan or Vendéen) took place in the schools, colleges and universities of France. The conflict was largely between secular and republican ideas that looked to enlightenment thinking and a Catholic and monarchist way of thinking that referred back to the established relationships between the governing and governed classes of the Old Regime. This did not necessarily mean that the republican education system was anti-religious; indeed the chief architect of the education reforms, Jules Ferry, specifically said: “if my policy is clearly anti-clerical, it will never be anti-religious.”²²⁶ By this he meant that there would always be a place for moral education in the republican curriculum. The struggle did not take place on a historical blank slate; the complexities of state education for the peasant population can be traced at least as far back as the Revolution and there were fierce debates between religious and secular educationalists in both the Second Republic and the Second Empire. Some of those arguing for a moral secular education looked to speeches made by Nicholas Caritat de Condorcet in the Legislative Assembly of 1792 in which he said that equality was impossible without education for all children, both male and female.²²⁷

While both contemporary educationalists and some subsequent historians evoked a dichotomy between “backward, rural” and “progressive, urban” France, a range of other factors such as religion, social mobility and local political will were equally important.²²⁸ The path of republican education was complicated by industrialisation and the concomitant demand for technical education in both agriculture and industry; and the difference

²²⁶ Quoted in Joseph Moody, *French Education Since Napoleon* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1978), 93.

²²⁷ Phyllis Stock-Morton, “Secularism and Women’s Education,” *French History*, volume 10, 1996: 356-357.

²²⁸ For contemporary views see the inspection reports in the *Bulletin d’Instruction Primaire de la Vendée* (for example that of December 1895, 181); for a more recent view see for example, Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*.

between the needs of the middle classes for education to open up bureaucratic or professional employment, and the lower classes who were interested in “literacy and the knowledge to improve their position not the sour-faced preaching of republican morality.”²²⁹

This complex situation was played out in the conflict between republican and conservative educationalists in the Vendée. The local reaction to republican legalisation led not to a lessening of religious school attendance or achievement, but rather to an increase in both the numbers of private Catholic schools and the children attending them. In Vendée 85, the majority of children were educated from the age of five to eleven in state schools (écoles publiques) but a significant number continued to attend private schools (écoles libres), especially in the Bocage region. The number and balance of schools changed during the period as follows:

	1864	1879	1912
Boy's state	221	274	313
Girl's state	82	291	311
Mixed state	55	56	63
Total state	358	502	687
Total private	29	119	318
Total schools	387	621	1,003
Proportion of private schools	7%	9%	32%

Table 3.1: Mix of state and private schools in Vendée 85, 1864–1912.²³⁰

As can be seen, the number of schools rose sharply between the end of the Second Empire and the first decade of the Third Republic and had almost tripled by the eve of the Great War, with the number of private schools more than doubling. Population growth spurred

²²⁹ Gildea, *Education in Provincial France*, 368.

²³⁰ These statistics are included in the *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, 1880 and 1913.

some of this increase, as did a greater proportion of children attending school (particularly by the end of the period). In 1879 it was estimated that there were 58,000 children between the ages of five and eleven in the Department. Of these approximately 6,000 (11%) were not registered for education at all; 42,000 (72%) were at state schools and 11,000 (19%) at private schools. The local census of 1912 showed a dramatic change to this picture. The population of school age children had increased by 12% to 65,000 and less than 1% were not registered to attend school. Private schools had made enormous gains; 27,933 (43%) children were registered at private schools compared to 37,532 (57%) in the state system. The vast majority of these gains were in the education of girls. In 1912, 13,390 girls were educated by the state whilst 19,032, almost 60%, were at private, Catholic schools.²³¹

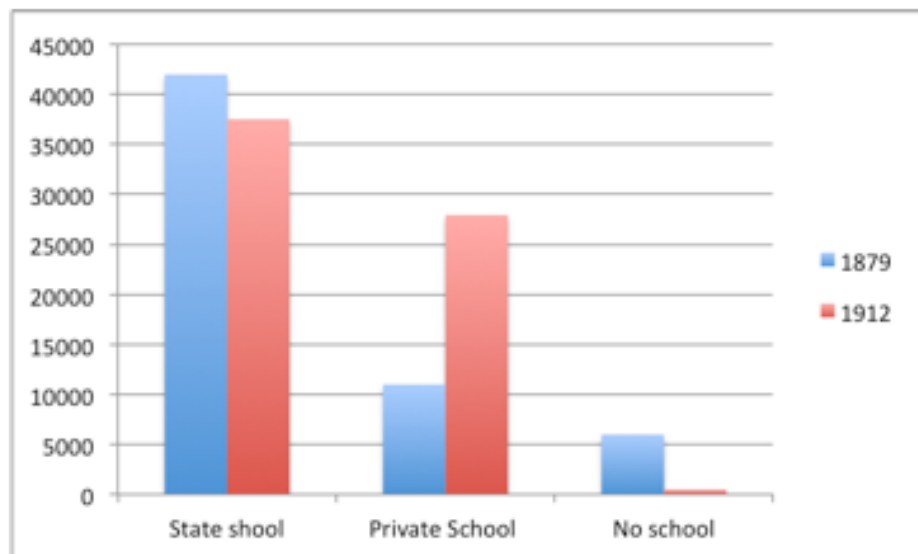


Figure 3.1: Vendée (85) children registered in school 1879 and 1912

In 1914 there was a concern that, despite these apparent gains in school registration, not enough progress was being made in outcomes and so a special census was taken of attendance rather than registration with the following results (these figures exclude

²³¹ These statistics are included in *Rapport annuel de l'Inspecteur d'Académie sur la Situation de l'Enseignement Primaire en Vendée* – in the *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée* 1880 and 1913.

infant schools - *écoles maternelles*) which accounts for the difference in the totals between 1912 and 1914):

Registered in December 1913:	State School		Private School		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Total
Boys	19,303	69%	8,726	31%	28,029
Girls	12,592	40%	18,579	60%	31,171
Total	31,895	54%	27,305	46%	59,200
Present in January 1914:		Attendance%		Attendance%	
Boys	15,204	79%	6,972	80%	22,176
Girls	9,231	73%	12,943	70%	22,174
Total	24,435	77%	19,195	73%	44,350
Total non-attendees	7,460		7,390		14,850

Table 3.2: Mix of state and private schools in the Vendée, 1864 – 1912²³²

Almost 15,000 children, a quarter of all children who should have been in school on 14 January, were not actually present on that date. The reasons given by the Chief Inspector were that parents were taking their children out of school too frequently for work in the fields or to help in the home. He blamed this primarily on the ease with which parents could break the law in private schools and the inability or unwillingness of the Regional Council, dominated by conservatives, to enforce the law. He also noted that the poor level of teaching in private school meant that neither the children nor their parents believed they were missing a good education. To support this view he showed that in the 690 state schools there were 560 teachers who had the Advanced Teaching Certificate, whilst in 330 private schools only 28 had the same level of advanced knowledge.²³³ These arguments may have been valid but the supporting statistics seem to show that, for boys, the differences between state and private schools were marginal. The more

²³² These statistics are included in the *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, 1880 and 1913.

²³³ *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, 1913, 199.

pressing issue, as it was throughout the period, was the irregular attendance at school of the region's girls.

The state's struggle to educate the Vendée's children in secular schools had not been won by 1914 but, in the opinion of the Chief Inspector of Schools, the battle needed to continue. In September 1914 he wrote that the clerical opposition had doubled their efforts to impede the progress of secular education and "maintain the people of the region in ignorance". He noted that "when the clergy controlled France, they built very few schools, so it is to the credit of republican educationalists, whose mission is to encourage curiosity and clarity, that so many are now being built."²³⁴ His insistence that it was a victory for republicanism that the alleged reactionaries had thought it necessary to build so many schools was, if nothing else, optimistic.

Schools were a uniquely polarising issue during the Third Republic because education was seen to have such enduring effects. In the national republican press there was a constant stream of articles about the need for expansion of education to build a functioning democracy and the need for eternal vigilance against the influence of the church. For example, a front-page opinion piece by Désiré Louis in Clemenceau's *La Justice*, on the need for better village education, stressed that evening classes for rural women would also have a civilizing effect on children and men. Importantly this would be done away from "existing social structures and religious influences. The husband and the children will benefit and, as a result, so will democracy."²³⁵ At the other end of the political spectrum, the corrupting consequences of secular education were a central theme of conservative ideology in the period. To take one example among hundreds: on 25 September 1895, the national Catholic newspaper *La Croix* seized excitedly on the admission in

²³⁴ *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, September 1914, 215.

²³⁵ *La Justice*, September 27, 1895, 1.

“the secular school magazine, *L’instruction primaire*” that the level of morality was everywhere in decline, that schools were not doing everything they could to reverse this largely because teachers were more interested in exam results than morality. The article concluded that without Christian education, the “terrifying” level of juvenile crime and suicide would “inevitably continue to increase.”²³⁶

Within the Vendée, regional conservatives reiterated such arguments. Four days after the *Croix* article appeared, *L’Étolie de la Vendée*, a clerically inclined newspaper, devoted a long editorial spread over two pages on the increase in juvenile delinquency caused, according to the paper, by fifty years of secular liberal education since the Falloux Laws of 1850. These laws were more conservative than those promulgated by Jules Ferry but Catholics saw them as the start of a drift away from religious education that had wide-ranging consequences. Noting that parents were about to make school choices for their children, the paper sought to inform them about “what happens when you send your children to secular schools”:

In the 50 years since we have had secular education, crimes committed by children have increased by more than 300% and suicide amongst children has risen by 300%. What has caused this rise in desperation and criminality amongst the young? All criminologists, anthropologists and men of science agree that it is the absence of religious education. If they have the all-seeing eyes of God following them, looking at them, reproaching them, children are much more likely to behave well compared to those who know they can escape the more fallible eyes of man.²³⁷

²³⁶ *La Croix Supplément*, September 25, 1895, 1-2.

²³⁷ *L’Étolie de la Vendée*, September 29, 1895, 1-2. There was no attempt to justify or support the “300%” claims.

Education of French men and women was thus one of the most important battlegrounds between republicans and conservatives and it would remain so throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

How successful was the implementation of the Third Republic's education policy in the Vendée? The first Annual Report of the Inspector General of Primary Education in the Vendée was published in November 1880 concerning the school year that was completed in June 1879. M. Baudoin, the Chief Inspector, was scathing: "the Department is extremely backward. It remains under the malign influence of the nobility and the clergy, who resist the development of popular education." He blamed the substantial proportion of children not attending school on parental negligence, but noted that the idea of encouraging school attendance by writing regularly to parents "could not be introduced as the parents were themselves illiterate." He went on to note that teachers were insufficiently trained and that only a third of children knew how to read properly, while writing was "even weaker" and even the spoken "French language was incredibly weak." As for adult education, the Inspector said that it was at a very low level. The 129 public libraries across the Department (containing 1,244 books in total) only made 9,181 loans in the year, an average of less than two books a week for each library. Only 2,443 men and 432 women attended any adult education courses out of a population of 411,781; a take-up of less than 1% of the adult population. In the inspector's view, France was "wasting its money on such courses". Overall, Baudoin concluded that the Vendée at the start of the 1880s was a like a sick man who needed simple remedies to bring him to good health. In direct contradiction of his superior in Paris, who wanted a broad curriculum to produce an educated citizenry, Baudoin argued that:

“in a country so backward, we need only reading, writing and arithmetic.”²³⁸

By 1892, twenty years into the Third Republic, there had been little progress. The Chief Inspector, M. Bernard, ironically noted that the money spent by the state, “was not entirely wasted” (*n’ont pas été en pure perte*). The proportion of conscripts who were at least able to read had increased over a ten-year period from 75% to 87%; at that rate of improvement, the Department would achieve total literacy by 1900. Nevertheless he noted that in comparison with other Departments, Vendée had fallen back from 72nd (out of 89) most illiterate in 1885 to 81st in 1887 and was 78th in 1890.²³⁹ Given that most of the Departments below the Vendée were those, such as the Breton, Flemish and Corsican Departments, where French was a minority language for children attending school for the first time, this was a strikingly poor result. No statistics were reported for female literacy although Robert Gildea suggests that, even in the more advanced Departments of Nord and Gard, the number of women who could sign their name on marriage registers was less than 60% at the beginning of the period.²⁴⁰ As noted above, by 1914 such little progress had been made in the implementation of republican secular schooling that the education establishment was forced to take credit for the expansion of Catholic schooling and to blame them for the continued high incidence of non-attendance.

History in Schools

For the purposes of this thesis, the way that children were educated matters, particularly if there continued to be a difference between the way they were being taught their history in the classrooms and what was disseminated in domestic, religious and popular settings. While it is difficult to be certain, disciplinary reports in the *Bulletin*

²³⁸ *Bulletin d’Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, November 1880, 186-192.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, February 1893, 143-144.

²⁴⁰ Gildea, *Education in Provincial France*, 228.

d’Instruction Primaire de la Vendée in the early years of the Third Republic suggest that inspectors often caught religious schoolteachers using unauthorised material for teaching – perhaps these were religious texts but they could also have been unauthorised history books. Baudoin noted in 1879 that, because history teaching was not required when most teachers had taken their qualification, the lessons were either not delivered or had no effective plan.²⁴¹

School examinations for the primary school education certificate included a history question in them from 1870 onwards, on the basis that “history is the foundation of civic instruction because it explains and makes sense of our social state and causes pupils to love our country and its institutions.”²⁴² The questions offered a mixture of periods and subjects as set out in table 3.3:

Year	Question
1876	What were the origins of feudalism? Explain the rights of lords and subjects.
1876	What did Louis XII and Richelieu contribute to the formation of a centralised nation?
1877	What part did the monarchy play in the acquisition of rights by communes in the Middle Ages?
1880	What were the events that led to Normandy, Burgundy and Lorraine becoming part of France?
1885	Describe the meeting of the Etats Généraux of 1789. Explain what their demands were and their first battles with the Ancien Régime,
1895	What was the Constitution of Year VIII? What was the government of the time called? What influence did the government have on events in France?
1913	What were the consequences of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes? What do you know about Colbert, Mirabeau, Guizot and Jules Ferry?

Table 3.3: History questions in the Vendée 1876-1913 ²⁴³

Questions about national unity, the role of feudalism, empowerment of communes, the struggle against the monarch, revolutionary constitutions, discrimination by Catholics against Protestants, and finally the roles of prominent commoners as advisers to monarchs and liberal republicans: these all point to a curriculum tilted in favour

²⁴¹ *Bulletin d’Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, November 1880, 186-192.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, December 1895, 181: Report of Chief Inspector of Schools in the Vendée.

²⁴³ Questions taken from *Bulletin d’Instruction Primaire de la Vendée* in the years noted.

of anti-Catholic, anti-monarchist and pro-nationalist sentiments. None of the questions concerned the imperial successes of Napoleon Bonaparte, the glorious reign of the 'Sun King', or, at the other end of the spectrum, the Jacobins, Terror, and Commune.

These questions assumed the use of standard history books that were required reading for all primary school teachers and students in both the private and state sectors. A list was published in the *Bulletin* every September as the school year began. Lavissee was the only academic historian on the list, having written two books which were widely used throughout France: *Histoire Générale* and *Histoire de France: cours élémentaire* (universally known as *Le Petit Lavissee*), both first published in 1884. Although Aulard's *La Première Année* was widely used elsewhere in France, it does not appear on the list for the Vendée.²⁴⁴ Other books recommended were written by provincial school inspectors, such as Eugène Brouard's (1824-1903) *Leçons d'Histoire de France à l'usage des écoles primaire*; Pierre Foncin's (1841-1916) *Le Pays de France*; Alfred Magin-Marrens' (1806-1870), *Histoire de France Abrégée*; and Gustave Ducoudray's (1838-1906) *Premières leçons d'histoire*.

Like the four major academic historians considered before, each of these touched on the Terror and the wars in the Vendée. Magin-Marrens' book was in use at the start of the period but had been originally published in 1860 at the height of the Second Empire, and it reflects a more conservative view of revolutionary terror than that taken by later academic writing. He denounced the Terror unequivocally: "crimes are always crimes and we should not try to dress them up as anything else."²⁴⁵ Later books were more in line with Third Republic academic orthodoxy, for example Brouard's 1884 book noted: "internal enemies were punished with sombre

²⁴⁴ François-Alphonse Aulard, *La Première Année d'Histoire de France, à l'Usage des Écoles Primaires et des Classes Élémentaires des Lycées et Collèges* (Paris: Chailley, 1894).

²⁴⁵ Alfred Magin-Marrens, *Histoire de France Abrégée depuis les Temps les plus Anciens jusqu'à nos Jours* (Paris: Dezobry, 1864), 235.

energy; for the Royalists, the state created a committee to find the guilty parties, and a tribunal to judge and punish them. Death was the punishment.”²⁴⁶ Foncin’s 1896 book agreed: “the Public Safety Committee saved France, the science of the guillotine defended the nation.”²⁴⁷

The same transition from a pro-royalist standpoint to more dismissive views can be seen in the schoolbooks’ consideration of the Vendée Wars. Magin-Marrens provided a list of events starting with the beginning of the war and the setbacks to the Royalist cause, such as “14 March 1793, the Vendéens swear to defend the throne and the altar ... 15 February 1795, Charette and the Vendéens surrender in exchange for freedom of worship and two million of war reparations.”²⁴⁸ Ducoudray’s 1872 book has one page dedicated to the Vendée Wars, which he labelled “an obstinate war” as a result of the peasants’ reluctance to take up arms for the Republic.²⁴⁹ He then used two stories of noble Vendéen generals, de Bonchamps and de Lescure, who spared the lives of republican prisoners. Among all the books examined for this chapter, this is the only mainstream textbook to suggest that the Vendée Wars were fought between civilized people. By 1884 Lavissee dedicated a mere two sentences from 185 pages of French history to the wars in the Vendée: “After the death of Louis XVI, all the European kings united to declare war on France. There were parts of the country, like Brittany and the Vendée which supported the late King and they rebelled against the Republic.”²⁵⁰ In this account, the Republic, finding itself in great danger on all sides, had no option but to defend itself. Brouard likewise described the cause of the Vendée Wars“ as a conscription riot under the name of

²⁴⁶ Eugène Brouard, *Leçons d'Histoire de France à l'Usage des Écoles Primaires* (Paris: Hachette), 299.

²⁴⁷ Pierre Foncin, *Le Pays de France* (Paris: A. Colin, 1902), 64.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 224–230.

²⁴⁹ Gustave Ducoudray, *Premières Leçons d'Histoire* (Paris: Hachette, 1872), 26.

²⁵⁰ Ernest Lavissee, *Histoire de France: Cours Élémentaire* (Paris: A. Colin, 1913), 142.

religion and the monarchy.”²⁵¹ Aulard called it a “cruel war that only profited Austria and Prussia” and blamed the nobles and priests for stirring up the peasants.”²⁵²

Joseph Bara: A Republican Myth from the Vendée

One of the most frequently told stories in the school history books, and also one of the most contested parts of the history of the Vendée Wars, is that of the death of Joseph Bara (sometimes written Barra). The story of Bara provides a useful case study for how the republican elite constructed and disseminated its version of the 1790s in the region through a variety of media and practices. Bara was born in Palaiseau near Paris on 31 July 1779. His father, a gamekeeper on the estate of the Prince of Condé, had died whilst he was a child and his mother was a poor widow who depended to a certain extent on the wages of her son. His mother’s parents were domestic servants to an aristocratic family, the d’Estimauvilles, and Joseph entered into the service of Jean-Baptiste Marie Desmarres d’Estimauville. At the Revolution Desmarres d’Estimauville took the side of the Republic, shortened his name to Desmarres and was given command of the Eighth Hussars regiment. Bara went to war with Desmarres and was killed in the Vendée. Beyond these generally accepted facts of his life there is little that has not been subject to challenge and revision.²⁵³

Following his defeat by the Royalists in December 1793 near Jallais, Desmarres sent a report of Bara’s heroic death to Robespierre, which declared: “the child was surrounded by rebels and he preferred death to surrendering the two horses that he was guarding.”²⁵⁴ Robespierre turned this account into a speech to the Convention: “Surrounded by rebels, who gave him the alternatives

²⁵¹ Ibid., 302.

²⁵² Aulard, *La Première Année d’Histoire de France*, 146.

²⁵³ Rachel Jaeglé, “Bara un Enfant de Palaiseau Entre dans l’Histoire,” in *Héros et Héroïnes de la Révolution Française*, ed. Serge Bianchi (Paris: CTHS, 2012), 333-342.

²⁵⁴ Letter from Desmarres to the Convention, 25 frimaire an II (15 December 1793).

of life if he said ‘*vive le roi!*’ or death, he chose to die, crying ‘*vive la république!*’”²⁵⁵ The servant boy was thus transformed into a child martyr, his remains to be transported to the Panthéon in Paris in a ceremony designed by the preferred artist of the Revolution, Jacques-Louis David.²⁵⁶

The ceremony did not take place because of the fall and execution of Robespierre (followed swiftly by the trial and execution of Desmarres) but by then David had produced the first image of Bara, depicting a young, innocent martyr:



Figure 3.2: La Mort de Bara by Jacques-Louis David, 1794 (Musée Calvet, Avignon)

257

Royalist sources disputed the story of Bara’s death. For example, the *Souvenirs de la Comtesse de La Bouère* described Bara as “a little thief” (*petit pillard*), who was caught and killed in the act of stealing two horses from local peasants.²⁵⁸ This happened shortly after the battle of Jallais, where the Royalists were led by Pierre Cathelineau, the brother of Jacques, which has, in turn, led at least

²⁵⁵ Speech by Robespierre to the Convention, 8 nivôse an II (28 December 1793). These letters and speeches are used almost verbatim in the story of Bara told in Aulard’s *La Première Année d’Histoire de France*, 149.

²⁵⁶ Whilst they shared a common surname, Jacques-Louis David was not related to David D’Angers although they studied in the same art school before the Revolution.

²⁵⁷ Dominique Perchet, *Monuments aux Grands Hommes* at: <http://www.musee-calvet.org/beaux-arts-archeologie/fr/oeuvre/la-mort-de-joseph-bara> accessed September 9, 2019.

²⁵⁸ Antoinette de la Bouère, *Souvenirs de la Comtesse de La Bouère, la Guerre de la Vendée, 1793-1796* (Librairie Plon, Paris, 1829), 99-100.

one modern historian to write that “by a tragic coincidence, Bara was executed by order of Pierre Cathelineau.”²⁵⁹

Historians, educationalists and politicians of the Third Republic seized on his myth despite the doubtful evidence about the death of Bara and Robespierre’s known penchant for propaganda, which had been exposed in academic journals.²⁶⁰ In 1980, François Wartelle surveyed 89 moral and civic instruction handbooks and 61 school history books published between 1870 and 1900 for his work on heroic children in Third Republic schools. Twenty of the civics books and twenty history books contained the story of Joseph Bara: almost a third of the total surveyed. Amongst those using the myth were Lavisse and Aulard, two of the most celebrated academic historians of the period, alongside the director of secondary education at the Académie Française, Edgar Zévort. Wartelle concluded that the story was particularly useful at the start of the Third Republic because both the bourgeoisie and the working classes needed to be reassured that this type of republicanism was benign.²⁶¹ Only the example of an ordinary child from humble origins who had chosen death rather than deny the Republic, could achieve those twin goals.

Whilst conservative reaction to the Bara story showed that aspects of the republican historical record could be challenged, academic and school historians had all concluded that the Vendée Wars were to be remembered as a deplorable event. The language used to describe the people of the region was “obstinate”, “deplorable”, “guilty men”, “enemies of the revolution”, and “followers of a cult”.²⁶² The causes of the wars were attributed to a conscription revolt

²⁵⁹ Rachel Jaeglé, “Bara un Enfant de Palaiseau Entre dans l’Histoire,” 335.

²⁶⁰ For example: Léon Duvauchel, “Joseph Bara, son Histoire et sa Légende!” *Revue Littéraire et Artistique* (September, 1881), 432 and Gustave Bord, “Deux Légendes Républicaines: Bara et Viala,” *Revue des Questions Historiques* (October, 1882), 233.

²⁶¹ François Wartelle, “Bara, Viala: le Thème de l’Enfance Héroïque dans les Manuels Scolaires (III^{ème} République),” in *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980), 365-389.

²⁶² See the section on academic and school history above.

against the state, inspired by priests and hijacked by the nobility. The First Republic's response in "pacifying" the region was seen as a rational and scientific way of defending the national interest.

History amongst the Adult Population of the Vendée

The inspectors' reports from the start of the period suggested that adult education provided by the state was not a success. The report by the Chief Inspector of schools for the school year 1878-9 noted that fewer than 4,000 people (about 1% of the population) had taken the 192 adult courses that were made available in that year, and the 129 public libraries loaned only 9,000 books in total.²⁶³ The courses would almost certainly have been aimed at basic literacy rather than history. Adult illiteracy was a continuing problem: in 1882 a report to the President of the Republic showed that 13% of (male) conscripts arriving into the army in the Vendée could not sign their papers and 25% of women could not sign their marriage certificates.²⁶⁴ To fill the gap in adult learning and fulfil den Boer's "fundamental need" for history, local history and learned societies formed all over France. In the Vendée, the Catholic royalist barrister and historian René Valette (1854-1939) formed a society in 1888, which published a quarterly journal, the *Revue de Bas-Poitou*. The use of the pre-Revolutionary name for the region in place of the Vendée is the first indication of the type of article that the journal would publish.

From January 1888 to December 1914 the society published over 100 editions of the *Revue* with over 11,000 pages dedicated to the history, literature and poetry of the region. Between 1888 and 1910 it published a list of its committee members, made up of 124 men and three women (all in the early years of the twentieth century) drawn from the local aristocracy, professional classes, gentlemen and the priesthood. An analysis of these 127 people shows that, in

²⁶³ *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, February 1881, 191.

²⁶⁴ *Bulletin d'Instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, 1884, 108.

the period covered, the number of aristocrats and priests (the class that den Boer says made up the first section of the population to write history) declined from about 33% of the total of the membership to about 25%. However the proportion of those who had a “particule” (as in Jehan **de** Cheznaye), which included many of the priests, all the aristocrats and the higher bourgeoisie increased from just over 33% in 1888 to 50% of the membership by 1910.²⁶⁵ This confirms other analyses of the way that the upper classes continued to dominate the political, social and intellectual leadership of the region whilst other parts of France saw a decline in such leadership during this period.²⁶⁶

There were thirty-six members of the society (28%) who disclosed that they were from professional backgrounds rather than landowners, aristocrats or priests.²⁶⁷ Work on nineteenth-century village notables by Barnett Singer suggested that those with leisure time, who were not priests, were likely to be supporters of secular republicanism.²⁶⁸ It might therefore be expected that architects, lawyers, doctors, teachers, civil servants, journalists and artists would be less inclined to the type of conservative history in which the *Revue* specialised and so provide a more nuanced or even pro-republican discourse. It is not possible to be entirely sure of the political or religious leanings of all of these men, but a sample of some of the thirty-six shows that even professional men in the Vendée were likely to be royalist and Catholic supporters.²⁶⁹ For example, the architect Léon Ballereau’s obituary, written by the Abbé Ferdinand Baudry, noted that he was a deeply religious man who had he not been an architect would have been an archaeologist or historian. He published articles in the *Revue* on

²⁶⁵ Of course the particule does not necessarily signify actual connection to the aristocracy as many bourgeois families simply adopted the style in the nineteenth-century. See Barnett Singer, *Village Notables in Nineteenth Century France* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 2-3.

²⁶⁶ William Brustein, *The Social Origins of Political Regionalism: France 1849-1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 122.

²⁶⁷ See appendix 2 for data on the membership of the society.

²⁶⁸ Singer, *Village Notables in Nineteenth Century France*, 6.

²⁶⁹ The local genealogy site provided much of this information: www.famillesdevendee.fr accessed September, 9, 2019

crusader reliquaries, church bell towers, roman funeral pits and art.²⁷⁰ The cemetery archive for the burial of the lawyer Edmond Biré noted that he was a renowned royalist and, as well as writing on art in the *Revue*, was the biographer of a number of conservative writers - Victor de Laprade, Honoré de Balzac, Alfred Nettement and Armand de Pontmartin.²⁷¹ The librarian Marius Septet was also an avowed monarchist. In an essay about the French flag, reprinted in the *Revue* in 1873, he wrote: "There is no mystery about my convictions. I am a traditionalist and as a result, I am also a monarchist."²⁷² By contrast, republicans like the physician Marcel Baudoin or the local government officer Guy Collineau, who both came from the coastal plain area of the Vendée, were unusual members of the society and contributed no historical work to the *Revue*.

With very few exceptions, members of the Society were royalist and Catholic, and such men always wrote the articles on the history of the civil war. The *Revue* aimed to provide a counterbalance to the official version of the Vendée Wars being taught in both the universities and schools. In its early years, the content focused on poetry, pre-revolutionary history and archaeology. Articles about the Revolutionary period tended to be uncontentious - about the life of townspeople or, from 1890 an extensive A-Z of the Vendéen army and its supporters. In 1891 the first step away from the bland and factual reporting style came with an article entitled "Une Amazone Vendéenne" by the lawyer Victor Chapot de la Chanonine. Its subject was Céleste, the widow of his great-great uncle, who went on to marry an Irish officer in the Royal Guard, William Bulkeley. Husband, wife and her daughter Marguerite Chapot from her first marriage were captured by republican forces and imprisoned in

²⁷⁰ Annuaire Départementale de la Société d'Emulation de la Vendée, 1878, vol. 8, 243-245.

²⁷¹

http://www.archives.nantes.fr/PAGES/DOSSIERS_DOCS/cimetieres/celebrites/bire_edmond/bire_edmond.htm Accessed September 9, 2019.

²⁷² Marius Septet, *Le Drapeau de la France*, (Paris: Hachette, 1873), ix.

Angers. William was later guillotined (“his six foot frame no longer needing his head”), Marguerite perished in prison but Céleste escaped to become a leader in Charette’s army during the second phase of the war. As well as telling the story of Céleste, Chapot de la Chanonine set out his understanding of the cause of the “immortal” Vendée Wars, “the people threw into the faces of the Republic their, *non serviam*, their loyalty and their faith ... they had no weapons or leaders, the first came from their initial victories and they chose their leaders, obliging the local gentlemen to march at their head ... it was, at its origin an entirely popular movement.”²⁷³

The language used in this article is very different to that in the official histories noted above. For example, we read of the “immortal war”, “incomparable splendour”, the loyal and faithful people rejecting “the regicides” and forcing their “gentlemen” to lead them. Most distinctive of all was the insistence that this was a popular uprising, rather than the republican understanding of the conflict which argued it was inspired by priests and hijacked by the royalist aristocracy. The phrase “I shall not serve” comes from Jeremiah 2:20: “Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, ‘I shall not serve you!’” (*a saeculo confregisti iugum meum rupisti vincula mea et dixisti non serviam in omni enim colle sublimi et sub omni ligno frondoso tu prosternebaris meretrix*) allowed Chapot de la Chanonine to demonstrate both familiarity with the Bible stories and to make the point that rebellion against an unjust rule was justified.

In 1893 the publication of a book by militant republican historian Célestin Port, *La Légende de Cathelineau*, brought a furious response from the Society. The book had suggested that Cathelineau was not the first general of the Vendéen army; the war was never a peasant uprising but a plot led by royalists and priests;

²⁷³ Victor Chapot de la Chanonine, “Une Amazone Vendéenne,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarter Four, 1891): 347.

and the “legend” of a peasant leader was an elaborate piece of propaganda designed to show the counter-revolution as a popular movement based on forged documents produced by the Church after the Restoration in 1816. Port’s book struck at the very heart of the contested Vendéen history being promulgated by the *Revue*. It published both an article by Baguenier Desoumeaux and an advert for the 296-page rebuttal by another member of the Society, the Abbé Eugene Bossard. In the words of fellow Catholic historian George Gandy, Bossard’s book exposed Port’s book as “a partial fantasy ... he believes things that are simply untrue.”²⁷⁴ This dispute is considered in more detail in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

By 1894 there were regular articles in the *Revue* setting out the local version of the history of the Vendée Wars. For example in the First Quarterly edition of that year there was an article about the absurdity of the “obligatory cockade”, the tricolour rosette forced on the population of a Vendéen village by a fierce republican, Merlet, who was later to be the Prefect of the Department. The author of the paper, historian Edgar Bourlonton, wrote, “public monuments were overwhelmed with slogans and emblems about liberty, equality and brotherhood, but these were so many empty words.”²⁷⁵ In the Second Quarter, the same author wrote an article about the clergy of Fontenay-le-Comte during the Revolution, in which he places the blame for the start of the disturbances firmly on the Republican civil power: “the country people murmured, demanding their alters and their priests. Instead of recognising their errors, the so-called patriots accused the priests of provoking the people. It was revolutionary intolerance itself that was the cause of the trouble.”²⁷⁶ Both the content and the language used in these articles contrasts starkly with that in the official histories; the people “murmur” and the republicans are “so-called patriots”, the people demand “their”

²⁷⁴ George Gandy, “La Légende de Cathelineau,” *Etudes Religieuses, Philosophiques, Historiques et Littéraires* (Spring 1894):139.

²⁷⁵ Edgar Bourlonton, “La Cocarde Obligatoire,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou*, Quarter One, 1895): 11.

²⁷⁶ Edgar Bourlonton, “Le Clergé de Fontenay-le-Comte pendant le Révolution,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarter Two, 1895): 129-152.

priests and altars but the republican slogans are simply empty words.

Later in the same edition, the editor René Vallette wrote an article on “the Military Commission of Fontenay and its Victims,” in which he described the way that revolutionary justice occurred in a period of twenty-four hours after a jailor’s wife had been strangled by a prisoner, leading to a riot. Vallette wrote, “the proconsul, furious at being interrupted in the middle of an orgy, ordered his general to surround the prison.” Over three hundred people were subsequently arrested and two hundred executions resulted, including three women. The first, Marie-Antoinette-Petronille Adams, who was shot, was accused of wearing a white belt and cockade, dressing as a man and putting up a reward of 4,000 *livres* for the head of her republican husband. The other two were a mother and daughter, Marie and Marie Piffeteau, who were guillotined after being accused of “giving hospitality to counter-revolutionaries.”²⁷⁷ Vallette concludes: “it was ordinary people, the same people for whom this fake revolution was undertaken, who became the victims of its guillotines.”²⁷⁸ By emphasising these stories, which show the trumped-up nature of some of the charges, as well as the language chosen to describe the republicans – gallows-builders and orgyists as well as the “pretended” nature of the revolution – Vallette’s version of the history of the period was in stark contrast to that being taught in the academy and the schools.

By the turn of the century the *Revue* was full of explicit royalist and Catholic views setting out the idea that the region’s history was a tale of victims and martyrs. Two articles stand out from their titles and content. The first, in the Second Quarter of 1900, on revolutionary victims in the Vendée, reinforces the idea that these

²⁷⁷ René Vallette, “93 en Vendée: La Commission Militaire de Fontenay et ses Victimes ” *Revue de Bas-Poitou*, (Quarter Two, 1895): 241.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

people – aristocrats and commoners – were victims.²⁷⁹ The second, in the Fourth Quarter, on Vendéen martyrs sets out the story of the shooting of “twelve or fifteen women” who had just celebrated mass in a barn in Trotiniere, the burning alive of three women and their four children in a house nearby, and the martyrdom of one Monsieur Remaud, who was taken for a priest and killed after having his tongue torn out. The author, editor René Vallette, combined this story with those of thirty-two other victims who “from a unanimous tradition” and a “register” collated by the local priest of a further hundred and two victims, “including eighteen children between the ages of six months and nine years” to describe the events as a *Martyrologie* or a list of Martyrs.²⁸⁰

Even the *Revue*'s poetry section was turned to the cause. A poetry cycle celebrating the important places of the wars was included in the First Quarter's magazine of 1900. It celebrated the birthplace of Henri de Le Rochejaquelein and, in its sixth verse, implored that God should remain in the schools or this poor world would be left in darkness.²⁸¹ This sums up the way the *Revue* used history, and especially the heroic young de Le Rochejaquelein to make the case against the modern world. By 1900 a consistent message about the events of the Vendée Wars had been promulgated and the terminology of victim and martyr was in place in this alternative history. The use of Old Testament stories and the myths surrounding the heroes of the wars were also firmly established.

In 1904-5, as the laws on the separation of church and state were being enforced throughout the country and demonstrations were being held against the inventory of church properties, the Society published its first bibliography of the Vendée Wars, consisting of

²⁷⁹ Charles de Sourdeval, “Les Victimes Révolutionnaires en Vendée,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarter Two, 1900): 243.

²⁸⁰ René Vallette, “Un Page du Martyrologe Vendéen,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarter Four, 1900): 459-261.

²⁸¹ François de Saint-Mesmin, “Lieux Célèbres de Vendée: Saint-Aubin de Baubigné,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarter One, 1900): 62.

almost two hundred works with a commentary by the royalist historian René Bittard des Portes. Bittard des Portes was the author of a number of books and articles on the wars including a biography of Vendéen general François de Charette. The commentaries are very brief and betray his royalist leanings, for example these about a “glorious” aristocratic memoir and a “precise” study of emigration by a priest:

Comte de Chabot – *Vendéennes*: “glorious episodes in the lives of famous Vendéen women”;

Abbé de Tressay – *Souvenirs de l’émigration et de guerres de la Vendée*: “these stories appears to be very accurate”.

In comparison, he believed these examples of republican writing to be politically partisan and inaccurate:

Joseph-Marie Lequinio – *Guerre de la Vendée et des Chouans*: “written with revolutionary fervour and full of errors”;

J.O. Laudleau – *Description du département de la Vendée et considérations générales sur la guerre civile de 1793-1795*: “many of his judgements are too visibly inspired by his political sympathies”.²⁸²

The shift from uncontentious poetry, literature and pre-revolutionary history to articles that attempted to revise and contradict the official history of the Vendée Wars was mirrored by the links the *Revue* had to other journals and organisations outside the Vendée. In the early years, adverts and “recommended publications” at the back of the *Revue* consisted of local newspapers, businesses and services. In 1897 the first advert for a Paris based publication appeared: the *Revue Mare*, a monthly Catholic newsletter published by the Mare

²⁸² René Bittard des Portes “Bibliographie Historique et Critique des Guerres de Vendée and Chouannerie,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarters One and Three, 1904): 31, 38, 148.

printing house. Not until 1902 did the Society start to direct its readers to a daily newspaper, *Le Gaulois*, a staunchly royalist paper with a circulation of between 20,000 and 30,000 largely in the nobility and haute bourgeoisie. The paper had been on the anti-Dreyfus side and agitated for Boulanger. A year later the *Revue* started carrying adverts for *Le Soleil*, an equally passionate monthly magazine calling for the restoration of the monarchy and then, in 1906, it began to recommend that its subscribers read *L'Action Française* (AF) which was the free paper of the organisation of the same name.²⁸³

AF became one of the first organised ultra-right wing parties in Europe, avowedly antisemitic, anti-republican and in favour of monarchy and Catholicism. It was eventually banned after 1944 for its support of the Vichy regime. Between 1906, when the *Revue* began to support it, and 1914 it was already clear that this was a step away from the largely benign reactionary politics of the previous twenty years. Laurent Joly described the AF journal as the “school” for radical right-wing thinking and AF gradually absorbed mainstream Catholic and royalist ideology. At the time when the state was sending soldiers into churches to carry out an inventory of all church possessions, AF published a ‘Livre d’Or’, which suggested that there had been new martyrs for the faith and that “democracy is essentially anti-Catholic and only monarchy can guarantee a return to Christian order.”²⁸⁴ The general rightwards drift of the monarchist and Catholic parties in France during the period following the Dreyfus Affair and the Boulangist movement is reflected in the work of the group of opinion formers and intellectual

²⁸³ For examples of adverts for the newspapers see *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Quarter Four, 1902); (Quarter Three 1903); and (Quarter Four 1906). For the politics of the newspapers themselves see RetroNews (Bibliothèque National de France), <https://www.retronews.fr/titre-de-presse/gaulois>; <https://www.retronews.fr/titre-de-presse/soleil>; and <https://www.retronews.fr/titre-de-presse/action-francaise>

²⁸⁴ Laurent Joly, “L’Action Française Bimensuelle et Quotidienne,” in *L’Action Française: Culture, Société, Politique*, eds. Michel Leymarie and Jacques Prévotat (Paris: Presses Univ. Septentrion, 2008), 331.

leaders who made up the writers and readers of the *Revue de Bas-Poitou*.

