'He didn't really talk about it': The (re)construction and transmission of a Free French past

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Hilaire Georges Marteau was fifteen years old when, on 21 June 1940, German soldiers arrived on the streets of his home town of Tours in the Indre-et-Loir. On 28 June, German soldiers executed Marteau’s father, Julien, in front of his family. Inspired by his father’s final words to him, the adolescent Hilaire chose the path of defiance. Initially, teenage rebelliousness informed his disobedience as he and his friends played practical jokes on German soldiers. These pranks led him into organised resistance. Arrested and deported to Stuttgart in January 1943, Marteau escaped from Germany the following month, clinging to the undercarriage of a train bound for his homeland. However, denounced to the authorities by a relative soon after his return to Tours, Marteau began a journey out of France that led him through the Vichy ‘Free Zone’, the Pyrenees, Spain, Portugal, and North Africa, where he joined the Force aérienne des français libres (FAFL). He subsequently took a boat to Liverpool (where he met his future wife) and spent the remainder of the conflict in England. The experience of the war marked Marteau for the rest of his life; he wore an enamel badge of the Free French every day until his death.

This, at least, is the story as Marteau told it, both in the form of written notes and in stories communicated to his family. His intention was to write a memoir entitled *Avec de Gaulle*, a rather grand title but one that reflected the filial nature that characterised the relationship between the General and his followers. The work was not begun in earnest before Marteau’s passing. In March 2014, his daughter H. contacted us following a chance encounter with the author’s sister-in-law at a hairdressing salon in Liverpool. Marteau had entrusted his daughter with the mission to tell his story to an audience beyond that of his immediate family and H. was looking for someone to help her do so. At our first meeting

with H., she requested that we use the documents bequeathed by her father to write his wartime biography.

Hilaire Marteau in his Free French uniform, pictured c. 1943-1944

Pocket diaries, service records, typed and handwritten notes, and letters helped to establish a narrative arc of Marteau's war experience. There were also several pages of continuous prose and draft outlines of the planned memoir. We contend that this writing is best understood as a 'witness text', that is, a personal reconstruction rather than a veridical account of one man's experience. Witness texts are constructed representations subject to

forgetting, errors regarding dates, locations, and the train of events, self-censorship, embellishment and exaggeration (Confino, 2008; Cubitt, 2007; Kelly, 2012; Wieviorka, 2013). To confirm the accuracy of what emerged from Marteau's papers, at least with regard to his movements during the war, we contacted several official bodies in France. The Fondation de la France libre attested to Marteau's membership in the FAFL. The Centre des Archives du Personnel Militaire at the Service Historique de la Défense confirmed the dates and locations of Marteau's journey from France to England. Nevertheless, parts of Marteau's story remained vague and, due to their nature, cannot be confirmed in the archival record. His documents, for example, refer several times to the last words of his father Julien, words that apparently made such an impression on the teenage Marteau.[1] Yet the only clue as to the content of this final message is in a typed document: 'Remember [father] said you're French so keep it that way'.[2] Beyond this, so unforgettable were his father's dying words that Marteau felt little need to record them verbatim.

Marteau's story speaks to recent trends in the historiography of France's Dark Years. On the one hand, his account provides glimpses into a teenage repertoire of disobedience to the Occupation evident in works such as Elisabeth Sevier's *Resistance Fighter: A Teenage Girl in World War II France* (1998) and Hubert Verneret's 2017 *Teenage Resistance Fighter: With the Maquisards in Occupied France*. It thus contributes to the story of 'resistance outside the Resistance', defined by Robert Gildea as 'spontaneous, sporadic and symbolic', gestures of defiance (Gildea, 2015, 52). On the other hand, Marteau's journey to join the Free French situates his account within a developing body of research on the *external* struggle against Vichy and the Nazis. Jean-Francois Murraciole's 2009 *Les Français libres* investigated the men and women of this 'other resistance', whom historians had neglected in comparison with the vast literature on members of the domestic resistance (Murraciole, 2009). Historians have also begun to address in earnest the activities of French expatriate and

exiled communities. Nicholas Atkin was a pioneer in this respect; his 2003 *The Forgotten French: Exiles in the British Isles, 1940-44* revealed a complicated picture of a divided French population upon whom the British government looked with suspicion (Atkin, 2003). Recently, Charlotte Faucher has brought to light the political conflict between Gaullists and anti-Gaullists at the French cultural institute in London as well as the aims and practices of French cultural propaganda in wartime Britain (Faucher, 2019a; 2019b). Faucher's work forms part of a transnational turn in the historiography of France and the Second World War, as historians seek to expand research beyond both its Franco- and Euro-centrism; this shift is evident in the articles contained within special issues of the *European Review of History* and *French Politics, Culture & Society*, published in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Marteau's wartime biography offers a micro-history of the transnational nature of the resistance both from the point of view of his journey from France to Britain and his eventual settling in Liverpool.

This article breaks new ground in the study of the memory of the Dark Years as transmitted from the generation of the war to their relatives, not least their children. We conducted interviews with Marteau's wife, I., his eldest daughter H., and his youngest son, C. We originally intended that the interviews help provide extra details of Marteau's story yet they ultimately revealed the ways in which he communicated his recollections. The interviews were structured, with questions formulated to elicit information about Marteau's experiences and what he had subsequently recounted about these. We permitted interviewees to speak at length and to address other subjects that they felt were appropriate or relevant. Before the interviews began, we made the interviewees aware that they were taking part in a project to investigate Marteau's activities during the war and what he had told them about these. Scholars have published a great deal of work on the construction and evolution of a national collective memory of the Occupation as well as the narratives of once-marginalised

ethnic, political and social groups (Gildea, 2015). There is likewise an abundance of published personal accounts and unpublished interviews (held at the Archives nationales) from former resisters and ex-members of the Free French. We know less about the stories passed from parent to child within the family environment. The subject of family memory and its communication has received much attention in other fields of research. In Holocaust studies, numerous publications have examined the 'intergenerational acts of transfer' (not only of memories but also of trauma) between survivors of the extermination camps and their descendants, sometimes referred to as second- or third-generation survivors (Hirsch, 2008). Moreover, Israeli state institutions and schools have encouraged the development of a community of survivors' children and grandchildren for whom family stories of hardship and survival can be so vivid as to constitute a form of memory of an event unlived (Hirsch labels this phenomenon 'postmemory' [van Alphen, 2006; Hirsch 2008]). We do not argue that the children of former French combatants are a 'second generation of resisters' comparable to that of second-generation camp survivors (this latter term is in itself contested amongst Holocaust scholars [van Alphen, 2006]). Yet we maintain that family stories of resistance – the 'what', 'why', 'when' and 'how' these were told – offer a new avenue of investigation into the French experience of the Second World War as well as a window onto how the experience of resistance continues to shape the lives of ex-combatants and their descendants in the present.

Why did Marteau begin to write his story? Hanna Diamond recently commented that the testimonies of former resisters and veterans of the Free French are frequently '*engagé*' or written with a contemporary cause in mind.[3] This is generally true of autobiographical narratives for, according to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, remembering is not 'an entirely privatized activity but … an activity situated in cultural politics' (Smith and Watson, 2001). Marteau's early attempts to record his experience refer to contemporary political and cultural

developments. In a partial manuscript dating from 1967, he mentioned the difficulties facing President Charles de Gaulle (a hero of Marteau's) in domestic politics and the contemporary rapprochement between France and West Germany. Indeed, in 1963, he had twice written to the *Liverpool Daily Post* to protest what he perceived to be negative reporting about the French President in the newspaper.[4] Marteau thus intended his memoir to both remind the French and the British both of the wartime heroism of the beleaguered president and of the danger that a resurgent Germany represented to both France and Europe (he expressed a dislike for the closeness of the relationship between the French government and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer).[5] In 1969, he compiled a page of notes for an oral presentation to a British audience in which he concluded that global peace depended on the alliance of France and Britain.[6] It is possible that he selected certain memories (and neglected others) according to his political agenda at the time of writing, thus 'remaking' his life story in the context of the present (on this process see McAdams, 2001). Later in life, Marteau's motivation for writing apparently changed. His mission was no longer to deliver a political message to the reader but to communicate a salutary tale to future generations. As H. explained, '[H]e said to me, "I've started to write this all down", and, "when I'm gone and I'm not here, you're to carry it on"… "you've got to do this, you've got to carry this on because people must know what I went through, people must know what happened".'[7] We may understand the changes in Marteau's motives through what Frances Houghton has termed the 'collusion' between an author's past and present in autobiography. Writing thus emerges from the ongoing reconstruction and revision of one's identity as well (Houghton, 2019). However, while we may understand personal stories in this respect as a means to give meaning to the present (Cubitt, 2007), Marteau's recollections, both during the 1960s and later in his life, seemed intended to be a warning for the future.