Conclusion

Both republican and reactionary actors attempted to use their version of the history of the Vendée Wars to construct a new form of community identity in the early decades of the Third Republic. While republicans used the Vendée Wars to substantiate the idea that repression and terror was justified, or even necessary, to build a single national French identity, reactionaries deployed the same events to show that resistance to the unlawful destruction of the traditional way of life presaged the renewal of a stronger, more spiritual France.

Whilst there is evidence of progress in the reach of school education, it seems unlikely that either the republican version of events in academic or school textbooks or the revisionist history of the *Revue de Bas-Poitou* made a significant direct impact on the adult population in the Vendée. Some of the stories first published in the *Revue de Bas-Poitou* were subsequently recycled in the conservative press, which as with most local newspapers at the time, carried a *feuilleton* or story on each front page.²⁸⁵ These stories thus had a greater reach than the *Revue* itself, but however influential it may have been, the society represented a small group of the population. We might then see the turn to statues and commemorative events described in the next three chapters as a response to the limited audience for formal history teaching and publishing. The group of activists who proposed, designed and paid for the commemorations, and the bureaucrats and politicians who

²⁸⁵ For example, a story about the baptism of Gaspard de Bernard de Marigny, a Vendéen general was carried first in the *Revue* and then on page three of *L'Étoile de la Vendée* on February 25, 1894. De Bernard de Marigny was a royalist general responsible for the massacre of hundreds of republican prisoners in the early phases of the war. He later fell out with other Vendéen general but continued the war against the republicans on his own. He was arrested by Stofflet in April 1794, condemned to death and executed by Vendéen royalists.

opposed them, were the same elite groups at whom academic histories and local history journals were aimed. These opposing visions of the Vendée conflict provided the narratives for the statues, the commemorative speeches and eulogies and their reception in the wider population.

4. Republican *Statuomanie* and the Memorial to Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux



Figure 4.1: Statue of Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux (1753-1824), first Director of the Directory, after David d'Angers in Montaigu, Vendée (85), inaugurated June 1885.

²⁸⁶

This chapter will consider the way the Third Republic used public commemoration to further its political and education aims, using the example of the 1886 memorial to Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux, the Vendéen republican, regicide and head of government between 1795 and 1799 under the short-lived Directory.²⁸⁷ The bust of

²⁸⁶ Dominique Perchet, *Monuments aux Grands Hommes* at <https://e-monumen.net/patrimoine-monumental/monument-a-la-revelliere-lepeaux-montaigu/> Accessed on September 5, 2019.

²⁸⁷ There are a number of different spellings of Larevellière-Lépeaux's name (La Revellière, Revellière, Lépeaux, de laRevellière). He was baptised de La Revellière but never used the "de" which denoted aristocratic or bourgeois antecedents in his public life. Lépeaux was the hamlet in which his family lived and was appended to his name in adulthood.

Larevellière-Lépeaux at Montaigu in Vendée was inaugurated by future Prime Minister, René Goblet, in a rare visit to the region by a senior republican politician.²⁸⁸ The chapter will argue that Goblet and local republicans used the memorial to stress to the local population their version of the events of the Revolutionary period and to provide an example of a famous Vendéen who represented contemporary republican values.

Memorials to great individuals and historically significant events have existed for as almost as long as mankind has had the ability to record events for subsequent generations. Until the eighteenth century – and particularly the revolutionary period in France – European memorials largely depicted monarchs and saints. The French Revolution brought a flowering of abstract ideas turned into solid form, for example images of liberty, peace or the nation were personified as young women.²⁸⁹ It also ushered in a century of iconoclasm with statues and memorials being erected and destroyed as quickly as the underlying philosophies of French governments. What differentiated the period after 1870 was the stability and longevity of the Third Republic, the search for new types of hero (often called “great men” in the historiography of the period), and the relative tolerance of a wide variety of memorial content and practice.²⁹⁰

As the previous chapter showed, educational institutions such as universities and schools, as well as print organs such as newspapers and learned society journals, all played an important part in efforts to educate the population and disseminate competing understandings of the French past. However in rural and remote areas of France, such as the Vendée, where illiteracy was high, the

²⁸⁸ “Prime Minister” is used throughout this thesis as the English equivalent of “président du Conseil des ministres” or head of government of the Third Republic. This position was appointed by the President of the Republic to the man who could form a government that had the confidence of both houses of the French parliament.

²⁸⁹ Maurice Agulhon, “La « Statuomanie », 153.

²⁹⁰ The historiography of statues and memorials during this period is set out in Chapter 1.

role of visual arts in educating the population had been well understood for centuries. As Denis Diderot claimed in the eighteenth century from an elevated position of elite judgement upon his more lowly compatriots: “The sort of exhortation which appeals to the heart by means of the senses, aside from permanence, is more within reach of the common man. The People make better use of their sight than of their understanding. Images preach without ceasing, and do so without wounding our vanity.”²⁹¹ As we have seen in Chapter 1, historians including Maurice Agulhon, William Cohen, Avner Ben Amos, Daniel Sherman and Karine Varley have shown that memorials and other statues were deployed in the service of the educational and political programmes of the Third Republic. They noted that the explosion of memorials between 1870 and 1900 marked a shift away from both the Old Regime’s and Imperial France’s preoccupation with saints and royalty but also the Revolution’s allegories to such virtues as brotherhood, peace and freedom.²⁹² In their place came the physical embodiment of the Republic’s cult of “great men” and the veneration of sacrifice for the cause of the nation. In his influential and pioneering work, Maurice Agulhon used the term *statuomanie* (a mania for statues) to describe this period, a term that had previously been used in the local Vendéen press as early as 1885.²⁹³ These Third Republic projects enabled both the “great men” of the republican pantheon and lesser men who were still important in their local towns or regions to be honoured.

The desire for heroic role models was not new but it became more important following the defeat by Prussia in 1870, since French elites widely attributed this defeat not only to German military superiority but also its stronger education, science and, most

²⁹¹ William Cohen, *Symbols of Power: Statues in Nineteenth-Century Provincial France* in *Comparative Study of Society and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 492.

²⁹² Ben Amos, “Monuments and Memory”; Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory*; Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat*.

²⁹³ *La Vendée*, June 23, 1885, 2: “je crois bien que notre siècle pourra légitimement se flatter d’avoir créé une époque jusqu’alors inconnue des mythologues – l’âge de marbre. Il est de fait que depuis quelques années la statuomanie a pris en France des allures tellement épidémiques.”

crucially, its moral codes.²⁹⁴ Some of the people chosen for elevation to the republican pantheon represented historic military struggles against the perceived twin evils of despotism and clericalism. These included the 1894 monument to the Girondins in Bordeaux and the 1880 statue of Lyonnais printer and freethinker Etienne Dolet, who was burned at the stake in 1546 for heresy. In the same vein were memorials to more recent republican warriors such as the 1888 statue in Nantau depicting Alphonse Baudin, who died on the barricades protesting against Napoleon III's coup d'état in 1851, and the many memorials to Léon Gambetta, the republican hero of 1870, including Alexandre Faguière's 1884 statue erected in Cahors.²⁹⁵

Other military figures were more contested, most notably Joseph Bara, the boy soldier killed by royalists in the Vendée in 1793, whose mythology is explored above and who had a memorial erected at the height of *statuomanie*. In July 1879, on the centenary of his birth, the Municipal Council of Bara's birthplace, the small town Palaiseau near Paris, issued a decree that they would commemorate their most famous son. The decree proclaimed that there was "no greater heroism, no more magnificent glory than the death of Bara, who volunteered age 13 and was killed by Vendéens engaged in a revolt against the motherland." The council voted 500 francs from its budget for the commemoration and sent a request to the Interior Ministry for permission for it to be erected.²⁹⁶ The statue was to be paid for mainly by a public subscription which by May 1880 had raised a mere 49 francs, with the only contributors being the local mayor, his two deputies and ten other councillors. There is no record of any further money being raised and by April

²⁹⁴ See Passmore, *The Right in France*.

²⁹⁵ Alexandre Falguière (1831-1900) was one of the foremost sculptors of the Third Republic. He was responsible for monuments to Lafayette in Washington D.C., Gambetta in Cahors, Pasteur in Paris and Henri de La Rochejaquelein (see Chapter 5). He became professor of sculpture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1894. See biographical details at the Musées Occitanie: <https://musees-occitanie.fr/encyclopedie/artistes/alexandre-falguiere/> accessed October 31, 2019.

²⁹⁶ Municipal decree filed on May 22, 1880 and other papers relating to the statue, Archive of the Ville de Palaiseau, copy sent by email to author from catherine.pecastaings@mairie-palaiseau.fr, January 20, 2017.

1881 the Ministry of Beaux-Arts had agreed to fund the fine bronze statue (Figure 4.2), by Louis-Albert Lefeuve (1854-1924).²⁹⁷ Lefeuve was a pupil of Falguière and he based his work on a model by David d'Angers that had been completed in 1838. That model and the more famous 1794 painting by Jacques-Louis David (see Figure 3.2) featured an androgynous naked youth that continued to attract debate and analysis two hundred years after Bara's death. Lefeuve's statue also drew on the work of Jean Joseph Weerts who unveiled his Young Bara in 1880 and Death of Bara in 1883. Weerts and Lefeuve both dressed Bara in the uniform of a Hussar and showed him standing with a sword as befitted the soldier hero needed for the youth of late nineteenth century France.²⁹⁸ The statue was unveiled on 11 September 1881 and remains in the main square of the town opposite the town hall.

²⁹⁷ Letter from Prefect of Seine-et-Oise to the mayor of Palaiseau dated April 2 1881 enclosing a letter from the Minister of Beaux Arts to the mayor of Palaiseau dated 30 March 1882. Archive of the Ville de Palaiseau, copy sent by email to author from catherine.pecastaings@mairie-palaiseau.fr, January 20, 2017.

²⁹⁸ For the debate about the artistic influence of the statue see: Morris Fraser, *Bara: Of Death, Desire and Drumsticks* in *Paidika: The Journal of Paedophilia* (Winter1995), 12, 2-12.



Figure 4.2: Statue of Joseph Bara by Louis-Albert Lefevre, erected in September 1881, Palaiseau (Essonne, 91).

The statue's unveiling was well trailed in the republican-supporting press, particularly Clemenceau's *La Justice*. The conservative press, led by *L'Univers*, was unconvinced of the need to remember Bara. On 4 September *L'Univers* noted on its front page that the significant involvement by the freemasons showed that republicans would be quick to sell the souls of children like Bara, who was in any case: "a model of neither discipline nor honesty."²⁹⁹ *La Justice*, as well as the more conservative *Le Gaulois* and the nationalist *L'Intransigeant*, carried supportive reports of the inauguration. It is interesting that the latter newspapers were later to be on the

²⁹⁹ *L'Univers*, September 4, 1881, 1.

opposite side to *La Justice* in the Boulangist and Dreyfus debates.³⁰⁰

Alongside the freemasons at the inauguration were seventy choral societies, the nephew and great nephews of Bara (from his surviving sisters), a detachment of soldiers from the 90th Regiment of the Line under Divisional General Jean Thibaudin who was the president of the ceremony, two deputies from Paris and some municipal counsellors. In a ceremony lasting an hour and a half, prominent actors read poems and songs written especially for the occasion were sung by the joint choirs.³⁰¹ General Thibaudin's main speech was summarised by the author Sutter-Laumann in *La Justice*: "Our army will be strong and brave because we remember the lessons of the past and the examples given to us by the life and death of Bara." Sutter-Laumann went on to acclaim the statue itself as "a work of art that tells the truth of the boy who died a hero, whose last cry was *Vive la République*."³⁰² *L'Univers* was less impressed, describing the large number of freemasons present, and opining that since Bara was merely a horse-thief, the little rascal could teach no good moral lessons in either honesty or discipline: "so let us talk no more about this little idiot Bara."³⁰³

The stories and monuments of Bara, Baudin, Gambetta and other military heroes provide us with one source of the "great men" statues, but the vast majority of the almost 2,500 monuments to Third Republic great men listed on the e-monument.net website are not military or political martyrs.³⁰⁴ Rather, they are men who

³⁰⁰ *La Justice, Le Gaulois, L'Intransigeant*, September 13, 1881, 2, 1 and 2. For example, in *Le Gaulois*, the report used the accepted story of Bara's death and reported Thibaudin's summary as "a ceremony such as this should be considered a patriotic education."

³⁰¹ Thibaudin (1822-1905), led the invasion and colonial occupation of Madagascar in 1882, was a freemason and later Minister of War in 1883 under Jules Ferry.

³⁰² *La Justice*, September 13, 1881, 2.

³⁰³ *L'Univers*, September 13, 1881, 4.

³⁰⁴ See: <https://e-monumen.net/> *Recense les monuments et le décor urbain créés au XIXe siècle principalement. Ce projet est développé par le Réseau international de la Fonte d'art, l'ASPM avec l'appui du Musée d'Orsay (Paris) et le Laboratoire de recherche des monuments historiques.* This is a joint project between the Orsay Museum and Historical Monument Research Laboratory in Paris, which catalogues over 16,000 works of French public art from the nineteenth century. 2,454 of the

represented the worlds of science, the arts, education and letters. Some of these are nationally, even internationally, recognisable such as Louis Pasteur and Eugène Delacroix, who had monuments raised to them in several cities (and in Pasteur's case, throughout the Empire) but most were "local heroes". An example of such a hero is the regionally important but relatively unknown Protestant scientist Denis Papin (1647-1713), the inventor of steam digester (a forerunner of the pressure cooker and the steam engine) in 1679. Papin's statue was erected in 1880 in his birthplace Blois, 110 years after his death as a pauper in London where he had fled after the revocation of the edict of Nantes.³⁰⁵



Figure 4.3: Statue of Denis Papin ((1647-1713) in Blois by Aimé Millet, erected in 1880.

Papin represents everything that the Third Republic wanted its citizen-electors to be aware of: he advanced the causes of the enlightenment and science for the greater good of mankind; he struggled against a combination of despotic monarchy and the Catholic Church; and he did not enrich himself through corruption. Republican statue makers had developed a style that looked back to the classical ideals of heroism and which contrasted with the early nineteenth-century when monuments were almost always in the form of a pyramid, an obelisk or

a column on which only the inscription identified the person being remembered or a bas-relief of their profile. Agulhon noted that

monuments are classified as "grands hommes", the next largest categories are 1,256 religious monuments, 1,240 decorative statues, 1,130 war memorials and 1,168 public fountains.

³⁰⁵ Dominique Perchet, *Monuments aux Grands Hommes* at: <https://e-monumen.net/patrimoine-monumental/monument-a-denis-papin-blois/> accessed September 12, 2019.

republican memorials were almost always on a pedestal made of “cut stone ... on which was set out an explanation of monument ... the subject of the memorial was most often standing up and dressed as he would have been in his time ... in brief this would be a “realist” statue.” In addition they would often be holding a symbol representing their notoriety.³⁰⁶ Papin’s statue is exactly in this “ideal” style.

The significance of statues was not only about the content of the memorial but the act of commemoration as a piece of theatre. Ben Amos argued that the time when the statues were unveiled “charged the monuments with special meaning” as they were transformed into political set pieces.³⁰⁷ As with the Bara statue, unveilings were almost always accompanied by speeches from politicians, and there was usually music played by military, police or fireman bands, as well as fireworks and public banquets. Often these events would take place on public holidays, last several days and have accompanying dances or sporting occasions such as bicycle races. There was also a desire, in the small towns as well as the large cities of the Republic, to rejuvenate and celebrate the urban environment. Alan Baker’s study of sport and music in provincial France concludes that public monuments were part of “the period’s emphasis upon a new aesthetic urbanisation and the fashion of reshaping cities as places of socially controlled leisure and recreation as well as work and habitation.”³⁰⁸ Bandstands and velodromes stood alongside statues in public squares and gardens to provide spaces for the population to meet, mingle and be educated in popular, innovative and democratic ways.

³⁰⁶ Agulhon, “La « Statuomanie »”, 161.

³⁰⁷ Ben Amos, “Monuments and Memory”, 51.

³⁰⁸ Alan Baker, *Amateur Musical Societies and Sports Clubs in Provincial France, 1848-1914: Harmony and Hostility* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 128.

Statuomanie in the Vendée

Historians of republican memorials have not offered a sustained consideration of why there are so few such monuments in the Vendée. Certainly there are a number of problems to overcome. The first is that, with respect to republican monuments at least, local politicians enthusiastically complied with the Vichy and occupation laws of 1941 requiring monuments to be melted down for the German war effort.³⁰⁹ Memorials to General Jean-Pierre Travot, Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux (see below) and the artist Paul Baudry, which had been unveiled by President Félix Faure in 1897 in La Roche-sur-Yon, were all sent back to the foundry in 1942.³¹⁰ Royalist statues such as the bronze 1885 statue of Henri de La Rochejaquelein (Chapter 5) were not destroyed and it is noteworthy that the stone statue commemorating Jacques Cathelineau (Chapter 6), banned for 57 years under the Third Republic, was finally placed on its plinth in March 1943. For the modern historian visiting the area, with its plethora of royalist memorials, this disappearance of opposing commemorations gives the impression of a royalist monocultural space.

The second problem is the confusion over the modern political demarcation of Vendée Department 85 and the *région de mémoire* which excludes the south and the coast of Department 85 but includes parts of the adjoining Departments of Maine-et-Loire and Deux-Sèvres. This confusion has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Historians searching for republican

³⁰⁹ The law of October 11, 1941 promulgated by the Vichy government but applicable throughout France is studied in depth in articles by Christel Sniter, "La Fonte des Grands Hommes," *Terrains & Travaux*, 13, no. 2 (2007): 99–118; and Elizabeth Campbell Karlsgodt, "Recycling French Heroes: The Destruction of Bronze Statues under the Vichy Regime," *French Historical Studies*, 29, no. 1 (2002): 143–181. Whilst the re-smelting of bronze was ostensibly to meet the demands of the war industry, these authors have shown that it also provided anti-republican politicians with the opportunity to remove a number of memorials to political opponents.

³¹⁰ Travot (1791–1836) was second-in-command to Hoche and known as the "pacifier of the Vendée" after he defeated the last of the Royalist generals Charette. His statue was erected in the new regional capital, La Roche-sur-Yon (previously known as Napoléon), in 1838 under the July monarchy. For the destruction of Travot's monument, see: <https://e-monumen.net/patrimoine-monumental/monument-au-general-travot-la-roche-sur-yon/> for the destruction of Baudry's statue, see <https://e-monumen.net/patrimoine-monumental/monument-a-paul-baudry-la-roche-sur-yon/>

memorials in the *région de mémoire* must therefore search in the archives and towns of adjoining Departments. Examples of such statues may have been found in Deux-Sèvres of Amable Ricard, briefly interior minister in 1876, which was erected in 1880; and of Jacques Bujault, agricultural scientist and liberal politician in the One Hundred Days parliament and under the second restoration, erected in 1893.³¹¹ Unfortunately both these statues were destroyed in 1942 and have not been restored.

The final, and most important, problem is that, as also set out in Chapter 2, the *région de mémoire* was predominantly a right-wing space and so finding memorials to those on the left is difficult. Nevertheless, the contested political nature of the three Departments shows the very close electoral mathematics at the borders of the *région de mémoire*, and the deep and intensifying conservatism at its centre resulted in a struggle over the meaning and memory of the Vendée Wars. This struggle was fought at a time when commemorative events and statues provided the opportunity for real political gains on both the left and the right.

The 1942 iconoclasm, the confusing geographical demarcation and the contested political nature of the region taken together mean that studying the impact of republican *statuomanie* on the Vendée is difficult. We can nonetheless reconstruct the system that the Third Republic established to ensure that permanent public monuments only honoured those people who represented the values of the Republic. A good example of this is the statue, mentioned above, to Amable Ricard (1828-1876) erected in 1880 in Niort, the Departmental capital of Deux-Sèvres. Ricard was a lawyer from Niort who had been proscribed by Napoleon III in 1851 for his republican views. He remained out of national politics until 1871 when he was named as Prefect for the Department by the new

³¹¹ See: [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/16312](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/16312), accessed August 12, 2018.

government, a post he gave up in order to be elected as a deputy for the Niort *circonscription*. He was quickly promoted into junior roles in the Thiers government and then to Interior Minister in February 1876 under MacMahon. Unfortunately he died of a heart attack, aged 48, on May 1876. The bureaucratic system, which was followed for this and every other “homage”, was that the municipal council devised a plan showing the nature of the monument and the way it would be financed (in Ricard’s case, a public appeal), approved it formally and sent it to Prefect. The Prefect then sent the council minute and his own view to the Ministry of Beaux Arts in Paris. This ministry would consult with other ministries as appropriate (for example, for anyone with military connections a statue would need approval from the Minister of War). In Ricard’s case the Interior Minister gave his approval and then it was sent to the President’s office for the formal “1816 decree” signature before being returned to the Prefect and the mayor of Niort for action. This process took three months for the Ricard statue.³¹²

The archives of the Ministry of Beaux Arts contain thousands of similar applications, mainly for changes to road names. In the documents relating to Maine-et-Loire, Deux-Sèvres and Vendée 85 in the thirty-year period from 1879 to 1909 three groups of people can be identified as worthy of commemoration: republican politicians, republican Vendéen War generals and intellectuals. The table below shows those who had more than one road named after them, across the three Departments in this period:

³¹² Archives Nationales: F/1cl/180, folder: Deux-Sèvres hommages publics.

Political figures	Vendée War Generals	Intellectuals
Ferry	Hoche	Caillié (explorer)
Gambetta	Kleber	Diderot (philosopher)
Sadi Carnot	Westermann	Hugo (writer)
Thiers		Michelet (historian)
Waldeck-Rousseau		Molière (playwright)
		Pascal (scientist)
		Pasteur (scientist)
		Renan (writer)
		Voltaire (philosopher)

Table 4.1: Road Name Change Applications in Maine-et-Loire, Deux-Sèvres and Vendée 1879 – 1909.³¹³

This shows three things about small-town councils in or close to the *région de mémoire*: their desire to be associated with enlightenment intellectualism; that they wanted to celebrate the achievements of the early leaders of the Third Republic (there were no roads named after Robespierre in the region, although there were at least seven for perhaps the most radical of the early Third Republic leaders, Gambetta); and finally, that in a sea of royalist and Catholic reaction, these councils were bastions of the republicanism that contested the region in a way that has perhaps been less well understood by historians up until now. The public approval of generals Hoche, Kleber and Westermann who led republican troops in the “pacification” of the Vendée in 1796 resulted in roads named after them in La Roche-sur-Yon, Angers, Thouars and Saumur during this period.

It is unlikely that there were many formal requests for *homages* to people who were not going to meet the criteria; these were probably self-censored or dealt with informally through discussions between

³¹³ Archives Nationales: F/1cI/168, 180,191, folders: Maine-et-Loire, Deux-Sèvres, Vendée hommages publics

Prefect and local council. Nevertheless, very occasionally one is preserved, such as the 1901 request for a street name in Thénézay in Deux-Sèvres to be changed to Rue Mérinville, the maiden name of the wife of the mayor of the town. The wife's father was, according to the Prefect, "the very reactionary mayor of the neighbouring commune, Pressigny and had done nothing of note for the town of Thénézay which would justify this special treatment." Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the recent elections had replaced a previously republican council with a reactionary one and so renaming a street with this name would inflame an already "delicate situation." For this reason, the Prefect said he could not support the renaming of the street. The Prefect's letter was dated 23 February 1901; it took the minister only five days (compared to the three months for Ricard's statue) to write formally to the Council rejecting the change of name.³¹⁴

In summary, during the first thirty years of the Third Republic a bureaucratic system evolved so that republican commemorations of worthy men could be enacted efficiently. In the Vendée region, largely because of the zealous compliance with Vichy laws, most of the republican statues from this time were removed, and so it appears to be an area that is almost entirely devoid of left-wing memorials.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Archives Nationales: F/1cl/197/2, folder: Deux-Sèvres hommages publics

³¹⁵ Whilst there is little evidence for street name changes in the Vendée during the Vichy period, a studies by Kyra Schulman and of street names in the Midi and Paris shows that streets named for Dreyfus and other republican Jewish leaders were renamed, Streets were also renamed after Petain and Action Française leaders. Kyra Schulman, *The Dreyfus Affair in Vichy France: An Afterlife, Honors Thesis In History*. Wolf Humanities Center, University of Pennsylvania (2018), 66-77. https://repository.upenn.edu/uhf_2018/2/; and Richard Vassakos, "Révolution Nationale et Toponymie Urbaine en Languedoc-Roussillon", *Nouvelle Revue d'Onomastique*, 52, (2010), 33-68. The only street named after a "republican hero" in La Roche-sur-Yon, the capital of Vendée 85, was Rue Gambetta; a review of adverts for a business in this street in *L'Étoile de la Vendée* from 1940 to 1945 shows that the name was not changed.

Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux

Only one Vendéen republican memorial remains in the town where it was originally erected, although it is a 1952 replacement of one that was melted down in 1942: the 1886 statue of the leader of the Directory, Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux, in Montaigu. Larevellière-Lépeaux was born in 1753 in the small village in the Mauges region of Poitou, which later became the Department of the Vendée. His parents and grandparents were members of the minor nobility, holding positions in the local judiciary. He was related by marriage to the Clemenceau family, whose most famous son, Georges, became president of the Third Republic, and to the sculptor David d'Angers, who was responsible for the design and production of the original 1823 bust of Larevellière-Lépeaux on which the 1886 memorial is based. Much of what we know about Larevellière-Lépeaux comes from his autobiography, which was published sixty years after his death by his son.³¹⁶ The family, who had been reluctant to carry out their father's wishes to publish the memoir because it revealed a strange and difficult character, eventually allowed the printing of one copy in 1873, which was lodged in the National Library and could only be seen by registered readers. One of these, the historian Jean Destrem, published a lengthy review of the book in the May 1879 edition of the *Revue Historique*. Destrem concluded that the memoir showed Larevellière-Lépeaux to be an honest and passionate but ultimately unlikeable person, who believed firmly that his view of the world was better than anyone else of note.³¹⁷ The book was eventually properly published after the death of Larevellière-Lépeaux's son by his great-nephew (and grandson of David d'Angers), Robert David D'Angers.

³¹⁶ Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux, *Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux: Membre du Directoire Exécutif de la République Française et de l'Institut National* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1895).

³¹⁷ Jean Destrem, "Les Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux," in *Revue Historique* (Paris: Librairie Germer Ballière, May – August 1879), 78-91.

Larevellière-Lépeaux was educated by the Abbé Perraudeau who believed that children should be schooled by “repeated beatings on the back” and which Larevellière-Lépeaux blamed for both his stunted growth and his breathing difficulties in later life.³¹⁸ His anti-clericalism probably dated from this time. He studied law at the University of Angers and then worked with his brother in Paris as an advocate but found the life of a poor metropolitan lawyer dull and so returned to Montaignu to live with his family. He became interested in botany and, after losing the first woman he loved to Pierre-Paul Clemenceau, he married a fellow botanist Jeanne-Marie de Chandoiseau, the daughter of another bourgeois lawyer. He was elected to the Etats Généraux of 1789 and then to the Convention of 1793 where he voted for the conviction and subsequent execution of Louis Capet formerly king of France. During the Jacobin coup, he was arrested but escaped to the country where he hid from his pursuers and waited out the Terror. Following the death of Robespierre he returned to Paris, wrote the first constitution of the Republic, the *Constitution of Year III* (1795), and was elected (with only two dissenting voices, his own and his best friend) to lead the newly formed executive Directory. The elections of 1797 to the Assembly returned a majority of delegates who were thought to favour the restoration of the monarchy and Larevellière-Lépeaux led a military coup (the Coup of 18 Fructidor) to arrest the new delegates and send them into exile in Guyana where many of them died. He ruled through the use of Hoche’s army recently returned from the pacification of the Vendée. Priests were deported, churches turned into temples for a new religion, *Theophilanthropism*, and forty-two opposition newspapers were closed. The country was declared bankrupt and interest on government debt reduced by two thirds. In 1799 he was overthrown by a combination of Abbé Sieyès and Napoleon Bonaparte, which led to his internal exile. He refused to serve under Bonaparte or

³¹⁸ Larevellière-Lépeaux, *Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux*, 12.

take a pension from the consulate and Empire and died in relative poverty in Paris in 1824.³¹⁹

Larevellière-Lépeaux's son-in-law was the renowned artist David d'Angers. He produced a bust of his father-in-law in 1824 but failed to establish a memorial to Larevellière-Lépeaux in the brief period of the Second Republic.³²⁰ Larevellière-Lépeaux's well-documented hatred of all three royal and imperial houses resulted in his memory being allowed to wither.³²¹ The revival of monarchist and Catholic ideology in the Vendée meant that there were few local demands for a memorial. It was only with the inauguration of the Third Republic and the search for acceptable historical lessons and heroes that Larevellière-Lépeaux's story was resurrected.

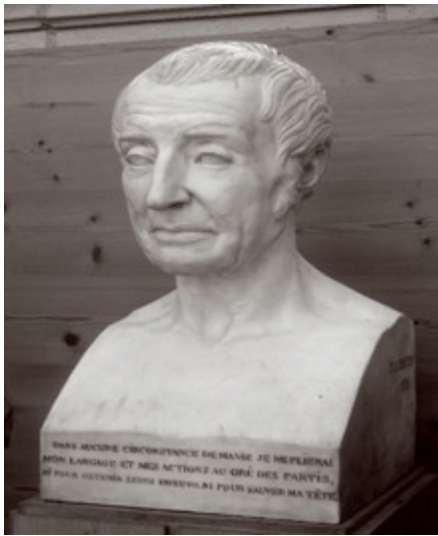


Figure 4.4: Marble bust of Larevellière-Lépeaux by David D'Angers, 1825.

In 1884, local historian and collector Charles Dugast-Matifeux (1812-1894) wrote a thirty-page “brief” history of Larevellière-Lépeaux's life which he sent to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, René Goblet (1828-1905), who would later be Prime Minister. Goblet, whom Renaud Quillet has called “a forgotten man”, had been Interior Minister in 1882 and

followed Jules Ferry (whom he detested) into the Education Ministry in 1885.³²² In this role, he designed many of the rules and practices of primary education, secularised the public teaching profession and

³¹⁹ Jean Destrem, *Les Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux*, 68-91.

³²⁰ Marble bust of Larevellière-Lépeaux by David D'Angers. 1824. Les Musées d'Angers. The inscription loosely translates as “I will never moderate my language for the benefit of any party, to obtain favour nor to save my head”

³²¹ The intervention of David is included in the introduction written by his son in 1873, see: *Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux*, XXV.

³²² Renaud Quillet, “À la Recherche de la République sociale: René Goblet et Jean Jaurès,” in *Cahiers Jaurès* (Paris: Société d'études jaurésiennes, 4, 2004): 55.

set up the first free state pre-schools under the law named after him. A practicing Freemason and fierce anti-clerical campaigner, Goblet was on the radical left of French politics. Although never convinced by the internationalism of socialism, he was a friend and political mentor of Jean Jaurès, who went on to become leader of the French Socialist Party.³²³

Goblet enthusiastically took on the political resurrection of Larevellière-Lépeaux and, in November 1884, agreed to provide state funds for a memorial. A copy of the David d'Angers bust in the Angers Museum was commissioned from a Monsieur Eude and produced by the Thiebaut Frères foundry at a cost to the ministry of 800 francs.³²⁴ Whereas statues born from local initiative such as Amable Ricard's in Niort were typically processed quite quickly, because the money to pay for Larevellière-Lépeaux's bust came from ministerial funds, and the idea for the memorial originated from Paris rather than from the town, the process took much longer. From suggestion to inauguration, almost nine months passed. On 29 December 1884 a letter from the Prefect of Vendée to the Minister thanked him for agreeing to pay for the bust and enclosed the town council minutes of 23 December agreeing to accept his "gracious donation" and to pay for the costs of transporting it from the foundry to Montaigu (eventually settled at 11 francs on 10 June 1885).³²⁵ The low price (other statues in this study have cost between 20,000 and 35,000 francs) and the use of a copy rather than an original work may account for some of the poor reception of statue and also the decision in 1952 to start again from the 1825 work of David d'Angers rather than the 1886 Eude/Thiebaut bust.

In June 1885, the announcement of the forthcoming commemoration was greeted with disdain in the royalist newspaper *La Vendée*. It pointed out that Larevellière-Lépeaux had been born

³²³ Ibid., 55-73.

³²⁴ AN: F/21/4412, folder: Correspondence of Ministry of Beaux Arts 1884/85.

³²⁵ Ibid., F/21/4412.

into the aristocracy (his birth certificate was reproduced showing his father's name as De La Revellière), that his mother Marie-Anne was an ardent royalist, and that she had had her son educated by the priests. The royalists also dismissed the tales of brutality by his teachers as "only told to excuse his anti-clericalism". The paper went on to remind its readers that Larevellière-Lépeaux had voted for the death of "the most honest and most generous sovereigns". Finally it called for a memorial to a better "model" such as General Édouard Collineau, from Sables d'Olonnes, who had risen from a private in the Foreign Legion to win Queen Victoria's Order of the Bath for his leadership in the Crimea before perishing whilst leading his troops in the Anglo-French attack on Beijing in 1861.³²⁶ Nevertheless, the preparations continued. The republican-supporting *L'Avenir & L'Indicateur de la Vendée* reported that the council of Fontenay-le-Comte, the nearest republican city to Montaigu, was putting money aside for the celebrations and that Goblet would be presiding.³²⁷

Both the national and local press took up the disputed history of Larevellière-Lépeaux. Republican newspapers such as Clemenceau's national *La Justice*, as well as the local *L'Avenir & L'Indicateur*, emphasised Larevellière-Lépeaux's role in designing the first written constitution, his opposition to imperial and monarchical despotism as well as Jacobin Terror, his honesty and relative poverty for a man with access to the corrupting influences of state finance, and his attempts to find an alternative moral and spiritual framework for society. On 11 June, three days before the unveiling, the editor of *L'Avenir* noted that that, although there was considerable opposition, "the small town of Montaigu will celebrate with dignity, despite reactionary grumbling, the memory of this revolutionary who, unlike Charette, de La Rochejaquelein and

³²⁶ *La Vendée*, June 23, 1885, 2. This is an interesting "hero" for conservatives to seize upon in the light of the distinctly anti-British memorial to Colonel George Villebois-Mareuil twenty years later (see chapter 7 of this thesis).

³²⁷ *L'Avenir & L'Indicateur de la Vendée*, June 2, 1886, 2.

Cathelineau, caused the Vendée no harm.”³²⁸ Conservative papers such as the Catholic *L’Univers* and royalist *La Vendée* focussed on the betrayal of his aristocratic and Catholic upbringing; his extreme ugliness; the “regrets” he had about voting for the death of Louis XVI; his mismanagement of the economy so that he had to declare the state bankrupt; and his leadership of the coup d’état that led to hundreds of exiles’ deaths as they were being transported to South America.³²⁹

The statue below was unveiled on 14 June 1886:



Figure 4.5: Postcard of the statue of Larevellière-Lépeaux, undated and unattributed.

330

This 1886 bust was melted down under the occupation government in 1942; it was replaced with an exact copy of the David d’Angers bust from the Museum in Angers, in 1954. Although the 1886 bust is based on the David D’Angers work, it was not an exact replica and it does not have the written testimony of the original bust. Perhaps the association with “losing your head” and the disavowal of party politics was too difficult for Third Republic politicians. The undated

³²⁸ *L’Avenir & L’Indicateur de la Vendée*, June 11, 1888, 2.

³²⁹ *La Vendée*, June 26, 1886, 2.

³³⁰ Dominique Perchet, *Cartes Postales on e-monument.net* at: <https://e-monumen.net/patrimoine-monumental/monument-a-la-revelliere-lepeaux-montaigu/> accessed September 12, 2019.

commemorative postcard above showing the bust surrounded by children serves to make the plinth look more imposing and the bust more ridiculous. The setting and the rather weird construction of the picture, with a distracted adult (who may be reading a book or a newspaper) and five oddly assorted children jar.

The monument was erected outside the newly built state school building looking away from the principal building in the town, the Hôtel de Ville, which had been built in the ruins of the castle on the heights above the old town. It looks down and across the town towards the Romanesque church of St. John the Baptist (who, of course, did lose his head). Its “conversation” with other buildings suggests that local republicans placed it deliberately to be in a royalist ruin, above the church and stressing the importance of education to the Republic. In 1954 when it was restored after the Second World War, it was placed in a small square named after Larevellière-Lépeaux (now a car park) off the main shopping street. The bust was removed from its plinth “for cleaning” in 2017 and had not been replaced when the author visited the town in 2018.³³¹ Unlike most Third Republic heroic memorials, which glamorised their subjects, it showed only the head of the man, mounted on a plinth.³³² Larevellière-Lépeaux was famously ugly and, because of childhood beatings, had a deformed spine. Perhaps this disability would have been uncomfortable for both producers and spectators of a full statue and so the bust is a compromise. If that was the case, they failed to quieten the opposition, who were happy to describe both the man and his memorial in unflattering language. This memorial, unlike that of Denis Papin described above, certainly does not meet any of Agulhon’s criteria (a standing, realistic, full length figure, holding the instrument of their fame and set on a

³³¹ For the restoration in 1954 see: <https://e-monumen.net/patrimoine-monumental/monument-a-la-revelliere-lepeaux-montaignu/>; the 2017-2019 absence comes from a discussion between the author and the head of engineering at the town hall in Montaignu on October 17, 2018.

³³² There are a few other “busts on pedestals” in the list of monuments to Third Republic great men (see <https://e-monumen.net/>) however they tend to be from much later in the period.

pedestal which described the rationale for the statue) for an ideal monument.

The unveiling was widely reported, mainly because it was one of the few occasions when a government minister visited the Vendée. René Goblet had spent the previous two days in nearby Nantes reviewing troops with the Minister of War, General Boulanger, who was also on a tour of the West (and had declined the opportunity to inaugurate the statue).³³³ Goblet's speeches on this tour and in the chamber in 1886 reveal his and the government's concerns at that time. Goblet's government, like Larevellière-Lépeaux's, was overwhelmed by the state of the public finances; his solution was to propose an income tax that drew the combined ire of the monarchist right and the more conservative republicans led by Ferry. Goblet was also embroiled in the Schnæbelé Affair, the arrest of a French-Alsatian spy working for Boulanger, and the subsequent diplomatic crises. Goblet's main concerns since he entered politics under the Second Empire had been increasing effective participation in democratic politics through education; political reform, especially by removing elite privileges and reinforcing the power of directly elected politicians; and, towards the end of his life, as he moved closer to Jaures's socialists, the development of effective unions, the regulation of child labour and implementation of different ownership structures in strategic industries such as mining, sugar refining and cloth production.³³⁴

The minister spent the day of 16 June 1886, meeting with teachers and regional education administrators. He presented the local schoolteacher, M. Guerineau with the Académie Française bronze medal for preparing one of his pupils, Marthe Labrousse, for the primary school examination, in which she had scored 85 points out

³³³ Letter from Boulanger to Prefect of Vendée, June 2, 1886, in Archives de la Vendée F/21, folder: Larevellière-Lépeaux monument.

³³⁴ René Quillet, "René Goblet et Jean Jaurès": 55-73.

of 90, the highest score in the whole Department.³³⁵ In the afternoon he gave a speech that drew on the lessons of Larevellière-Lépeaux's life for the Third Republic's government. Firstly he spoke of how Larevellière-Lépeaux was an honest, incorruptible politician who looked to serve only the state. Secondly he noted the importance of the constitution (imperfect though it was) and how universal law should rule governments. Thirdly he drew on Larevellière-Lépeaux's opposition to elites, despotism and tyranny; Goblet noted that the king had betrayed the French people and, "thankfully, even though the princes continue to conspire against the Republic, times have changed and we no longer have to resort to extreme measure to defend her." Even the most radical of republican ministers could not, at the end of the nineteenth century, condone the execution of Bourbon, Orleanist or Bonapartist pretenders. Earlier that year, however, Goblet had led the debates in parliament that saw the "descendants of the families who had ruled France" ejected from both the Senate and the Chamber, being stripped of their military ranks and, eventually sent into exile. Finally he denounced the way that the Catholic Church continued to meddle in the affairs of the state: "We ask only that the Church respects the rights of civil society and the state. We will defend the Church's rights to preach in the sincere hope that it will eventually replace ignorance with reason."³³⁶

Goblet's sole concern about Larevellière-Lépeaux's career was his leadership of the coup d'état of 18 Fructidor, which he said, opened the way for others to overthrow legal governments and constitutions and allowed Bonaparte to deliver the final blow to the First Republic. This showed the current generation of politicians the importance of working together and within the law: "Party divisions, ambition and personal rivalry have always been our downfall ... it has taken three quarters of a century to bring French democracy to this point and

³³⁵ *Bulletin de l'instruction Primaire de la Vendée*, 1886, 115.