Interviews with Marteau's surviving relatives initially suggested that his family knew relatively little about his wartime experience. His wife, I., stated that her husband did not like to speak about the war, especially not to his children; 'he didn't really talk about it'.[8] Likewise, H. said, 'there were just a lot of things he didn't ever want to talk about'.[9] Only Marteau's youngest son, C., felt he knew his father's story well, yet as our interview with him progressed, he admitted, '[I]t's surprising how little you really know, when you think you know lots'.[10] Yet our conversations revealed that Marteau spoke regularly to his relatives about his experience, albeit in a piecemeal manner.[11] The family could recount, in broad strokes, Marteau's experience during the war. Limits to the family's knowledge owed something to this haphazard method of storytelling; no relative had read the more detailed and structured accounts that Marteau put down on paper.

The family's best-remembered stories involved humour. All interviewees recalled with a smile Marteau's reminiscences of throwing snowballs at German soldiers and pranks involving stealing or hiding the bicycles of the Occupation troops.[12] The pranks pulled by Marteau and his friends perhaps reflected the temperament of their teenage years. They were, 'mischief making', as his daughter termed it, believing that they would not be punished for acting like 'naughty boys'.[13] It is unsurprising that the family recalled these stories with great fondness for in them Marteau played the role of the hero. These tales were subject to the same processes of self-representation as his written memoirs. As Lucas M. Bietti argues, family stories involve the creation of 'a positive self-representation, which can be either as hero or victim depending on the situational context' (Bietti, 2010); the character of Marteau as hero appears frequently in his family's recollections.

Marteau's written memoir revealed more details of his practical jokes. He confected paper aeroplanes upon which he drew the Cross of Lorraine and flew them in the street and the schoolroom (an activity he would later enjoy with his own children). He and his friends

sang the *Marseillaise* in public, using old pots for musical instruments, and performed small processions, with two of them carrying a fishing rod (a *gaule*), which they crossed episodically to form a 'V' shape.[14] In the local Café de la République, Marteau made fun of the German soldiers, affecting a rigid posture and giving the straight-armed salute before ordering a beer. Finally, 'when the Germans sang while goose-stepping in the streets', he explained, '*we* sang and marched too. I would not dare tell you the words of our songs!'[15] Poking fun at the Occupier was an important aspect of Marteau's defiance.

Whether such teenage behaviour qualified as resistance depends on one's definition of the phenomenon (Wieviorka, 2016, 89-91). To be sure, some teenagers joined resistance movements and committed acts of violence against the Occupier and the French collaborators: to this end, sixteen-year old Jean Debrais, for example, commanded a special hit squad in the communist Franc-Tireur and Partisans (Liaigre, 2015, 244). For those adolescents who wanted to defy the Occupier in their own way, as Marteau's notes illustrate, the playing of teenage pranks offered another repertoire of action. The teenage Elisabeth Kapelian gave German soldiers the wrong directions and rode her bicycle into their path (Sevier, 1998, 48). Teenager Hubert Verneret described similar acts: in October 1943, Verneret and his classmates celebrated the end of their studies with a visit to a cinema. The boys disrupted the screening when they brandished a skeleton borrowed from their biology teacher and threw firecrackers in the auditorium. An attendant German officer stormed out of the screening. The tales of Marteau's teenage jokes drew smiles from his family yet such behaviour could lead to serious consequences: in March 1943, the German authorities arrested 70 young people in Tours who disrupted the showing of a newsreel in a cinema (Gildea, 2003, 52). In another incident, Verneret's friend, M., threw an ink ball at a portrait of Pétain that adorned the wall of their classroom; he narrowly escaped a beating from his Pétainist peers (Verneret, 2017, 21-22).

Some of the activities recounted in Marteau's notes went beyond the misbehaviour of teenage boys. He pasted stickers embossed with anti-German and anti-Pétain slogans on walls and he did not miss an opportunity to etch the Cross of Lorraine onto a wooden surface.[16] In his writing, Marteau recounts that he and his friends produced a small bulletin called *Le Gaulois*. He delivered an issue personally each month to the Occupation authorities with the following note: 'Monsieur Feld-Kommandantur, in order to satisfy the desire of M. the Head of the Military Administration in France, I hasten to bring to you the latest issue of *Le Gaulois* which has just appeared. Subscription is entirely free, but all donations will be accepted with pleasure. Please accept, Monsieur Feld-Kommandantur, my most respectful and French good wishes.'[17] Even in this risky act, one perceives the teenage taunts characteristic of his behaviour toward the Germans. Teenage shenanigans formed part of a 'battle for hearts and minds… in a world of codes and symbols', that did little to undermine the Germans or Vichy but which helped to unite the occupied French in patriotic sentiment (Gildea, 2003, 161-2). While distinct from 'Resistance with a capital "R"', as Robert Gildea puts it, 'spontaneous, sporadic and symbolic' gestures of defiance constituted a 'resistance outside the Resistance' (Gildea, 2015, 52). It is possible that the pranks of a Kapelian, a Verneret, and a Marteau acted as a ramp into more organised forms of opposition where the 'ardor, selflessness, [and] self-sacrifice' of the young proved invaluable (Wieviorka, 2016, 401).