³³⁶ "Un discours de M. Goblet," in *La Justice*, June 16, 1886, 1-2.

we must learn the lessons of the past to ensure that we do not fail again.”³³⁷ In this conclusion, he would have been thinking of the divisions within the Directorate as well as the significant disagreements within the current ranks of republicans and the growing sense of unease about the popularity of General Boulanger.

The republican press reported the speech approvingly, along with responses from the Prefect, the mayor, a deputy brought in from Paris (there being no republican deputies in the Vendée due to the Departmental List system in force at the time) and a further after-dinner speech by M. Goblet praising the work of teachers in the region and encouraging them to continue to fight the ignorance and misplaced views of the local population.³³⁸ Meanwhile the conservative press continued to stress to its readership Larevellière-Lépeaux’s role in the appalling conditions of the exiled opposition (including eighty priests who died on their way to Guyana) and his repudiation of two-thirds of the government debt. Above all, an opinion piece in *La Vendée* said: “This little monument ... is absolutely ridiculous. The little head is the subject of ribald jokes by all who see it: ‘have you seen “*le petit...*” (a word too risqué for our pen to write).”³³⁹ The press’s ridiculing of the statue’s dimensions and form may have provided a lesson for the royalist activists behind later statues of Vendéen heroes, especially that of Henri de La Rochejaquelein, which won much acclaim at the Paris Salon of 1895 for its artistic merit.

³³⁷ *La Justice*, June 16, 1886, 1-2.

³³⁸ *L’Avenir et L’Indicateur*, June 20, 1886, 1.

³³⁹ *La Vendée*, July 17, 1886, 3.

Conclusion

Regardless of the pleas of Goblet and the approval of the republican press, the statue of Larevellière-Lépeaux and its accompanying educational message failed to have an impact on either local republicans or the voters of Montaigu. A meeting to launch a *Réveil Républicain de la Haute Vendée* in 1906 broke down in disagreement over the best way – free newspaper or educational talks – to persuade a reluctant population. The six cantons (including Montaigu) between them had no *conseillers généraux* and, since 1900, no candidates for the roles. By 1914, the total number of votes cast for the republican candidate in Montaigu was 1,160: 56 fewer than the Republican had gained in 1881. The percentage voting for the monarchist candidate had meanwhile risen from 60% in 1881 to 71% in 1914.³⁴⁰

This commemoration of Larevellière-Lépeaux and the visit by Goblet reveals several important matters for this thesis. The first is that the republican government wanted to tell local people a story of the Vendée Wars that contradicted local conservative historical memory. The wars, as seen through this statue, were fought for the enlightened values of the Republic. Larevellière-Lépeaux was a constitutionalist, an honest man fighting for the rule of law and against the corruption of the Old Regime and the ignorance of the Catholic Church. He represented the wars not as the Terror visited on the region by the Jacobins but as something that the even conservative republicans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could have endorsed. Secondly, the commemoration shows how important government and military figures used Vendéen War monuments to draw lessons and make political statements about current affairs. Goblet, a future prime minister, used Larevellière-Lépeaux to justify the expulsion of the royal

³⁴⁰ Election statistics reprinted in *L'étoile de la Vendée* 1914, biography and results confirmed by archive of members of the Assemblée Nationale, [http://www2.assembleenationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/7531](http://www2.assembleenationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/7531), accessed 20 June 2018.

pretenders; to praise the use of the constitution and the role of honest politicians in applying it; to stress the role of education in constructing a free and democratic state; to put the case for a new relationship between church and civic powers; and to warn of the dangers of internal divisions within republicanism and how that might allow the rise of populist leaders (such as his rival for power General Boulanger). Likewise, Thibaudin, a future Minister of War, in his unveiling of the statue to Joseph Bara linked a free, democratic, republican people to the power of army. In this early period of the Third Republic, the fear of both the Prussians and the Commune was uppermost in the minds of military planners and Bara represented the sacrifice of young Frenchmen at a time when the nascent First Republic was also threatened by Prussia and internal revolt.

The commemoration and the political events that accompanied them were reported in the emerging local press in a very partial and politicised way. As we have seen in Chapter 3, in the Vendée, the ideological opposition between the dominant factions in central government and local politicians and elites heightened levels of political discord. The closely contested nature of some of the elections meant that these commemorations mattered to both sides. The press reporting of the Larevellière-Lépeaux celebrations also set the tone for the debate about royalist commemorations a decade later. Neither side would countenance a balanced or nuanced depiction of the Larevellière-Lépeaux story; nor, later, those of de La Rochejaquelein and Cathelineau.

5. Reactionary Politics in the Vendée and the Memorial to Henri de La Rochejaquelein



Figure 5.1: Statue of Henri de la Rochejaquelein by Alexandre Falguière, erected 1895, Saint Aubin-de-Baubigné (Deux-Sèvres).

341

The next two chapters consider the memorial to Henri de la Rochejaquelein (1772-1794), which was inaugurated in Saint Aubin-de-Baubigné (Deux-Sèvres) in 1895 and to Jacques Cathelineau in

³⁴¹ Author's photograph, June 2017.

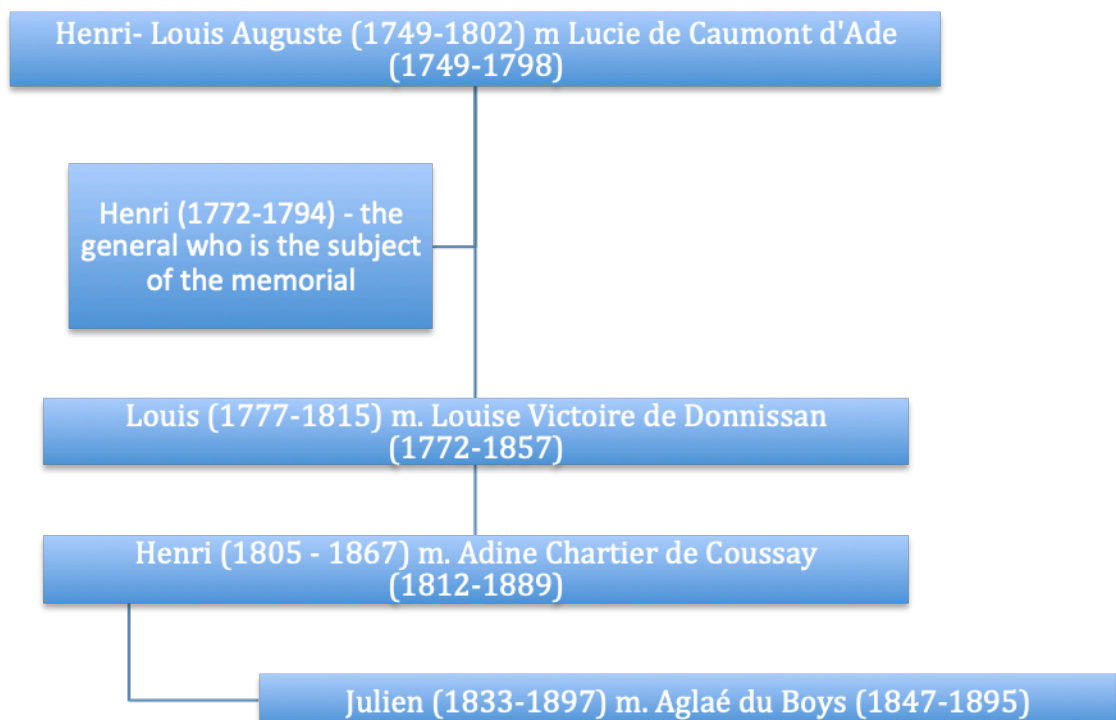
Le Pin-en-Mauges (Maine-et-Loire) in 1896. The first of these chapters is largely concerned with the strategies used by Catholics and royalists to resist the political, cultural and social changes of the Third Republic, whilst the second focuses on the complexities within that resistance revealed by the memorials. The terms “royalist”, “right wing” and “conservative” are used largely interchangeably as they often were at the end of the nineteenth century. The chapters will argue that these conservative commemorations, often using the same processes as their republican rivals, presented an alternative version of the history of the Vendée that supported a radically different vision of the region and France.

This chapter begins with a brief summary of de La Rochejaquelein’s life, how the myths about him were established largely through the work of his sister-in-law, Donnissan de La Rochejaquelein, and the subsequent disputes between the two male editors of her memoirs. It argues that male historians and editors removed or diminished the women who took part in and wrote the first histories of the Vendée Wars as a means of reinforcing heroic male discourse. The chapter’s main focus is on the part that the memorial played in developing the reactionary politics of resistance in the region. It considers the motivations of three of the principal actors associated with the memorial: Henri’s great-nephew Julien de La Rochejaquelein (1833-1897), the last Marquis; the priest who preached the eulogy at the unveiling of the memorial, Monseigneur Cabrières, the Bishop of Montpellier (1830-1921); and the recently deceased Marquise Donnissan de La Rochejaquelein (1772-1857). Finally it explores how the content of the statue was discussed and received both by its conservative supporters and by their opponents in the republican press.

Henri de La Rochejaquelein

Henri du Vergier, Comte de La Rochejaquelein, the oldest son of Henri Louis Auguste du Vergier, Marquis de La Rochejaquelein (1749-1802) came from one of the most ancient aristocratic families in France. His ancestors went on the second crusade alongside Louis VII; others fought for the Huguenot King Henri IV in the religious wars of the sixteenth century.³⁴² During the second phase of the Vendée Wars, when the twenty-year-old Henri took command of the royalist army after the death of Jacques Cathelineau, he became known throughout the region simply as M. Henri.

A summary of the de La Rochejaquelein family tree as it relates to this study is set out below:



³⁴² Chevallier de Courcelles, *Histoire Généalogique et Héraldique des Pairs de France, des Grands Dignitaires de la Couronne, des Principales Familles Nobles du Royaume, Volume 10* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1829), 63.

The source for most of the historical record relating to Henri de La Rochejaquelein and for many of the other stories that emerged from the Vendée Wars is the *Mémoires de Madame Marie Louise Victoire de Donnissan Marquise de La Rochejaquelein*, first published in 1814.³⁴³ The Marquise was the widow of Henri's friend, cousin and fellow general, Louis-Marie Lescure (1766-1793), and then the widow of his brother Louis de La Rochejaquelein. In 2010, Alain Gérard revealed that a first edition of 1814 was found in Napoleon Bonaparte's carriage after he had fled from Waterloo in 1815.³⁴⁴ The book claims to be a true account of the events of the wars in which Henri de La Rochejaquelein fought and of his character and leadership. In her introduction "*À Mes Enfants*", dated 1811, she wrote: "I took no notes and my memory was my only resource. I could not and would not have wished to write anything other than what I remember perfectly."³⁴⁵

The memoirs were written between 1793, when the Marquise was twenty-one and in hiding, and 1811, when she was living quietly in France with her second husband, who encouraged her to finish the story of the Vendée Wars as she remembered it. The Marquise was born at Versailles, the daughter of courtiers to Louis XV; the king's daughter Madame Victoire was her godmother. In 1791 she married

³⁴³ Five different versions of the *Mémoires* were used for this thesis. The handwritten and undated manuscript is held in the Rochejaquelein Family Archive in Clisson, Deux-Sèvres. An original 1814 first printed edition: *Mémoires de Mme la marquise de La Rochejaquelein* (Paris: Beaudouin frères, 1814) is in The National Library of Scotland. The most commonly available edition, in the British Library and elsewhere, is: Prosper de Barante, *Mémoires de Mme la marquise de La Rochejaquelein, écrits par elle-même, et rédigés par M. de Barante* (Paris: Beaudouin frères, 1823). In 1889, her grandson issued a new version, supposedly reproducing exactly her manuscript (it did not): Julien de La Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires de Mme la marquise de La Rochejaquelein, Edition Originale* (Paris: Bourolton, 1889). Finally there is the modern, "critical edition" written in 2010 by the head of the Vendée Research Centre: Alain Gérard, *Mémoires de la marquise de La Rochejaquelein, édition critique*, (La Roche-sur-Yon: Centre vendéen de recherches historiques, 2010). These are footnoted as: *Mémoires (mss.)*, *Mémoires (1814 ed.)*, *Mémoires (1823 ed.)*, *Mémoires (1899 ed.)*, and *Mémoires (2010 ed.)*.

³⁴⁴ Donnissan de La Rochejaquelein presented this copy of the book, one of the few remaining first editions, to Louis XVIII after the first Restoration. When Napoleon returned from his exile in Elba he took the book from the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris and carried it with him on his final campaign. The book was seized by Prussian soldiers and given to the British ambassador to Prussia who took it home with him to Scotland, where it was later deposited in the National Library of Scotland. It contains handwritten notes by both Louis and Napoleon and was the centrepiece of the Library's Waterloo bicentenary exhibition in 2015. Some of the manuscript notes appear as changes in the 1823 edition – the most significant being in the 1814 edition that Louis de La Rochejaquelein "se trouvait par hasard ce jour même à Bordeaux" as British troops were occupying the City, this is changed to the more simple "Mon mari se rendit à Bordeaux ..." in all subsequent editions.

³⁴⁵ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1823 ed.), 2.

her cousin, Louis-Marie Marquis de Lescure, a Vendéen nobleman and also a cousin of Henri and Louis de La Rochejaquelein. On Lescure's death, shortly after that of Henri de La Rochejaquelein in 1793, she was hidden by local farmers and then fled the country to Spain. In 1802 she married Louis de La Rochejaquelein and together they returned to France under the Consulate and the First Empire. Louis refused to serve under Napoleon and they lived quietly at their chateau in Clisson near Bressuire (not to be confused with the far grander Château de Clisson in the Loire). After Napoleon's exile to Elba, Louis de La Rochejaquelein became a general in the first restoration army and, during the 100 days, raised a force in the Vendée to fight the returning Emperor. He was killed in battle on 4 June 1815. After two subsequent periods of exile in Spain and Portugal, where her oldest son was killed fighting in the Legitimist cause, the Marquise settled in Orléans close to two of her daughters and where she died in 1857.³⁴⁶

The memoirs are important for this study not only because they are the foundation for all subsequent stories about de La Rochejaquelein, but also because they became the subject of a dispute in the late 1880s between the supporters of the editor of the first edition of the book, Baron Prosper de Barante (1782-1886) and the de La Rochejaquelein family. In *Souvenirs de Baron De Barante* published for the first time in 1889, Barante's grandson, Claude de Barante wrote that Prosper Barante recalled that on first meeting the Marquise "she had begun to write her memoirs, she gave me all her notes and asked me to rewrite some of the earlier chapters, she guided me in my subsequent researches."³⁴⁷ To Julien de La Rochejaquelein, who was struggling to relaunch his political career after a number of setbacks, the thought that Barante, "a sub-prefect

³⁴⁶ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (2010 ed.), this information is in the preface to Alain Gérard's book, which has an excellent summary of the life of the Marquise.

³⁴⁷ Barante was the civil servant used by Napoleon Bonaparte to provide him with information about the Vendée, first as Sub-Prefect in the Vendée Department and then as Prefect in Deux-Sèvres. See: Prosper Barante, *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante. Publiés par son Petit-fils Claude de Barante*. (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, 1890), 271-272.

staying briefly in Bressuire in 1807,” should claim that anyone but his grandmother was the true author of the book was intolerable.³⁴⁸

This dispute may have been manufactured; certainly there is nothing in Barante’s letters or conduct during his lifetime that suggests he claimed authorship rather than editorship of the memoirs. Yet the incident led to the de La Rochejaquelein name being once more in the public domain for the publication and sale of the fourteenth edition of the book, this time under the title “from her own handwritten manuscript.”³⁴⁹ In his introduction to the new edition, Julien de La Rochejaquelein complained that the “eulogists of M. Barante (note, not Baron de...) have allowed the memoirs to be placed alongside his other works of as though they were his own.”³⁵⁰ Julien used the work of Cardinal Louis-Édouard Pie (1815-80), who had undertaken an exhaustive study of the notes and early editions of the book for his paper on its authorship, which Pie presented at the Société des Antiquaires de l’Ouest in 1868.³⁵¹ The paper declared that the Marquise was “fully and incontestably the author of the memoirs.”³⁵²

There were a number of important differences between the 1814 (and subsequent thirteen editions) and the 1889 edition, for example in the initial description of Henri. In the 1889 (“original words”) edition he was described as:

Extremely thin and blonde, an elongated face. He seemed more English than French. He had no pretty features, but his physiognomy [sic] was sweet and noble. At that time he seemed very timid; however, his eyes were very lively.³⁵³

³⁴⁸ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1889 ed.), 4.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁵¹ Pie was Cardinal and Bishop of Poitiers and an important actor in this story because there were rumours being reported in the Republican press that he, and not Henri de la Rochejaquelein, was the natural father of Julien (see below for the possible repercussions of this story).

³⁵² *Société des Antiquaires de l’Ouest* 1868-69, 119.

³⁵³ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1889 ed.), 52.

In the 1814-23 published versions this became:

He was then twenty years old. He was a rather shy young man, who had lived little in the world; his manner and laconic language were remarkable for simplicity and naturalness; he had a gentle and noble physiognomy; his eyes, in spite of his timid air, seemed lively and animated. He had a tall, slender figure with fair hair, a slightly elongated face, and an English rather than French manner.³⁵⁴

The lack of good features is ignored and the extreme thinness turned into someone who is tall and svelte. His appearance is no longer “more English than French” (not an especially good thing in either Imperial or Royalist France) but only his “manner”. Both agree that his eyes were very lively and in the early pictures of him, illustrators caught their peculiarity:



Figure 5.2: Clay pipe and engraving of Henri de La Rochejaquelein.

355

³⁵⁴ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1823 ed.), 41.

³⁵⁵ The clay pipe and engraving are in the BRHAM Museum, Mauléon, Deux-Sèvres, images used with permission of the curator. Whilst neither is sourced exactly, the pipe is in the style of the Gambier

By the time the statue and his new tomb were commissioned in 1895, the eyes became less “lively” and the form more classical:



Figure 5.3: Model for Faguliere's statue of de La Rochejaquelein and bas-relief from the tomb in the church of St. Aubin-de Baubigné.

356

The memoirs are also the source of the most important story about de La Rochejaquelein: the immortal words that became the *leitmotif* for him and his memorial. The story concerned a speech delivered to peasants who had come to ask him to lead them into battle against republican forces who were threatening the neighbourhood of the family chateau in Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné. According to the 1814 edition, he proclaimed:

My friends, if my father were here, you would trust him. For me, I am a mere child; but through my bravery I will show that I am worthy to command you. If I advance, follow me; If I retreat, kill me; If I die, avenge me (*Si j'avance, suivez-moi; si je recule tuez-moi; si je meurs, vengez-moi.*)³⁵⁷

The short speech sums up the attraction of Henri as a figure for people who wished to use him to construct his identity as a noble

workshop and was produced between 1849 and 1860; the engraving appears in early editions of the *Mémoires de Mme la marquise de La Rochejaquelein* and so dates from before 1823.

³⁵⁶ Photograph of statue model provided by the BRHAM Museum, Mauléon, and used with permission of the curator. Photograph of the tomb, author's own, June 2017.

³⁵⁷ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1814 ed.), 66.

leader. It places him as an equal (a “friend”) to his people. It shows that he is humble and reluctant (“you would have more confidence in my father”) whilst also stressing his noble bloodline. It stresses his youth and courage and uses the word “digne”, dignified, that came to be the preferred term to signify “worthy of election to high office” by later politicians and churchmen. Finally, it uses two established rhetorical devices to give him a memorable slogan: first the triple phrase and second *Le Répond* (call and response) of the liturgy. Together these produce three double-action imperatives – advance/follow, retreat/kill, die/avenge. These words are inscribed on the base of the memorial statue and on every piece of subsequent memorabilia associated with de La Rochejaquelein.

There are good reasons to doubt the speech was actually given. First, it appears in the memoirs (which, we are informed, are only “those events which I had direct evidence from my own experience”) at a time when the Marquise and her husband Lescure had just been imprisoned in Bressuire.³⁵⁸ A little over twenty kilometres from Saint-Aubin, this was too far for a woman to travel while under house arrest and guarded by gendarmes, so it is highly unlikely she was actually present to record his words. The second issue is that both editors changed the order of the key phrase from “retreat, advance, die” to “advance, retreat, die”.³⁵⁹ It is not clear why Barante changed the order, although he was an aspiring man of letters and it does scan better. He would have been aware of the power of the rhetorical triple phrase; it is a short step from patri, filio, spitui-sancto and liberté, égalité, fraternité to suivez, tuez, vengez. By the time Julien de la Rochejaquelein came to revise the memoirs, the phrase was so embedded in the mythology that it would have been impossible to revert to the original. The third is that some of the language seems inappropriate. Aged twenty, Henri

³⁵⁸ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1823 ed.), 3.

³⁵⁹ The original handwritten manuscript remains in the Rochejaquelein Family Archive in Clisson and is rarely shown to visitors. I was fortunate to be allowed to see it. The Marquise’s work contains many corrections and crossings-out but she wrote clearly “si je recule tuez-moi, si j’avance suivez-moi, si je meurs vengez-moi.”

had been a soldier for seven years, had served in the royal guard, fought his way out of the Tuileries, and escaped arrest by republicans in the countryside. He was far from being a child. His father had been long absent from Saint-Aubin on his Caribbean plantation and it is unlikely that an appeal to the loyalty of the peasantry was either necessary or needed. It is also unlikely that he would have called his tenants and domestics “*mes amis*” (the memoirs note that “we had numerous servants all of whom were devoted to us and our opinions.”)³⁶⁰ It clear throughout the memoirs that the relationship was, at worst, master and servant (*leurs paysans*) and, at best, paternal. The idea that he would be killed by his own soldiers for retreating in the face of a superior enemy – something that he would have learned as an essential piece of leadership at the military school of Sorèze that he attended from the age of twelve and that he practised often in the subsequent war, was ridiculous.³⁶¹ Finally there is the issue of vengeance. This is difficult because of the bible teaching of vengeance being God’s and because much of the subsequent royalist propaganda stressed the mercy given by royalist commanders to their prisoners compared to the terror visited on the peasants by republicans.³⁶²

When we compare Barante’s edition of the memoirs to the Marquise’s, it becomes clear that his version of the story – which other histories of the period all followed – evoked a figure of de La Rochejaquelein who was surer of himself and his leadership. Whereas the original memoirs had reported the young man “hoping that he would prove worthy” of the peasants’ respect, Barante’s Henri was affirmative: “I will show myself worthy of leading you.” Barante also attempted to make Henri into a man of the people by inserting a scene which is not in either the original manuscript or the 1899 version, where he paused to have breakfast with the peasants

³⁶⁰ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1823 ed.), 43.

³⁶¹ Jacques Cretinau-Joly, *Les Généraux Vendéens* (Paris: Editions Découverte de l’Histoire, 1838),

22.

³⁶² See for example Cretinau-Joly, *Les Généraux Vendéens*, 157-159.

before departing: “while the peasants went off to seek white bread for their general, he took a bit of their brown bread, and ate it with them in good spirits.” Barante also omitted the Marquise’s gloss – “Such were his true words.” – following the speech, perhaps sensing that this injected needless doubt into a purportedly eyewitness account.³⁶³

The memoirs also provided a notionally harmonious description of the relationships between nobility and peasantry in the region. The Marquise notes that the seigneurs lived close to their tenants, ate with them, had dances every Sunday in the courtyards of their châteaux, which even “the ladies took part in.” This convivial, almost prelapsarian, society of course depended on the “excellent people” of the Bocage who were described as pious, hospitable, charitable, courageous and devoted to their seigneurs.³⁶⁴ The nobility, according to this account, lived amongst their people, which is why when the war came they chose to be led by them. This description sits awkwardly with what we had been told earlier about Henri’s life: he was sent to the military school at Sorèze as a child of ten and then, aged thirteen, served in his father’s regiment before becoming part of the royal guard to Louis XVI. At the time of the early events of the Revolution he was in Paris at the Court and only escaped to the country with Lescure when the king was taken prisoner in August 1792. Henri’s father, the Marquis, meanwhile was with his wife supervising his “vast properties” on the Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue where he used slave labour to enhance the family fortune from the production of sugar.³⁶⁵ The Marquis was a founder of the *Club Massiac*, a group of aristocratic planters who petitioned both the king and later the Convention to keep slavery and to deny “free coloured” (usually the offspring of slave holders and women slaves) any rights outside the colony and most importantly any

³⁶³ See Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1814 ed.), 66-67 compared to Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1889 ed.), 116 for the alternative versions of the story.

³⁶⁴ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1823 ed.), 35.

³⁶⁵ Cretinau-Joly, *Les Généraux Vendéens*, 22.

inheritance rights to titles in France. The Marquis spent the entire revolutionary period either on Saint-Domingue, in England, or English Caribbean territories trying to raise armies to fight the slave and “free coloured” rebellions that followed the declaration of the ending of slavery by the Convention on 16 pluviôse an II (4 February 1794). The Marquis died on the island in 1802.³⁶⁶

The great radical historian of the Revolution Alphonse Aulard reviewed the 1889 version of the memoirs for his own periodical, *La Révolution Française, Revue Historique*.³⁶⁷ For a convinced republican, Aulard was remarkably generous about the memoirs as a work to be read and enjoyed but asked: “What is the historical value of these memoirs?”³⁶⁸ In answering his own question he said that it was really not worth pointing out all the errors in the book, nor the physical impossibilities of some of her eyewitness accounts, because this was the work of a woman who could not understand the complexities of what she was recording: “Raised at Court, only just out of childhood, she knew nothing and no way of judging events or men...the only truth she understood was the cause defended by her father, her husband and the man who fulfilled all her dreams, Henri de La Rochejaquelein.” Aulard then made an important point about the story of de La Rochejaquelein that provides us with an important differentiator between it and the religious piety underlying the myth of Jacques Cathelineau, the Saint of Anjou. He notes that Henri’s story is all about glory, honour and “the wonder of being [counter]-revolutionaries.” Nowhere, he wrote, in this book dedicated to the glory of “l’armée catholique” do you find “a single word from the Christian soul. This was a lady of leisure inspired more by the romantic works about la Chimène, l’Emilie de Corneille than religious belief.”³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 23-24.

³⁶⁷ Alphonse Aulard, “Mémoires de Mme la marquise de La Rochejaquelein” *La Révolution Française, Revue Historique*, Paris, (January 1889) v.16, 98 -112.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 106

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 107. A reference to the love plays of Pierre Corneille and the opera, *Chimène*, about *El Cid* presented to the court in 1793. Aulard appears to be saying that the Memoirs have no more religion in

Aulard was not the only one to cast doubt on the completeness of the memoirs. Julien de La Rochejaquelein, in his introduction to the 1889 edition, remarked on the exclusion from printed versions of “a number of too frank remarks, perhaps due to the youth of the author.”³⁷⁰ These could have been about the Prince de Talmond, a Vendéen general who was licentious and over fond of “public women.” Talmond son’s widow later married Auguste, the youngest brother of M. Henri and so brought the Talmond and de La Rochejaquelein families together so this may have been the reason for excluding the story. Also erased by Julien was her comment about how Henri was “madly in love with Mme de Bonchamps” the wife of yet another Vendéen general.³⁷¹ Such youthful voyeurism of the love lives of the pure Maccabean heroes would not have served either Barante’s or Julien’s purpose.

Aulard ignores the importance that “simplicity” rather than historical evidence may have played in the popularity and power of the Marquise’s book. There is no doubt that an innocent and even naïve telling of the story lent it an air of truth that would have appealed to the very readers who would go on to respond positively to the de La Rochejaquelein memorial. Barante, Cretineau-Joly and all subsequent royalist historians of the wars use this “simple woman’s words” to establish the myth of the young, brave golden-haired leader, chosen by his people to lead them against the forces of evil. The same message would be needed a century after his death when political contests were being fought for the royalist and aristocratic causes in the Third Republic.

In this and other important respects, the edited versions of the memoirs of the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein conform to the

them than the fictional romances popular at the court of Louis XVI when Mme. de La Rochejaquelein was a young woman.

³⁷⁰ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1889 ed.), 6.

³⁷¹ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (2010 ed.), 16.

gendered model of Vendée memory established by Adélaïde Cron. The Marquise herself was, according to her friend and confidante Cardinal Pie, a hero of the wars.³⁷² She was twice the widow of Vendéen generals, her father and her three children she had with Lescure all died in the wars and she lost one of the children she had with de la Rochejaquelein to the Legitimist cause in Spain. Yet there is no statue, or other permanent memorial to her, nor to any other of the female heroes, including the “Amazons” who fought and sometime led troops on the Royal and Catholic side of the conflict of the wars. Cron’s work on early chroniclers of the Vendée Wars concludes that the popular memory of the wars was almost entirely established by the widows of the generals and female survivors – de la Rochejaquelein, Renée Bordereau *dite* l’Angevin, Madame de Sapinaud and Madame de Bonchamps – who all published memoirs between 1814-23.³⁷³ Cron came to three important conclusions. First, these memoir writers, apart from Bordereau, took their legitimacy from their status as widows of heroes and “so find it hard to present themselves as experts.”³⁷⁴ They were simple – and so honest and believable – reporters of what they had seen, not experts able to analyse or draw political conclusions. Second, they reinforced the traditional worth of the female, as mother, daughter, and wife but also as interceder on behalf of the stricken foe. Cron compared them to the Virgin Mary: the memoir writers put themselves and the women they described as shared martyrs alongside their men, in the long Catholic tradition of women with pure motives sacrificing themselves for their faith.

Cron’s third conclusion concerned the way that memoir writers dealt with Amazons. The idea of women dressed as men fighting for their cause gripped both the imagination and the fantasies of male writers well before the Revolution but it was particularly present in

³⁷² In Pie’s funeral oration of February 28, 1857, he wrote “En sa personne se résume une des plus grandes pages de l’histoire humaine” (reprinted in Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1889 ed.), 476).

³⁷³ Adélaïde Cron, “Les Mémoires des « Vendéennes »: un Récit de Guerre au Féminin?” *Itinéraires* (2011 v.1): 45-63.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

the contemporary stories told by revolutionaries about the Amazons of the Vendée.³⁷⁵ The noble memoir-writers were less comfortable in their versions of the Amazon stories. Indeed, Cron suggested that their embarrassment on this subject was so great that they all used the same avoidance strategy. This starts with minimisation of the numbers involved; Mme de la Rochejaquelein listed them all – ten – and insisted there were no more.³⁷⁶ The strategy went on to say that they were all virtuous and the rumours of bad behaviour, “*filles travesties, filles débauchées*” were simply ignored. Finally, the writers insisted on treating the Amazons’ role as though they were simply soldiers, not women. So for example the one set of memoirs not written by a noble lady was those of Renée Bordereau, who fought as Cavalryman Langevin throughout the wars, was imprisoned under Bonaparte and dictated a short memoir for Mme de La Rochejaquelein which was published at the first Restoration in 1814. The anonymous (almost certainly male) editor of this edition wrote in the preface to the book that “her morality was pure, her courage unwavering and her only goal to see the triumph of true religion and the restoration of the legitimate king.”³⁷⁷ This reinforced the image of the pure and virtuous Amazon. Similarly, the *Revue de Bas-Poitou* published a long article by Victor Chapot de la Chanonine in 1891, entitled “Une Amazone Vendéenne”, about Céleste Bulkeley, which described her life and military exploits as well as reinforcing the rationale for the wars as being one of popular uprising rather than aristocratic revenge.³⁷⁸ We know from this and other articles about the Amazons that people were aware of their role in the wars, but it is clear that the restoration of a traditional way of life with its security provided by the hierarchy of God, king and aristocracy, excluded the idea that women could play a military role.

³⁷⁵ See the work of Sylvie Steinberg, in particular *La Confusion des sexes: le Travestissement de la Renaissance à la Révolution*, (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

³⁷⁶ Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1823 ed.), 258.

³⁷⁷ Renée Bordereau, *Mémoires de Renée Bordereau dite Langevin* (Paris: L.G.Michaud, 1814), 4-6.

³⁷⁸ Victor Chapot de la Chanonine, “Une Amazone Vendéenne,” *Revue de Bas-Poitou*, (Quarter Four, 1891): 347.

The Marquise de La Rochejaquelein was therefore exemplary of the role of women in the construction of conservative memory of the Vendée Wars: her role was to communicate stories of masculine heroism to future generations of royalists, rather than to take on a heroic role herself. Overall, the various versions of the Marquise's memoirs, edited by men who wanted to use the story for different purposes, provide us with a means to explore the motivations of the people constructing the myths of Henri's life. They were a powerful resource that, in twenty-three eventual editions, resonated with those who wanted to believe in and build an identity of heroic martyrdom for de La Rochejaquelein and the army that he led.

Motivations and Rationale for the Memorial

By the 1890s, sustained by new editions of the Marquise's memoirs, the heroic myth of Henri de la Rochejaquelein had become an established part of conservative memory culture in the Vendée. 1894 marked the centennial of de La Rochejaquelein's death, which helps account for the project to erect a statue to the hero in Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné. But other important local factors helped attract interest in the project. Most importantly the local political power of the man who led the committee established to commemorate de la Rochejaquelein, the last of his line, Julien, was under severe political pressure from local republicans. At the same time, he was dealing with a declining financial situation, the terminal illness of his wife and the fallout of a series of sexual scandals in which his father had been involved.

Local Politics

As we have seen in the chapters on education and the republican monuments, conservative forces in the Vendée opposed the Third Republic's attempted imposition of national ideas about citizenship based on secularity, democracy and freedom. Royalists and

Catholics had an alternative vision of France that included religious observance, monarchical and aristocratic privilege, family stability and tradition. In the period when the memorial to de La Rochejaquelein was being planned, it was not certain which of these sets of ideas would prevail. We should consider not just these national ideological differences, but also disputes and arguments between local notables that played an important role in the establishment of a royalist memorial discourse. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the region “Vendée” was not only the Department of that name and Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné lies in the northern part of Deux-Sèvres. It is the site of the de La Rochejaquelein chateau of La Durbellière, which was the birthplace of Henri de La Rochejaquelein. Both during the Vendée Wars and at the end of the nineteenth century, this was an intensely royalist region, whereas the Department of Deux-Sèvres, in the early period of the Third Republic, had a majority of republican voters, returned republican senators and, in the south of the Department, members of the Assembly. In the north, in the electoral district of Bressuire, which encompasses Saint-Aubin, both Henri de La Rochejaquelein’s nephew (also called Henri, who became a senator during the Second Empire) and great-nephew, Julien, were elected first as town councillors and then as representatives to the National Assembly. Both men served as leaders of the Legitimist and royalist factions in the Senate and the Chamber in Paris.³⁷⁹

Republicans were highly suspicious of the de La Rochejaqueleins’ success. The Prefect, an official appointed by the Republican executive in Paris to oversee the Department, ensured that Julien de La Rochejaquelein was kept under surveillance whenever he visited the region. Police reports noted his arrival in Niort, the hotels that he stayed in and the people that he met.³⁸⁰ The republican newspaper *Le Bocage & La Plaine* reported that in the 1893

³⁷⁹ [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/4187](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/4187)

³⁸⁰ Examples of such reports from August 18, 1883 (report number 2096) and September 3, 1883 (2215) from the police commissioner to the Prefect are preserved in AdDS 3-R-1.

election a candidate who had previously been a Bonapartist and then a Boulangist had split the votes of the republicans in the area. It suggested that the result was unfair: “The Marquis de la Rochejaquelein owes his election to this regrettable situation: if we add the 639 votes of the others to the 9,834 of the republican M. Le Roux we come to 10,473 whilst the reactionary candidate had only 10,121 votes – in summary M. de la Rochejaquelein was beaten.”³⁸¹ This election was the subject of a parliamentary enquiry and a subsequent re-run in which de La Rochejaquelein was again successful.

Deux-Sèvres was thus at the political frontline between republicans and royalist politicians. While the area had once been a royalist stronghold, where de La Rochejaquelein had taken in excess of 45,000 votes, the family’s political position was under increasing pressure.³⁸² Despite de La Rochejaquelein’s electoral successes, it is easy to see how he felt something was needed to remind local voters of the importance of both the family and the political philosophy it represented.

We may conclude that whilst the content of the memorial was determined largely by the national discourse between republicans and royalists, the timing of and the nuances (religious, political, economic) were mainly the result of local factors.

Financial Situation

The financial situation of the de La Rochejaquelein family provided another motive for Julien to agree to the commemoration of his ancestor at this time. At the time of the Vendée Wars, the de La Rochejaquelein family had large landholdings in Metropolitan

³⁸¹ *Le Bocage & la Plaine*, September 13, 1893, 2.

³⁸² [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/4187](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/4187)

France, augmented by a significant addition at the end of the eighteenth century when Henri's father married Constance de Caumont d'Ade. As part of the dowry, he acquired a "vast" sugar plantation, a sugar mill and several thousand slaves in Saint-Domingue, the richest of France's colonies in the Caribbean.³⁸³ After the slave rebellion of 1791, which de la Rochejaquelein fought alongside the British to try to quash, and which ultimately led to the establishment of the Republic of Haiti, the family were ejected from their estate. At the restoration of the monarchy, reparations from the Haitian government were negotiated by the French government and paid to the family by successive French governments ending in 1883.³⁸⁴ The ending of reparation payments (and the interest on them) coincided with the long decline in agricultural prices between 1871 and 1914 as Europe faced increased competition from a resurgent Reconstruction-era United States.³⁸⁵ French landowners grew steadily poorer and began to sell assets, Julien amongst them, "Julien's financial position remained very strong...but his capital was eroded steadily little by little and each year his neighbours swallowed up one of his farms."³⁸⁶ Elizabeth MacKnight suggests that land values in France decreased by a third between 1888 and 1912.³⁸⁷ The family may also have suffered along with many other conservative investors from the bankruptcy of the Union Générale bank in 1882 and the subsequent stock market crash.³⁸⁸

³⁸³ Amlard de Guerry, *La Rochejaquelein: État Présent de la Descendance* (La Roche sur Yon: Association des Descendants de La Rochejaquelein, 1991), 41.

³⁸⁴ In 1826 a report by an enquiry into the ownership of estates in Haiti agreed that the de La Rochejaquelein family should receive 52,000 francs in compensation for the loss of their land as part of the overall settlement of 150,000,000 francs payable in five equal tranches. Haiti defaulted on this after two payments and then in 1838 renegotiated the remaining balance to 60,000,000 francs payable in 30 annual instalments ending in 1883. *Ministère des Finance, État Détailé de Liquidations par la Commission Chargé de Repartir l'Indemnité Attribuée aux Anciens Colons de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1829), 318-319; and Anthony Philips, *Haiti, France and the Independence Debt of 1825* (Vancouver: Canada-Haïti Information Project, 2008), 3-5.

³⁸⁵ Kevin O'Rourke, "The European Grain Invasion, 1870-1913," *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 4 (1997): 776.

³⁸⁶ De Guerry, *La Rochejaquelein État Présent de la Descendance*, 42.

³⁸⁷ Elizabeth MacKnight, *Aristocratic Families in Republican France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2012), 71.

³⁸⁸ Jean Bouvier, *Le Krach De L'Union Générale 1878-1885*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France, 1960). Unfortunately the book does not contain a list of individuals affected by the liquidation of the Bank.

We should not overstate the financial difficulties faced by the family. In 1866 Julien, at the age of thirty-three, did what many aristocrats did to relieve such pressure by marrying the nineteen-year-old daughter of a wealthy bourgeois family, Aglaë Désirée Du Boÿs (1847-1895).³⁸⁹ According to *Le Petit Journal*, one of the more disreputable Parisian newspapers, “Mlle du Boys has only just left the convent school in Paris but she brings a dowry of 250,000 francs a year to the marriage.”³⁹⁰ For comparison, a coal miner would earn 550 francs a year and the best paid workers on farms in Angers and Cholet some 450 francs a year.³⁹¹ Despite this relative affluence, the de La Rochejaquelein fortune was clearly under pressure in the later part of the century.

Personal Difficulties

Another factor in both the timing and content of the memorial that may have motivated the de La Rochejaqueleins was more personal. By the time the statue was under consideration Julien’s wife was terminally ill and she died a month after the inauguration. The couple had no children and both Julien and his father had been the subject of attacks on their sexual morality by Republican pamphleteers.³⁹² These pamphlets suggested that Julien was not Senator Henri de La Rochejaquelein’s son but rather the progeny of his mother’s lover and priest Monseigneur Pie. Cardinal Pie, as he later became, was one of the leading churchmen of the ultramontane and Legitimist causes, a close friend of Julien’s grandmother (the author of the *Mémoires*), was the officiating priest at Julien’s wedding and preached the eulogy at his grandmother’s funeral. The pamphlets also claimed that Julien’s father had several mistresses and at least one illegitimate son who had to be bought-off with favours and positions by Julien. Senator Henri de La

³⁸⁹ See MacKnight, *Aristocratic Families in Republican France*, 46-47.

³⁹⁰ *Le Petit Journal*, Paris, April 8, 1866, 2.

³⁹¹ Émile Chevallier, *Les Salaires au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle de Droit, 1887), 55, 80.

³⁹² A document from 1983 (AdDS 1J/1199) in the Archives de Deux-Sèvres, Niort summarises these sexual indiscretions from some 200 other documents that have since disappeared.

Rochejaquelein was the Legitimist-royalist candidate for president in 1851 during the short-lived Second Republic, immediately before the coup d'état that brought Napoleon III to the throne of the Second Empire. A 70-page manifesto supporting his bid for the presidency refers to “unjustified attacks and lies about him and dared his opponents to provide evidence for such attacks.”³⁹³

Robert Nye’s research into masculinity and codes of honour in the late nineteenth century showed that men from both new aristocracy (such as Xavier de Cathelineau, the great-grandson of the Saint of Anjou) and old nobility (such as Julien de La Rochejaquelein) continued to aspire to an “honour code that worked to both shape and reflect male identity and ideals of male behaviour.”³⁹⁴ These honour codes had two sources – the first “sprang from a set of inheritance practices, the other from the public military vocation of the nobility.”³⁹⁵ Neither Xavier, whose father, grandfather and great-grandfather all served and died in Royalist armies, nor Julien, who, “because of his poor eyesight was unable to go to Saint-Cyr [the officer training school]” served in the army.³⁹⁶ Similarly, Judith Surkis’ work on masculinity in the early Third Republic revealed a fragile and fractured country that was attempting and failing to build a society based on conjugal heterosexuality. Both Republicans and conservatives were deeply concerned about “voluntary bachelors”. This group of young men, mainly from comfortable backgrounds, was represented by the “repressed student, the unmarried man, the childless bureaucrat.”³⁹⁷ She quotes a contemporary source as saying that such men sought to be “exonerated from all public and private responsibilities in order to live with greater ease, in giving free rein to their most disorderly impulses.”³⁹⁸ Such impulses

³⁹³ Paul-Ernest de Ratier, *M. de La Rochejaquelein, Président de la République* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1851), 52.

³⁹⁴ Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, 16.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹⁶ De Guerry, *La Rochejaquelein Etat Présent de la Descendance*, 41.

³⁹⁷ Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870–1920* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 71.

³⁹⁸ Pierre Garnier, *Célibat et Célibataires* (1898) quoted in *Ibid.*, 71.

included both homosexual and heterosexual licentiousness. For both Surkis and Nye this concern with sexuality can be traced to the existential threat to France caused by the declining birth rate compared to Germany, compounded by a declining “masculinity index”, which is to say the ratio of male births. Fewer men to join the army would inevitably lead to defeat in what was assumed to be the inevitable future war with Germany. They note that late-nineteenth-century science attributed male births to vigorous and dominant men.³⁹⁹

Both of the royalist memorials studied in this thesis involved men from ancient noble families who were the “last of their line”: Julien de La Rochejaquelein and Maurice d’Andigné, the mayor of Le Pin-en-Mauges and enemy of the Xavier de Cathelineau. It was unusual for men from such distinguished and old nobility to fail in their primary duty of continuing the line. According to both Nye and Surkis, there appears to have been a real crisis for men from aristocratic backgrounds: an increasing feeling of being divorced from the mainstream and unable to fulfil their familial, political or military destiny. We might conclude that this type of personal crisis added to the desire of men such as Julien de La Rochejaquelein to ensure his family name lived on after his death.

The accumulation of difficulties that Julien de La Rochejaquelein faced in the mid-1890s – political, financial, personal – seemed to require a response from the family. The booklet published alongside the inauguration of the statue explained: “Now is the right time for the statue of Henri de La Rochejaquelein – to praise his heroic memory and to tap into the well of past patriotism that he represents so that we can forget the shame and failure of the present.”⁴⁰⁰ This was an event designed to reinforce the need for

³⁹⁹ Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, 77-78.

⁴⁰⁰ Emile Grimaud. *Inauguration de la Statue de Henri de la Rochejaquelein* (Nantes: Emile Grimaud et Fils, 1895) 1.

royalist and aristocratic revival and revenge against a decadent Republic.

The Memorial

The first announcement of the memorial to de La Rochejaquelein came in the royalist press on 11 February 1894, almost exactly one hundred years after his death. *L'Etoile de la Vendée* wrote that, since Anjou (in fact in Maine-et Loire) had already announced the building of a monument to Cathelineau, the Vendée could not be left behind. This was a bizarre form of competition since while on the one hand Vendée 85 would not be involved, on the other hand both statues would be in what was recognised to be “the Vendée” *région de mémoire*. A committee to fund and build the de La Rochejaquelein memorial had been formed under the chairmanship of Julien de La Rochejaquelein and the honorary presidency of General Charette. Charette was himself the great-nephew of a Vendéen War general on his father’s side and, on his mother’s side, a liaison between the Duc de Berry (the father of the Comte de Chambord) and an English girl, Amy Brown, whilst the Bourbons were in exile. Charette was also the founder and leader of the Papal Zouaves, not having wanted to fight for the Bonapartes, and a decorated hero of the Franco-Prussian war.⁴⁰¹ The committee was thus led by and made up largely of senior royalists with links to both the events of the civil war and the royal family.

A place to put the statue was found on a parcel of private land that belonged to the de La Rochejaquelein family. It would be next to the both the town hall and the church with its special chapel and the splendid marble tomb of Louis and Henri de La Rochejaquelein; brothers who had both died fighting for the Bourbon restoration. The church would also receive a new memorial window to be unveiled at

⁴⁰¹ *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, February 11, 1894, 3.

the same time as the statue. The statue was moved from this site in 2011, to one owned by the commune, to allow for the enlargement of the roundabout in the centre of Saint-Aubin but at the time of its erection the statue was clearly meant to be at the centre of the “conversation” between Church and state in the middle of the town.⁴⁰²

The committee quickly raised over 13,000 francs to pay for a bronze statue to be designed and cast by the celebrated sculptor Alexandre Falguière (1831-1900). Subscribers to the cost of the de La Rochejaquelein statue included the pretenders to the French throne and most of the aristocratic families of the region.⁴⁰³ Out of 376 subscribers, 157 were nobles with 38 marquises (the highest rank below the royal family) and 68 comtes (earls), the next rank down.⁴⁰⁴ Not all the nobility answered the call because in September 1883 the de La Rochejaquelein family had moved its support to the Orléans cause on the death of the Comte de Chambord. There continued to be a small group who found themselves unable to support anyone not in the direct male line of succession. They had long memories of the Orleanist Louis-Philippe, the citizen king and his father Louis Egalité, who supported the initial stages of the Revolution and voted for the death of Louis XVI. The de La Rochejaquelein family were themselves large subscribers to the funds, despite losing their Caribbean sugar plantations.⁴⁰⁵ They continued to be “rich from their immense

⁴⁰² The 2011 removal and restorations are engraved on the pedestal of the statue, seen by the author on July 8, 2016.

⁴⁰³ The first three entries on the list of subscribers in the Grimaud book were the Comte de Paris, the Duc de Parme and the Comte de Bardi. The Comte de Paris was Prince Philippe d’Orléans – the Orleanist claimant to the throne (known as Philippe VIII in royalist circles). Robert I, the Duc de Parme, was the Bourbon claimant to the throne of Italy, having being overthrown by the house of Savoy in the unification of Italy. Henry, Comte de Bardi was the nephew of the Comte de Chambord and one of the Spanish Bourbon-Parma family that claimed the French throne through the male line from Charles X.

⁴⁰⁴ Grimaud, *Inauguration*, 67-74.

⁴⁰⁵ On the manuscript list kept by the family, the total raised for the statue was just under 11,000 francs of which Julien contributed 1,000 francs and other members of the immediate family a further 800 francs (about 16% of the total). Rochejaquelein Family Archive.

landholdings, from which they spent without concern to ensure that the retained political power.”⁴⁰⁶

Falguière was a member of the *Institut des Beaux-Arts* and a commander of the *Légion d'Honneur* who had already won prizes for his statues of Balzac in Paris, La Fayette in Washington DC and of the prominent anti-slavery leader and Primate of Africa Cardinal Lavigerie, in Bayonne. The model for the statue of de La Rochejaquelein was exhibited at the May 1895 Paris Salon, where “it was much admired.”⁴⁰⁷ The review of the Salon in *L'Univers Illustré* noted that sculpture was the only art form where France was currently preeminent and that, of the 1895 exhibits, “If I was forced to cite just one of the works, it would be the statue of de La Rochejaquelein by Falguière.”⁴⁰⁸ In the *Figaro-Salon* review the statue was praised as “the most recommended of all the works on show.”⁴⁰⁹ Especially by comparison with the Cathelineau statue, there was almost no dispute about the need for a statue to de La Rochejaquelein. The statue itself was to be erected and unveiled on the private property of the de La Rochejaquelein family and there are no documents in the family, local, regional or national archives that suggest that the laws about Public Homage were considered.⁴¹⁰

The image used in the statue, the memorial window and the new tomb of Henri de La Rochejaquelein drew on national stereotypical imagery that idealized the handsome and dangerous male. An example of such heroic imagery is illustrated below, the first of the young Bonaparte on the bridge at Arcola painted in 1796 by Jean-

⁴⁰⁶ De Guerry, *La Rochejaquelein: état présent de la descendance*, 42.

⁴⁰⁷ L'abbé Th. Gabard, *Histoire de la paroisse de Saint-Auban de Baubigné*, (Saint Maxient: Herault, 1908), 141.

⁴⁰⁸ *L'Univers Illustré* 15 June 1895, 376-378.

⁴⁰⁹ Charles Yriarte, *Figaro-Salon* 1895, (Paris: Goupil et Cie, 1895), 77.

⁴¹⁰ The law of July 1816 (one of the first to be passed by the newly restored king, Louis XVIII) stated that: « NOUS AVONS ORDONNÉ et ORDONNONS ce qui suit: Art. 1er. À l'avenir, aucun don, aucun hommage, aucune récompense ne pourront être votés, offerts ou décernés comme témoignages de la reconnaissance publique, par les conseils généraux, conseils municipaux, gardes nationales ou tout autre corps civil ou militaire, sans notre autorisation préalable ». This law was used to forbid the erection and then the unveiling of the Cathelineau statue in 1896.

Antoine Gros compared to the portrait of de La Rochejaquelein by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin painted in 1817.



Figure 5.5: Henri de La Rochejaquelein by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, 1817, Municipal Museum, Cholet.



Figure 5.4: *Bonaparte au Pont d'Arcole* by Antoine-Jean Gros, 1876, Palace of Versailles.

As can be seen, these are standing portraits, as was usual for men who were not royalty. They suggest dynamism and readiness for armed action. The picture of de La Rochejaquelein tells almost the same story as that of Bonaparte: young generals seizing their opportunities to lead their forces into battle under their chosen flag, the *Dieu et le Roi* white battle standard or Bonaparte's Army of Italy standard. De La Rochejaquelein had a wounded arm, which did not stop him leading heroically and we may compare the white sash of the royalists and the sacred heart of the church on his left breast with Bonaparte's tricolour sash of the republic. Both look into the distance and are immaculately coiffed and dressed. There is evidently only a limited concern for realism in either of these images and so they were easily transported to the imaginary and mythic

space from which their memories were used in the process of identity formation.

The statue of de La Rochejaquelein shown at the beginning of this chapter draws on earlier work by Falguière, for example the statue to Gambetta in Cahors (Figure 5.6), which is also inscribed on the base with his famous words about “clinging to flag of the glorious French Revolution”.



Figure 5.6: Leon Gambetta by Alexandre Falguière, 1884, Place Francois Mitterrand, Cahors.

John Dixon Hunt's work on the reception of monuments reminds us that statues have often included verbal prompts and "writing something down, especially where the medium is in stone, teak, granite or marble lends the words more than usual importance. We look and attend perhaps more so when the place we find writing does not automatically suggest itself as a locus of communication."⁴¹¹ Supporters of both sides of the ideological conflict clearly set great store in the words on the statues, and the associations that spectators would draw from them.

The Events of 26 September 1895

Contemporary accounts of the inauguration on 26 September 1895 speak of an "immense crowd" filling Saint Aubin, a village of no more than 500 inhabitants. According to the Abbé Gabard – who was parish priest at the time and whose brother was the personal chaplain to the de La Rochejaquelein family – 360 people sat down to dinner and a further 15-20,000 people were served "seven fat bullock, two calves, a sheep and two pigs, a thousand kilos of bread, thirty-five barrels of wine, six tonnes of beer and more than a thousand bottles of lemonade."⁴¹² (The detail remembered after thirteen years appears impressive until you realise it is lifted almost word-for-word from a report on 29 October 1895 by the royalist newspaper *Le Conservateur Bressuirais* newspaper.⁴¹³)

The publication of a book collecting together all the speeches made on the day of the inauguration gives us a very clear idea of both the religious and political significance that contemporaries attached to the events of 26 September 1895. Unlike the Cathelineau memorial brochure, which we will see was sold to pay the debts of the inauguration committee, the eighty-page bound book produced for de La Rochejaquelein's appears to have been given to those who

⁴¹¹ Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens*, 97.

⁴¹² Abbé Th. Gabard, *Histoire de la Paroisse de Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné* (Cholet: Hérault, 1990, [Reproduction in facsimile of the edition of 1908]), 96.

⁴¹³ *Le Conservateur Bressuirais*, October 29, 1895, 1.

served on the committee and was sent freely to others who might be interested.

The religious part of the day was led by three bishops, of Poitiers, Luçon and Montpellier and two mitred abbots accompanied by 300 priests and monks from the religious houses. It began with the unveiling of the new tomb of Louis and Henri de La Rochejaquelein and of a memorial window in the church. The window (Figure 5.7) depicts the death of Judah Maccabee:



414

Figure 5.7: Stained glass window in the Chapel at in Saint-Aubin-de-Baubigné. The features of Judah Maccabee are in fact those of Henri de La Rochejaquelein and the scene of the fallen hero is symbolically overseen by the figure of Christ and the Sacred Heart. The inscription at the top of the first panel is (a slightly corrupted version) from the first book of the Maccabees: MELIUS EST NOS MORTE BELLO QUAM VIDERE MALA GENTIS NOSTRAE ET SANCTORUM - "It is better for us to die in battle, than to see the destruction of our nation, and of our altars".

The eulogy was given by the youngest of the attending bishops, Monseigneur François Marie Anatole de Rovérié de Cabrières (1830-1921), the Bishop of Montpellier, a future cardinal and a supporter of the Bourbon Legitimist cause. Cabrières was the son of

⁴¹⁴ *Author's own photograph*, July 2016. The Latin Vulgate Bible (the Douay-Rheims version) has this as "Quoniam melius est nos mori in bello, quam videre mala gentis nostrae et sanctorum" (1 Maccabees 3:59).

Comte Eugène de Cabrières, who had been imprisoned along with all the men of the family during the Terror. He was ordained in Nîmes in 1853, aged 23 and, during the Second Empire, took up anti-protestant and ultramontane positions, for example “we have no need to ask forgiveness from the Protestants for the acts of our fathers.”⁴¹⁵ He spent his entire working life in what Philippe Secondy calls, the “Vendée du Midi”, that is the Catholic and royalist resistance to republicanism which was led by the Royalist Committee in Montpellier. This group of 350 men including 112 aristocrats selected and supported political candidates, met in Cabrière’s diocesan hall, which was decorated with pictures of kings and queens of France and, according to Cholvy, a picture of Henri de La Rochejaquelein.⁴¹⁶ Cabrières’ disdain for the Third Republic became well known, “if we were not already prejudiced against its birth, we would have to invent that prejudice – their Revolution was essentially satanic.”⁴¹⁷ He refused to publish Leo XIII’s papal encyclical calling for reconciliation or compromise with the Republic in 1891 and his biographer, Gérard Cholvy believed that his submission to papal authority was less than sincere. He was a complex man who believed in a patriarchal and agrarian society ruled largely by notables in the regions. He was a supporter of the renaissance of the Provençal language and a friend of Fredric Mistral. In the 1907 strikes and demonstrations over the production cost and price of wine in the Midi he took the side of the wine growers and smallholders against capitalism and mechanisation.⁴¹⁸ After he was made Cardinal in 1911 he continued to support populist causes. He became a friend of Charles Maurras, the founder of Action Française, and advocated for him in Rome.⁴¹⁹

That the committee for the inauguration brought this man over 500

⁴¹⁵ Quoted in Gérard Cholvy, *Le Diocèse de Montpellier* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1972), 233.

⁴¹⁶ Philippe Secondy, *Royalisme et Innovations Partisans les « Blancs du Midi » à la fin du 19e siècle* (Revue Française de Science Politique v.53, 2003), 78.

⁴¹⁷ Quoted in Gérard Cholvy, *Commémoration en Marge d’un Cinquantenaire: le Cardinal de Cabrières*, in *Revue d’histoire de l’Eglise de France* v.58, 1972, 247-249.

⁴¹⁸ Smith, *Terror and Terroir*.

⁴¹⁹ Gérard Cholvy, *Le Diocèse de Montpellier* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne 1972), 233-239.

kilometres from Montpellier (even taking the train via Paris, the journey would have taken at least two days) to preach the eulogy rather than one of the local bishops from Poitiers, Luçon or Angers shows us that they wanted a political speech rather than a religious one. Cabrières often intervened in local and national politics, where he urged Catholics to form an electoral bloc: “in all elected bodies, we must bring forward men who share and support the Catholic faith...Catholics should vote and make others vote for the most dignified candidates.”⁴²⁰

Cabrières’ eulogy set out to show that the monument to de La Rochejaquelein was an important reminder to society: it evoked a world of peasants who wanted leadership and so elected men born to lead, and had the touch of “genius” to inspire the rural masses. He told the crowd that now was the right time to receive this reminder: “Present-day France, after a century of revolution is once again worried, trouble and divided.” The Christian world looked on and wished for nothing more than that France, “the cradle of civilisation, regains her brilliance.”⁴²¹

Cabrières took two themes for the eulogy. The first came from the book of Maccabees: “How is the mighty man fallen, that saved the people of Israel.”⁴²² The story of the fallen hero of the Maccabees was a common thread in royalist discourse and was also the subject of the memorial window. The Maccabee mythology is addressed in greater detail in the next chapter. The second theme of Cabrières’ eulogy was from the epistle of John: “The victory that overcomes the world is our faith.”⁴²³ He used this reference to construct a distinctly political eulogy. He wanted, he said, to speak of faith “as a civil virtue; that is loyalty to national and domestic traditions; it is a

⁴²⁰ *Lettre Pastorale de Monseigneur l’Archevêque Métropolitain de la Province Ecclésiastique d’Avignon au Clergé et aux Fidèles de leurs Diocèses*, quoted in *Secondy Royalisme et innovations*, 81.

⁴²¹ Grimaud, *Inauguration*, 23.

⁴²² First book of Maccabees Ch.9, V.21.

⁴²³ The First Epistle General of John Ch. 5, V. 4.

cult of duty and of honour”, and this civil virtue was the main support and resource of “societies in great danger.” Such societies needed men who would lead them from a position of conviction and strength; such a man was Henri de La Rochejaquelein. While this would not always lead to victory in this world, God reserved to himself all eternity for the reward of “the Good” (“les bons”) and the punishment of “the wicked, the propagators and champions of antisocial and anti-Christian doctrine.”⁴²⁴

The statue’s unveiling was followed by a banquet and speeches by regional and national notables. First was General Charette, head of the Papal Zouaves and representative of the exiled Prince of Orleans, then M. Alfred Biré, the Senator of the Vendée (the Deux-Sèvres had only Republican senators). Julien de La Rochejaquelein gave a short response and the evening concluded with a long speech by the scholar, journalist and orator Henri, Comte de Mayol de Lupé.⁴²⁵ These speeches expanded on the themes from the eulogy: the joining of God, King and Country against the Republican and Masonic doctrines of secularism and knowledge; and the free choice made by the people to be led by the King and his aristocrats. Charette asked the crowd who but their traditional leaders would lead them against the detestable ideas of the current period? He exclaimed, “Frenchmen of today also know how to fight and die for the God and King, that is to say for *la Patrie*.”⁴²⁶ De Mayol de Lupé pronounced that three words “make up our national code ... despite the criminal and impious attempts to rob them of their power: Sacrifice, Honour, Loyalty. In those words you have the whole life of Henri de La Rochejaquelein, who would have cried out for King and for Liberty – the true liberty which allows mankind to develop strength from the nobility of his upbringing.”⁴²⁷ Biré also reminded

⁴²⁴ Grimaud. *Inauguration*, 4.

⁴²⁵ Henri de Mayol de Lupé was the former counsellor to Henri V, Comte de Chambord, the Bourbon pretender and the father of the infamous Jean Mayol de Lupé, later commander of the SS Charlemagne regiment.

⁴²⁶ Grimaud. *Inauguration*, 36.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-55.

the crowd of the consequences of the path that the current government was taking, towards anarchy and barbarism but his focus was on leadership, “the chiefs of the army were freely and spontaneously chosen from the ranks of that army, showing their irresistible brilliance – in 1895 as in 1793, for God and for the King,”⁴²⁸

There is little doubt that the main speakers at the inauguration, both religious and secular, had a set of current political messages that they wanted to convey. The memorial reminded people of the courage that was needed to support a different discourse to that being offered to them by the state through the academy, schools and bureaucracy. This golden young man, a biblical hero and martyr, stood for a traditional governing system of God, King, Aristocracy that should be restored before their region and France itself fell into barbarism and anarchy. Their slogans of Sacrifice, Honour and Loyalty deliberately chosen to counter the three words of the Republic: Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood.

Reception of the Memorial in the Royalist Press

The reception given to the inauguration in the conservative press bordered on the ecstatic. In the learned journals of local history societies, the speeches were reprinted in their entirety and long extracts could be found in the daily, weekly and monthly royalist press. It is difficult to know the exact reach of these papers but one estimate puts *La Croix* at 140,000 copies and *Le Monde* at 670,000, whilst some regional papers printed as many as 200,000 copies.⁴²⁹ Taken with the publication in books and learned journals it is possible that extracts from the speeches would have been printed a million times. In a culture that shared readership of newspapers

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁴²⁹ Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral, Fernand Terrou, *Histoire Générale de la Presse Française: de 1815 à 1870* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), 398-402.

widely, both in domestic settings and in more public spaces such as bars and cafés, these were genuinely mass media events.⁴³⁰

La Croix, the leading national Catholic paper, placed the story in a full column its front page. Under the headline “Henri de La Rochejaquelein: His Statue” it urged its readers to look backwards to a time when de La Rochejaquelein epitomised the glory of France: “Paris has so abused France that provincial life has decided to bypass it ... we witness so many scandals that it is time to look back to our glorious past because the present is so full of greed.”⁴³¹

Le Monde, a conservative and monarchist paper, asked its readers to “Meditate on this, what would it take for the Vendée to triumph? And what of the rest of France if we did the same?”⁴³²

The regional press gave the story not just a column, or indeed a page, but the whole newspaper. Having trailed the inauguration on its front page since the beginning of August, *Le Conservateur Bressuirais* presented its readers with a preview of the inauguration in its edition of 23 September that took the whole front page. It included a timetable for the day, instructions on which trains to take and the price of tickets as well as extracts from the life of Henri and the oration given at the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein’s funeral by Cardinal Pie. This oration went back even further in the history of Poitou, comparing de La Rochejaquelein’s battles to those of the fifth-century Clovis suppressing the Arian heresy (the belief that Jesus, being the son of God, is subordinate to the Father); and to Charles Martel’s defeat of Islam in the eighth century at the Battle of Tours. Cardinal Pie proclaimed that the Vendée Wars which the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein had so faithfully chronicled “which we should not call a civil war, a political war or a social war ... but a holy war.”⁴³³

⁴³⁰ Christophe Charle, *Le Siècle De La Presse, 1830-1939* (Paris: Univers Historique, Seuil, 2004), 15.

⁴³¹ *La Croix*, September 26, 1895, 1.

⁴³² *Le Monde*, September 26, 1895, 1.

⁴³³ *La Revue Bressuirais*, May 16, 1895, 1; and *Le Conservateur Bressuirais*, August 25 1895, 1.

The following two editions of the paper were given over in their entirety to reports of the events of 26 September. It was not until 20 October that the front page did *not* contain a story about it, and that was only because of a full-page report of the death of the current Marquise de La Rochejaquelein (Julien's wife).⁴³⁴ Long sections of the eulogy, the speeches and the toasts were published alongside songs and poems written for the occasion. In the edition of 6 October a page was given over to extracts from other national conservative and royalist newspapers such as the *Gazette de France*, *La Vérité*, *L'Univers*, *L'Autorité* and *Le Moniteur Universel* all of which appeared to have given it significant positive coverage.⁴³⁵

To understand the appeal of the inauguration to these papers, it is worth considering the stories that dominated the conservative press in this period, which included republican reforms to education, new taxes on the church, the Jewish and Freemason questions, and the campaign for the restoration of a robust and traditional monarchy. Examples of such stories included scandals at secular schools, and the increase in juvenile delinquency between 1841 (when the majority of all education was delivered by the church) and 1891 (when the majority was delivered by the state).⁴³⁶ Attacks on church finance through the imposition of membership taxes on its religious orders for the first time took up many column inches in *La Revue Bressuirais* and *Le Conservateur Bressuirais*.⁴³⁷ The way that the politicians and priests' speeches at the inauguration defined themselves against a Masonic 'other' was reflected in these papers. For example *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, published every edition with the slogan "LE FRANC-MACON, VOILA L'ENNEMI" (Freemasonry, That is the Enemy) above its title and stories about the threats of

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, October 20, 1895, 1.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, October 6, 1895, 2.

⁴³⁶ *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, September 29, 1895, 1.

⁴³⁷ *La Revue Bressuirais*, May 16, 1895, 1; and *Le Conservateur Bressuirais*, August 25, 1895, 1.

Freemasonry were common in this period. The Freemasons were frequently brought into connection with the Jews as conspiratorial foundations of the Republic. In July, at the time of the regional and town elections, *L'Étoile* published a critique of the “false republicans whose primary sin had been to sell France to Freemasons and Jews, as Judas had sold Christ.”⁴³⁸ Although it was not an explicit part of the inaugural speeches – where Jews featured as Old Testament heroes like the Maccabees – antisemitism was, at the time of the memorial, a respectable position to take in most conservative circles, even amongst people who rarely ventured into the big cities and towns where Jews lived, and allusions to the Masons and Republicans may have brought out additional resonances for auditors steeped in the associations of the conservative press. In the whole of Vendée Department in 1866 there were no Jews, in Deux-Sèvres there was one Jew and in Maine-et-Loire, with its relatively large city of Angers, twenty. In 1872 there were still no Jews in the Vendée, four in Deux-Sèvres and thirty in Maine-et-Loire, almost all living in Angers.⁴³⁹ The final theme that fills the pages of the conservative press at this time is the attractions of a monarchical system of government. On 19 May 1895, the day that *Le Figaro* reported the exhibition of the statue of M. Henri at the Salon de Paris “a work of art of such a glorious person that it merits veneration”, it also carried a report of the banquet celebrating Saint Philippe, the patron saint of the French kings.⁴⁴⁰ The banquet was presided over by Julien de La Rochejaquelein who, as reported in the *Gazette de France* of the same date, gave the after dinner speech which enumerated the many faults of the Republic, including of course the concordance between Jews, Freemasons and the Republic, the secularisation of education, the financial scandals and the attacks on the church. His

⁴³⁸ *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, July 28, 1895, 1.

⁴³⁹ Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews and the French Revolutions 1789, 1830 and 1848* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), 110.

⁴⁴⁰ *Le Figaro*, May 19, 1895, 2.

answer to all these problems was simply the restoration of the monarchy.⁴⁴¹

Reception of the Memorial in the Republican Press

Unlike the accounts of the inauguration of Cathelineau's statue in Le-Pin-en-Mauges a year later, there are no reports of the event by republican newspapers. The republican press studiously ignored the inauguration. In six different republican-leaning newspapers in the Vendée and Deux-Sèvres there is not one line about it, although they find space to report on the death of Louis Pasteur (although he was probably the most famous man in France, this news from Paris was not on the front pages of any local royalist papers); the unfortunate accident of a local man whose hand was broken by a log falling from a bullock cart; and the case of "the abbé Hugonin, previously vicar of the parish of Vaucelles near Caen in Normandy, arrested for molesting children under the age of sixteen."⁴⁴² Such reports of clerical misbehaviour, often in parts of France a long way from the Vendée, are often seen in the republican press close to the date of a major royalist or religious event. Given the extraordinary sight of members of the National Assembly, senators, generals, three bishops and the heads of two religious orders along with a 20,000 strong crowd gathering in a small village in their region, it seems likely that the republican press's collective omission constituted a deliberate strategy not to associate the de La Rochejaquelein name with anything positive.

Julien de La Rochejaquelein's deeds and views were in fact often reported negatively on the front pages of the republican newspapers. For example, four days before the inauguration, *Le Bocage et la Plaine* reported: "The Marquis de La Rochejaquelein believes that the church alone should be in charge of education.

⁴⁴¹ *Gazette de France*, May 19, 1895, 1.

⁴⁴² *L'Echo de Deux-Sèvres*, October 3, 1895, 1; *Le Bocage & la Plaine*, September 26, 1895, 3; and *La Vendée Républicaine*, September 28, 1895, 1.

Like all clericals, he continuously spreads his angry hatred against the laws that require our children to be educated in secular schools.”⁴⁴³ The struggle for obligatory, secular education of the young continued to be a source of fierce debate in the papers throughout this period as did the role of the monarchy and, in particular the example of foreign monarchs. Three days after the events in Saint-Aubin, the same newspaper reported on the visit of the King of Belgium and the enthusiastic cries of “*Vive le roi*” which it called “simply politeness.” It noted that the “the royalist committees led by the provisional deputy from Bressuire [de La Rochejaquelein] seem to believe that this is a revival of the long-dormant spirit of the monarchy...but all it actually shows is that to be a reactionary you need lots of faith.”⁴⁴⁴

Unlike what we will see in the republican press reaction to the Cathelineau statue, there was no personal attack on the current Marquis de La Rochejaquelein’s antecedents. The fact that bourgeois republicans were ready to insult the great-grandson of a “peasant, a tinker and a rag-picker” and not the descendants of an aristocratic slave-owner suggests that they may have found Cathelineau more threatening. This may invert our expectations of class politics, but for republican interpretations of the Vendée rebellion, the myth of the peasant leader who fought against a popular rebellion for ideological reasons was probably far more dangerous than that of the wealthy aristocrat who was simply fulfilling the expected role of his class and position.

⁴⁴³ *Le Bocage & La Plaine*, September 22, 1895, 1.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, September 29, 1895, 1.

Conclusion

The commemoration of Henri de La Rochejaquelein in 1895 illustrates at least three important findings about conservative memory culture in the Vendée. First, this culture built on foundational myths that were created by predominantly women writers in the immediate aftermath of the wars – in this case, the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein – which were then adapted by male editors, writers and historians to construct an idealised image of the masculine hero. Second, the memorial was constructed in order to remind the voting population of the region of their royalist and Catholic heritage, and the martyrdom and heroism of their grandfathers, in a context of genuine electoral contestation against Republicans. The statue aimed to influence regional opinion concerning the political choice between traditional, conservative values and the ideology of secular, democratic republicanism. Third, the content of the memorial speeches, the style of the statue and the timing of its erection depended not only on these national political concerns but also on the personal and local concerns of the principal actors. The motivations of the people responsible for its planning and construction included reminding people of the contribution of the de La Rochejaquelein family to the heroic defence of traditional values, the monarchy and the Church at a time when the family's political fortunes were under threat and there were stresses in their financial and personal lives.

Both the memorial itself and the way it was received at the time show us that some of the historiographical narratives of commemoration in the Vendée need to be reassessed. Reynald Secher's contention that the wars and their immediate aftermath has been the subject of cleansing from history is wrong: the research for this thesis shows conclusively that the events, their meaning and their memory were debated at length in the press, in politics, in the pulpit and in academic journals. Gildea's and Martin's

work meanwhile reveals some but not all of the complexities of royalist commemoration and the way it was used to construct a regional identity around a discourse of masculine, Catholic and racial purity. In particular they do not explore the way this discourse includes both the national “big picture” debates about the type of government and society that was best for France and the “small picture” concerns of the principal actors in the commemoration. At the same time, this chapter confirms the work of historians of the nineteenth-century right. Accampo and Mansker’s work on masculine honour and the aristocracy would lead us to expect the masculinisation of the myths, whilst Nye and Passmore’s work suggests that, whatever the disagreements between royalists, they would always unite around their fear of “the other”: Freemasonry, the Jews and the Jacobins. In the next chapter we will see how this analysis can be challenged when the republican state and its supporters in the press changed their stance from the passive acceptance of the de La Rochejaquelein memorial to active resistance of the memorial to Cathelineau.

6. Jacques Cathelineau: A Disputed Memorial



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Fol Figure 6.1: Stone Statue of Jacques Cathelineau, Saint Pavin Church, Le Pin-en-Mauges, after Dominique Molknecht, 1896.

Following the relatively uncontroversial inauguration of the memorial to Henri de La Rochejaquelein, this chapter considers a statue that reveals the complexities of both royalist resistance in the 1890s and the reaction to it by the republican state: the memorial to the peasant Jacques Cathelineau (1759-1793), in his hometown of Le Pin-en-Mauges (Maine-et-Loire) in October 1896.

⁴⁴⁵ Author's photograph, June 2017. Provenance of statue: Louis Guéry, *Jacques Cathelineau, un Héros de Vitrail* (Nantes: Editions Artaud, 1983), 99.

The chapter begins with a summary of Cathelineau's life and how the myths about him were constructed and challenged, revealing the conflicts that arose between republicans and Catholic reactionaries surrounding the erection of the memorial. We then explore the motivations of key players in the commemoration: Comte Xavier de Cathelineau (1857-1921), the great-grandson of Jacques and the driving force behind the statue; Comte Maurice d'Andigné (1844-1926), the mayor of Le Pin-en-Mauges and a major figure in royalist circles; and Monseigneur Louis-Joseph Luçon (1842-1930), the Bishop of Belley in 1896 but later to become the leading representative of the Catholic church during the Great War as Cardinal-Archbishop of Rheims. Alongside these three on the memorial committee was Julien de La Rochejaquelein (whose motivations are dealt with at length in Chapter 5), who served as its president and became its largest financial supporter. The chapter will show how disputes between these actors about the statue revealed fissures within the church and reactionary politics more widely.

There are several similarities between the memorials to Cathelineau and de La Rochejaquelein. In each case local and personal issues beyond national ideological conflicts determined the timing and content of these commemorations. They also both show how important the manipulation of image was in the construction of a hero. The commemorations also used the cults of the Maccabees in order to develop stories of heroic leadership on the one hand and of martyrdom and redemption on the other. The Cathelineau statue nonetheless differed from the de La Rochejaquelein memorial in several important ways. The first is that de La Rochejaquelein's commemoration was almost entirely political in nature – even the eulogy focused on Henri's military prowess and was delivered by the most overtly political bishop in France at the time. In contrast, the memorial to Cathelineau, who was known locally as the Saint of

Anjou, had a much stronger religious flavour. This partly reflected the authorship and construction of the founding myths about the two generals. The Marquise de La Rochejaquelein's memoirs focussed on the heroic glamour of Henri's young life and, as Alphonse Aulard remarked, she had very little religious purpose to her memoirs.⁴⁴⁶ As we have seen, Baron Prosper de Barante and Julien de La Rochejaquelein then edited de La Rochejaquelein's story largely for their own contemporary political purposes. The first author to set out Cathelineau's story was the lowly parish priest from where he grew up, Jacques Cantiteau.⁴⁴⁷ Cantiteau revealed a young saintly man serving the church, singing the liturgy, leading processions to rural shrines to the Virgin Mary, marrying young and fathering eleven children. When, as a more mature man, he was called on to lead the men of the village to war, it was thus natural for him to devote his military success to God. The contrasting stories of the young, glamorous Henri and mature, saintly Jacques usefully served the purpose of reinforcing the dual nature of reactionary revivalist ideology: traditional social structures, led by local nobility as represented by Henri bulwarked by a traditional belief system and a loyal peasantry as represented by Jacques.

The Cathelineau story also opens questions about how class differences were used in reactionary and republican discourse. Cathelineau was the poor son of peasants, his children brought up in an unremarkable two-room shack, which today is marked only by a small plaque. He went to fight alongside his equally poor peasant family and friends initially because they were threatened by conscription for a war they believed was not theirs. By contrast, de La Rochejaquelein was the heir of one of the oldest and wealthiest aristocratic families in France, his family owned slaves and plantations in the Caribbean as well as property in Paris and the Vendée; his family considered people like Cathelineau and his

⁴⁴⁶ Alphonse Aulard, "La Révolution Française", *Revue Historique* 16 (Paris, 1889): 106.

⁴⁴⁷ François. Uzureau, *Le Premier Généralissime de la Grande Armée Catholique et Royale de la Vendée. "Éloge Funèbre de M. Cathelineau" de J. Cantiteau.* (Paris: Savaete, 1909).

friends to be “leurs paysans”. His birthplace of Château Durbellière is now a romantic ruin, signposted from miles away, and is the setting for stylised reconstructions of his life.

The third major difference between the memorials is in how republicans reacted to them. The de La Rochejaquelein statue was designed and sculpted by an internationally acclaimed artist, exhibited and fêted in Paris, paid for largely by the aristocracy and unveiled with barely a murmur of dissent at local, regional or national levels. By contrast, Cathelineau’s memorial struggled to raise funds even for a locally composed stone statue of little artistic merit, relying ultimately on the generosity of the de La Rochejaquelein family. It was opposed at all levels of government from the moment it was planned, through its inauguration and afterwards in the republican press. “Jacques in the Box” attracted journalists and photographers to the tiny village of Le Pin-en-Mauges for years after the planned inauguration date, caused the resignation of the entire town council and hundreds of column inches in national and regional newspapers.

The final distinctive feature of the Cathelineau statue that this chapter will unpack is how it illustrated splits in conservative and Catholic politics during this period. The dispute between two of the principal actors Xavier de Cathelineau and Maurice d’Andigné about placing the statue in a public space did not just result from personal animosity, but also concerned the way that conservatives like d’Andigné looked for pragmatic ways to retain a limited amount of power and to deal with the growing strength of secular, democratic republicanism. Others, like Xavier de Cathelineau, believed in holding a more purist line that left them at the extreme edge of politics alongside populists such as the founders of Action Française. The two eulogies preached at the inaugurations also reveal nuances in the way that the church approached the question of political control. In the case of the de La Rochejaquelein eulogy,

Mgr. Cabrières preached the case for the church to influence elections by electing royalists and Catholics; whilst in the Cathelineau eulogy, Mgr. Luçon set out the case for the church to be concerned with changing society through prayer and faith whilst operating under any type of government.