The unstructured transmission of Marteau's stories to his family left them less knowledgeable about the chronological sequence of his wartime experience. According to Marteau's youngest son C., the story came out 'in bits and pieces' over the years, and recollections were told 'in the moment', when something reminded him of an experience or detail.[18] Certain experiences triggered the recounting of memories. Marteau would talk about his life in France when films about the war were on television. A favourite film of his was

Casablanca because, according to his wife, 'it reminded him of a lot of things that had happened to him' (Marteau journeyed to Casablanca in spring 1943).[19] War films could also prompt angry tirades against the Germans.[20] Television news reports about France, especially those involving Charles de Gaulle, also triggered the telling of stories. H. recalled that the events of May 1968 sent her father into a frenzy during which he shouted at the student 'bastards' on the television news. She remembered that when she told her father that the protests had little to do with the war, 'I got an absolute tirade from him [about] what he'd been through, what General de Gaulle had done for [France] … I got such a tongue lashing, [it was] anger like I'd never known'.[21]

The instances that triggered the recounting of Marteau's most vivid memories occurred in France. Hilaire and I. returned every year on holiday to France, to visit his mother Antoinette in Tours, first as a couple and later with their children. The trips to France provided the opportunity to illustrate his accounts with visits to places of significance. During the 1950s, he and I. made a special journey to retrace the course of his escape from France. I. stated: 'we traced his route exactly, and … we stayed in the places that he'd stayed in on his way down… '.[22] As the couple ventured toward the Pyrenees they managed to locate one of the farmhouses at which Marteau had stayed in 1943: '[T]he people there were delighted because they said he was the only one who had come back to say thank you'.[23]

The most frequent instances of retelling occurred in Tours where locations around the town held evident significance for Marteau. H.'s memories of the visits to Tours revealed that Marteau recounted more to her about his wartime experience than to her siblings. Her father began speaking to his eldest child about the war while she was still in primary school, possible aged nine, with the apparent intention of passing on his memories to her.[24] It is therefore unsurprising that in later life he charged her with telling his story death. During their annual family holiday, Marteau and H. took a walk together in Tours, their route

following the same itinerary year after year. Particular locations sparked the retelling of stories. He told his 'funny' stories in front of the Hôtel de Ville: he would say, 'there'd be a bike there and a bike there and we'd do this and we'd throw snowballs and you know we could run down here and we knew they couldn't leave their post and couldn't chase us and hahaha!'[25] Moving away from this site and toward the town's cathedral prompted Marteau to recount the darker elements of his experience, as H. stated: 'when you were walking around old Tours, that's when [the stories] would definitely turn bad and that's where you got shown all the bullet marks in the walls'. Walking through this area of the old town, Marteau would tell H.: ' "this is where I was chased", and, "this is where I was bayonetted, this is where they got me." That's what he has told me in our meanders around the old town that one time he didn't get away.' [26]

A number of other stories of hardship and danger appear in Marteau's writings; these are stories that his family did not mention during their interviews. When in November 1941 a train was derailed near Tours, Marteau wrote that his mother was required to contribute 120 Francs of her 800 Francs monthly income to a fine imposed upon the town as punishment.[27] The Marteau family's suffering was not limited to financial penalty: in November 1942, Antoinette was beaten severely by the Germans for listening to the BBC. The thrashing left her incapacitated for four weeks.[28] Marteau's testimony leaves unexplained some possibly more sinister aspects of his life under the Occupation. How, as is written in his notes, did his bike save his life on numerous occasions? What happened when, as he told his daughter, he was bayoneted as he fled through the narrow streets of the old town of Tours? Was this the occasion upon which he was 'left for dead' when 'caught delivering messages' as his writing indicates?[29] The answers to these questions, neither written down in his personal recollections nor recounted to relatives, are lost.

However, the emotional content of some memories did not prevent Marteau from relating them to his family. Indeed, he recounted perhaps his most vivid memory – that of the loss of his father – many times over, using it as a salutary lesson. '[N]ever forget what happened', he told H., 'never forget when I was fourteen[30] my dad was shot in front of me and his wife and my brother, and you never forget that that's what happened'.[31] H. remembered the story as one of the clearest stories that her father had told.[32] Marteau retold the story annually in the front garden of Antoinette's house in Tours. The house stood opposite the prison's exterior wall against which her husband had faced a firing squad. Marteau would point to the bullet holes in the masonry, one of which, H. presumed, was made by the bullet that killed Julien.[33] H. remembered seeing, 'a big plaque outside… black marble, that sort of says you know "thinking about all of the people that were you know sacrificed here during the war". The plaque in fact reads 'Between 1940 and 1944, from here departed the resisters of Tours for execution squads and Nazi concentration camps'.[34] This scene was played out every year. H. told us: 'I can remember being told this story [at ages] 8, 9, 10 plus you know right through my life.'[35] However, she did not know specifically why her grandfather was executed, referring simply to 'some sort of act of martyrdom'.[36] Marteau referred to the story of his father's execution in other contexts, too. During a conversation about his wife's attendance at church, Marteau (who was not part of the congregation) asked his daughter, 'if your dad was shot in front of you, would you think there was a God?'[37] When H. travelled to Germany for her twenty-first birthday, her father could not fathom the fact that his daughter had made friends amongst a people that had murdered her grandfather.[38]

The family's knowledge of Marteau's deportation to Germany and subsequent escape to France was sketchy. H. commented that her father had once shown her a map of France upon which he had plotted the path he took to freedom but she could remember neither the location of the map not the place names indicated upon it. With the help of the written notes,

official documents and snippets of information from interviews with the family, we may reconstruct Marteau's journey here.

In August 1942, Marteau was scheduled to be transported to Germany, 'owing to [his] participation in the resistance movement in Tours' (no more details than this exist on this subject). However, he managed to escape to the free zone where he joined the air force of Vichy France on a four-year commission at the Toulouse-Francazal airbase.[39] At this time Marteau suffered an injury that remains unexplained in his own writing; his wife believed that he was hurt while jumping out of a grounded plane on the runway.[40] However he suffered this misfortune, he required a period of convalescence in the Pyrenees, returning to his base in Toulouse in December 1942. During his trip back to Toulouse-Francazal, he deserted from the air force, possibly at Limoges, having come to appreciate the reality of the recent total occupation of France (according to his own explanation). This is perhaps true because German forces had recently confiscated French planes and occupied Vichy's air bases; airmen experienced a profound sense of humiliation as they continued to serve in an air force without planes and on bases over which flew the swastika. (D'Abzac-Epezy, 1998). He fabricated a demobilisation order - how he did this is not known - and hopped aboard a coal lorry, before taking the evening train north to Vierzon.[41] It seems likely that he planned to return to Tours.

The fugitive Marteau was soon arrested and held prisoner at Chateauroux before being transported to Stuttgart on 18 January 1943.[42] His destination was, in his words, 'a forced labour camp'; his wife described it as 'an optics factory [that] made lenses for telescopes and binoculars'.[43] He was not there for long. At the camp, he happened to meet one of his former army instructors and the two men decided to escape by clinging to the undercarriage of a goods wagon destined for France. The details of his journey back to Tours are unclear. We know that the train took him via Alsace – or, at least, that he was aided in an

unspecified way by 'some Alsatian people'. According to I., he was 'passed from safehouse to safehouse', across northern France.[44] His diaries from 1945 and 1946 refer to the date of his arrival in Tours as 20 January 1943. If that is accurate then he travelled 500 miles in the space of 48 hours.[45]

Once back in Tours, Marteau's plan was to live secretly with his mother until springtime when the crossing of the Pyrenees into Spain would be more practical. His stay in Tours was shorter than he planned. A local gendarme who had served with Julien Marteau during the Great War warned Hilaire that he was about to be arrested. In fact, his uncle A. had denounced his presence to the authorities. On 19 February 1943, Marteau hurriedly packed a case with three weeks' worth of tinned food and 5,000 Francs. He dressed in his best suit, said goodbye to his mother, and took the train to Pau with little idea of how to cross the border. From Pau, he travelled to nearby Oloron-Sainte-Marie, where a vicar, suspecting that he wanted to take the route to Spain, advised him to travel to Tardets and then on to Licq-Athérey. His plan changed when two gendarmes confronted him in the village of Laguinge. Asked where he was going, Marteau replied that he was on his way to see the Mayor of Licq-Athérey. 'That is not true', one of the gendarmes responded, 'you want to cross over to Spain.' Thinking quickly, Marteau replied, '"No I do not. How do you think I would be dressed to go over to Spain?"... And I showed them how I was dressed – Sunday suit [and] black patent-leather shoes'. The gendarmes allowed him to move on but, rattled by the encounter, he decided not to go to Licq-Athérey.[46]