The Life of Jacques Cathelineau

The first full biography of Jacques Cathelineau, written anonymously but later attributed to Dr Lafond-Gouzy from Toulouse, was published in 1821, twenty-eight years after Cathelineau's death.⁴⁴⁸ It was based on the memoirs and letters of his parish priest, Jacques Cantiteau (1759-1817), and Cantiteau's funeral eulogy to Cathelineau that had been published privately in 1807.⁴⁴⁹ The facts of Cathelineau's life are recorded in the parish registers of his birth in 1759 in the small village of Le Pin-en-Mauges: his marriage to Louise Godin (a woman who was eight years older than him) in 1777, aged eighteen, the subsequent birth of eleven children (only five of whom survived him) in the fifteen years to 1792, and his ultimate death in 1793.⁴⁵⁰ His father, Jean, is variously recorded as being a peasant, stonemason and a rag-picker. Jacques followed him into the stonemason trade at first, before becoming a *colporteur* – or travelling salesman – on later documents (Cantiteau called him “un voiturier marchand”).⁴⁵¹ Cathelineau's job took him into towns and villages of the largely agricultural region to sell household essentials such as pots, tools and fabrics, as well as printed books and papers. At first he would have walked with these goods in his backpack, which is how he is remembered in the narrative of the

⁴⁴⁸ Lafond-Gouzy, *Vie de Jacques Cathelineau*.

⁴⁴⁹ The eulogy and letters were reprinted and are included as an annexe in Uzureau, *Le Premier Généralissime*.

⁴⁵⁰ Guéry, *Jacques Cathelineau*, 5-9.

⁴⁵¹ Letter from Cantiteau to M. Lebouvier-Desmortiers, 28 September 1807 in *Le Premier Généralissime*, 24.

hugely popular Le Puy du Fou *son-et-lumière* play, where Jacques the Colporteur is the narrator of the story of the Vendée.⁴⁵²

Cantiteau's version of Cathelineau's life stresses his piety and service to the church. Until his late teens, Cathelineau seemed destined for the priesthood. While he decided this would not be his vocation, he continued to sing the liturgy at Sunday services and Cantiteau recounts that he led several pilgrimages to a sacred oak tree in Saint Laurent-de-la-Plaine where the Virgin Mary had appeared.⁴⁵³ Cathelineau emerged as a leader of a small band of rebels protesting against conscription to serve in the frontier wars of the First Republic on 13 March 1793. As a father, Jacques Cathelineau would not have been included in the recruitment exercise, however his cousin, Jean Blon, who was on the list, had led a riot in the nearby village of St. Florent that had resulted in the death or injury of the recruiting sergeants. Cantiteau wrote that Blon returned to Cathelineau's house in Le Pin and said, "we are all lost ... our country will be crushed by the Republic. We must rebel (*insurger*) and begin the war today." Twenty-seven young men followed Cathelineau from Le Pin, including fifteen cousins and other relations. This represented about a quarter of the male adult population of Le Pin at the time.⁴⁵⁴

Anne Rolland-Boulestreau recently considered the familial network in Le Pin to illustrate how the relationships in the village allowed the core of the first counter-revolutionary army to develop. She illustrated this with the diagram in Figure 6.2.

⁴⁵² The *Puy du Fou* is a historical theme park featuring a number of shows during the day that tell the history of the region from a royalist and Christian viewpoint. The evening *son-et-lumière* shows, which feature the wars of the Vendée told from the viewpoint of Jacques the Colporteur are played to audiences of 40,000 and are sold out from June-August each year. The park is the second largest visitor attraction in France after Euro Disney, attracting over 2.3 million people in 2018 (source: IAAPA.org - <http://www.iaapa.org/docs/default-source/IAAPA-EMEA/margreet-papamichael.pdf> - reviewed on 30 April 2019).

⁴⁵³ Funeral eulogy, August 1793, in *Le Premier Généralissime*, 5. This tree is almost certainly the one burned by Larevellière-Lépeaux during his service in the region in 1796.

⁴⁵⁴ Lafond-Gouzy, *Vie de Jacques Cathelineau*, 14-15.

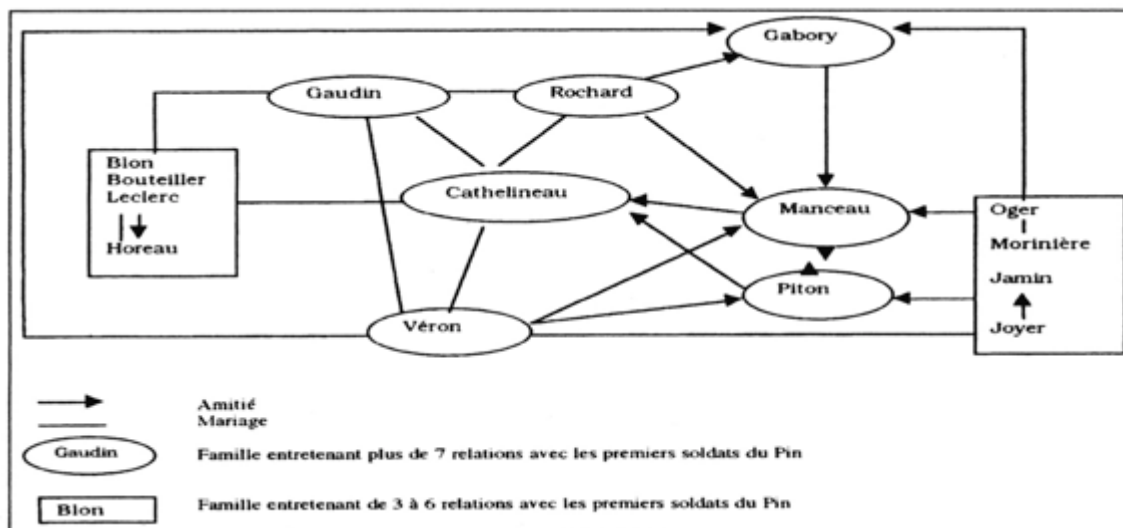


Figure 6.2: Relationships between families in Le Pin, 1793.

455

These village families serve as an example of the consistencies of rural life in France during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After the restoration of the Bourbons in 1815, forty-four people were honoured as part of the inauguration of the first memorial to Jacques Cathelineau. Amongst them were the widows of Jamin, Morinière and Bouteiller as well as four members of the Rochard family and Étienne Manceau. In 1897, two of the council members who resigned over the statue of Cathelineau were descendants of Jamin and Manceau, whilst the lawyer representing Xavier de Cathelineau was the grandson of Gabory. Over a century after Cathelineau's death the Blon (three sons), Gaudin (two), Piton (two) Boutellier (one) Rochard (one), families who had resisted the frontier wars of the First Republic served and died in the Great War of 1914-18 and they make up a quarter of the 40 dead listed on the war memorial which stands next to the Cathelineau family grave in the Le Pin cemetery.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ Anne Rolland-Boulestreau, *Familles, Réseaux et Contre-Révolution dans les Mauges* In: *La Contre-Révolution en Europe XVIIIe-XIXe siècles*. On line. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2001. (Reviewed July 18, 2017).

⁴⁵⁶ Great War memorial in Le Pin en Mauges seen by author in July 2017.

Cantiteau describes Cathelineau leading his band of twenty-seven men to the nearby town of Jallais where they defeated about eighty Republicans, seized their arms and a cannon named “the missionary”. More men arrived and they joined up with other armed bands led by Jean-Nicolas Stofflet (a game-keeper on the estate of the Marquise of Colbert) so that by the time they reached the large town of Cholet on 14 March 1793 there were 5,000 rebels facing 7,000 inhabitants of the town. The town was taken and more of the population joined what was now a small army.⁴⁵⁷

By this time, other counter-revolutionary armies had also formed in the region, led mainly by aristocrats, and by 12 June 1793 the leaders of these armies decided that a commander-in-chief was required, and they appointed Cathelineau to the post. By May or early June 1793, Cathelineau’s followers had become so impressed with his devotion to the church and his piety that they began to call him the Saint of Anjou. At the end of June, after a long battle, the army failed to take the city of Nantes and Cathelineau was mortally wounded. He was carried from the city to St. Florent, the village where the original conscription revolt had occurred, and where he died of his wounds on 14 July 1793, a mere eighteen weeks after he had left his home in Le Pin.⁴⁵⁸

A Disputed Memory

Jacques Cathelineau wrote almost nothing during his lifetime – there are a few examples of his signature, although Cantiteau noted that “he wrote passably and read much better.”⁴⁵⁹ His memory was preserved through the work of his early hagiographers, Cantiteau (1807), Amédée de Béjarry (1817), Lafond-Gouzy (1821) and Créteineau-Joly (1838). The 1814 *Mémoires* of the Marquise de la

⁴⁵⁷ Lafond-Gouzy, *Vie de Jacques Cathelineau*, 18.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁵⁹ Letter from Cantiteau to M. Lebouvier-Desmortiers, 28 September 1807 in *Le Premier Généralissime*, 25.

Rochejaquelein (discussed at length in Chapter 5) also played a role in the construction of the myth.⁴⁶⁰ The author, as well as being the sister-in-law of Henri de la Rochejaquelein acted, with her second husband Louis de La Rochejaquelein, as the guardian of Cathelineau's only surviving son, Jacques-Joseph.⁴⁶¹

The stories told about Cathelineau were unchallenged until January 1893, when the celebrated Angers archivist and member of the Institut Français Célestin Port published his *La Légende de Cathelineau*.⁴⁶² This book revised an article on Cathelineau that Port had published in his *Dictionnaire de Maine-et-Loire* five years earlier and which had followed the Cantiteau version of the story.⁴⁶³ Port's new theory was that the story of Jacques Cathelineau was unbelievable: the idea that a mere peasant could raise an army, take four towns in two days, be elected to be commander-in-chief by aristocrats and then die a martyr's death was simply too good to be true. He spent 173 pages and a further 180 pages of supporting documents explaining his conclusions, citing numerous sources and attempting to undermine the credibility of those documents that supported the original story. Port drew three important conclusions: first that the Vendée Wars started as a conspiracy between émigré and local aristocrats who led the uprising, at first through proxies (their valets or gamekeepers) and then directly; second that Cathelineau played a much smaller part in the initial action than was assumed; and third that Cathelineau was never the commander-in-chief of the army. He believed that there had been post-mortem adornments to the Cathelineau story in order to create a popular, saintly and humble leader for this reactionary conservative uprising against the Revolution.

⁴⁶⁰ See for example, Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (2011 ed.), 128, 161, 194.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 532-3.

⁴⁶² Célestin Port, *La Légende de Cathelineau* (Paris: Felix Alcan Editeur, 1893).

⁴⁶³ Célestin Port, *Dictionnaire Historique, Géographique et Biographique de Maine et Loire*. (Angers: Lachèse et Dolbeau, 1878).

Of Jacques Cathelineau the man, Port wrote: “We know nothing about him ... he was an unknown peasant, modest, subservient and faithful; he died fighting for his God and his faith.” As for his *Légende*, Port quotes one of the hagiographers, Béjarry as saying that Cathelineau’s type of popular devotion was “exactly what was required, the Vendée has never had a more perfect, a more glorious example” and, he noted, this was “precisely the reason that his name was taken, with all the Church’s fanfare to build an idealised memory for the glory of the holy cause.”⁴⁶⁴ The myth of the glorious saint was created by Cantiteau, “the man who had been everywhere, seen everything, always in the first row of the audience like a counsellor or a director – but he misled, he destroyed the truth, he lied.”⁴⁶⁵

Port’s work provoked an immediate and outraged response from royalists, led by the historian and writer Abbé Eugène Bossard. His 310-page *Cathelineau – Réponse à M. Célestin Port* appeared only six months after Port’s book was published in July 1893.⁴⁶⁶ Bossard argued that many people other than Cantiteau wrote independently about Jacques Cathelineau and that Port himself had changed his mind about the subject. He noted that republicans wrote most of the contemporary documents that Port relied on or they were written by other leaders of the Vendéen armies to demonstrate their own importance. He pointed out several factual errors in Port’s book (confusing similar names, disputing dates of battles). He also disputed Port’s central argument that the émigré and local aristocrats began the war by showing the initial leadership of either non-aristocratic or very minor aristocrats until the war was underway. Bossard relied heavily on the *Mémoires* of Mme de la Rochejaquelein for his understanding of events and he concluded that it was the general discontent with both the way the revolution

⁴⁶⁴ Port, *La Légende*, 164.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁶⁶ Eugène Bossard, *Cathelineau, Généralissime de l’Armée Catholique et Royale - Réponse à M. Célestin Port* (Ingrandes-sur-Loire: Vendée militaire, 1893).

was treating the Church and the way that the new army was being conscripted which led to the uprising, “which proved that the movement was spontaneous.”⁴⁶⁷ Bossard believed that responsibility for the wars rested firmly at the feet of “the *Patriotes*, the *Jacobins*, the guilty men who provoked the Vendéens to rise up against them.”⁴⁶⁸

Port claimed to have discovered a new document: the interrogation record of René Mercier in front of the Revolutionary court at Ingrandes on 9 brumaire, an III (30 October 1794). This stated that, in March 1793, Mercier was “a fusilier in the Third Company under the orders of their ‘the said Cathelineau’ who was their captain,”⁴⁶⁹ Port believed this to be decisive – Cathelineau was a simple captain of the Parish division. Bossard had three difficulties with this conclusion. First he noted it was possible to be both Captain of the Parish and General of the Army – he pointed out that Port was both Chief Archivist of Anjou and also a member of the Institute. Second he wrote that Mercier spoke only of “Cathelineau” and Jacques had three brothers: Joseph (guillotined in Angers on 27 March so probably not him); Jean, who nobody disputed had no talent for military affairs; and Pierre who, in the established story, fought alongside Jacques until Nantes and then after the death of his brother led a division of d’Elbée’s army. Bossard made the case that Mercier could have been talking about Pierre (although this does not explain entirely why Mercier should be recorded as saying “du nommé Cathelineau” as though it was understood that this was *the* Cathelineau). Finally, he cast doubt on the date – March 1793 – if this was at the beginning of March or the end of March, it made a significant difference as the first wave of fighting happened in the middle weeks and then the Vendéens went home to celebrate Easter. Bossard concluded that Mercier’s testament was both “a

⁴⁶⁷ Bossard, *Cathelineau, Généralissime de l’Armée Catholique et Royale*, 64.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

doubtful and fragile foundation on which to base such an important conclusion.⁴⁷⁰

The final area of dispute between Port and Bossard concerned the *Brevet de Généralisme*, a document appointing Cathelineau as commander-in-chief signed by all the Vendéen generals on 12 June 1793. The illustration in Figure 6.3 comes from Port's book.⁴⁷¹

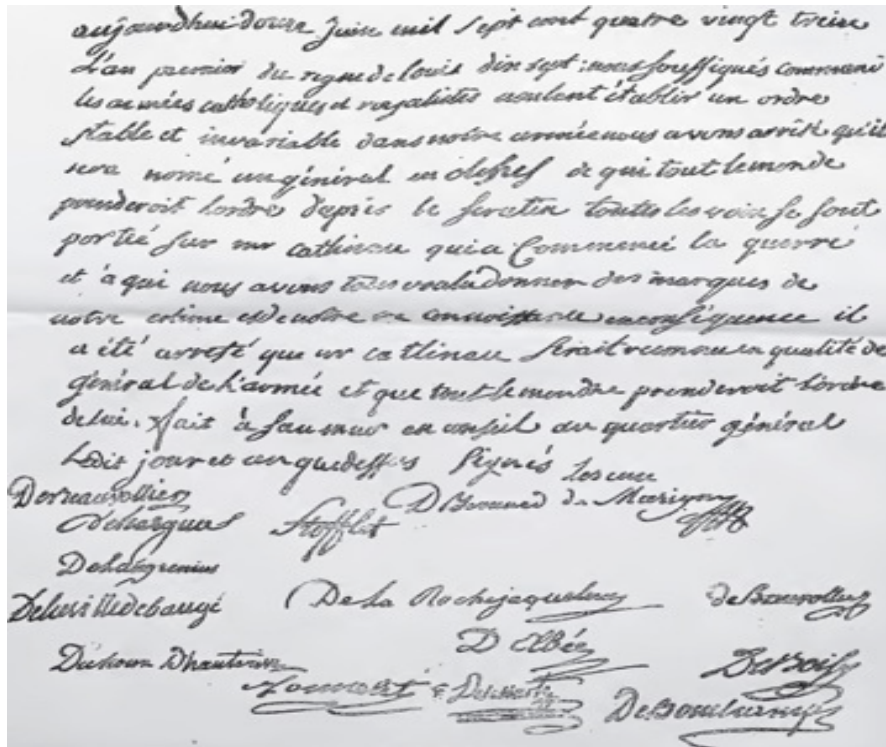


Figure 6.3: The *Brevet de Généralisme* signed by all the Vendée leaders and discussed in Port's book.

Port believed that this document was a forgery, a claim supported by both the renowned historian of the Revolution, Alphonse Aulard and the palaeographer Étienne Charavay.⁴⁷² Working from facsimiles of the original, Charavay noted many differences between the two copies that he was presented with and compared the signatures with other examples of the same generals'

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁷¹ Port, *La Légende*, 77-81.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 82

signatures. All three, Port, Aulard and Charavay, concluded that the document was a fabrication.

Bossard's response was that both Aulard and Charavay were working on copies that were indeed false; the first was badly copied by a journalist from the *Figaro* newspaper from the inscription on the base of the first memorial to Cathelineau, the second from an 1840 book by Auguste Johanet which the author notes was copied "by a clumsy, but sincere hand."⁴⁷³ Bossard had seen and studied the original (it is now preserved in the museum in Le Pin-en-Mauges but too badly damaged to reproduce), which at the time was owned by Mme. Henri de Cathelineau (the widow of the 1870 war hero), and argued that the signatures were exactly those of the generals, that whilst there were ink changes between the top signatures and the bottom ones, this could have been for any number of reasons and that the paper was of the type seen in many documents of the same era.⁴⁷⁴

It is impossible to conclude on the reality of Jacques Cathelineau's life, war and death, or to arbitrate between these two conflicting accounts. What matters is that in 1893 respected historians believed the debate was necessary. Large stretches of the opposing books were taken up in attacking the integrity and honesty of the other side of the debate and casting aspersions on their motives in the most vituperative language available to men of letters. Underneath the poison lay a larger set of disputes about the memory of the wars and what it represented. On the reactionary side, Bossard wanted to show that the Vendéen people rose up spontaneously against the imposition of a way of life that was against their wishes, and consequently chose as their first leader one of their own; that the uprising came from the people and not the aristocracy; and that Cathelineau and his people fought and died for

⁴⁷³ Auguste Johanet, *La Vendée à Trois Époques*, (Paris: Dentu, 1840), 94.

⁴⁷⁴ Bossard, *Cathelineau, Généralissime de l'Armée Catholique et Royale*, 110.

the honourable and saintly purpose of defending the real France against an alien ideology. On the republican side, Port's debunking sought to show that the church and the aristocracy were devising a set of myths about the wars that covered up its true nature, which he believed was a conspiracy by the ruling classes to keep the peasants in servitude, aided by a conservative church determined to keep them in ignorance. The battle between academic historians over Cathelineau's legacy moved swiftly onto a battle over a more public memorial.

The Content of the Memorial

The Chevalier de Lostanger erected the first monument to Jacques Cathelineau in Le Pin-en-Mauges in June 1827, as part of the decision to commemorate and compensate those who had served and died in the service of the recently restored Bourbons during the Vendée Wars. At the same time as the monument was unveiled, Charles X, the last Bourbon king, made a thousand francs available to de Lostanger to distribute to widows and survivors. The archive records the names of forty-four people (twelve widows, five other women and twenty-seven men) who each received between ten and fifty francs.⁴⁷⁵ This 1827 statue was damaged by a troop of Orleanist soldiers in 1832 during the rebellion in the Vendée against the July Monarchy and removed to the chapel of the village cemetery.⁴⁷⁶ The chapel later burned down and the original statue was lost, although a copy remained in the Angers museum and the copy was used as a base for the subsequent statues.

⁴⁷⁵ All the papers relating to the statue that are preserved in the Departmental Archive for Maine-et-Loire in Angers are in a single folder numbered 3-R-1 and entitled "Statue de Cathelineau". They include reports, letters and telegrams to and from the office of the Prefect along with press cuttings (sometime annotated). No further chapter marks or references have been used for these documents. They are all marked "*Cathelineau papers*, AdML3-R-1" and, where appropriate, additional information is provided for the purpose of referencing in this thesis.

⁴⁷⁶ The "July Monarchy" came about after a coup d'état in July 1830 replaced the conservative government of Charles X with a more liberal constitutional monarchy under Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, who took the title King of the French rather than King of France. This monarchy lasted until 1848 when it was overthrown by a revolution that established the Second Republic.



Figure 6.4: Lithograph of original statue of Cathelineau in Le Pin-en-Mauges, erected in 1827 and destroyed by Orleanist troops in 1832.

477

For the next sixty years, the village of Le Pin-en-Mauges slipped back into obscurity. Célestin Port's *Dictionnaire Historique de Maine-et-Loire* of 1878 notes that a mere 375 people lived in the village and only 15% of the population could sign their names.⁴⁷⁸ However, in 1893, Jacques Cathelineau's great-grandson, Xavier (now Comte de Cathelineau after ennoblement of his grandfather by Louis XVIII in 1817) decided, in response to the dispute between Bossard and Port, that a new memorial to the Saint of Anjou was required. A committee of notables and clergy was formed to raise the money for the monument and to organise its unveiling in the same place where the original statue stood, opposite the church in the centre of the village. The committee's president was a cleric, the Abbé Grimault, while its honorary president was the Marquis Julien de la Rochejaquelein. The other nineteen members of the committee included ten more aristocrats (four counts, four viscounts, a baron and a duke); four more priests; the architect Tessier; the Cathelineau family lawyer, Gabory, who acted as secretary (and guiding force), and two gentlemen MM Bouteloup-

⁴⁷⁷ Image photographed in the Cathelineau Museum in Le Pin-en-Mauges – used with permission of curator – June 2017.

⁴⁷⁸ Célestin Port, *Dictionnaire Historique de Maine-et-Loire*, (Angers: Lachèse et Dolbeau, 1878), 96.

d'Apremont and de la Salmonière.⁴⁷⁹ The announcement of a competition to design and produce the statue was covered in the *Revue d'Anjou*, which noted that, unlike the subsequent competition for the de La Rochejaquelein statue, “only artists from Anjou would be considered for the memorial to the ‘Saint of Anjou.’”⁴⁸⁰ When the statue was finally unveiled, however, it was simply a copy in local stone of the first memorial, perhaps because the committee lacked the funds to recruit a new artist. Unlike the de La Rochejaquelein statue it made no claims to artistic merit at a national exhibition.

As well as the statues that were erected in 1827 and 1896, a number of images in lithographs, paintings and windows were made after Jacques Cathelineau's death. The earliest of these is the undated lithograph of a balding 34-year-old man, in profile and dressed in a plain topcoat (with no Sacred Heart badge on the lapel or left breast) and a plain scarf, preserved in the Le Pin-en-Mauges museum (Figure 6.6, left):

⁴⁷⁹ Minutes of the Cathelineau Statue Committee dated January 4, 1897 in *Cathelineau papers*, AdML 4-T-94.

⁴⁸⁰ *Revue d'Anjou*, 1893, volume 26, 127.

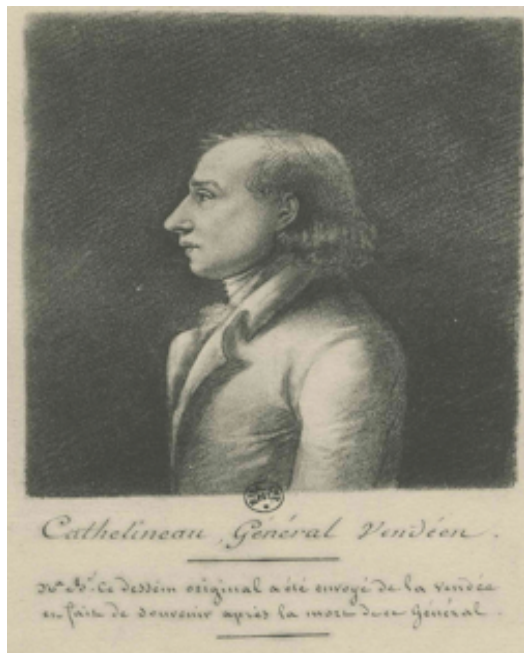


Figure 6.5: Jacques Cathelineau: Lithograph by unknown artist and painting by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson.

481

During the Bourbon Restoration, several paintings of the Vendéen generals were commissioned and sold to raise funds for the survivors of the wars, their widows and families. Jacques Cathelineau's son, Jacques-Joseph, was used as the model for the 1824 picture (Figure 6.6, right) by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767-1824), a pupil of Jacques-Louis David, who also painted the portrait of Prosper de Barante the editor of the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein's memoirs. His portrait of Jacques-Joseph (Figure 6.7) who was later to lose his life in the Vendée rebellion against the July Monarchy shows a clear resemblance.

⁴⁸¹ Lithograph in the museum of Le Pin-en-Mauges, used by permission of the curator and available on line from Maine-et-Loire Archive: https://www.archinoe.fr/v2/ad49/visualiseur/iconographie_celestin_port.html?id=490052834
Paintings of Jacques and Jacques Joseph Cathelineau in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Cholet.



Figure 6.6: Portrait of Jacques-Joseph Cathelineau compared to the portrait of his father. Both pictures by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson.

Trioson's portrait shows a far more glamorous image than the earlier lithograph; a young man with flowing locks, dressed in an aristocrat's cloak, coat, decorative chains and sash and boots with the sacred heart on his left breast and pistols and sabre drawn. This image was chosen for the 1827 statue and all subsequent images of Cathelineau follow the same pattern, except the windows in the church (see below). The 1896 statue (Figure 6.8) has the young man's face and hair, sacred heart, the cross and aristocratic dress.



Figure 6.7: 1896 statue of Jacques Cathelineau, now badly damaged and stored in the parish church of Le Pin-en-Mauges.

482

Only in the windows of Le Pin-en-Mauges church (Figure 6.9), which were designed and made at the same time as the tomb and the statue, is there a slight deviation from the new, accepted image of Jacques Cathelineau. In all the images of his departure from Le Pin up to the one of his death, Jacques Cathelineau and his companions are shown dressed in homespun trousers, wooden clogs and short jackets. Whilst Cathelineau's followers are dressed in dull browns and greys, he is marked out by a blue jacket (ironically, the colour of the Republicans) with a sacred heart on his left breast. In the image of Cathelineau receiving his general's sabre from Lescure, the aristocratic generals are dressed in high boots, white riding breeches and frock-coats whilst Cathelineau remains in clogs and the short jacket of the peasant.

⁴⁸² Author's picture, July 2017.



Figure 6.8: Window in parish church, Le Pin-en-Mauges.

483

This alteration of the image of Cathelineau from the “unknown peasant” to the glamorous image of the portrait and statues shows us that, despite the fact many conservatives wanted to portray him as a popular saint, the nineteenth-century elites who were using the memorial to press their own agendas had a distinct set of requirements for their heroes. These included a young face, flowing hair and well-trimmed beard, aristocratic dress and the symbols of faith and militancy.

⁴⁸³ Guéry, *Jacques Cathelineau, Un Héros de Vitrail*, 81.

A Disputed Legacy

Much as in the case of Henri de la Rochejaquelein's memorial, local and personal motivations had an impact on both the timing and the content of Cathelineau's commemoration. The committee and its project immediately ran into serious difficulties as the local town council, prefecture, and the government in Paris all had concerns about the statue.

Maurice d'Andigné and Xavier de Cathelineau: A Clash of Personalities and Reactionary Ideology

The mayor of Le Pin-en-Mauges, Comte Maurice d'Andigné, was on the memorial committee but had an extremely poor personal relationship with Xavier de Cathelineau dating back to a dispute between d'Andigné and Xavier's father, Henri de Cathelineau.⁴⁸⁴ D'Andigné came from one of the oldest noble families in Anjou and was the last secretary to the Comte de Chambord, also known as Henri V, the Legitimist (Bourbon) pretender to the throne. He was present at the death of Chambord in 1884 and immediately founded the Royalist Committee to carry on the search for a realistic alternative to Republicanism. In this period of his life he was very critical of the Duc d'Orléans and refused to acknowledge his claim to the throne, preferring the Spanish Bourbon succession of Charles XI, Duke of Madrid.⁴⁸⁵ After Pope Leo XIII's call to reconcile with the republic, however, d'Andigné became a pragmatist who attempted to forge good relations with the authorities in Angers and Paris so as to maintain his personal power base in the region.⁴⁸⁶

Comte Xavier de Cathelineau was the son of General Henri de Cathelineau (1813-1891), who had led a French army against the

⁴⁸⁴ See letters between Xavier de Cathelineau, dated March 1, 1897 and Maurice d'Andigné, dated February 20, 1897 in *Cathelineau papers*, AdML 3-R-1.

⁴⁸⁵ *Le Roi Légitime: Discours prononcés par M. le Comte Maurice d'Andigné, à la réunion légitimiste*, July 27, 1884.

⁴⁸⁶ See open letter from Maurice d'Andigné to the people of Le Pin-en-Mauges, dated February 20, 1897 in *Cathelineau papers*, AdML 3-R-1.

Prussian invasion in 1870; the grandson of Jacques-Joseph de Cathelineau (1787-1832) who had died leading Legitimist forces in the Duchesse de Berry's rebellion against the Orleanist usurpation in 1832; and the great-grandson of Jacques, the first generalissimo of the Royal and Catholic Army. It is not clear why he did not also serve in the army or stand for public election, one of Robert Nye's criteria for honourable aristocracy, but he did at least fulfil the second criteria, marrying young from his own class and producing three boys and five girls to carry on the "aristocratic" (the "de" Cathelineaus had only been ennobled in 1816) bloodline. The de Cathelineau family were poor in comparison with other aristocratic families and wrote several letters to the de La Rochejaquelein family seeking financial support.⁴⁸⁷ Xavier was a writer of angry open letters and frequent challenges to duels. His letters were not just about his ancestors but also about Catholic education, the closure of churches and the dishonour brought on the Vendée by the most famous Third Republican Vendéen, Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929). His open letter of 1906 invited Clemenceau to come to Le Pin-en-Mauges with "500 men, apaches if you wish and try to close the church", he would have 500 "chouans" ready to take him on and he told him, in the language of the duel "prenez garde à la justice de Dieu".⁴⁸⁸ The following week, three Republicans, including the editor of *La Petite République*, took up the challenge, replying in the same duelling terminology "we are honoured to take up your challenge ... how may we set up the conditions, the time and the place for such a duel."⁴⁸⁹

The poor relationship between the mayor and the Sponsor exploded in a public exchange of letters published in the local newspapers

⁴⁸⁷ Letters from Cathelineau family, 1855, 1888, in the de La Rochejaquelein family archive, Chateau de Clisson – seen July 2019.

⁴⁸⁸ Open letter to M. Clemenceau October 8, 1906, published in *La Vendée Historique*, volume 236, 1906, 381. The reference to "apaches" in the letter refers to the bands of hooligans who, according to the press, haunted the Parisian boulevards.

⁴⁸⁹ Letters reproduced in *L'Intransigeant*, October 15, 1906, 2. *L'Intransigeant* was a right wing newspaper owned and edited by Henri Rochefort who was an early supporter of Boulanger and an anti-Dreyfus campaigner.

and commented on in national conservative organs including *Le Figaro* and *La Croix*. Having discussed the issue of the statue at length with the Prefect and the Minister, d'Andigné publicly protested against its inauguration "as mayor, as royalist and as Vendéen."⁴⁹⁰ He gave two reasons. The first was that the Bishop of Angers had agreed to come to the inauguration of the commemorative windows and a new tomb for some of the remains of three great Cathelineau leaders in the church on the condition that the external statue was not unveiled at the same time (although there is no evidence that the Bishop had indeed set out this condition and in fact he did attend alongside the Bishop of Belley). The second reason was that the Minister of the Interior and the Prefect had informed the Town Council and the mayor that the statue was not to be unveiled. This was because it was against the law prohibiting public homages unless approved by government decree; a law, d'Andigné pointed out, that was brought in by the 1816 Restoration Monarchy. The mayor accompanied this *Protestation* with his letter of resignation to the Prefect. The *Conseil Municipal* followed his lead, questioning both the need for a statue and, if they were to have a statue, the location of the statue in the middle of the village. They too resigned *en bloc* and, although d'Andigné refused the resignations, they wrote publicly of their support for his stand.

There followed what *Le Républicain*, a local Angers newspaper, called "an amusing exchange of letters between the mayor, M. M d'Andigné and M. X de Cathelineau" (note that the paper refused to dignify them with *comte de*, although both were so entitled). Cathelineau's three-page response to the d'Andigné *Protestation* showed that the mayor's political posturing was not to be relied upon: "I have known him as royalist alongside the Comte de Chambord and with the royalists in Spain, then as a Boulangist and

⁴⁹⁰ *La Statue de Cathelineau – Protestation de M. Le Comte Maurice d'Andigné* –February 20, 1897 in *Cathelineau papers*, AdML 3-R-1.

now the humble servant of the current government. But today he is a royalist again, perhaps tomorrow we will see another change of heart.”⁴⁹¹ Cathelineau noted that he and d’Andigné had been exchanging letters since 1889, after d’Andigné had attacked his father in the newspaper that he had owned at the time “in language that was undignified for a man so well-born but understandable from one who marched with Naquet behind Boulanger. Everything you write is a lie ... everything you support is false.”⁴⁹² Finally he warned d’Andigné, in the language of the duel, to be on guard because any further lies would be punished.⁴⁹³

In March 1897, *Le Républicain* seized on this exchange of letters between d’Andigné and Cathelineau. The paper noted that the first statue had been erected under the Bourbons in 1827 and destroyed by Orleanists, not republicans, in 1832. The newspaper argued sardonically that whenever four monarchists found themselves together, it would always end in a fight, and that behind it all were always the priests, who would do anything to avert people’s eyes from what they were involved in. The editorial concluded that, as liberal republicans, it was right to allow Catholic-royalists to celebrate “their ‘saints’ and ‘martyrs’ in their castles and churches, but allowing them to take over the streets and squares for their anti-republican propaganda is stupid, and we should not be stupid when we do not have to be.”⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹¹ Xavier de Cathelineau, *Adresse au Vendéens du Pin-en-Mauges*, March 1, 1897 in *Cathelineau papers*, AdML 3-R-1.

⁴⁹² The populist and anti-parliamentarian Boulangist movement recruited its activists from a wide spectrum of the political right including many who would perhaps be considered strange bedfellows. Alfred Naquet was a Jewish scientist, a radical and previously a Bonapartiste who believed in the direct election of the President and using plebiscites to decide important matters of policy. (See Kevin Passmore *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy*, 48 and 69). By referring his readers to Naquet as well as Boulanger, Xavier de Cathelineau implies that d’Andigné is a worse class traitor than may first seem apparent.

⁴⁹³ Although d’Andigné was political editor of *Le Journal de Paris* in 1888, there is nothing in the National Archive that reveals the nature of this “attack” on General Henri de Cathelineau. In 1884, the General and d’Andigné were both present at the death of the Comte de Chambord and subsequently sat together at the launch of the Royalist Committee. See Paul Vasili, *La Société de Paris: Le Monde Politique* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue, 1888), 349.

⁴⁹⁴ *Le Républicain* (Angers) March 16, 1897, 2.

Regional and National Concerns

The Prefect in Angers, alerted to the proposal for a statue by d'Andigné, formed a special investigative group to consider the memorial. The first and most important objection to it was set out in the Prefect's briefing note of early 1894 for the Minister of the Interior: "Can we today allow the glorification of a rebel who raised an armed civil war against the Republic?"⁴⁹⁵ His note went on to state that there were two legal grounds to object to the statue. The first reason was that all public memorials ("*reconnaissance publique*") had to be explicitly authorised by the national government. This law was first passed under the Bourbon Restoration in 1816 and was designed to stop both Napoleonic and Revolutionary statues being erected. The second reason was that there may have been "non-authorized expenditure by the village for the levelling of the site". This latter reason was quickly dropped, because had there actually been a misappropriation of public funds, it would have been authorised by d'Andigné himself.

Throughout 1894-6 the Committee behind the statue lobbied the government and a number of compromises were suggested, most notably that the land on which the statue would stand (in the middle of a public square) was actually private land and had been lawfully purchased by the de Cathelineau family. If that were the case then a statue could be erected, so long as it had a sufficiently high fence around it so that members of the public could not see it inadvertently. The investigative committee searched the archives for evidence of ownership and traced the history of the original 1827-32 statue as part of this debate. In the meantime, most of the money for the statue had been raised, the work was complete and dates, 16 and 17 October 1896, were agreed for the unveiling ceremony of

⁴⁹⁵ "*Pourrait-on admettre aujourd'hui la glorification d'un insurgé qui soulève la guerre civile et combattit la République les armes à la main?*" Copy of internal memorandum of the Interior Ministry sent to Prefect of Maine-et-Loir, undated except from 189- but probably from 1895 given its filing with other papers. In Cathelineau papers, AdML 3-R-1.

both the new tomb of the Cathelineau family and the statue. Bishops and nobles were invited and plans laid for feasts and solemn church services.⁴⁹⁶

At this stage the national government decided that, whilst they had no legal powers to stop the church service of celebration of the life of Cathelineau, or the consecration of the tomb, following the political advice of the Prefect concerning rebellions against the republic, they could and should stop the statue. A note from the Interior Minister informed the mayor and the Prefect that the statue must not be unveiled. It had by this stage been placed on its plinth in a wooden box waiting for the grand unveiling. A troop of gendarmes was sent from Angers to ensure that it remained in its box and to investigate its elevation onto the plinth. The report of the two officers leading the investigation, dated 18 October 1896, noted that Xavier de Cathelineau had instructed his lawyer M. Gabory to take workmen and place the statue on its plinth in the square. The gendarmes interviewed two of the workers to confirm that they had been ordered to do the work by their master M. Gabory and had been paid (one franc and a glass of wine) by M. Cathelineau. Finally they interviewed Joseph Jamin, the Assistant mayor (the mayor, d'Andigné, being absent in Paris at the time). M. Jamin told the police officers that: "despite the orders that I had given, the statue was put on its pedestal ... and I advised the sub-prefect of events."⁴⁹⁷

This news was so important that the sub-prefect telegraphed it on the same day to the Prefect, who telegraphed the Ministry of the Interior on 19 October. By 26 October the Minister wrote back to the Prefect (who then sent on the message to the sub-prefect and thence to the mayor) that whilst the statue remained in its box, no

⁴⁹⁶ *Inauguration du Monument du Cathelineau: Compte Rendu de la Fête et Discours* (Angers : Germain et Grassin, 1896), 2. In *Cathelineau papers*, AdML, 3-R-1.

⁴⁹⁷ Police Report sent to the Chief of Police by Gendarmes Pasquier and Boileu on October 18, 1896. In *Ibid.*, AdML, 3-R-1.

laws were being broken and they could all wait for the judicial process to take its course.⁴⁹⁸



Figure 6.9: Statue of Cathelineau placed on the plinth but still in its box in Le-Pin-en-Mauges.

499

⁴⁹⁸Letter from Interior Ministry to Prefect of Maine-et-Loire, dated October 26, 1896. In *Ibid.*, AdML, 3-R-1.

⁴⁹⁹AdML – post card collection. Reference 11 Fi 4844 and 11 Fi 4838 (undated).

In the meantime the special investigator wrote a long report on the potentially seditious behaviour of the people at the church ceremony and the subsequent banquets. His conclusion was that whilst there were many toasts to “Dieu et Roi,” there was little overt politics to worry about. The worst event was the young son of M. Charette, a descendant of another Vendéen War general, who “with the enthusiasm of a young man shouted ‘à bas la République! Vive Philippe VIII!’”⁵⁰⁰

The statue remained in its box and Xavier de Cathelineau continued to press his case that it was on private land and therefore did not contravene the laws about public homage. In March 1897, the Minister of the Interior wrote a long and detailed letter to the Prefect in Angers setting out the government’s position. He rested his case on the 1816 ordinance, which itself rested on a 22 August 1790 law, and the Constitution of 1791, chapter II, act 1, section 12 concerning “the state’s exclusive right to approve *hommages publics*”. The Minister concluded that the statue could only be unveiled once a fence had been built that was high and continuous enough that it was impossible for the statue to be seen from neighbouring property or by any passer-by. Xavier de Cathelineau agreed to undertake such work but in fact only built a small wall and a chain such that, in the view of the Prefect, the statue was enhanced rather than hidden.⁵⁰¹ The Minister of the Interior, M. Barthou, then decided to remove the statue on 10 March 1897 and to place it under seal in a building owned by de Cathelineau’s lawyer, M. Gabory. The statue was damaged in the process, spurring a new set of correspondence about who was responsible for restoring and paying for the restoration work on it.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰⁰ Report of special investigator to chief of police, October 27, 1896, *Cathelineau papers* AdML, 3-R-1. Philippe VIII was the name given by royalists to the Philippe Duc d’Orléans (1869-1926), the Orleanist pretender. It is interesting that this audience shouted out his name rather than that of the Legitimist pretender and adds weight to the argument that the Cathelineau memorial represented a more pragmatic approach to politics than that of de La Rochejaquelein.