Walking across country Marteau happened upon a farmhouse, where he received food from the woman who lived there. She instructed her son to guide Marteau to the path that led to the hamlet of Larrau, where a friend of hers would welcome him. However, on the path to Larrau he became lost. As it grew dark and snow began to fall, he found it difficult to see the way ahead. He crossed a freezing-cold river before stumbling upon another farmhouse. The

farmer's wife advised him that it was too dangerous to cross over that evening and that he could stay the night with them. Relieved to have found a bed, Marteau nevertheless remained vigilant, expecting the police to arrive at any moment to arrest him. At 3.30am, he was awoken and told that a guide had arrived to take people across the border. The guide – 'a real Basque type' – led the small party to the Pic d'Orhy where they crossed the border into Spain on 27 February; 'Freedom!' he noted in his writing. Marteau was one of the twenty-three-thousand Frenchmen and women who crossed the Pyrenees and who subsequently joined the Free French (Wieviorka, 2016, 110).

Penniless and unable to speak Spanish, Marteau decided that the best course of action was to give himself up to the Spanish police the next day in Orbaitzeta. He spent 45 days in the provincial prison in Pamplona – where he was fed on orange peel and lived with rats in his cell[47] - before being moved to the camp at Molinar de Carrenza for a further 45 days. He was liberated thanks to the efforts of the British Consul General in Bilbao, perhaps because, according to his wife, he tried to pass himself off as a French Canadian.[48] On 25 May 1943, he began his journey to England, via Villar Formoso (Portugal), Setubal (Portugal), and Casablanca.[49] He left Alger on the *Orbita* on 26 August 1943 and arrived in Liverpool on 9 September.[50]

Marteau spent the rest of the war in England. As a member of the FAFL he was assigned to the Ile-de-France squadron in November 1943, then to the *état-major* of the FAFL in London on 11 April 1944. Despite writing that in 1940 he hated the British for their 'betrayal' of France at Dunkirk, his later impressions of the British were warm.[51] He noted the British did not treat French nationals as 'escapees' from a defeated army. 'I was often stopped in the street by a worker who was a veteran of Flanders or of Champagne', he wrote, 'and he dragged me into a pub to have a drink'.[52]

The services of the British Council in Liverpool eased his arrival in Britain. The Council's office in the city housed several rooms, each dedicated to the nationals of individual nations. The French Room – which was inaugurated in February 1942 during de Gaulle's trip to Liverpool and Warrington - was a space in which French, including Free French servicemen, could socialise. Members of the French community in Liverpool, as well as students of modern languages at the University of Liverpool, were encouraged to attend social events to welcome sailors and soldiers arriving in the city.[53] Marteau met his wife at one such event. I. was a student of French and Spanish at th University and had been encouraged by her professor of French to attend a soirée at the Council building. Marteau, who at the time resided at an RAF camp in West Kirby, attended, too, with two other compatriots. I. recalled: 'There were three, there were three others and it turns out it was the first time they'd been let out their camp, and the other two girls started talking straight away and I was sort of not one for making great conversation and this lady said, "there's nobody speaking to that one go and talk to him". Hilaire and I. were married in 1951.[54]

De Gaulle at the Allied Centre in Liverpool, on the occasion of the inauguration of the French Room, circa. 1943

'French A.F. Band, 1943', likely taken at the Allied Centre in Liverpool

The experience of the war left a profound and troubling impression on Marteau. H. recounted a story of her mother's that every night her husband had nightmares about, 'running from the Germans'.[55] As the years passed, Marteau told and retold his stories in a repetitive cycle that H. described as 'the loop'. Marteau's recollections bore the features of what Singer and Salovey have termed 'self-defining memories: 'vivid, affectively charged, repetitive, linked to other similar memories and related to an important unresolved theme or enduring concern in an individual's life' (Singer and Blagov, 2004). The fact that Marteau experienced the war during his late adolescence may have strengthened his ability to recall the experience and his desire to recount it (McAdams, 2001). They ultimately became a burden to his daughter. As Marteau aged, nostalgia tinged his stories of the war years and his daughter's tolerance for these 'maudlin' and 'schmaltzy' tales diminished.[56] Recollection could prompt disagreements. H. told us: 'I'd say "you know look, that's not my world, and I wish I'd known my grandfather and I'm sorry for everything you've been through dad but my

future's going to be different"'.[57] She felt that her father's stories now spoke to his vanity and he used them to win arguments with his daughter, whether they were relevant to his war experience or not: 'He'd use it to sort of beat you with [saying], "if it wasn't for me France wouldn't be free, your country would be speaking German"'.[58] In this way, his memories, repeated *ad nauseum* from a moral high ground, became a source of tension and, ultimately, an obstacle to the communication of the memory itself. H. now regrets that she, 'didn't ever listen carefully enough' to his reminiscences.[59]

Conclusion

It was not possible to confirm all the details in Marteau's account. Marteau's notes are vague on some important points, not least how exactly it was possible to escape from escape a labour camp in Nazi Germany and travel home across the Occupied Northern Zone. Was it the case that he actually volunteered to work in Germany? Few French, after all, were able to escape from detention camps. Furthermore, the particulars of perhaps the most important aspect of the story – the death of Julien Marteau in 1940 – were the subject of disagreement between family members: I. claimed that Marteau *père* suffered a fatal injury during the family's flight from Tours to Toulouse before the Germans arrived in their home city. And, when questioned about his grandfather's death, C. had never heard the story of his Julien's execution at the hands of the Germans.[60] The second-hand nature of recollections can compound potential inaccuracies. Once Marteau arrived in North Africa and joined the FAFL, it becomes easier to trace his movements through official documents. Conversely, at this point in his story – or at least the story he intended to tell – the narrative ends; neither his writing nor the plans he sketched out for his memoir go beyond this point. Ultimately, however, while we were concerned to establish the accuracy of Marteau's account, the 'truth' of his experience mattered less than the story he constructed around it.

In his tale of defiance, resistance, and a daring escape from France, Marteau foregrounded his cunning. From throwing snowballs at soldiers to evading guards at a labour, Marteau demonstrates how he repeatedly outwitted the Germans. He pulled the wool over the eyes of his compatriots, too, when he fooled the gendarmes at Laguinge. This emphasis on his own ingenuity raises a question as to the extent to which his memoirs drew on the narrative of resistance that informed French collective memory of the war during the 1960s. It is common for individuals to draw on cultural scripts – that is, narratives, frames of reference, language and images - when reconstructing their own memories of a period. While we should not consider personal stories as 'mere artifacts or epiphenomena of cultural or group stories' – which are themselves multifaceted despite their ostensible monolithic character (Freeman, 2001) - this process of borrowing provides for the composition of a past life that falls within the bounds of acceptability for the author and the intended audience (Roper, 2004; Green, 2004; Houghton, 2019). It is particularly salient in the case of 'trans-generational memory', in which one may perceive that 'a big story of a national historical level becomes an essential constituent of the small story of an individual at a personal level' (Sakai, 2009). Marteau began his memoir at a time when the so-called 'Gaullist resistancialist myth', dominated the collective memory of the war. This reading of the war years held that the nation as a whole morally or materially supported the struggle against the Occupier. The *French* contribution to the liberation of the country was paramount to the myth. Gaullist influence on the collective memory of the Occupation – as evidenced in commemorations, films, literature, journalism, and monuments – reached its zenith during de Gaulle's tenure as president of the Fifth Republic between 1958 and 1969. If it is an exaggeration to frame Marteau's story as an allegory of the resistancialist myth, we can draw similarities between Marteau's recollections of French daring and gumption and Gaullist memory; in both, French individual and national agency came to the fore.

Nevertheless, tensions may exist between collective memory and an individual's experience (Green, 2004). Marteau's uncle's apparent denunciation of his fugitive nephew hardly fits into a narrative of national resistance (though the Gaullist myth did not deny the existence of a few 'bad apples'). Likewise, Marteau left unexplained his decision to volunteer for Vichy's air force, a move that was perhaps expedient but one that, even if it illustrates the complexities of behavior during the Dark Years, we could not interpret as an a transgressive act. Still, in each case, French resistance carried the day: Marteau may have fallen victim to a denunciation yet he was able to escape thanks to a warning from a friendly gendarme; liberation from Vichy's armed forces arrived thanks to the fabrication of a demobilisation order. These outcomes reasserted the central narrative of French cunning and resistance.