⁵⁰¹ Report from Prefect to Minister of Interior, February 1897, *Cathelineau papers*, AdML, 3-R-1.

⁵⁰² Summary report from Prefect to Minister of Interior, July 27, 1902, *Cathelineau papers*, AdML, 3-R-1.

In September 1902, Xavier de Cathelineau made a further attempt to restore the statue to its place in the square, this time with a higher wall and a grill fence; but once again on 22 September the police (“25 policemen and a troop of foreign workers”) were called in to supervise its removal.⁵⁰³ The right-wing press reacted with horror to this “invasion of privacy”. The statue was stored “under seal” in the coal cellar of the, largely unused, state school for boys in the village. Throughout the early part of the twentieth century the family lobbied for the statue to be returned and restored to its position in the middle of the village.⁵⁰⁴ It was not until the 150th anniversary of Jacques Cathelineau’s death, under the occupation government of 1943 that they achieved their aims.⁵⁰⁵ Robert Gildea touches on this final unveiling in his work on occupied France, *Marianne in Chains*, when he notes that the statue was finally placed in the public square as part of the reconciliation between local Catholic Church, notables, the government in Vichy and the occupation forces in Paris.⁵⁰⁶ The 1943 events were orchestrated by the Bishop of Angers, Mgr. Jean Costes, alongside the descendants of Jacques. Amongst them were his great great-grandson, Yves (1884-1972) and Yves’ son, Gérard (1921-1957), who, following his illustrious ancestors, went on to serve as an officer in French army, dying in the Algerian war in 1957.⁵⁰⁷ The 1896 stone statue remained in place (in the middle of a busy roundabout and so frequently damaged and repaired) until it was replaced with a new

⁵⁰³ *Le Journal de Maine et Loire*, 26 September 1902, 1.

⁵⁰⁴ The town council of Le Pin-en-Mauges archive of the nineteenth-century events has been transferred to Angers but the twentieth-century archive includes a letter signed by four of the de Cathelineau family on 18 June 1932 asking for the statue to be restored to the plinth.

⁵⁰⁵ There is nothing in the main archive about the 1943 decision however Louis Guéry notes that on 8 January 1941 the mayor of Le Pin wrote to the Cathelineau family to inform them that the plinth would have to be moved because the main road was being diverted to make way for a new town hall. The mayor suggested that this would be a good time to reopen the case with the national authorities, see: Jacques Cathelineau, *Un Héros de Vitrail*, 105

⁵⁰⁶ Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, (London: Macmillan, 2002), 218. Gildea notes that the statue had been “pulled down after the Revolution of 1830” but makes no reference to the long history of attempts to have it replaced over the previous fifty years.

⁵⁰⁷ Michel Ganier, *Un Officier Française: Gérard de Cathelineau* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1960), 18.

bronze statue at the bi-centennial of Jacques Cathelineau's death on 18 July 1993.⁵⁰⁸

The 1896 statue is now placed next to the tomb and memorial to the three Cathelineau generals in the church at Le Pin-en-Mauges. The “conversation” between this statue, as with the de La Rochejaquelein memorial, places it between the church and the town hall in the centre of Le Pin. The church contained further memorials to the Cathelineau family – and ornate tomb for the remains of the three heroic members of the family and windows telling Jacques' story. The new bronze statue is in the corner of *Place Cathelineau* surrounded by high bushes so that it is not easily seen from the road. There are no signposts from outside the modern town of Le Pin suggesting that this is an historic site connected to the events of 1793.

The Church and the Memorial to Cathelineau

The republican side, as we have seen, used various instruments - the academy, schools, press, bureaucracy, the police and the financial muscle of the state – to propagate its version of the history of the Vendée rebellion. The forces of reaction held on to their local power base in the West partly because they used the means that the Church had always used with a poorly educated and semi-literate population: stories, sermons, pictures, windows and memorials. In the case of Jacques Cathelineau, these told a consistent tale about a popular uprising led by a “man of the people”: a man who was so pious that his own soldiers called him a saint in his own lifetime.

The man chosen to preach the eulogy at the inauguration of the memorial to Cathelineau used all these tools to show the Saint of

⁵⁰⁸ Papers relating to the new statue are in the archive of Le Pin-en-Mauges, filed in date order under 1993 council decisions.

Anjou to a new generation of Vendéens. The Bishop of Belley, Monseigneur Louis-Joseph Luçon, was born in Maulévrier, Maine-et-Loire in the heart of the *région de mémoire*, the descendent of soldiers who had fought on the side of God and King and a rising star of the Catholic hierarchy.⁵⁰⁹ Aged 54 at the time of the inauguration, he would be appointed to the Archbishopric of Reims in 1906 and made Cardinal in 1907 by Pope Pius X. He served as a hugely popular public figure during the Great War as his cathedral and city were heavily bombarded by German artillery. Luçon's political thinking can be gauged from the funeral oration he gave for Cardinal François-Marie Richard, Archbishop of Paris, another Vendéen, on 31 March 1908 at the height of the anti-clerical moves of the Radical government of Georges Clemenceau.⁵¹⁰ Cardinal Richard had been responsible for the building and opening of the new cathedral of the Sacré-Cœur (l'église du Vœu national) on Montmartre. The oration set out Cardinal Luçon's thoughts on the state of relationships between state and church at a time that he said was "the most critical hours for the church in France."⁵¹¹

Luçon believed that the contemporary challenges for the church were, first, "neo-Protestant and Kantian", that is they concerned matters of theology and faith.⁵¹² Only of secondary nature were the concerns that the state treated the church as an "enemy of the Republic, which was carrying on a war without mercy against the church often by presidential decree ... they have chased God out of the constitution, out of the law, the army, the school, the hospital, the street, from everywhere".⁵¹³ Unlike others in the church, and in particular Bishop Cabrières of Montpellier, who had preached the eulogy at the unveiling of Henri de La Rochejaquelein's memorial,

⁵⁰⁹ Pierre Lyautey, *Le cardinal Luçon, Archevêque de Reims (1842-1930)*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1934), 2-3. Maulévrier is a small village on the border between Vendée, Maine-et-Loire and Deux-Sèvres, 10 km from Saint Aubin-de-Baubigné, 35 km from Le Pin-en-Mauges and 50 km from Montaigu.

⁵¹⁰ SE Cardinal Luçon, *Oraison Funèbre de Son Eminence le Cardinal Richard* (Paris: P.Lethillieux, 1908), 50.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

neither Richard nor Luçon believed that it was the role of the church to say that democracy, autocracy or constitutional monarchy was the right form of civil government. Indeed, Luçon said in 1908, “we have never refused Cesar what is due to Cesar...there is not a single citizen who is more docile nor more devout [than the Church]” but that “the question is whether France remains a Christian country or not.”⁵¹⁴ He argued that, whilst the state was against them, the challenges they faced required the most traditional of responses: not politics but sainthood and faith.⁵¹⁵ In other words, Luçon believed that the Church should not take part in the political process but work directly with believers to create a better spiritual France,

Luçon’s earlier eulogy to Cathelineau was published in 1896 both as a stand-alone pamphlet for 50 centimes in aid of the church at Le Pin and as part of a 74-page brochure for one franc (to go towards the statue fund) containing all the sermons, speeches and toasts as well as songs and poems.⁵¹⁶ As with the eulogy to Richard, the 1896 work stressed Luçon’s belief in a spiritual rather than a political solution and it is no surprise that he took the theme of *Fide fortes facti sunt in bello*, part of the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews: “Gideon, Barak, Samuel ... who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness...out of weakness were made strong.”⁵¹⁷ As a son of the Vendée, he said, he was brought up with a sense of the memory of heroism and horror in this “earth soaked with the blood of our fathers and the tears of our mothers.”⁵¹⁸ Luçon argued that the wars were fought for one thing only: “Faith; the faith that they saw being unjustly persecuted, faith that they wished to preserve for themselves and their children. In faith could be found the motive for their bravery and their success but also the

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁵¹⁶ *Inauguration du Monument du Cathelineau: Compte Rendu de la Fête et Discours*, (Angers: Germain et Grassin, 1896).

⁵¹⁷ *Authorised King James Bible*: Hebrews 11, v.32-34.

⁵¹⁸ *Inauguration du Monument du Cathelineau: Compte Rendu*, 5.

explanation for their sorrow.”⁵¹⁹ He believed that in Cathelineau’s life was the history of a whole martyred people: “This was the man that heaven had decreed would be the new Maccabee ... it was his faith, Christian zeal, attachment to the Catholic church and desire to see the reestablishment of the monarchy that made him take up arms.”⁵²⁰ Turning from the life and war career of the general, in which he follows the words of Cantiteau, to his death, Luçon returned to his theme of Cathelineau as a latter-day Maccabee:

The Vendée cried out, as Israel had done before ‘how have you fallen, brave Maccabee, you who led the people of Israel to victory.’ It is true that Cathelineau died but when did success prove the righteousness of the cause? Cathelineau is dead, the Vendéen generals are dead, and the army is annihilated. But the Maccabees also died, the apostles, Joan of Arc all died; even Christ died. But was not right on their side? Was the cause not just or true?⁵²¹

Cabrières had also used the Maccabee analogy in his eulogy to de La Rochejaquelein and these were an important set of stories in the creation of the Vendée memories.⁵²² There are three relevant stories about the Maccabees, which are often conflated: the soldier-priest, the martyred family and the brilliant young hero. The first story is of Mattathias, who was ordered by the Greek king Antiochus IV to make sacrifices and light incense, which was against the traditional practices of the Jewish faith at that time. Mattathias refused and began a guerrilla resistance against the king. The second story concerns the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons who refused Antiochus’ demand that they eat pork. “We would rather die than abandon the traditions of our ancestors.”⁵²³ Each of the sons was tortured and killed in turn in front of their mother who

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 26.

⁵²² Grimaud, 25.

⁵²³ Second book of Maccabees Ch.7, v.2.

was then also killed. The final set of stories is about the brilliant young leader of the Maccabean army, Judah Maccabee. According to these stories Judah led first a guerrilla campaign in the Judean desert and then an army of 6,000 against increasingly large Greek and Syrian armies. He defeated all in turn (“God was their mighty defender because they obeyed the laws he had given them.”⁵²⁴) until he died in battle against vastly superior forces, “It is better for us to die in battle than to see the destruction of our nation and our altars.”⁵²⁵

As Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski wrote in his work on the Maccabean martyrs, it is noteworthy that Christians commemorate the Maccabees at all because these are stories of Jewish resistance in support of Mosaic Law against pagan post-Alexandrian rulers who wished to assimilate the Jewish religion into their polytheistic way of life.⁵²⁶ He shows that early Christianity began to incorporate the stories both as a way of establishing that their religion was one of continuity of God’s promise to them as the new Chosen People and because they were stories about redemption through suffering. The early Christian church (through to the Third Century) was persecuted by Imperial Rome and these stories reinforced the message in Deuteronomy that, in due course, God would take revenge on those who opposed him.⁵²⁷ The leaders of the early the church wrote treatises about the Maccabees so that, “in the act of constructing a memory of the Maccabees to aid the resistance of the Carthaginian community against Imperial persecution, any meaning of the story that retains a Jewish valence is erased.”⁵²⁸

⁵²⁴ Second book of Maccabees Ch.8, v. 4.

⁵²⁵ *Melius est nos morte bello quam videre mala gentis nostrae et sanctorum* as inscribed on the memorial window to Henri de la Rochejaquelein in the church of Sant-Aubin-de-Baubigné next to the statue - 1 Maccabees Ch.3, v.59.

⁵²⁶ Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories of the Maccabean martyrs*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁵²⁷ Deuteronomy. Ch.23, v.35: To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

⁵²⁸ Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*, 26.

As Christianity itself became an Imperial religion and expanded its synthesis of Jewish stories to include those of Greece, Rome and other pagan cultures, the story of the Maccabees mutated into one that argued for the purity of the Catholic form of Christianity compared to all rival versions. Fathers of the Church wrote influential sermons and letters referring to the Maccabees in their fights against the heresies of Arianism, Manichaeism and Donatism. Augustine of Hippo's Sermon 300 *On the Maccabean Martyrs* notes that the Maccabees were proto-Christians and "They were not openly confessing Christ because the mysteries of Christ were still concealed behind the veil."⁵²⁹ There was also a long tradition, from at least 1098 through the hundred-years war and into the wars of religion, of adapting the Maccabees' stories to suit the needs of French kings, military leaders and priests.⁵³⁰ In the nineteenth century, Napoleon III used Judah Maccabee as one of his "worthy knights (preux)" to decorate the battlements of his restored Chateau de Pierrefonds.⁵³¹

From the early, persecuted church until the modern period, French clerics adapted and synthesized the Maccabee stories of priestly and military leadership, rebellion and martyrdom. There is no doubt that each of the senior churchmen who preached eulogies to the martyrs and leaders of the Vendée would have been familiar with the writings of the Doctors of the Church. Indeed Cardinal Pie used John Chrysostom's sermon on the Maccabees rather than the original biblical text.⁵³²

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁵³⁰ 1098: Raymond d'Aguilles, the chaplain to Raymond of Toulouse, wrote in his description of the battle of Aleppo "I rate this battle as before the Maccabean wars". 1389: Charles VI's councillor, Philippe de Mézières wrote to advise him against establishing a mass peasant army "as Judas Maccabee said, for my Father to give victory to the bravery and discipline of a small number". 1598: the protestant minister Jean de L'Espine wrote in his treatise *Du ministre de l'église* "the priest Mattathias touched off the revolt by killing a royal commissioner.

⁵³¹ <http://www.chateau-pierrefonds.fr/view/pdf/1373066>, 5. Château visited by author April 7, 2019.

⁵³² Pie's funeral oration for the Marquise de La Rochejaquelein (included as an annexe to Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires* (1889 ed.) includes these references.

Cabrière's eulogy at the de La Rochejaquelein memorial had cast the Third Republic, as the political inheritors of the dechristianising First Republic, as the evil king Antiochus who insisted on absolute obedience to the new regime. De la Rochejaquelein, his followers and their political descendants were the faithful Maccabees: priests at war, young brilliant military leaders cut down only by vastly superior forces, soldiers and populations martyred in the righteous cause of tradition, the law and faith. Above all Cabrière believed in the Deuteronomic promise of future redemption for those who kept the faith and, by extension, stay faithful to the Catholic Church and to their traditional political representatives.⁵³³

Luçon drew a subtly different conclusion as he used the stories to illustrate not the glorious military leadership of Judah Maccabee in the face of overwhelming odds but rather the martyrdom of Maccabees and, by analogy, of the Vendée. He concluded that from the deaths of its leaders and annihilation of its army, God would reward people in heaven for their faith on earth. He went further still, arguing that the Vendée rebellion had been a legitimate response to religious oppression: "if they had left the Vendée its priests and its church there would have been no war. This is the true nature of the war – everything else is secondary – not a struggle against progress or liberty, absolutely not an armed riot or a rebellion against the law".⁵³⁴ This eulogy sums up the *ralliés'* view of the Vendée Wars and how it should be remembered. The wars were not a popular uprising against conscription, taxes or modern ways, for those would be, as Leo XIII had made clear, an insurrection that could lead to anarchy. Rather, they had been a holy war fought to preserve the faith against those who sought to destroy it. Luçon compared Cathelineau to Joan of Arc, to apostles and martyrs especially the Maccabees (Christian martyrs before Christ) and even to Christ himself. In this set of memories, the main defender of

⁵³³ Grimaud, *Inauguration*, 25.

⁵³⁴ *Inauguration du Monument du Cathelineau: Compte Rendu*, 10.

the faith and the guarantor of a strong and traditional society was the king and, *for this reason alone*, the faithful sought the restitution of the monarchy.

Reception of the Memorial in the Local Press

The local conservative press such as *La Croix Angevin*, as was common at the time, used a syndicated set of words in their description of the events surrounding the inauguration of the Cathelineau monuments in October 1876. The following story was on every front page:

The solemn unveiling of the statue of Cathelineau, the Saint of Anjou ... his left arm raised to heaven ... the head bent in prayer ... a congregation of 4,400 at Mass ... a moving eulogy by Mgr. Luçon ... the statue was erected on land belonging to M. Xavier de Cathelineau and was unveiled to a crowd, whose enthusiasm is difficult to describe in words.⁵³⁵

There are a number of key phrases to note in this description: the obligatory “Saint of Anjou” reference; the piety of Cathelineau; the huge number of people said to be in the church (the village had a total of 300-400 inhabitants and the church holds no more than 500); the leading role of Mgr. Luçon (to the exclusion of other speakers); the fact that the land on which the statue was placed belonged to Xavier de Cathelineau and so was not public; and the (false) unveiling story. Small wonder that it was difficult to describe the enthusiasm of the crowd.

Unlike the unveiling of the de La Rochejaquelein statue a year before, which the Republican press had completely ignored, the Cathelineau statue attracted an ironic or mocking reaction. For

⁵³⁵ “... la statue a été découverte au milieu d’un enthousiasme indescriptible” *Le Journal de Maine et Loire* (and *L’Echo Saumurois*, *Le Progrès de l’Ouest*, *Le Réveil de l’Ouest* and *Le Croix Angevin*), 15-18 October 1896, 1. (In all newspapers)

example *Le Républicain*, under the headline “Failed Demonstration”, wrote on 16 October 1896: “The inauguration of the statue of the brigand Cathelineau attracted fewer than 1500 people including priests, rural squires, the pupils of the nearby Catholic college and Royalists whose expenses had been paid. The ridiculous statue was placed, not in the public square but an adjoining field with only donkeys for company.”⁵³⁶ In a follow-up piece, the paper called Cathelineau “the chief chouan” and the supporters of Xavier Cathelineau “a fistful of fanatics.”⁵³⁷ In November, it returned to the theme, writing that “we already have statues of de La Rochejaquelein and Charette, that’s enough! ... the government is naïve for allowing, in the middle of the Republic, the right to put up more statues just so that reactionaries can shout “*Vive le Roi!*”. It noted that the Prefect had forbidden the statue “of the famous brigand” Cathelineau but that “Sire Xavier de Cathelineau, descendant of the rag picker (chiffonnier)” had put it up anyway.⁵³⁸

These reports called Jacques Cathelineau a bandit, a rag picker and the chief *chouan* but never the Saint of Anjou. Whilst the *chouans* had many of the same aims as the Vendéens, they lacked a central command and avoided both the pitched battles and the sieges carried out by the Royalist armies in 1793. In calling Jacques Cathelineau a “chouan” the republican press downgraded his importance, from the general of an organised army to a bandit. The initial report noted that only 1,500 people (not the 4,000 reported in the royalist press) were at the inauguration and that many of those were present either because they were children brought in to make up the numbers or because they were paid to be there. It emphasised the role of the Bishop of Angers and makes no mention of Mgr. Luçon who played a much more important part and was the more impressive churchman. Finally, there is the false report of the

⁵³⁶ *Le Républicain*, October 16, 1896, 3.

⁵³⁷ *Le Républicain*, October 25, 1896, 4.

⁵³⁸ *Le Républicain*, November 11, 1896, 3.

statue being placed in a field for donkeys (perhaps an allusion to royalists) to contemplate. In the later report this changes to horror that it should be placed in a public square against the wishes of the Prefect and the Government.

The reception by both conservatives and republicans of the memorial to Cathelineau shows that it had an important part to play in the development of stories that helped to build both the regional identity of the Vendée and the peculiar nature of its political discourse. Of particular concern to the republicans was the idea that this statue of a popular and saintly figure who emerged from the peasantry could disturb their narrative about the causes of the civil war. If Cathelineau was genuinely what the stories claimed him to be, then the idea that the Vendée could be represented as priests, who wanted to keep the people in ignorance, and aristocrats who wanted to maintain their power and wealth could be challenged. From the reactionary point of view, Cathelineau added religion, saintliness and martyrdom to the discourse. He allowed the church to reclaim the cause of the wars and the power of his memory to retain the faithful in their Catholic churches – despite all that the state was doing to tear them away.

Conclusion

The memorial to Jacques Cathelineau shows that the disputes between reactionaries and republicans in the 1890s, which appeared to be very straightforward when considering the memorial to Henri de La Rochejaquelein, were rather more complex. The de La Rochejaquelein memorial represented single-minded royalist and Catholic resistance to republican religious, educational and cultural changes, expressed as a set of political statements that Republicans met with indifference, as if they were simply to be expected. Local and personal motivations lay beneath the national discourse, and these seem to illustrate the well-documented social

and psychological pressures on the male elite of late nineteenth-century France. There is no doubt that similar notions of honour discussed by Robert Nye and Kevin Passmore also had an impact on Xavier de Cathelineau. His frequent challenges to his opponents (although there is no evidence that he actually fought a duel), his passion for the old ways, the legitimate king and the ultramontane church may have been rooted in the shallow soil of the recently ennobled and the desire to live up to the deeds of his immediate ancestors. In both the memorials the absence of any heroic women, whether in the case of de La Rochejaquelein because they were deliberately erased from the history, or of Cathelineau because they were never present, is perhaps also to be expected in an elite society that was anxious about its masculinity.

Yet despite these similarities, the Cathelineau statue provides a powerful illustration of the fissures that underlay the image that contemporary Republicans (and some later historians) painted of a single-minded reactionary resistance. Whilst Xavier de Cathelineau frequently attacked the Vendéen Republican Georges Clemenceau, he reserved his bitterest language for his fellow royalist Maurice d'Andigné, the last person to see Chambord alive but who by 1896 was at the opposite end of the royalist spectrum. D'Andigné illustrates the way that some conservatives moved away from what Robert Locke called the "extreme Right" and towards a more pragmatic solution that sought to retain power locally.⁵³⁹ These may have included Julien de La Rochejaquelein, although he died too soon for us to establish this with clarity.

The case study also shows that there were nuances in the way that the Catholic Church approached the use of Vendée memory. The different takes on the Maccabee story – military hero or martyred people – illustrated the way that church was moving away from

⁵³⁹ Robert Locke, *French Legitimists and the Politics of Moral Order in the Early Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 49.

Cabrière's position of defiance of the republic and a call to armed conflict to overthrow the "satanic regime" towards reconciliation. Whether or not ordinary Catholics of the Vendée engaged with the political fault-lines among clerics, they clearly chose to use the memorial inaugurations to establish contrasting visions of the relationship between religion and the Republic.

Finally, the Cathelineau case shows us that, despite their initial indifference in the face of the de La Rochejaquelein inauguration in 1895, Republicans could be deeply concerned by this type of reactionary resistance. It may be that the de La Rochejaquelein memorial, because it had been kept out of the official record, did not come to the notice of the bureaucracy in Niort or Paris. The almost ecstatic reaction to its unveiling in the reactionary press may have drawn the government's attention. Perhaps the departmental scrutiny of proposed memorials in Maine-et-Loire (with its large city of Angers) was simply more focussed than that of Deux-Sèvres ruled from the smaller provincial town of Niort. Or, alternatively, it could be that a memorial to an aristocrat, paid for by his rich family, was less threatening to the Republic than that of a popular saintly peasant leader elected by the people to be the supreme leader of a counter-revolution. Whatever the combination of reasons, the banning of the statue by the state had the effect of rejuvenating the reactionary cause, and turning the stone statue in its box into a mass media event.

7. Reconciliation or Resistance: The Memory of the Vendée Wars, 1896-1918



Figure 7.1: The statue of George Villebois-Mareuil, the hero of the Transvaal. Inaugurated in Montaigu, Vendée (85), August 1902. Moreau photo. (Archive de la Vendée, 6 Fi 491).

This chapter deals with the period from when the last of the statues discussed in previous chapters had been constructed up to the end of the Great War, so from 1896 to 1918. It considers how the memory of the Vendée Wars continued to resonate through a period of rapid change in national and local politics. The Dreyfus Affair and subsequent realignments in the relationship between the army and politicians, the development of more formal political parties, and the impact of foreign political entanglements all had significant consequences on politics and society in the Vendée. This chapter will show how local actors responded to these events, discuss the failure of attempts to reconcile left and right following the death of a

new Vendéen hero, and explore how the memory of the events of 1793-96 continued to be used to bolster opposing political views throughout the period, even after the call for a *Union Sacrée* at the start of the war with Germany in 1914.

The Dreyfus Affair in the Vendée

1895 was marked not only by the inauguration of the de La Rochejaquelein statue but also the deportation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus to start his life sentence on Devil's Island in French Guiana. The impact of the "Dreyfus Affair" (the Affair) on politics in the Vendée can be seen mainly in the way that right-wing politicians adopted increasingly antisemitic language to attack those on the left. The left responded defensively ("we are no friends of the Jews")⁵⁴⁰ but antisemitism entered the political right's lexicon to stand alongside the totems of "Jacobin", "sans-culottes" and "Freemason". After Dreyfus, "Jewish" with all its accompanying tropes such as cosmopolitan, *sans-patrie*, and metropolitan, entered the vocabulary of the right in the Vendée as a new set of codes for those who opposed the royal and Catholic mythology. The codes showed that conservative politicians in the region were prepared to adapt national messages for use locally, even though few of their supporters would have had any direct exposure to Jews: there were almost none in the Vendée.⁵⁴¹

The Affair has been the subject of thousands of books and articles, leading to a wide range of conflict and debate amongst historians.⁵⁴² Few disagree that the years between 1895 and 1899 involved a fundamental reshaping of French politics, an increase in anti-Jewish discourse, and debate about the relationship between society and the army. The Affair began in October 1894 with the arrest and

⁵⁴⁰ *Le Patriote de la Vendée*, May 8, 1898, 1.

⁵⁴¹ Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews and the French Revolutions*, 110.

⁵⁴² The Lorraine Beitler collection at the University of Pennsylvania lists 5112 sources relating to the Dreyfus Affair – see: http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/dreyfus/docs/Beitler_bibliography7.pdf accessed September 12, 2019.

subsequent conviction of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an Alsatian Jewish artillery officer, on the charge of spying for the Germans. Three years later, in January 1898, the officer who had actually carried out the spying for the Germans, Major Charles Ferdinand Esterhazy, was tried and cleared of the offence, leading Emile Zola, perhaps the most widely read novelist in France at the time, to publish an open letter “J’Accuse” in Clemenceau’s *L’Aurore* newspaper on 13 January 1898. The confession and subsequent suicide of one of the forgers of the evidence against Dreyfus, Major Hubert-Joseph Henry, led to the Supreme Court overturning the original 1894 verdict and ordering a second trial. Dreyfus was returned to France in September 1899 and eventually pardoned by the government. Later that same year, after the sudden and unexpected death of President Félix Faure, a plot to launch a coup d’état by the extreme right wing *Ligue des Patriotes* was uncovered and led to a backlash by the left against monarchists and Catholics. In 1902, the socialist leader Jean Jaurès raised the matter of Dreyfus once again and a new army investigation began which led, in 1906, to the complete exoneration of Dreyfus, who returned to active service, served throughout the Great War and until his death in 1935.⁵⁴³

For this thesis, it is interesting to consider how the Affair and its aftermath affected the politics and culture of the Vendée after 1896, and whether the “Jewish Question” had any impact on the mythology and the messages about the civil war. The way Vendée politicians used the Affair and the vocabulary it produced to reinforce positions taken by left and right in the contested parts of the region suggests that provincial actors did incorporate the Affair into their local disputes. In the early years of the Third Republic the “Other” in the Vendée was almost always Freemasonry – if the right used “Jew” then it was always associated with “Freemason” to

⁵⁴³ This summary is taken from Larkin, *Religion, Politics*, 9-28 but also see Gildea, *France 1870-1914*; Bernard Wasserstein, *The Jews in Modern France* (Hannover, New Hampshire, 1985); and Nancy Fitch, “Mass Culture, Mass Parliamentary Politics, and Modern Anti-Semitism: The Dreyfus Affair in Rural France,” in *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (1992): 55-95.

deride left wing political figures.⁵⁴⁴ The right suggested that those on the left, by supporting Jews and Freemasons, were explicitly anti-Catholic, secretive and unpatriotic. Jewishness and Freemasonry were both seen as alien to France and, in the eyes of the right, strove to establish and exercise power through supranational structures and conspiracies.⁵⁴⁵

The right in the Vendée used the trials of “the Jew, Dreyfus” to position itself as supporters of the established order, the army, patriotism and legality: the generals were correct, left-wing politicians were wrong. They painted supporters of Dreyfus as traitors, corrupted by Jewish money and ready to tear down the judicial system. After Zola’s “J’Accuse” letter was published widely in the local republican press, the conservative press and politicians took up increasingly antisemitic positions and called their supporters onto the streets. For example, in Nantes, just to the north of the Vendée, where there was small Jewish community of shopkeepers and merchants, riots lasted days. Shops were looted and smashed and individual Jews injured, including a cousin of “the traitor Dreyfus”. *La Vendée* reported that as many as 20,000 took to the streets, shouting “death to the Jews, drown the traitors, down with Dreyfus”. The paper concluded, “this patriotic demonstration gave the greatest honour to the Nantaise population, *Bravo! Les Nantaises – Vive la France!*”⁵⁴⁶

Although urban mobs would not necessarily concern the peasant voters of the rural hinterland, and the Vendée had neither any large towns nor a Jewish population to attack, conservatives found ways of linking the “Jewish Question” to local concerns. The first of these

⁵⁴⁴ Before Dreyfus, it has been argued that most antisemitism in France came from the socialist left who equated “Jewish” with “Capitalism” and particularly with the banking dynasty of the Rothschilds. See: Robert Byrnes, “Antisemitism in France before the Dreyfus Affair,” in *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no.1 (1949): 49–68.

⁵⁴⁵ For example, *L’Étoile de la Vendée*, February 3, 1898, 1: “The speaker who came closest to the truth demanded the return of France to the French by purging the country of the Jewish infection, who with all other foreigners seemed to be more entitled than the French themselves.

⁵⁴⁶ *La Vendée*, January 21, 1898, 2.

was the security of their homes. Raymond de Fontaines (1859-1949) used an address to the electors of the first Fontenay-le-Comte district to state: “Cosmopolitan Jewry does not hesitate to attack our army which safeguards us from our enemies. Their work stops us declaring war which I consider the greatest calamity of all.”⁵⁴⁷ More remotely he suggested that the Jews caused the government to tremble before them as bankers and corruptors. The two most pressing issues for many peasant farmers were the price of bread and the cost of agricultural equipment and seeds. The 1898 election manifestos of de Fontaines and his fellow conservative Edmond Biré pointed the finger at “Jewish monopolists, speculators and exploiters who manipulated the price of wheat and flour and who, Jews who were only naturalised but actually ‘sans patrie’, laid down the law for 38 million Frenchmen.”⁵⁴⁸ Biré wrote: “I want order and liberty – liberty for religion and education – order against a government that trembles in the face of financiers, speculators and Jews”. De Fontaines declared: “I abhor the campaign by cosmopolitan Jewry to try to rehabilitate a traitor and who are attacking the army and its chiefs ... I am against the band of exploiters and the ‘sans patrie’, those who monopolise grain and flour and rob and ruin us.”⁵⁴⁹ This was not only a short-term set of concerns. In 1910, *Le Réveil Populaire*, a newspaper launched specifically to cater for antisemites, blamed the catastrophic autumn floods of the Loire, which destroyed much of the northern Vendée harvest, on “Jewish acquisition and subsequent destruction of our French forests”.⁵⁵⁰

In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of historians, most notably Michael Burns and Bernard Wasserstein, concluded that for most people the Jewish Question was “a minor question or no question at

⁵⁴⁷ *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, April 28, 1898, 1.

⁵⁴⁸ *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, May 8, 1898, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ The manifestos are reprinted in *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, May 12, 1898, 1 whilst the biographies of the winning candidates are in the database of members of the National Assembly (see for example [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/7813](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/7813)). Accessed September 17, 2019.

⁵⁵⁰ *Le Réveil Populaire*, December 17, 1910, 2.

all” and that “significant numbers of peasants remained indifferent to the Affair ... because it failed to strike a relevant chord in villages.”⁵⁵¹ They argued that due to the absence of a mass national political culture, events in Paris, Rennes or Guiana had little resonance in rural France. Nancy Fitch’s 1992 study of the impact of the Affair in rural France came to the opposite conclusion. She showed that the press had a more wide reaching impact than that suggested by previous historians and that, at least in the departments covered by her study, the local press and politicians used the Affair to reinforce local concerns and discourse.⁵⁵² Although none of these studies looked at any of the departments in the *région de mémoire*, research for this thesis clearly supports Fitch’s findings, rather than Burns and Wasserstein’s. Whilst there are no specific anti-Jewish statements in the memorial celebrations of de La Rochejaquelein and Cathelineau, the antisemitic politicians and journalists noted above are the same ones as those involved in the planning, payment and delivery of the memorial messages.⁵⁵³ The speakers at the memorial inaugurations had also used narratives of “Jewish” betrayal of the Royalist and Imperial causes, especially the betrayal of the Duchesse de Berry to the Orleanist police in 1832 by Simon Deutz.⁵⁵⁴ Deutz was the son of the Chief Rabbi of France who had converted to Catholicism and been baptised in Rome under the protection of the future Pope Gregory XVI. The main speaker at the inauguration banquet for the de La Rochejaquelein statue was Henri de Mayol de Lupé, who became

⁵⁵¹ Wasserstein, *The Jews in Modern France*, x; Michael Burns, “Qui ça Dreyfus? The Affair in Rural France,” in *Historical Reflections*, no. 5 (1978): 115.

⁵⁵² Fitch, *The Dreyfus Affair in Rural France*, 55-95.

⁵⁵³ The work of Raymond Secher has attempted to compare the aftermath of the civil war in 1796, what he has called the “Franco-French genocide” see for example: Reynald Secher, *A French Genocide: The Vendée*, trans. George Holoch (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003) with that of the Jewish Holocaust of the 1940s. However there were no parallels drawn in the early twentieth century between the atrocities committed during and after the war by republicans against the Catholic population, that Secher considers to be “genocide”, and the mistreatment of the Jewish population.

⁵⁵⁴ Marie-Caroline, Duchesse de Berry, was the mother of Henri, Comte de Chambord, the last male direct descendant of Louis XVI. In 1832, after the death of Charles X and the usurpation of the throne by Louis-Philippe of Orléans, she raised an unsuccessful rebellion in the Vendée in which Jacques-Joseph de Cathelineau (son of Jacques) lost his life.

president of *La Jeunesse Royaliste* in 1900.⁵⁵⁵ This organisation is seen by some as one of the precursors of Action Française and had launched an antisemitic newspaper, *Le Réveil Français*, which as early as 1897 had written 'France is oppressed by cosmopolitan Jewry'⁵⁵⁶

Development of Parties

The Dreyfus Affair played an important part in two fundamental changes in Vendéen and French politics: the development of formal political parties on both left and right; and the relationship between civilian politicians and the army.

In the period up to the mid-1890s, the first battles to establish the Third Republic and its political institutions had been won: a sovereign bicameral parliament, an appointed rather than directly elected president, regular elections using (most of the time) a constituency-based two-stage process and universal adult male suffrage. Republicans had seen off the various monarchist and imperial revivals as well as the threat of a populist military strong man in the form of Boulanger. By the end of the nineteenth century, France was moving away from the informal groupings of likeminded politicians that coalesced around individuals and policies, towards more formal political party structures.

On the right, the most significant movement was the decline of all types of monarchism. Following the death of the Bonapartiste Prince Imperial, whilst serving in the British army in South Africa in 1879, and the last direct male descendent of Louis XVI, the Comte de Chambord, in 1883, Royalists had gathered behind the Duc d'Orléans, Comte de Paris. Orléans was a dilettante exile and when Pope Leo XIII issued the call to reconcile with the Republic in

⁵⁵⁵ François Callais, "La Jeunesse Royaliste. Préfiguration de L'Action Française," in *Histoire, Économie et Société* 10, no. 4 (1991): 561-589.

⁵⁵⁶ *Le Réveil Français*, December 2, 1897, 1

1892, the right split into *ralliés*, who joined the Action Libérale Populaire (ALP) with conservative republicans to form most of the governing bloc in parliament for the rest of the century, and a more extreme nationalist group around the new newspaper Action Française (AF). Whilst the ALP was not a “Conservative Party” on British lines at this stage, it was made up of men who agreed on issues such as the protection of property rights, no national ownership of key industries, lukewarm support (at best) of unions, religious freedom – including the right to run schools – republicanism as the preferred constitutional settlement, with bi-cameral parliament elected by universal male suffrage, no directly elected president or plebiscite/referendum, no taxes on income, colonial expansion, the main external threat from Germany and the alliance with Russia.⁵⁵⁷

To the right of this bloc, the “new right” were the Ligue des Patriotes and AF. These men were antisemitic, ultra-nationalist (and so xenophobic) and increasingly anti-parliamentarian, preferring instead the Bonapartist, Boulangist or Orleanist ideas of a strong leader either elected by popular vote or placed in power by the army. One of their intellectual leaders, Maurice Barrès, a Lorrainer by birth, was amongst the first to popularise the word “nationalism” in an address to the electors of Neuilly-Boulogne, where he was seeking re-election in 1893. He headed his manifesto “The Nationalist Sentiment” and explained that, like the Czechs and the Irish (interestingly two nations without states at the time), French nationality depended on “a common language, a set of common myths ... and hatred of your neighbours.”⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ A good general introduction to the politics of this period is Gildea, *France, 1870-1914*. For right-wing politics see Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* and for the extreme right, Laurent Joly, *Naissance de l'Action Française: Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras et l'Extrême Droite Nationaliste au tournant du XXe siècle* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2015). For politics on the left, see Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870*; and Renaud Quillet, “À la Recherche de la République Sociale”.

⁵⁵⁸ Maurice Barrès, *Étude pour la Protection des Ouvriers Français: Contre les Étrangers* (Paris: Grande Imprimerie Parisienne, 1893), 28.

To the left of the central bloc a group of Jacobins and socialists gradually coalesced into a recognizably modern party, albeit one that was prone to splits and internal conflicts. In the early Third Republic, the followers of Louis-Auguste Blanqui, who had been proclaimed as president of the Paris Commune but spent most of his adult life in jail, continued the violent struggle to overthrow any bourgeois government. The Blanquist *Comité Révolutionnaire Central* eventually merged into the Socialist Revolutionary Party and continued to fight for the violent overthrow of the Republic. Slightly to the right of this extreme were groups who disagreed amongst themselves about participation in government but believed that change could be forced through by peaceful protest, strikes and political debate. Two of these organisations, the French Socialist Party and the Socialist Party of France, combined to form the SIFO (French Section of the Workers' International) under the leadership of Jean Jaurès. The SIFO joined other Republicans in the *bloc des gauches* to form governments under Emile Combes and Maurice Rouvier between 1902 and 1906. Socialist policies included the nationalisation of key industries, collective bargaining for better working conditions and wages, introduction of progressive income taxes and better welfare provision, international cooperation against the abuses of capitalism, disestablishment of the church and state ownership of church assets.⁵⁵⁹

This extremely fractured national picture led to coalitions being formed and destroyed in quick succession and the establishment and fall of successive governments. The decision in 1904 of the SIFO to go into opposition led to a right-of-centre government being formed in 1906 under Georges Clemenceau who became the dominant figure in French politics until the outbreak of the Great War.

⁵⁵⁹ Sowerwine, *France since 1870*, 72-74.

In comparison with the changes in national politics, the right-wing politics of the Vendée moved less quickly to party formation. The local right-wing press adopted some of the modern anti-Dreyfusard slogans of the national discourse, but their more successful political representatives relied on the established rhetoric of personal trust, as was evident in their 1898 manifestos (more accurately “declarations of faith”). Paul Bourgeois (1827-1912) who won, unopposed, as he had for the past five elections in the 2nd La Roche wrote: “I have been your deputy for many years and have worked hard for you”. Léon de Baudry-d’Asson (1836-1915), who was the descendant of a Vendéen War leader, and had been successful in every parliamentary election of the Third Republic until his death in office in 1915, won in the 2nd Les Sables. His manifesto said simply: “I have been your deputy for more than 22 years”.⁵⁶⁰

The Vendée left, perhaps because they were more likely to be held to account for implementing national policy, developed a party system more quickly and by 1898 ran under one manifesto that was devised by Republican deputy Gaston Guillemet (1851-1914). The manifesto set out the programme that they would follow in government:

- liberty, equality and justice – but against violent revolution
- a better life for workers and for those unable to work because of their suffering
- state pensions
- reductions in taxes on small commerce
- reduction in railways fares
- more free agricultural/technical education and state supported agricultural insurance
- reduction of court costs
- military service of two (rather than three) years

⁵⁶⁰ Both these quotes are from *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, May 8. 1898, 1.