The case study of Hilaire Marteau suggests that the (re)construction and transmission family histories of the war offer a new avenue of investigation into the French experience of the Dark Years. If wartime diaries and journals offer a means to preserve a sense of oneself (*le moi*) during the chaos of the Occupation (Piketty, 2009), post-war accounts are no less important in the process of making sense of the French catastrophe and one's own place within it. Besides the content of these histories, the circumstances and manner in which they are told reveal the continued 'presence of the past' in the lives of former internal and external resisters and their descendants – and the uses to which protagonists put this past. When the Marteau family was not in France, stories emerged sporadically and were subject to certain triggers; they provided both a salutary lesson for the future and ammunition in family disagreements. Storytelling on location in Tours was a ritualised affair, a fact that we attribute both to the materiality of the location and the fact that the family reunion is a privileged site of recollection (Smith and Watson, 2001). Year after year, Marteau recounted the same stories, using the town's geography to communicate his memories, in particular to

his daughter. His tales about playing pranks on the Germans were amongst those best remembered by the family. This suggests that these stories were those most retold. It may also point to the fact that Marteau felt most comfortable in communicating the less painful aspects of his experience - and that his family were most able to accept these. The motive for recounting his past changed as Marteau aged. During the 1960s, contemporary French politics apparently led him to begin his memoir. Later in life, he looked back on his teenage years during the war with a nostalgia; the fact that this caused them to grate on certain family members reveals the complex ways in which descendants may respond to stories of the war.

No less complex is the transmission of memories from the second- to the third-generation, a subject that falls beyond the bounds of this article. H. has not passed her father's stories onto her own children, keen that they retain their own memories of their grandfather, uncoloured by the stories of his war; she is willing to tell them about her father if they ask but, 'they don't ask'.[61]

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Notes

[1] Untitled Notebook A, p. 15.

[2] Untitled Notebook B.

[3] Prof. Diamond made this comments during the 'Chronicling the war, re-imagining French-ness: Memoirs of the French external resistance' workshop held at the University of Manchester on 14 June 2019.

[4] Letters from Hilaire Marteau to the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, 26 February 1963 and 1 March 1963.

[5] Untitled Notebook A, p. 2.

[6] Handwritten notes on Great Britain and the Second World War.

[7] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[8] Interview with I., 23 November 2014.

[9] Interview with I., 28 September 2014.

[10] Interview with C., 31 December 2016.

[11] Interview with I., 23 November 2014.

[12] Interview with I., 28 September 2014.

[13] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[14] Untitled Notebook A, p. 20.

[15] Untitled Notebook A, p. 20-22.

[16] Untitled Notebook A, p. 20.

[17] Untitled Notebook A, p. 20.

[18] Interview with C., 31 December 2016.

[19] Interview with I., 23 November 2014

[20] Interview with C., 31 December 2016.

[21] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[22] Interview with I., 23 November 2014.

[23] Interview with I., 23 November 2014.

[24] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[25] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[26] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[27] Untitled Notebook A, p. 15.

[28] Untitled Notebook B.

[29] Untitled Notebook B.

[30] Marteau was in fact 15 at the time.

[31] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[32] Interview with C., 31 December 2016.

[33] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[34] 'D'ici sont partis de 1940 à 1944 les résistants tourangeaux pour les pelletons d'exécution et les camps de concentration nazis'

[35] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[36] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[37] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[38] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[39] Copy of Marteau's record sent to the authors, from Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Rongier, Chef du Centre des Archives du Personnel Militaire, Service Historique de la Défense, 8 December 2014.

[40] Interview with I., 28 September 2014.

[41] Interview with I., 28 September 2014.

[42] This date is marked in the diaries of Marteau for 1945 and 1946. It is noted too on the 'Demande d'admission militaire', held by the Association des Français Libres, a copy of which was sent to the authors, 14 September 2014, and on the copy of Maretau's record provided by Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Rongier.

[43] Interview with I., 28 September 2014.

[44] Interview with I. Marteau, 23 November 2014.

[45] Noted in the diaries of Marteau diaries from 1945 and 1946. 'Demande d'admission militaire', Association des Français Libres, copy sent to the authors, 14 September 2014.

[46] Untited Notebook B.

[47] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[48] Interview with I. Marteau, 28 September 2014.

[49] Information according to an email to the authors from Sylvain Cornil-Frerrot, Enseignant détaché à la Fondation de la France Libre, received 11 September 2014.

[50] 'Demande d'admission militaire', Association des Français Libres, copy sent to the author, 14 September 2014; and copy of Maretau's record provided by Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Rongier.

[51] Untitled Notebook B.

[52] Handwritten notes on Great Britain, circa. 1969

[53] Amongst Marteau's papers see letter from Rosamond M. Day, Organising Secretary of the British Council, Liverpool, to M. E. Deresse, Compagnie Français de l'Afrique Occidentale, Liver Building, 4 June 1943.

[54] Interview with I., 23 November 2014.

[55] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[56] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[57] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[58] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.

[59] Interview with I., 23 November 2014.

[60] Interview with C., 31 December 2016.

[61] Interview with H., 11 February 2015.