- against the military tax on the infirm, sick, and family carers, and any return of the monarchy or empire.⁵⁶¹

This was a programme tailored for the peasant and working population of the Vendée. As to Dreyfus and the Jews, in an article in *Le Patriote*, Guillemet defended himself against the “obscene lie in *La Vendée*” that he was a friend of the Jews: “I have no more sympathy for the Jews than for anyone else and ... to pretend that because I was not prepared to wage a civil war against the Jews, made me the friend of traitors and the enemy of the army is an odious lie.” Guillemet declared himself to be a “patriotic as M. de Fontaines”.⁵⁶²

By the 1906 elections, the Vendée press had changed the nomenclature of the region’s parties: left-wing newspapers called their candidates “républicains” and their opponents “réactionnaires” (rather than monarchist or royalist) whilst right-wing papers called their candidates “libéraux” (previously conservative) and their opponents “radical-socialistes” (rather than republican).⁵⁶³ The left manifesto set out their main plans for office – what it called a “modest programme” including the development of industry, agriculture, commerce and transport; more efficient use of state spending; and state pensions for all workers. More controversially, at the top of its list of policies that had to be implemented was the separation of Church and state, “without provocation or weakness, avoiding the rage of the clericals who aim only to stir up the people”.⁵⁶⁴

This rather sober list was followed up by a front-page appeal to voters from the candidates on the day of the election, 6 May 1906. In far more dramatic prose, the left stopped talking about national

⁵⁶¹ *Le Patriote de la Vendée*, May 8, 1898, 1.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, May 5, 1898, 3.

⁵⁶³ See for example: *Le Patriote de la Vendée*, April 29, 1906, 1 and *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, May 6, 1906, 1.

⁵⁶⁴ *Le Patriote de la Vendée*, April 29, 1906, 1.

issues and reverted to the one thing that had mattered in Vendée politics for the past century: the memory of the civil war. They called out the “supposed liberals” who were: “fanatical partisans of monarchy who had fomented civil war in France ... in order to cut France in two and restore the monarchy.” They called on voters to lift up their eyes and see the people “whose ancestors had waged war, brother against brother and who fought alongside the Prussians against France.” This would have been well understood as about both the current fears of invasion from the East and the role of the royalist exiles and rebels at the end of the eighteenth century. On the other side of the debate, the six “liberal” candidates issued a series of negative slogans against the “socialist candidates of the leftist bloc”, comparing the tricolor that they were supposed to support with the red flag that “in reality they marched behind.” It is difficult, amongst all the negative campaigning, to understand what these candidates would actually do if they were ever to be in power, as it seemed that the whole manifesto revolved around reversing the policies of the outgoing government, made up of: “drunkards, slimy nonentities, liars and three-faced cowards – supported and congratulated by the Vendéen republican committees.”⁵⁶⁵ The references to committees and socialist flags served as a historical reminder to their supporters of infamous revolutionaries from the Committee of Public Safety through to the Commune.

Whilst the national preoccupations with the Dreyfus and the Jewish Question appeared to be important to the political class, they seem to have had little impact on success or failure in the Vendée. The issues that had been contested for so long in the region: schools, the church and above all the memory of 1793 seem to resonate right up to 1914.

⁵⁶⁵ *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, May 6, 1906, 1.

The Changing Relationship between the Army and Civil Power

Republican ideas about the role of the army, its uses, and how it was held to account by civil power developed significantly between 1870 and 1914. In the early period there was much debate about the type of army to which a modern republic should aspire. Recent experiences of the disastrous 1870 campaigns against the Prussians and 1871 Commune as well as First Republic and Napoleonic military success influenced these debates. There were influential republican ideas about the notion of the citizen in arms – *levée en masse* – referring back to the First Republic and the equally republican idea of *la patrie en danger*. Most politicians agreed on the idea of the citizen army and its conscription. Charles de Freycinet, who was Prime Minister four times in the 1880s and 1890s, said “defending the motherland is a not a burden but a duty which no one has the right to avoid”.⁵⁶⁶ Some conservatives in the early period were not as enthusiastic – for example, Thiers noted that, “the nation in arms puts a rifle on the shoulder of every socialist” – preferring a strong professional officer corps with fewer conscripts along the lines of the 1870 army.⁵⁶⁷

Three other major concerns informed society’s thinking about the army during this period. The first was *revanche*, the need for revenge for 1870 and especially regaining the “lost” provinces in Alsace and Lorraine and the resulting fear of “strong Germany”. This was accompanied by the development of nationalism and the exceptional place that France occupied as a cultural and democratic leader amongst nations. There were very few dissenters from these views as a mainstream political ideology until socialist internationalism in the early twentieth century.⁵⁶⁸ Second were

⁵⁶⁶ Charles Louis De Saulces De Freycinet, *La Guerre En Province Pendant Le Siège De Paris 1870-1871* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1872), 358.

⁵⁶⁷ John Horne, “Defining the Enemy” in Daniel Moran and Arthur Waldron, *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 103.

⁵⁶⁸ David B Ralston, *The Army of the Republic; The Place of the Military in the Political Revolution of France, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1967).

insecurities related to the ideal of French masculinity. Concepts of honour, violence as a means of resolving disputes, and the need to overcome the historic deficit of male birth rates compared to Germany, all resulted in increased insecurity amongst the (entirely male) political elite that Germany would retain its lead over France.⁵⁶⁹ Finally, there was widespread political agreement in France on the importance of French imperialism and colonialism. French republican exceptionalism was taken as read, and military victories over African and Asian native forces built a belief in the supremacy of French arms. At the same time colonial disputes with Great Britain and Germany, mainly in Africa, resulted in significant increases in tension and risk in relationships with those countries.⁵⁷⁰

Taken together, the idea of democratic duty to the *patrie*, imperialism, desire for revenge against Germany, concepts of masculinity and the search for heroic leadership, all resulted in a powerful political drive for a stronger army. Debate centred on the need for fuller conscription or a longer length of service, and the search for allies to combat the ever-present assumption that Germany would be the enemy in the next war. As the comparative male birth rate continued to mean that fewer men were available for conscription in France than in Germany, the only way to increase the size of the army was to extend the amount of time that conscripts would spend with their regiments, and to decrease the number of exemptions from service. In 1905 all exemptions except for medical incapacity were removed, including those for teachers and priests, whilst in 1913 the length of service was extended from two to three years with the approval of all the mainstream political parties except the international socialists.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, 77.

⁵⁷⁰ Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne: The French Army 1871-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 133-168.

⁵⁷¹ A good general overview of the French Army in this period remains, Porch, *The March to the Marne*, whilst Moran and Waldren, *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution* gives a more nuanced view. For anti-militarism see: Paul Miller, *From Revolutionaries to Citizens: Antimilitarism in France, 1870-1914* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2002); and Jean Rabaut, *L'Antimilitarisme en France, 1810-1975* (Paris: Hachette Sciences-Humaines, 1975).

The fallout from the Dreyfus Affair in 1898 and an abortive coup d'état in 1899 led to the dismissal, demotion and retirement of many Catholic and conservative officers and NCOs. Officers considered to be more loyal to the Republic replaced them. The *affaire des fiches* in 1904 showed that most staff officers were conservative, anti-republican and sent their children to Jesuit schools.⁵⁷² Some 20,000 *fiches* (dossiers) were prepared with only 10% of them giving favourable opinions on the officer.⁵⁷³ This vetting was unveiled in 1904 and led to the fall of the Combes government but the purging of Catholics and anti-republican officers continued up to 1912 when it was scaled down to include only the very senior promotions. As a result, the military acted with much less independence from civilian accountability in the early twentieth century than in the last decades of the nineteenth. In comparison with the German army there were many fewer experienced officers/NCOs in 1914 and a large number of conservative officers were recalled after the first few months of the war.⁵⁷⁴

In the meantime, France's search for allies resulted in successive treaties between 1891 and 1894 that ensured, in the event of an attack by Germany or its allies, that Russia and France would both mobilise their armies. The resolution of colonial differences between France and Great Britain after the Fashoda Incident allowed better diplomatic relationships to develop between the two countries.⁵⁷⁵ In 1904 a formal agreement – the “Entente Cordiale” – set out the future arrangements for managing colonial expansion, and in 1907

⁵⁷² This scandal was revealed in 1904: all 27,000 army officers had been the subject of secret surveillance by the police from 1900 and the War Ministry needed a system to manage the large amounts of data. In a very early form of government outsourcing, the freemasons undertook this work, establishing a network of 300 masonic informers (including five MPs, three prefects, three sub-prefects, senior civil servants, mayors and deputy mayors, an army general, lawyers, doctors and journalists). See Larkin, *Religion, Politics*, 45-50.

⁵⁷³ Larkin, *Religion, Politics*, 48: unfortunately only 2,836 *fiches* survive, only 210 of these were favourable.

⁵⁷⁴ Porch, *The March to the Marne*, 197.

⁵⁷⁵ The Fashoda Incident of 1898 saw a small French force attempting to block the British advance up the Nile Valley so as to complete unbroken British African territory from the Mediterranean to the Cape of Good Hope. Hopelessly outnumbered at a fort in Fashoda in the Sudan, the French were ordered to retreat by the government in Paris rather than risking conflict with Britain that could easily have spilled over into a European war.

Britain joined with Russia and France in the Triple Entente: an understanding that each party would provide mutual support to the others in the event of a war.

The Army and the Vendée

Whilst there were inevitably significant disagreements over the way the army and national politicians handled Dreyfus's trial, conviction and exoneration, Vendéen political leaders at the end of the nineteenth-century largely agreed on the army's central place within French society. A conservative newspaper wrote, at the height of the Dreyfus and Fashoda crises, "those who attack our army do so to the great advantage of our two worst enemies, Germany and England."⁵⁷⁶ In the 1910 election on the conservative side De Fontaines wrote: "above all, good Frenchmen disapprove of the criminal ideas of the anti-militarists." The republican Bazire meanwhile appealed to "the grandeur and the very existence of France, which need the Tricolour to fly proudly above all our disagreements."⁵⁷⁷ Such disagreements that did exist were largely about the cost of and politics of the civil administration of the army. In 1898 the conservative view was that "the army is being humiliated because there are too many Jews, Masons and Protestants in the government who have become used to bowing to the English."⁵⁷⁸ In 1910, the conservative De Lavrignais noted, after decrying the closure of "our" religious schools that had "led to a state of ignorance that was ten times worse than Germany," that he had joined the "unanimous vote of 200 million francs for the army and navy, but the administrative failures and the corruption of the left compromise National Security, so that only the patriotism of our soldiers and sailors guarantees our safety."⁵⁷⁹ We may conclude that in the Vendée there was little dissent from the view that France

⁵⁷⁶ *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, October 2, 1898, 1.

⁵⁷⁷ *Journal des Sables*, April 14, 1910, 2.

⁵⁷⁸ *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, September 12 9, 1898, 1.

⁵⁷⁹ *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, April 19, 1910, 1-2.

needed a strong army focussed on the twin tasks of projecting French imperial strength across the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, and protecting the *patrie* from Germany. Agreement on these matters, imperialism, militarism and nationalism, provided an opportunity in 1902 for reconciliation between the right and left in the Vendée.

The Memorial to George Henri Anne-Marie Victor, Comte de Villebois-Mareuil

The death of a Vendéen general in Africa provided an example of how such agreement about the army could offer common ground between the Vendée's political communities, as they came together to build a memorial to another hero of the region. In 1885, the small town of Montaigu – in the north of Vendée 85 and at the centre of the *région de mémoire* – had provided the divisive memorial to Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux.⁵⁸⁰ In 1902 it witnessed an extraordinary reconciliation between conservatives and republicans when the memorial to Colonel George de Villebois-Mareuil (1847-1900) was paid for and erected under the guidance of a cross-party committee, following his death in the Transvaal two years earlier. The bronze statue by Arthur Guéniot was unveiled on 24 August 1902 on Rue de la Gare, close to the railway station in Montaigu and at the opposite end of the town from the statue of Larevellière-Lépeaux. It was destroyed under the Vichy laws of 1942 and restored as a stone statue in 1952 in the same place on the newly named *Avenue Villebois-Mareuil*.⁵⁸¹ Situating the memorial in this way provided a “conversation” with modernity unlike than the other statues considered in the thesis which looked to the past and relationships between church and state.

⁵⁸⁰ In 1900 Montaigu had 1,776 inhabitants. The wider commune, also called Montaigu, had a population of just over 17,000 and registered voters – males over 21 who had lived in the commune for at least five years - of just under 4,000. Statistics taken from *Annuaire-Almanach du Commerce, de l'Industrie, de la Magistrature et de l'Administration* (La Roche-sur-Yon: Annuaire Didot-Bottin, 1900, 188 and the voting records of the commune of Montaigu in various regional newspapers.

⁵⁸¹ AN, Hommages Publics, F/1cl/210-F/1cl/235.

Villebois-Mareuil was the last male descendant of a line of aristocrats who traced their lineage to the 1214 Battle of Bouvines that secured the Capétien dynasty. King Phillip-Auguste made Hugo the first Comte of Villebois-Mareuil for his bravery in that battle. During the Revolution, Pierre Villebois-Mareuil served in the émigré royalist armies and as an officer in the British army against Napoleon. Pierre's son married the only child of a Vendéen noble family, who had fought in the 1793-96 wars and, after the restoration, the family inherited the Château de Bois Corbeau in Montaigu. The family rallied to the cause of the Duchesse de Berry in the 1832 where Pierre fought against the Orleanist monarchy alongside Jacques-Joseph Cathelineau (Jacques' son).⁵⁸² George Villebois-Mareuil was born in Nantes but spent most of his childhood in Montaigu where he "absorbed the ideology of the Chouannerie" before going to secondary school at the Jesuit Vaugirard College in Paris run by Father Pierre Olivaint and from there to officer training at St Cyr in 1865.⁵⁸³ He was posted to Indochina but returned in time to serve and be seriously wounded in the final battle of the Franco-Prussian war where he was decorated and promoted to captain in the field. After the war he became a staff officer at the Collège de Guerre and wrote military strategy essays alongside rather dull novels. He married into a bourgeois family, to the horror of his aristocratic parents who refused to attend the wedding; had a daughter, lost his wife in her second childbirth and became the youngest colonel in the French army.⁵⁸⁴

The Villebois-Mareuil family was a conservative milieu. George's younger brother Christian had been elected a royalist deputy for the

⁵⁸² There are three biographies of Villebois-Mareuil: Roy Macnab, *The French Colonel: Villebois-Mareuil and the Boers, 1899-1900* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1975); Bernard Lukan, *Le Lafayette de l'Afrique du sud / Villebois-Mareuil* (Monaco: Le Rocher, 1990); Annette Keaney, *Le Lion et le Sanglier: Deux Héros de la Guerre des Boers: Paul Kruger et Georges de Villebois-Mareuil* (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1991). All three focus the majority of their work on the time that Villebois-Mareuil spent in South Africa but both Macnab and Lukan have some details of his earlier life and political views. Keaney uses Macnab's work as the source for this part of her book.

⁵⁸³ Pierre Olivaint was a Jesuit priest who was one of the "martyrs of the Commune". He was executed on 26 May 1871 along with 52 other Catholic hostages the day before the Commune was overthrown. See Keaney, *Le Lion*, 53; and Charles Clair (SJ), *Pierre Olivaint* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1878), 429

⁵⁸⁴ Macnab, *The French Colonel*, 5-10.

Department of Mayenne (about a hundred kilometres north of Montaigu). When, in 1893, George was promoted to lead the local infantry regiment, the 130th, the Prefect of Mayenne intervened with Minister of War, concerned about a concentration of local power in reactionary hands.⁵⁸⁵ This was George's first brush with political republicanism and he was unhappy to be moved to the northeast to take command of another regiment. He then applied for and was given command of the first regiment of the Foreign Legion in Algeria in anticipation of a fighting expedition to "pacify" Madagascar in 1895. Whilst the Legion was sent, however, Villebois-Mareuil was ordered back to Paris where he was being considered for promotion to general. Disgusted by this move as he had seen no active service since 1870, he resigned his commission in 1898 just as the Dreyfus Affair and the Fashoda Incident were adding to, as he saw it, the scandalous way that politicians treated the army.⁵⁸⁶

Villebois-Mareuil was "ashamed by this national humiliation" and, according to Lugan, "naturally seduced by the ideas of 'national revival' set out by the brilliant set around Charles Maurras."⁵⁸⁷ He became one of the founders of Action Française as well as a 5,000-strong veterans' society. Villebois-Mareuil was ready to launch his political career when the Boer ambassador to Paris approached him and suggested that he could provide an important service to the Boer Republic in its struggle against the same British who had humiliated his compatriots at Fashoda. Eager for action, he left his daughter in the care of her grandparents and sailed for South Africa to become the only foreign general in the Boer army. On 5 April 1900, Villebois-Mareuil along with 75 mainly French volunteers including three Charette brothers, descendants of the 1793 Vendéen general, were surrounded by a British force of 750 men

⁵⁸⁵ Christian Villebois-Mareuil was a monarchist and Catholic deputy from 1889-1914, see biographical details at: [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/7421](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/7421). Accessed September 17, 2019.

⁵⁸⁶ Macnab, *The French Colonel*, 16.

⁵⁸⁷ Lugan, *Le Lafayette*, 47. Lugan was himself the head of security of Action Française during the 1960s so is not the most reliable source on the "brilliance" of its early leaders.

with artillery and maxim guns. The general was killed just as he ordered the surrender.⁵⁸⁸ The outpouring of public grief in France was immense. In the Vendée and elsewhere in France, there were immediate calls from all quarters in the press for memorials to the “brave colonel”.⁵⁸⁹

A committee was set up to manage the fund raising for a statue, led by the republican mayor of Montaigu town but including notables across the political divide. On the conservative side were two senators: the deputy for Montaigu commune (and leader of the royalist party in the Vendée), de Baudry d’Asson, and Achille Le Cler, the president of the *Conseil Général*. On the republican side were the deputy for La Roche-sur-Yon, Guillemet (the leader of the republicans in the Vendée) and the Prefect of the Department – supposedly politically neutral but always a republican political appointment by the government in Paris – Eugène Plantié. Together they issued an appeal circulated to all the towns of the region calling for donations, so that “the Vendée can honour one of its most glorious children who, surrounded by an enemy force twenty times superior preferred to die rather than surrender”. Each member of the committee subscribed for 50 francs but there were also thousands of donations of centimes from workers and servants.⁵⁹⁰ Le Cler’s speech to the *Conseil Général* just before the unveiling reminded people that “this monument was voted for unanimously and I hope we are all united in our proclamation of our Vendéen hero”.⁵⁹¹ Paul Bourgeois, the conservative deputy for the 2nd La Roche wrote and read a poem for the inauguration, reprinted in the *L’Etoile de la Vendée* the following day that proclaimed the joining of the Blue (republican) and White (royalists) in a new effort to forget the past, revive the country and march forward together.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ Macnab, *The French Colonel*, 155.

⁵⁸⁹ Macnab, *The French Colonel*, 94.

⁵⁹⁰ The appeal for donation and lists of donors are preserved in the Department of the Vendée archives: file reference AV 4/T/41, folder Villebois-Mareuil.

⁵⁹¹ Reported in *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, August 18, 1902, 1.

⁵⁹² *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, August 20, 1902, 1.

What is remarkable about the list of notables on the committee and at the inauguration ceremony is that Villebois-Mareuil was not connected to any of the politics that they represented. Whilst he had served the Republic under Guillemet faithfully, and his brother was a member of the royalist party of de Baudry d'Asson, he had decided that a new political movement was needed. Action Française would end up to the right even of the Vendéen monarchists but at its inception was the inheritor of the Boulangist nationalist populism that owed as much to the Jacobin clubs as to these gentlemen politicians. This committee was, then, not commemorating the man or his ideas but rather what he represented: a hero fighting against an external enemy that threatened their idea of French (rather than Vendéen) exceptionalism. This coming together against an imagined external threat in 1901-2 foreshadowed the way that the two communities seemed to unite against the real German threat twelve years later.

The idea of a glamorous, aristocratic and masculine hero around which the community could unite is one we have seen in other commemorations in the Vendée, particularly that to Henri de La Rochejaquelein. Edward Berenson has argued that, while the French people may not have had much interest in the civilising mission of imperialism, they loved the idea of heroes and the late nineteenth century was “saturated with the imagery of imperialist heroes ... the press, advertising, popular theatre and consumer goods all had explicit or implicit colonial themes.”⁵⁹³ The list of the most popular subjects for national statues confirms this, with Joan of Arc, Roland and Vercingetorix all representing heroic, losing fights against external enemies that eventually made France a stronger nation. This type of “martyr hero” in the modern era was necessarily a military man and, with no European wars since 1870,

⁵⁹³ Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 5.

in the years before 1914 this meant an imperialist. Men such as Jean-Baptiste Marchand in the Sudan, Hubert Lyautey in Morocco and Pierre de Brazza in the Congo all answered this need to some extent. Villebois-Mareuil, who had the added tragedy of being a widower with a young daughter – the other three were all bachelors who had questionable relationships with native young men – was the epitome of the martyr hero.⁵⁹⁴

The story of Villebois-Mareuil confirms that politicians in the Vendée at the beginning of the twentieth century may have been opposed to each other on subjects such as education and religion, and they used different versions of the memory of the 1793-1796 conflicts to reinforce their arguments, but they could also agree on a number of matters. Most important amongst these were the importance of the army to society and the threat to French imperial ideals and aims. Conflicts with proxy British native armies in East Africa, Egypt and China resulted in what Edward Berenson called “not so latent Anglophobia simmering amongst France’s politicians and publicists”, meaning that Germany no longer “monopolise[d] evil and brutality” in the French press.⁵⁹⁵ Theatrical productions of *Au Pays des Boers* and romanticised *feuilletons* in the newspapers such as *La Fiancée Boer* popularised the story of Villebois-Mareuil.⁵⁹⁶ Meanwhile news reports of “La Sauvagerie Anglaise” continued to appear even in the months before the unveiling of the statue.⁵⁹⁷ Agreement here seems to have led to an unexpected but revealing truce in the memory wars between left and right in the Vendée.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., *Heroes of Empire*, 45.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., *Heroes of Empire*, 77.

⁵⁹⁶ *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, February 21, 1; 1902, Juin 28, 1902, 1.

⁵⁹⁷ *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, January 23, 1902, 1.

Breakdown of the Truce: The *Affaires des Fiches* and *Inventaires* of 1906 in the Vendée

Reconciliation around these areas of mutual interest was short-lived. Even in the week after the unveiling of the monument, in a speech to veterans of the 1870 war on the subject of Villebois-Mareuil, the conservative senator of the Vendée noted that “in fighting for us, our fathers have shown us the way to our duty; they were the race of Giants ... we remember their glorious past!”⁵⁹⁸

One of the consequences of the Dreyfus Affair was a renewed suspicion on the left of the Catholic Church and its influence over army officers and potential coup leaders. The election in 1902 of a left-wing government (the *bloc des gauches*) under Emile Combes signalled a new wave of anti-clericalism. The uncovering of the *affaire des fiches* in October 1904 that led to the downfall of Combes was accompanied in the Vendée by constant references to the past. Guy Thuiller’s study of the controversy in the nearby garrison of Poitiers noted the language of the fiche for one officer, Major Georges de Cadoudal: “this officer is a royalist and fanatical Catholic ... the most dangerous officer in the garrison ... hates everything that is republican ... he is a *chouan* and very dangerous in this part of the country that was part of the old Vendée.”⁵⁹⁹ De Cadoudal did indeed come from a family of Vendéen counter-revolutionaries; his great-uncle had been guillotined as one of the leading generals. Nevertheless, that his “chouan” connections should be the thing that defined him rather than, say, his young service in the Papal Zouaves, shows how much the local republicans as well as conservatives continued to interpret political identities through the lens of 1793.⁶⁰⁰ The local conservative

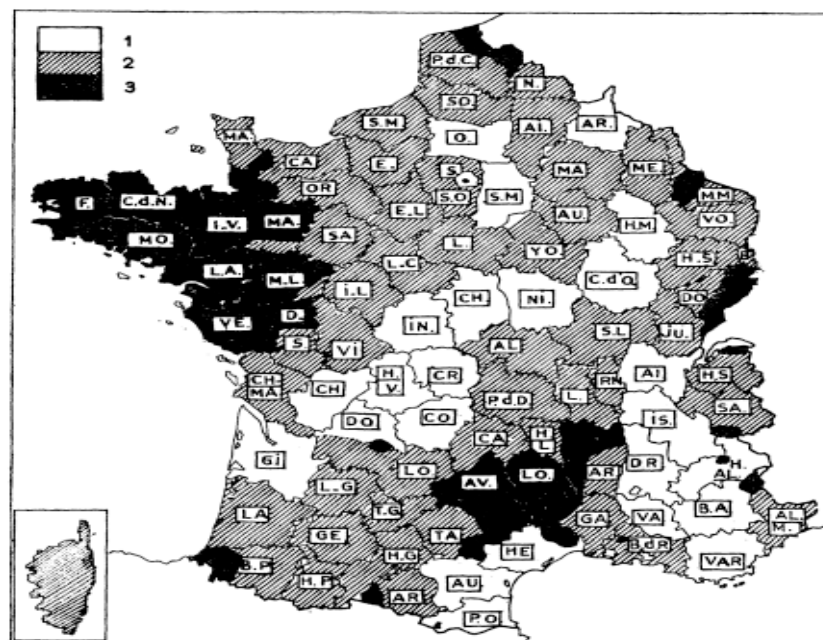
⁵⁹⁸ Reported in *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, August 28, 1902. The reference to the “race of Giants” is Napoleon Bonaparte’s description of the Vendée army of 1793.

⁵⁹⁹ Guy Thuiller, “A Propos De L’affaire Des « Fiches » Les Mésaventures Du Préfet Gaston Joliet En 1904.” *La Revue Administrative* 47, no. 278 (1994): 135.

⁶⁰⁰ Louis Georges De Cadoudal, *Georges Cadoudal et la Chouannerie. Par Son Neveu G. De Cadoudal* (Paris: Hachette, 1867).

newspapers responded in kind, for example *Étoile de la Vendée*: “the current Jewish-masonic, anti-French government ... imposes a more selfishly implacable and despotic governance than any of the aristocracy of times past.”⁶⁰¹

Combes’ closure of 3,000 non-authorized church schools in 1903 was followed by the legal separation of church and state in 1905 and the consequent establishment of “cultural associations” to hold church property on behalf of the state. In order to establish what property the church owned, the government ordered a national inventory to be carried out in 1906. In most of France, this proceeded with little fuss. Jean-Marie Mayeur’s 1966 study of the geography of resistance showed that the Vendée *région de mémoire* was one of the very few regions to resist the inspectors (another was Montpellier, the so-called Vendée of the Midi, where Mgr. Cabrières remained archbishop).



Carte n° 1 : Les manifestations des Inventaires.
1 : Pas d'incidents ; 2 : Incidents isolés ; 3 : Incidents graves.

⁶⁰² Figure 7.2: Map showing relative resistance to inventories. This study considered the reports of the inspectors to the ministry and attempted to grade them by severity of response.

⁶⁰¹ *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, January 20, 1904, 1.

⁶⁰² Jean-Marie Mayeur, “Religion et Politique: Géographie de la Résistance aux Inventaires (février-mars 1906),” in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 21, no. 6 (1966): 1259-72.

In the departments of Vendée, Maine-et-Loire and Deux-Sèvres the local press reported many incidents of extreme violence by both the inspectors (and the troops sent to support them) and protestors locked inside their churches.⁶⁰³ These included the churches at St. Aubin-de-Baubigné, where Henri de La Rochejaquelein was buried, and Le Pin-en-Mauges, which held the tomb of the Cathelineaus. The doors hacked down by troops in St. Aubin have been preserved as a lasting memorial of the events (see Figure 7.3).



Figure 7.3: Photograph of the old church door from the church of St. Aubin-de-Baubigné, courtesy of Nicolas Stofflet and used with permission. The notice on the inside of the door reads "Inventaire, mars 1906".

Claude Petitfrère's study of how the Maine-et-Loire press reported the violence found that there were frequent references to "the last gasp of the *Chouannerie* that we had thought was well finished with the tragi-comic episode of the Duchess of Berry in 1832."⁶⁰⁴ He quotes both the left-wing *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* and the right-wing

⁶⁰³ For example *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, February 22, 1906, 1-3 had three pages of reports from various communes.

⁶⁰⁴ Claude Petitfrère, "Angers, 1906 : la Presse et les Inventaires," in *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 86, no.1 (1979): 60.

Le Petit Courier and *La Croix Angevine* as using the civil war terms “chouans” on the left and “Jacobins” or “les sans-culottes infects de l’an II” on the right for their respective opponents. *Le Patriote* of 11 March 1906 accused those nobles and priests that were stirring up the violence of “the same lies from 1793 that brought us the war of the Vendée”, whilst *La Croix* called the inventories the “March towards the Terror ... history recommences and the same causes will have the same effects.”⁶⁰⁵

The Vendée press used similar terms and rationales. On the right, *La Croix Vendéenne* noted that “1793 was the last time our churches were inventoried and less than a year later they had all been confiscated and our priests guillotined” as well as complaining that the “revolutionaries were shouting ‘take the priests to the water and the guillotine’” in a clear reference to the beheadings and mass drownings of Catholics in the Loire after the wars.⁶⁰⁶ On the left *La Démocratie Vendéenne* wrote incredulously about the terminology being used for what was being accepted calmly throughout the rest of the country, “Revolution ... the justice of the people ... pretended legality of the Jacobins ... these are big words to be using for such a small event” as were the way that the “royalist press” described its opponents as “tyrants, false witnesses, propagators of tuberculosis, the vile Bloc of Freemasons, snitches and Jews.”⁶⁰⁷

A mere four years after the erection of the Villebois-Mareuil memorial with its promise of reconciliation, the Vendéen right and left were clearly once again struggling to impose their version of history on events and the local population.

⁶⁰⁵ All newspaper quotes from Petitfrère, *Angers 1906*, 78.

⁶⁰⁶ *La Croix Vendéenne*, February 11, 1906, 1; and March 13, 1906, 1.

⁶⁰⁷ *La Démocratie Vendéenne*, February 11, 1906, 1; and March 11, 1906, 1.

Reinforcing Resistance: Clemenceau's Visit to the Vendée and the Period up to the Outbreak of War with Germany

Vendée republicans, encouraged by electoral gains in May and July 1906, prevailed upon the new Interior Minister, Georges Clemenceau, to travel to the region on the pretext of opening a new hospital.⁶⁰⁸ The recent election had resulted in three deputies from each side of the political divide as shown in Table 7.1.⁶⁰⁹

May/July	1906		Total	% share		
	Conservative	Republican		C	R	C Majority
LR1 (July)	9565	9620	19185	50%	50%	-55
LR2	17084	4992	22076	77%	23%	12092
FC1	10654	9753	20407	52%	48%	901
FC2	8301	10912	19213	43%	57%	-2611
SD1	8458	8484	16942	50%	50%	-26
SD2	11159	7325	18484	60%	40%	3834
Total	65,221	51,086	11,6307	56%	44%	14135

Table 7.1: Election results in Vendee (85) for 1906.

Unlike Goblet's visit in 1886, which featured no local deputies, the three Republican deputies were present at each of Clemenceau's speeches and Guillemet's newspaper *Le Patriote de le Vendée* of 4 October 1906 carried every word of his and Clemenceau's speeches.⁶¹⁰

As well as the regional capital and republican city of La Roche-sur-Yon, Clemenceau chose to attack the right in the same small town of Montaigu that had both Villebois-Mareuil and Larevellière-

⁶⁰⁸ Although Clemenceau was a Vendéen by birth (and he chose to retire to the Vendée coast in 1920) his political career was centred entirely in Paris and in the Var in the south. Visits to the rural heartlands by senior politicians were rare events – in the entire period covered by the study the Deux-Sèvres department had no such visits.

⁶⁰⁹ For the first time the opposing sides disagreed on the nomenclature of their parties. Up until this election the "left" were called "républicain" and the "right", "monarchiste" or "droite". For this election, left wing newspapers called their candidates "républicain" and their opponents "réactionnaire" whilst right wing papers called their candidates "libéral" and their opponents "radical-socialiste". For the purposes of this table and to allow for consistency with other tables in the thesis, the old terms Conservative and Republican have been used.

⁶¹⁰ *Le Patriote de le Vendée*, October, 4, 1906, 1-2.

Lépeaux monuments. Montaigu was in the centre of the only electoral district that had returned a royalist deputy at every election since 1870 and the one with the largest majority. Choosing this town was no coincidence and the local press made much of the fact that Montaigu was the hometown of Larevellière-Lépeaux (“the brave city which was the birthplace of Larevellière-Lépeaux” as *La Vendée Républicaine* reminded its readers).⁶¹¹ Clemenceau’s great-grandfather, Pierre-Paul Clemenceau, had been a distant cousin and close friend of Larevellière-Lépeaux (even though “the Young Clemenceau” had stolen Larevellière-Lépeaux’s first love and subsequently married her).⁶¹² As a young man, Georges Clemenceau had been the editor of *La Justice*, the national newspaper that had reported positively on and supported the construction of memorials to both Joseph Bara and Larevellière-Lépeaux and, even earlier in his life, he had spent his childhood in Montaigu. Clemenceau’s father had been arrested in Montaigu by Napoleon III’s officers and sent into exile in Algeria. Clemenceau used this episode in one of his speeches: “I ran to him and told him I would avenge him. He said, ‘my revenge will be if you study and work hard’ – I did and here I am avenging him.”⁶¹³

Clemenceau did not refer to Goblet’s visit, probably because he had been partly responsible for the downfall of his administration. While Goblet’s politics had moved to the left at the end of his career, Clemenceau’s were moving to the right as he grappled with the difficulties of office for the first time. As we have seen in the *affaire des fiches*, it was not only the conservatives who were obsessed with the events of 1793. This most republican of leaders, returning to his native region for the first time as a minister took “the Chouannerie”, the favoured republican derogatory term for the civil war, as his theme in both of his major speeches whilst in the region, including the story about his maternal grandmother watching the

⁶¹¹ *La Vendée Républicaine* September 15, 1906, 1; and October 6, 1906, 2.

⁶¹² Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux, *Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux*, 23.

⁶¹³ *La Vendée Républicaine*, October 6, 1906, 2.

1793 battle of Luçon from a bell tower and weeping with joy once it became clear that republican troops had beaten the Vendéen rebels.⁶¹⁴

Whilst Clemenceau spent much time talking about national concerns, he also discussed the local issues of clerical and aristocratic privilege and the need to educate “the last chouans” in the benefits of republicanism. To the largely conservative mayors of towns gathered to meet him as required by the Prefect, he said that he wanted to convince them of the need to change, arguing that their preferred regime had given them “no freedom to write, no freedom to think and no freedom to organise. Thirty-five years of the republic have given you all three.” At the new teacher training college for girls in La Roche-sur-Yon, the first such organisation in the department, he questioned, “Where is the old Vendée? The one where there were no such colleges? A hundred year ago we discovered The Rights of Man. Today we are discovering the rights of womanhood. It is now up to you, *Mlle la directrice*, to use them to bring peace to us all.” Finally, in his major speech, on the Place Larevellière-Lépeaux in Montaigu, he talked about the republican blood that had been shed in wars that crossed this beautiful country to ensure that the values of the republic would be embedded.⁶¹⁵

Guillemet’s language in welcoming Clemenceau on behalf of the “bleus de la Vendée” was sober but his description of the “coalition clérico-nationalo-réactionnaire” as “chouans ... the last vestiges of feudalism which exploits to the limits both fanatical religion and the terror of the great landed fortunes” could easily have come straight from 1793.⁶¹⁶ It is clear from the speeches that Clemenceau and Guillemet were as adept at using the language and imagery of the civil war as their conservative opponents. Clemenceau in particular declared:

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁶¹⁵ *Le Patriote de la Vendée*, October 4, 1906, 1-2.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., March, 18, 1806, 2; and May 26, 1806, 2.

Who better than you, men of Vendéen earth, to understand the price that was worth paying in those legendary times, for our inalienable right to think, to believe, to live peacefully as our conscience required. Our oak-lined lanes tell a terrible tale of those heroic “blues” of Mayenne who returned gloriously from the Rhine only to fall to French bullets at the battle of Torfou.⁶¹⁷

The conservative press, led by *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, remarked that the Interior Minister's visit to his native Vendée “was actually of no importance – the celebrated leader said nothing of note,” and instead gave its 30 September 1906 front page over to a repeat of an 1893 story about the Interior Minister's links with “the little German Jew” Cornelius Herz, who had funded Clemenceau's newspaper to the tune of 400,000 francs.⁶¹⁸ Herz was a *bête noire* for conservatives because of the role he was alleged to have played alongside another Jew, Baron Jacques de Reinach, in the collapse of the Panama Canal Company, amidst the loss of huge sums of government and private sector (much of it from aristocratic families) funding. Meanwhile, as we have seen in Chapter 6, the man behind the Cathelineau memorial, Xavier de Cathelineau was inspired to write one of his angry open letters to Clemenceau in 1906. De Cathelineau was still trying and failing to persuade the Prefect in

⁶¹⁷ *La Vendée Républicaine*, October 6, 1906, 1. Recalling this particular battle provides a fascinating insight into Clemenceau's thinking. The battle of Torfou (Maine-et-Loire) in September 1793 was a victory for the Royalist army but at huge cost to both sides. The reference to Mayenne (Mainz) is to the garrison of a short-lived republic in Germany who had called on the French revolutionary army for assistance. After heroically resting a long siege from Prussian and Austrian troops, the garrison was allowed to leave having promised not to take part in further conflict with the allies. This promise did not include the Vendée and so they were despatched to help deal with the insurrection. Clemenceau knew that referencing this battle – a French republican army that had resisted “Germany” and then been betrayed by royalists – would be understood by his largely republican audience. See: Archibald Alison, *History of Europe during the French Revolution Embracing the Period from the Assembly of the Notables, in M.DCC.LXXXIX, to the Establishment of the Directory, in M.DCC.XCV* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1833), 253-255 for a near contemporary account of the events at Mainz and Torfou.

⁶¹⁸ *L'Étoile de la Vendée*, September 30, 1906, 1. Finding equivalent currency for historical periods is problematic but this was clearly a noteworthy amount for the press at that time. <http://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>

Angers and the minister in Paris to allow him to unveil his grandfather's statue.⁶¹⁹

Even as the Great War approached, political discourse continued to refer back to the memory of 1793. The front page of *La Démocratie Vendéenne* (the “organe départemental d'union républicaine”) on 9 July 1914, after the events in Sarajevo but before the invasion of Belgium by German forces in August, had two stories. The first was on the thoughts of Victor Hugo and Serbia, which noted that this “great thinker” believed that the answer to the Balkan question was to replace the political question with a humanitarian one. The newspaper believed that what the situation in Serbia required was a united states of Europe:

Finish with Empires and despotisms, break open superstition. Free thought, freedom of movement, brotherhood! That is the goal, there is the answer! ... The shot that killed the archduke might result in a war that pits one half of Europe against the other half, who can turn us away from this great peril?⁶²⁰

Alongside this article it had excerpts from a speech given by the Minister of War, Adolphe Messimy (1869–1935) on the annual commemoration of General Lazare Hoche, the commander of the “infernal columns” that destroyed the last resistance in the Vendée in 1796.⁶²¹ Messimy noted that “Hoche was Republican because he was a Patriot – in 1914, as in 1793, these terms are synonymous ... the army will be victorious because it is founded on the same principles as Hoche's: hard work, discipline, love of country and the Republic.” *L'Etoile de la Vendée*, the conservative and Catholic

⁶¹⁹ Letters reproduced in *L'Intransigeant*, October 15, 1906, p. 2. *L'Intransigeant* was a right wing newspaper owned and edited by Henri Rochefort who was an early supporter of Boulanger and an anti-Dreyfus campaigner.

⁶²⁰ *La Démocratie Vendéenne*, July 9, 1914, 1.

⁶²¹ Adolphe Messimy resigned his commission in the army in 1899 when both government and military refused to reopen the Dreyfus conviction. He entered politics as a radical republican and was Minister of War between 1911 and 1912 and then again in 1914 before re-joining the army and leading a regiment at the first battle of the Somme. See http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/%28num_dept%29/5219. Accessed September 17, 2019.

newspaper, in a front page editorial of 16 July 1914 criticised the thinking behind the articles in *La Démocratie Vendéenne*. It said that the words “free thinking and brotherhood” meant only one thing in the Vendée: “was it not in this region that not a single dwelling, a single field, was left unburned by the Infernal Columns, sent by ‘free thinkers’ into the Catholic Vendée?” There was no doubt, it continued, that these ideas could lead only to chaos.⁶²²

These references back to the wars of 1793-6 even as France stood on the verge of a new war against Germany reveal the continuing importance of the myths and memories of the civil war on both sides of the political divide, and despite the brief truce for the memorial to Villebois-Mareuil, under what seem to have been very specific ideological conditions, such memories continued to occupy a central place in the Vendée’s continuing resistance to republican ideology.

The *Union Sacrée*

The outbreak of war with Germany in 1914 and the call for national unity that accompanied it brought a new opportunity to reconcile the domestic fighting between the left and right.⁶²³ Whilst the peak of Anglo-French imperial disputes in the 1898 Fashoda Affair was seen as “the greatest international humiliation France had experienced since 1871”, there was no doubt that the main preoccupation of foreign and military policy was the threat from Germany.⁶²⁴ In 1913 French conscription rules were changed so the “classes” of 1911, 1912 and 1913 were forced to serve for an additional year and exemptions from service, which had been reduced in 1905, were further tightened. A centrist government, concerned by the increases in German military expenditure and

⁶²² *L’Étoile de la Vendée*, July 16, 1914, 1.

⁶²³ *L’Union Sacrée* was the expression used by President Poincaré in his message to the nation on the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914: “dont rien ne brisera devant l’ennemi l’union sacrée.” (Republished in *Le Matin*, August 5, 1914, 1).

⁶²⁴ Leonard Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War, 1914-1918: French Sections Translated by Helen McPhail* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14, 11.

manpower, believed that France needed more men to defend the frontier. The most left wing of the trade unions, anarchist groups and some members of the Socialist party opposed these changes but they passed through parliament with the support of all politicians from the Vendée.⁶²⁵

Infantry regiments were recruited on a largely departmental basis and there were two from Vendée: the 93rd Infantry based in La Roche-sur-Yon and the 137th Infantry in Fontenay Le Comte. At mobilization in 1914, the annual “classes” of conscripts from the years 1869-1914 were called-up (those men born between 1869 and 1894 so all of them educated under the Third Republic). Each regiment had 3,500 men in it with a further 2,500 in each of two reserve regiments the 337th and 87th Territorial Infantry. Both regiments were posted immediately to the Belgian frontier and fought in the first battle of the Meuse – the 137th had the honour of capturing the first German flag and a German colonel, for which they were awarded the Légion d’Honneur. The regiments took part in battles on the Marne, Champagne, Verdun and Chemin des Dames. In one battle in Champagne in 1915, the 137th lost 1,200 men (a third of its men), killed, wounded or missing presumed dead. In five days in the defence Verdun in 1916 the 93rd lost 657 men. Over the course of the war five regimental commanders were killed or so seriously wounded that they had to be replaced.⁶²⁶ The Prefect, Fernand Tardif – who of course had an interest in showing that the situation in his part of the country was calm and ordered – reported on the mobilisation of these regiments: “In the Vendée, as in the rest of France, conscripts hurried to join up calmly and

⁶²⁵ Alexandre Niess, “La Gauche Parlementaire Française Face à la Loi de Trois Ans (1913)” In: *Revue d’Histoire Politique*, 26, No. 2, 2017, 67-89; and Hervé Lozingot, “La Lutte Contre la Loi Militaire des Trois Ans dans le Pas-de-Calais (1913-1914)” In: *Revue du Nord*, 72, No. 288, Octobre-Décembre 1990, 1037-1045.

⁶²⁶ This data comes from the official histories of the two regiments which were published in 1920 and are available online at <http://memorial-poiresurvie.fr/Regiments/Historique>, Accessed September 17, 2019.

resolutely. The local population gathered to see them leave with an air of enthusiasm and acclamation.”⁶²⁷

Some historians, such as David Drake, suggest that the Sacred Union lasted until the end of the war.⁶²⁸ Ian Beckett notes that even the mutinies and strikes of 1917 “rarely had any political element to them,” but were instead focused on differences in pay between workers and soldiers, and the amount of leave given to front line troops.⁶²⁹ Others such as Smith, Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker believe that by early 1917 unity had fractured. The failure of the Chemin des Dames offensive, mutinies amongst some of the troops at the front, the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in Russia and strikes in the French interior could have seen the end of the French war effort. It was only “rescued by the quasi-dictatorship of Georges Clemenceau” who launched a second mobilization that excluded much of the left.⁶³⁰ Certainly by 1917 the national press, which was heavily censored throughout the war, was full of coded messages about the “defeatism” of the left and the “fight to the last soldier” of the right, even while Clemenceau was attempting to relaunch the offensive war.⁶³¹

There is reason to believe that, in the Vendée at least, suspension of factional infighting lasted a much shorter time. Given the brevity of the period of peace between the 1902 erection of the memorial to Villebois-Mareuil and Clemenceau’s rancorous 1906 visit this is perhaps not surprising. The Vendée press shows little sign of the coded war that developed in the national papers, perhaps because the Department was reduced by shortages of both paper and

⁶²⁷ Fernand Tardif, *Un Département Pendant la Guerre (3e édition)* (La Roche-sur-Yon: Librairie Guigné Hurtaud, 1917), 3.

⁶²⁸ David Drake, *French Intellectuals and Politics from the Dreyfus Affair to the Occupation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 65.

⁶²⁹ Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2007), 508.

⁶³⁰ Smith, Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *France and the Great War*, 7, 116.

⁶³¹ Catherine Slater, *Defeatists and their Enemies: Political Invective in France, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) describes the “*le défaitisme*” and “*jusqu’aboutisme et guerre à outrance*” in her study of post 1917 political invective in the French press.

journalists to two small newspapers, which must have been heavily censored by the Prefect's office.⁶³²

There are nonetheless signs of the continuing resonance of the Revolutionary period that so preoccupied local politicians and intellectuals before the war. On the republican side the one remaining local newspaper's front page headline for the confirmation of war on 8 August was "*La Patrie en Danger*" – the opening words of the 1792 declaration of the National Assembly to call the citizens to arms.⁶³³ Such references persisted throughout the war. For example, in 1917 as some national left-wing politicians were calling for a negotiated peace, conservative republicans in the Vendée recalled that it was the Convention of 1793, debating the constitution of the First Republic, that proclaimed "the Republic will never make peace with an enemy that occupies its territory".⁶³⁴ These local references reflected a national republican preoccupation with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies. The leading proponent of this was the historian Alphonse Aulard who published a regular column in *Le Journal*, although even he allowed that the Vendéens who "had stabbed the French Army in the back in 1793 were now fighting the invader in the republican ranks."⁶³⁵ He returned to the subject in 1916 when writing about the French "will to win". As Aulard put it, "in July 1793, we were invaded, the Vendée raged, almost sixty departments joined the Girondin revolt ... but the Convention won because it willed it (*elle voulut*) by the terror, by the scaffold, science, enthusiasm, by punishing the

⁶³² For a summary of the way that censorship was invoked at both national and local level, see: Oliver Forcade, "Censure, Secret et Opinion en France de 1914 à 1919" In *Matériaux pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, 58, 2000, 45-53. On August 9, 1914, *L'Étoile de la Vendée* informed its readers that readers of *La Croix Vendéenne* and *Le Vendéen* would, until further notice, receive copies of *L'Étoile*. On August 18 it reduced the size of the newspaper from eight to four pages "as our workers and our materials have been diverted to essential war work." (Page 1 "Avis important"). Guillemet's *-Le Patriote de la Vendée* struggled on to February 1915 when it closed completely, *La Vendée Républicaine* moved to a weekly paper and from six to four pages.

⁶³³ *La Vendée Républicaine*, August 8, 1914, 1. Alan Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The Nation-in-Arms in French Republican Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) shows that this phrase was used only to evoke the memory of the republican call to arms.

⁶³⁴ *La Vendée Républicaine*, January 6, 1917, 1. Constitution du 24 Juin 1793, article 121.

⁶³⁵ Alphonse Aulard, *Le Journal*, November 23, 1914, 2.

egoists; by iron, fire and blood it saved the country, chased out the enemy and fixed the borders of France at the Rhine.”⁶³⁶

On the right in the Vendée, the press was unable to remind readers of their alternative history but some alternative sources allow us to see how it continued to resonate. The first is this undated and unattributed photograph shows officers and men in French infantry uniforms of the Great War (taken after the 1915 introduction of the “Adrian” helmet) in what appears to be a trench or bunker:

They are proudly posing in front of the stirring words of Henri de La Rochejaquelein: “If I advance, follow me; if I retreat, kill me; if I die, avenge me”.⁶³⁷ The adoption of this “rebel cry” into the army of the republic shows both the enduring nature of the de La Rochejaquelein mythology and its adaptability to the circumstances of the existential threat of German invasion.



Figure 7.4: photograph of Great War army officers.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., February 29, 1916, 1.

⁶³⁷ A local historian in the Vendée sent the photograph to the author. He was not able to shed any further light on its provenance and (to date) enquiries at local archives and the national army museum have only identified that the uniforms date from the 1914-18 war period.

The second is a remarkable collection of some eight hundred letters sent between a 21-year-old Vendéen peasant conscript, Joseph Mady and 16-year-old girl, Eglantine Bardin, whom he had met in the month before he was called up in 1914. The letters illustrate the depth of their faith and the way that it had become politicised. In the Vendée, the interlinking of clerical and political support meant that churchgoing remained higher amongst all classes than elsewhere, and these letters show that believers were deeply invested in many of the characteristic features of the Catholic revival such as belief in mystic prophecy, the latter-day appearance of saints in holy places (often associated with certain trees or forest glades) and the power of pilgrimage.⁶³⁸

The couple came from neighbouring villages in the southern tip of Vendée 85, in the canton of Luçon part of the second *circonscription* of Fontenay-le-Comte. This was one of the most contested of the region, if not the entire country: Luçon swung between being 58% republican in 1881 to 55% conservative in 1914 whilst the wider region had winning margins of less than 1% in both those years.⁶³⁹ Joseph and Eglantine were both highly literate and had been entirely educated under the secular regime of the Third Republic. Nevertheless, Joseph believed that God would determine whether he survived the war or not and, in an echo of the deal with God that would not be out of place in the medieval church, he vowed to go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes should he live.⁶⁴⁰ Both Joseph and Eglantine wrote often about the prophecies of the Vendéen mystic, Claire Ferchaud who Joseph calls “a second Joan of Arc.”⁶⁴¹ Eglantine complained that even the “prophet of the Sacred Heart”

⁶³⁸ The huge loss of life in the Great War resulted in an increase in both atheism and a revival in religious feeling as described in Annette Becker, *La Guerre et la Foi: de la Mort à la Mémoire, 1914-1930* (Paris: A. Colin, 1994).

⁶³⁹ Election results taken from *L'Étoile de la Vendée*.

⁶⁴⁰ Letter from Joseph Mady October 8, 1916 in Regional Archives of the Vendée, see: (http://recherche-archives.vendee.fr/archives/fonds/FRAD085_1NUM384). Accessed September 17, 2019.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, letter from Mady dated January 11, 1917.

does not know when the war will end.⁶⁴² Claire Ferchaud was born in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre in the north of Vendée, 15 kilometres from the birthplace of Henri de La Rochejaquelein, where she professed to visions of the risen Christ showing his wounded heart.

An illustration of the way that royalist politics and Catholic faith continued to work closely together and refer back to the eighteenth century came in January 1917, when the leader of the royalist party in the Vendée, Armand Charles de Baudry-d'Asson (who had succeeded his father Léon in 1914) presented Ferchaud to President Poincaré. Together the politician and the prophet shared the instructions for the president that she had received from Christ. France would only be victorious if the flag and uniforms of French soldiers carried the Vendéen Royal and Catholic army's civil war badge of the Sacred Heart.⁶⁴³ Poincaré passed on the message to his commanders but no more was done. Joseph and Eglantine survived the war, married on 16 September 1919 and went on to have ten children.⁶⁴⁴

The uncensored learned journal, *Revue de Bas-Poitou*, provides further evidence of how actors in the region continued to refer to the memory of the 1790s in wartime. In 1916, historian Henri Baguenier Desormeaux (himself the great-grandson of a soldier-surgeon who served under Henri de la Rochejaquelein and the father of a son killed in the trenches later in 1916) revived the dispute over the origins and responsibilities of the 1793 civil war. His conclusion looked forward to that time when, "rid of our current terrible preoccupations, we are able, with complete freedom, to show that

⁶⁴² Ibid., letter from Eglantine Bardin, July 6, 1918 (http://recherche-archives.vendee.fr/archives/fonds/FRAD085_1NUM384). Accessed September 17, 2019.

⁶⁴³ Richard D. E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), 129-132. For more on Claire Ferchaud see Raymond Jonas, *The Tragic Tale of Claire Ferchaud and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁶⁴⁴ http://recherche-archives.vendee.fr/archives/fonds/FRAD085_1NUM384

the patriotism of the Vendéens of 1793 was no less than that of their sons in 1870 or 1914-1916".⁶⁴⁵

Preoccupations with the events of 1793 were also reflected in the monthly obituaries of the sons of famous Vendéens published in the journal. Two of the most important aristocratic families, D'Elbée and de Savary de Beauregard, lost sons during the war. In the months before the outbreak of war in 1914, Charles-Maurice, Marquis d'Elbée (1846-1922), grandson of the Vendéen general executed in his armchair on the beach at Noirmoutier in 1794, had written the preface to a new book about the events of 1793-6.⁶⁴⁶ In it, he proclaimed that the noble people of the Vendée "rose up to defend their religion and their king. Defeated, they are now victorious because they have kept the faith alive, the Catholicism of France."⁶⁴⁷ He was to lose a son, Philippe, in 1915, and a nephew Bertrand in 1916. Philippe's obituary noted that he was the dignified descendent of the "great Vendéen leader ... in him were found the most pure virtues of the old France." Whilst Bertrand's accolade included his "enormous enthusiasm for the great causes that once made the hearts of our fathers beat. This enthusiasm had grown in him by visiting the battlefields of the *Vendée Militaire* which had witnessed the incomparable exploits of his great ancestor."⁶⁴⁸

Similar themes could be found in other obituaries. Henri de Guerry, comte de Savary de Beauregard (1862-1913), had inherited the *circonscription* of Bressuire in Deux-Sèvres from his cousin Julian de La Rochejaquelein in 1897 and was re-elected to it with massive majorities until his death.⁶⁴⁹ His eldest son, also called Henri, died at

⁶⁴⁵ *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Spring 1916): 28.

⁶⁴⁶ See biographical details at: https://data.bnf.fr/fr/12296465/charles-maurice_d_elbee. Accessed September 17, 2019. The book is: Cyrille Ferret, *Histoire Merveilleuse Illustrée des Géants de la Vendée, un Peuple de Héros Français, une Gloire de l'Humanité, Exemple de Résistance à la Tyrannie* (Niort: Self Published, 1919).

⁶⁴⁷ Preface reprinted in *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Summer 1914): 166.

⁶⁴⁸ *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Winter 1916): 255.

⁶⁴⁹ See biographical details at: [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/\(num_dept\)/6324](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche/(num_dept)/6324). Accessed September 17, 2019. Henri's grandson, the current Comte Henri de Savary de Beauregard, is the current owner of Chateau Clisson and curator of the de La Rochejaquelein archive.

the front in August 1914. His obituary stressed the connections to the “family in which heroism and faith were traditional. Amongst his ancestors was de La Rochejaquelein, a great warrior’s name”. A poem written about him in 1915 included the line “his glorious sword will shine alongside that of de La Rochejaquelein.”⁶⁵⁰ Jean, Hubert and Ivan Savary de Beauregard, were the younger brothers and cousin of Henri, “Continuing the beautiful traditions and great virtues of their ancestor known affectionately throughout the Vendée as *Monsieur Henry* [de La Rochejaquelein] who put at the service of his religion and country, his eloquence, duty and faithfulness.”⁶⁵¹ Other obituaries of sons of Vendée nobility have similar messages: in one there is a story of the soldier “arriving near the front for the first time they came across a priest which allowed them, to their great joy to celebrate mass like the Vendéens of 1793 in the middle of a wood.”⁶⁵² This final story recalls the many stories of sacred trees and groves where saints (in particular the Virgin Mary) would appear to the faithful who had been ejected from their churches. Jacques Cathelineau is said to have led a pilgrimage to one of these before he took command of the army and Larevellière-Lépeaux’s memoirs record him cutting down a sacred oak on his journey through the Vendée in 1793. These references in the obituaries and the letters all show a devotion to a traditional and often politicised form of Catholicism of mystics, pilgrimages and echoes of paganism.

Conclusion

The social and political stance of both right and left in the Vendée in the first two decades of the twentieth century continued to be informed by reference to the civil war of 1793-96. Driven partly by the national upheavals of the Dreyfus Affair, the growing sense of

⁶⁵⁰ Obituary in *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Summer 1915): 80. Poem by the composer Louis Blanpain de Saint-Mars in same edition.

⁶⁵¹ *Revue de Bas-Poitou* (Winter 1917): 233-240.

⁶⁵² Obituary of Sergeant Louis de Kervenoeael in *ibid.*: 241.

French imperial exceptionalism and the changing role of the army, the period marked the transformation of both left and right in the region into more organised and recognisably modern political parties. The 1902 statue to George Villebois-Mareuil shows how local politicians viewed the importance of military and imperial heroes and foreshadowed the Union Sacrée of 1914. The statue and the war with Germany could have marked the end of the culture wars of Vendée memory by bringing together republican and conservative factions against an existential threat to a greater French identity. Instead, despite uniting behind the national causes of opposition to both British imperial expansion and German aggression, the region's attachment to its local history of conservative resistance to the republic endured. Conflicting memories of the 1790s remained powerful in the Vendée right up to and, as far as it is possible to see through the censorship of the time, during the Great War of 1914-18.

8. Conclusion

This thesis set out to explain how the memory of the events of the civil war of 1793-96 shaped the culture and politics of the Vendée in the period 1870-1918. It has shown that the idea of a *région de mémoire* in the Vendée was as valid in that period as it has proven for students of later periods. The geography of the *région de mémoire* in the period studied is different to the present Vendée Department 85 with its accompanying tourist heritage. In the nineteenth century it corresponded more closely with the military region over which the battles of the civil war were fought. By using case studies of memorials from across the Departments that make up the *région de mémoire*, the thesis shows that historians who write about the Vendée without considering the broader region understate both the geographical reach of the political impact of its memory and the closely contested nature of its politics.

The thesis shows that much of the literature on the building of national and separatist identities discussed in the introductory chapter applies equally to those groups who built a community identity without the ultimate aim of a separate national identity. The work of Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson and others provided a good framework for the study of the conservative and reactionary groups in the *région de mémoire*. In particular we have seen the way that these groups used the memories, myths and shared stories about the suffering of their 1790s ancestors in order to build a sense of common culture for political ends. One of the findings of my work in this area is that it was not only the conservative descendants of the victims of the civil war but also the victorious republicans who used these memories as a political weapon. As the contested history of the region passed out of academia and the classroom into the wider population in the form of memorials to

heroic figures, both sides of the political divide devised ways to use commemoration to disseminate contemporary messages.

The methodology devised to assess the memorials has allowed us to consider many revealing features of the commemorations. Exploration of the *motivations* of the men who proposed, financed and erected the four statues has added layers of complexity to the broad picture of political partisanship. We have seen how Jean Goblet used national republican government funding for a statue of the one prominent Vendéen from the Revolutionary period to support the policies that Goblet's government sponsored. The motivations behind the two royalist statues revealed the complex mix of personal, local, national and religious politics that made up the conservative elite. The statue of George Villebois-Mareuil was proposed and financed by politicians from both sides of the divide as they sought to find common ground in nationalist and imperialistic politics when faced with external threats.

The *content* of the monuments is equally revealing. Only the Henri de La Rochejaquelein monument conforms exactly to Maurice Agulhon's definition of an ideal Third Republic statue. A feted piece of art in bronze by an internationally renowned sculptor, it was both life-size and life-like (as far as we can tell from near contemporary pictures), while the words on its plinth told an effective story. It was the only one of the statues to be presented at the Salon in Paris, to be considered part of the national revival in visual arts and the only one to survive in its existing form today. The Larevellière-Lépeaux and Cathelineau memorials were cheap and not very good copies of existing artwork, which probably reflected the lack of money available for both rather than any artistic decision to use local materials. Neither had the resounding words of the de La Rochejaquelein statue, as the lifetime utterances were almost non-existent in Cathelineau's case and rather long-winded and tedious in Larevellière-Lépeaux's. Villebois-Mareuil's statue stood on a high

plinth and was of him as a fifty-three year old rather than the dashing young hero personified by de La Rochejaquelein. The two royalist statues, de La Rochejaquelein and Cathelineau have had the most enduring impact on the region's memory. The causes that Villebois-Mareuil represented, anti-British and anti-semitic nationalism have become uncomfortable parts of French history. Larevellière-Lépeaux is now a largely forgotten man, even in his hometown. Meanwhile, perhaps because of the presence of at least some of the mortal remains of the royalists, their memorials continue to attract pilgrims and flowers are laid on the anniversaries of their deaths.⁶⁵³

The concept of *local conversations* in the placement of the four Vendéen statues revealed that nineteenth-century preoccupations influenced both the location and the effectiveness of the monuments. The Larevellière-Lépeaux bust in Montaigu was situated between the new school and the new town hall in the ruins of a medieval castle and overlooking the town's main church in a symbolic conversation that stressed the importance of education and democratic government and its triumph over a defunct monarchy and church. The placing of the "reconciliation" statue of George Villebois-Mareuil away from the medieval quarter of Montaigu, in the new town next to the railway station, appears to say that only by turning away from ancient conflicts and embracing modernity as represented by the railway could the old divisions be healed. Both the royalist statues were placed in the centre of town squares, between the church and the town hall. In each of the churches next to the statues, were elaborately decorated tombs of the men being commemorated and windows illustrating their lives and heroic deaths. These conversations stressed the vital and continuing importance of the alliance between local politics and the

⁶⁵³ A body that is reputed to be that of De La Rochejaquelein was recovered from a temporary grave close to the battlefield on which he died and is buried next to the statue. The Cathelineau tomb in Le Pin-en-Mauges contains the heart of the General and the bodies of his son and grandson. Larevellière-Lépeaux is buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, Joseph Bara is in the Pantheon in Paris and Villebois-Mareuil in Boshof, South Africa.

Catholic Church and the central place that heroic male leaders had to play in contemporary society.

In the early years of *statuomanie*, republican politicians used memorial statutes of their heroes from the Vendée Wars to stress two important issues that confronted the new Republic. First, for Jean Thibaudin, the Minister of War, the 1881 memorial to the martyred Joseph Bara provided an example of the sacrifices required for the Republic: “our army will be strong and brave because we remember the lessons of the past and the examples given to us by the life and death of Bara.”⁶⁵⁴ Second, the 1886 memorial to Louis-Marie Larevellière-Lépeaux, who was one of the most conservative of First Republicans, demonstrated that even left-leaning politicians, such as future Prime Minister Jean Goblet, prioritised the establishment of a society based on the protections of a written constitution and honest politics, without the need for hereditary rulers or the meddling in politics of the Catholic Church.

On the other side of the political divide, royalists used the same memorial tools as those described by Agulhon in his review of republican *statuomanie* to propagate their anti-state message. Given the vast amount of newsprint given over to the banned statue of Jacques Cathelineau, conservative commemorative practices may well have had a greater immediate impact than the majority of republican memorials. The commemoration of Henri de La Rochejaquelein in 1895 illustrated that conservatives wanted to show an idealised, masculine hero, who would impress on the voters of the *région de mémoire* the political choice between traditional conservative values and the ideology of secular, democratic republicanism. In the process, they also erased the significant role that women played both in the development of the mythology and in the wars themselves. The motives of the men who

⁶⁵⁴ *La Justice*, September 13, 1881, 2.

proposed, paid for and erected the statue were not, however, entirely driven by these national political and social concerns, as historians of the period such as Jean-Clément Martin and Robert Gildea imply.⁶⁵⁵ More prosaic motivations included, for example, the defence of the de La Rochejaquelein family at a time when the family's local political fortunes were threatened and their financial and personal lives were under stress, and the intense personal feud between conservatives such as Xavier de Cathelineau and Maurice d'Andigné.

Catholics demonstrated the Church's continuing relevance to the political debate through the 1896 commemoration of Jacques Cathelineau, the "Saint of Anjou" (although he has never entered the canonisation process of the Catholic Church). That case study revealed nuance and complexity that was not apparent in the reception of the de La Rochejaquelein memorial. The Church's use of two different Maccabee analogies – military heroes or martyred people – illustrated the differences of opinion within the Church about its relationship with the Republic. The memorial to Cathelineau also showed that the right in the Vendée was as fractured as elsewhere in France, with some of the most vehement rhetoric reserved for disputes between Legitimists and those conservatives who had become reconciled to the Republic. Above all, though, the Cathelineau statue revealed the deep concern that conservative memorials evoked among republicans. The statue's banning in 1896, removal to a storeroom in 1906, and the subsequent attempts to have it restored, provided more media coverage than all the other commemorations combined, and had the unintended consequence of rejuvenating conservative fortunes.

The final case study was that of the statue to Georges Villebois-Mareuil in 1902, which allowed us to consider whether the debate

⁶⁵⁵ See the Commemoration of the Vendée Wars in the historiography section of Chapter 1 of this thesis for more detail on the conclusions of Gildea and Martin.

between left and right in the region continued to focus on the memory of 1793-96. This statue came immediately after the climax of the Dreyfus Affair when conservative Vendéen politicians attempted to use national antisemitism, tailored to their perceptions of the concerns of peasant voters. These modern right-wing messages failed to help them win elections. The anti-British political truce that Villebois-Mareuil inspired in 1902 lasted a very short time and was completely destroyed by the 1904 *affaire des fiches* and the inventories of church possessions that accompanied the drive to separate church and state. The call by the French president for the country to come together in a sacred union to fight the German invasion in 1914 lasted a little longer but, as is recognised by most historians of the Great War, it too broke down, and certainly by 1917 the Vendéen right had reverted to their traditional evocations of the 1790s.

Taken together, these memorials to the heroes on both sides of the Vendée civil war provide support to the conclusions of Avner Ben-Amos, Daniel Sherman and Karine Varley that politicians used commemorations of sacrifice and collective grief over the devastating impact of war on communities to influence contemporary culture and voter behaviour. Whilst Sherman believed that this form of political manipulation emerged with the commemoration of the 1914-18 war in the late 1920s, and Varley shifted that process back forty years and to commemorations of the 1870 war, my work shows that, for the Vendée region, the commemorations of 1793-96 in the 1890s were just as important.

The thesis also supports the work undertaken over the past forty years by Jean-Clément Martin. Whilst my conclusions are similar to that huge body of research, they differ in two important areas. Unlike this study of the early Third Republic, Martin's focus especially in his more recent work has been on "the events" (*les évènements*) of 1793-96 and on their subsequent impact on

twentieth and twenty-first century society. While Martin has concentrated on the big political questions when considering how collective memory is constructed, he potentially underplays the role of the local and personal. As we have seen, there were important disagreements both within and between political communities in the Vendée. Debates between local republican and conservative historians – such as the 1893 dispute over the life of Cathelineau between Célestin Port and Eugène Bossard – were as important as the fissures within the conservative side – and which separated the ultramontane Xavier de Cathelineau and Bishop Cabrières from their pragmatic counterparts Maurice d’Andigné, Bishop Luçon and perhaps Julien de La Rochejaquelein.

The second major point of difference between this work and Martin’s is that he understates the contested politics of the *région de mémoire*. The construction of the local myths, elaborate commemoration events, and especially fights over the historical truth of Bara and Cathelineau, mattered because the voters who could be influenced by the sacrifice of a peasant drummer boy or a saintly peasant father also mattered. In Chapter 2, we saw that in the early years of the Third Republic, once we adjust to take account of Nicolas Roussellier’s “rotten boroughs”, the region was more politically contested than has previously been suggested by electoral historians François Goguel and Odile Rudelle. Many electoral districts in the *région de mémoire* either swung between left and right during the period or were won by very close margins. The analysis of Vendée 85 in Goguel’s and Rudelle’s work, using unadjusted percentages of the vote is particularly misleading, as it recorded a vote always between 61% and 82% for the right compared to a national picture of between 18% and 48%. Had these statistics been valid, they would surely have resulted in the left abandoning Vendée 85 as an unwinnable stronghold rather than, as we have seen, contesting winnable seats. In 1902, three

elections in the region were won with majorities of 150, 140, and nine votes, respectively.

An important question that remains is the nature of the relationship between, on the one hand, the processes of cultural and political polarisation that this thesis has described in the Vendée, and on the other hand, the equivalent 'culture wars' taking place at the national level in the same period. It is worth reiterating that while the conservative leaders considered in this thesis were all born in the *région de mémoire*, apart from Cabrières, they also had important national roles. Luçon became the public face of the Catholic war effort as the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims during the Great War. De La Rochejaquelein was one of the three aristocrats sent by National Assembly royalists to persuade the Comte de Chambord to accept the Assembly's role in restoring the monarchy. Maurice d'Andigné was Chambord's last secretary and the first president of the national Legitimist Royalist Committee after Chambord's death.⁶⁵⁶ There were, then, literal bonds that drew together the national and regional conservative cultures. Beyond this, however, there was an important interplay between the national struggles for a more conservative France and the ideological ambitions and priorities of Vendée conservatives. The social, political, and cultural conflicts – over education, the role of the family, politics or religion – were the same at both national and regional level, and Vendéen politicians and churchmen often led the national debates. This points to the distinctive conception of the relationship between regional and national identity that characterised conservative politics in the Vendée. Among Vendée conservatives there was little appetite for regional autonomy, far less for independence from France, but rather a desire to restore the old beliefs, hierarchies and certainties to the whole of France, through using the memory of the

⁶⁵⁶ Frank Herbert Brabant, *The Beginning of the Third Republic in France: A History of the National Assembly (February-September 1871)*, (London: Macmillan, 1940), 247.

conflicts of 1793-96 in the region as a cultural weapon and beacon of identification.

This work has touched on a number of topics that it was not able to explore more fully due to its focus on memory and politics. First is the way that inter-generational family networks operated in Vendéen society and politics. In Chapter 6, I noted the relationships between the Cathelineau family and friendship group that went to fight in 1793, the list of survivors paid pensions in 1816 and the men who are commemorated on the 1914-18 war memorial. The De La Rochejaquelein family brought up Jacques-Joseph Cathelineau, Jacques' only surviving son and he fought alongside Louis and Auguste, the younger brothers of Henri de La Rochejaquelein in the Hundred Days uprising against Napoleon Bonaparte.⁶⁵⁷ Henri de Cathelineau, Jacques' grandson, was a papal Zouave leader and a supporter of the Comte de Chambord after the fall of the Second Empire.⁶⁵⁸ Cathelineaus, De La Rochejaqueleins and George Villebois-Mareuil contributed to the cost of and attended the inaugurations of both the royalist memorials discussed in this study. The main speakers at those inaugurations were men whose ancestors were also leaders of the Royal and Catholic Army in the 1790s. Some of the children and grandchildren of these men went on to be prominent collaborators in the 1940s and leaders of the French army in Algeria in the 1950s. By researching these Vendéen family ties, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, it should be possible trace the development of right-wing French politics in the Vendée through a new lens.

Second is the interplay between slavery and the right in the Vendée, which Chapter 5 briefly touched on. The de La Rochejaquelein

⁶⁵⁷ A short history of the de La Rochejaquelein family was published shortly after the death of Julien de La Rochejaquelein: Edmond Béraud. *Le Denier La Rochejaquelein* (Niort: Imprimerie Niortaise, 1897).

⁶⁵⁸ The life of Henri de Cathelineau is detailed in De La Bissonnaye., *Le général Henri de Cathelineau : son rôle pendant la guerre et la Commune* (Paris: imprimerie. de F. Levé, 1886).

family fortune, which financed both the royalist memorials studied, was enhanced by profits from its sugar plantations in the eighteenth century and by reparations paid by the Haitian government up until 1883. The thesis has not explored whether other conservative leaders in nineteenth-century Vendée were also connected to the slave economies of the Caribbean or how conservative resistance was funded. Many recent studies have explored the Haitian revolution and the earlier establishment of the French colonial empire.⁶⁵⁹ There has been at least one study of the long-term impact on Haiti of the debt burden of the reparations.⁶⁶⁰ There has also been a significant focus, since the pioneering work of Eric Williams in the 1940s, on the use of the profits of slavery to finance the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the UK.⁶⁶¹ There appears to be no equivalent study for France, and it would be interesting to map the uses of slavery reparations to the emergence of conservative politics both locally in the Vendée and more broadly across France.⁶⁶²

A third issue for further research is the absence of commemoration of female figures from the Wars, which was briefly considered in Chapter 6. Women writers, in the aftermath of the wars, were instrumental in capturing the initial memories on which the myths of Cathelineau and de La Rochejaquelein are based. Women were fighters, spies, assassins, supporters and victims in the civil war but there were few stories told and no memorials raised to them during the period. This is also largely true of republican *statuomanie*, and may be expected at a time when the cult of heroic men was so strong and there were concerns about French masculine virility. A

⁶⁵⁹ For example, Jeremy Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁶⁰ Anthony Phillips "Haiti, France and the Independence Debt of 1825" available on line at: https://canada-haiti.ca/sites/default/files/Haiti,%20France%20and%20the%20Independence%20Debt%20of%201825_0.pdf accessed October 31, 2019.

⁶⁶¹ Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery; with a New Introduction by Colin A. Palmer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

⁶⁶² A new database of slaveholders and slaves in Haiti will be published in mid 2020 by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), this should provide useful information for such follow up work. See email from the director of CNRS, Myriam Cottias on November 12, 2019.

substantial amount of work in the past few decades has explored the role of women in Revolutionary France.⁶⁶³ Many studies have examined the way that women captured the memories of and led the commemorations after the American Civil War.⁶⁶⁴ There is scope to build on Adélaïde Cron's work on the early memorialists and expand it to compare the way the right and left commemorated such women.⁶⁶⁵ It would also be interesting to consider whether late-nineteenth century advocates of women's rights in France commented on the removal of women from the history of the civil war.

Finally, the thesis has not explored comparisons between the disputed history of the Vendée and similar disputes in other national and historical contexts. Clark and Kaiser's *Culture Wars*, which considers the way that emerging nation-states dealt with the conflict between Catholics and anti-clerical forces through case studies in ten different countries, is an example of what could be done with different memorial cultures.⁶⁶⁶ There have been comparative studies of the Vendée Wars themselves, for example Reynald Secher and Jean-Clément Martin have argued about the comparison between the "genocide" of 1796 and the later Nazi, Soviet and Maoist genocides.⁶⁶⁷ In 1920, Lenin himself famously referred to the Don and Kuban Cossacks as the "Soviet Vendée."⁶⁶⁸ Raymond Jonas's examination of the young George Clemenceau's 1866 visit to the USA in the immediate aftermath of their civil war showed how some Southern journalists compared the Infernal Columns of General Turreau to those of Sherman's burning of the South. Clemenceau seems to have believed that the "light touch" reconstruction of the

⁶⁶³ For example, Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Olwen Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁶⁶⁴ Matthew Grow, "The Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory," *American Nineteenth Century History*, 4:2 (2003): 77-103.

⁶⁶⁵ Adélaïde Cron, "Les Mémoires des « Vendéennes »".

⁶⁶⁶ Clark and Kaiser, *Culture Wars*.

⁶⁶⁷ For example in Jean-Clément Martin, "A Propos du « Génocide Vendéen », " *Sociétés Contemporaines*, 39 (2000): 23-38.

⁶⁶⁸ Esther Kingston-Mann, "Problems of Order and Revolution: Lenin and the Peasant Question in March and April, 1917." *Russian History*, 6, (1979): 39-56.

South should have been more radical (for example, no leader of the Confederate rebellion was executed and the maximum prison sentence was only two years).⁶⁶⁹ No work has compared the nineteenth-century Vendée memorials with the *commemorations* of these events of great loss, whether through memorials to victims such as those of the twentieth-century genocides, or to heroes in losing causes, such as those of the Confederacy, or perhaps the losing sides of the civil wars in Spain or Ireland. Such comparative studies would undoubtedly be challenging, and would perhaps best be done through collaboration between historians with different national and linguistic specialisms.

In conclusion, this thesis shows that debates amongst historians and politicians about the Vendée Wars have taken place almost continuously, and were certainly very prominent in the region between 1870 and 1918. Whilst this project ends in 1918, it is clear from even a few snapshots from the archive of Vendée newspapers that the memory of the Vendée wars continued to be invoked for both political and cultural reasons. In 1926, reporting on a proposed visit to the Vendée by Léon Daudet, one of the founders of *Action Française*, both the Catholic-supporting *Etoile de la Vendée* and the newly founded *Parole Républicaine* printed a letter from “A Catholic Vendéen”. This said it would be a disgrace to the memory of “the martyrs led by the Saint of Anjou, Cathelineau and the white scarf of de La Rochejaquelein for Daudet to bring his abominable theories, his lies and dishonesty to the region.”⁶⁷⁰ In 1932 Charles Coubard founded the Souvenir Vendéen, a local history society specifically dedicated to recording and popularising “the history of the heroes and martyrs of the Vendée Wars and to promote their moral and religious values, against the attacks on our heritage by historians of

⁶⁶⁹ Raymond A. Jonas “Le Prix de la Paix. Un Regard Vendéen sur la Guerre de Sécession,” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest*, 104 (199): 89-98.

⁶⁷⁰ *L’Etoile de la Vendée*, July 16, 1926, 1; and *Parole Républicaine* July 24, 1926, 2.

the Revolution.”⁶⁷¹ In 1938 another newly launched, Catholic newspaper, carried a glowing report on the first night of a play put on in La Roche-sur-Yon, “The Giants of the Vendée” starring Pierre Barbereau as a “magnificent Henri de la Rochejaquelein.”⁶⁷² Into the Occupation years, the *Dépêche Vendéenne* founded in 1919 as a vehicle for the royalist politician Armand de Baudry d’Asson and later absorbed into the business empire of Pierre Taittinger, the founder of the far-right *Jeunesses Patriotes*, used its June 1943 front page to report on the death of 178 people in bombing raids by the Americans on Rennes. Taittinger reminded his readers that 150 years ago Henri de La Rochejaquelein had “thrown his hat over the walls of Saumur and shouted ‘who will go and get it back for me’ ... having taken the town, they captured 11,000 prisoners and liberated them all.”⁶⁷³ As late as 1958, the extreme right-wing French-Algerian leader Robert Martel who labelled himself “the Chouan of Mitidja” launched a political movement known as MP13 (the Popular Movement of May 13) under the Vendéen symbol of the Sacred Heart.⁶⁷⁴

Despite modern right-wing theories that the Republic has hidden the “real” history of the civil war, there is ample evidence that, at least in the region itself, the causes, consequences and memory of the events of 1793-96 have been at the very centre of political discourse for the last one hundred and fifty years. Debates about these events between both right and left in the early Third Republic led to the deliberate construction of a *région de mémoire* that was unique in France.

⁶⁷¹ See unattributed biography of Coubard at <http://souvenirvendéen.org/charles-coubard/> Accessed September 30, 2019.

⁶⁷² *La Voix de la Vendée*, January 16, 1938, 4.

⁶⁷³ *La Dépêche Vendéenne*, June 2, 1943, 1.

⁶⁷⁴ Arienne Chebel d’Appolonia, *L’Extrême-Droite en France: de Maurras à Le Pen* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1996), 302.

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