Duke UNIVERSITY | GRADUATE LIBERAL STUDIES

Singularity, Solidarity, and Gender

France 1945-1997

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March 2022

This project was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate Liberal Studies Program in the Graduate School of Duke University.

Abstract

This paper examines how French Philosopher Mona Ozouf's theory of French Singularity answers for the state of French feminism at the end of the 20th century. It also examines the historical and moral gaps in this theory and offers social solidarity as an alternative lens through which to understand the theory. Chapter One provides a historical explanation of Ozouf's response to American feminists' critique of the French women's movement. Ozouf attributes the French women's movement's relative quiescence after 1945 to the fact that French women benefited from a legacy of female power that existed during the Ancien Régime as well as France's legacy of social (sexual) mixing. After the French Revolution, Ozouf points to educational privileges (thanks to Rousseau) advanced in service of Republican motherhood that French women enjoyed, making French women's experience of womanhood superior to that of women in the rest of Europe or the United States. Chapters Two and Three survey Claire Duchen's historical challenge to Ozouf's singular representation of the women's movement in postwar France. This includes longstanding campaigns for legislative removal of laws limiting women's marital and reproductive rights that laid the groundwork for reforms in the late 1960s and 1970s. Chapter Two also examines internal conflicts between Lacanian *Psychanalyse et Politique* and the rest of the French second wave women's movement. Chapter Four proposes an interpretation of French Singularity through Sally Scholz's theoretical framework of solidarity and demonstrates how French Singularity, once detached from its problematic underpinnings and understood through the lens of social solidarity, stands as a useful historical explanation of French gender relations in the 1990s.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank my husband, Vaibhav Kakkad, Ph.D, for supporting me in completing my thesis as we faced three moves and a global pandemic. From doing things around the house so I could focus on my studies to talking to me about a topic that was far outside your academic purview on many of our daily walks, I would not have been able to do this without you. Thank you also to my parents, sister, cousins, aunts, uncles, and my grandmother for providing moral support throughout the whole process.

Thank you to the Duke faculty who worked closely with me throughout my Graduate Liberal Studies journey: Amy Laura Hall, M.Div., Ph.D., Kent Wicker, Ph.D., Negar Mottahedeh, Ph.D., and Susan Thorne, Ph.D. Each of you has significantly impacted my academic career and this paper would not have been possible without your guidance.

I'd like to thank too many friends to name for providing moral support throughout the years. To everyone who ever listened to me vent or provided encouragement, thank you. A special thank you goes to Nicholas Wagner, Ph.D. The hours you spent with me and the multiple drafts that you read were invaluable.

Introduction

In 1992 American feminist Marilyn French published *The War Against Women*, a book which examines the history of systemic discrimination against women, institutional wars against women, cultural wars against women, and men's personal wars against women, in Europe and the United States (with a heavy focus on the United States). In the introduction, French claims that "men's long-standing war against women is now, in reaction to women's movements across the world, taking on a new ferocity, new urgency, and new veneers."[1] In 1997, as a direct response to the "mistrusting and bitter war between the sexes, and as a consequence, a particularly aggressive-male-bashing kind of feminism" espoused by American feminists such as French, French born historian and philosopher Mona Ozouf unveiled her theory of French Singularity in her book, *Women's Words*, claiming that such antagonistic feminism was not present in France and exploring the historical reasons for this phenomenon.[2] Scholars have long debated the reasons for France's inability to break free from their long history of pervasive male dominance, but Ozouf's explanation, French Singularity, is unique. How, in Ozouf's mind, does the theory of French Singularity answer for the state of French feminism at the end of the 20th century? What are the historical and moral gaps in this theory? How can we look at French Singularity through a new lens in order to make it more useful in the modern day?

My first chapter begins with an in-depth description of Ozouf's explanation of what French Singularity is. After explaining Ozouf's theory, I will discuss its merits and shortcomings in understanding French gender relations. In Chapter Two, I draw heavily from Claire Duchen's

[1] Marilyn French, *The War against Women* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), 19.
[2] Robert Nye, "Sexuality and the 'Singularity' of French Feminism," *Australian Feminist Studies* 15, no. 33 (2000): 325.

Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968, which provides an empirical history of the French women's movement between the end of World War II and the Student Riots of May 1968 (May '68). The third chapter builds on of Duchen's *Feminism in France, from May '68 to Mitterrand*, which describes the rise and fall of second-wave French feminism, starting with the birth of the *Mouvement de libération des femmes* (Women's Liberation Movement, MLF) out of May '68 and ending with the election of Francois Mitterrand in 1981. This chapter reviews the three main currents of the MLF, with a deep dive into *Psychanalyse et Politique's* (Psychoanalysis and Politics, Psych et Po) psychoanalytic understanding of sexual difference as an explanation for the state of French gender relations in the 1960s. In Chapter Four, I propose an alternative way of interpreting French Singularity. In this chapter, I will introduce Sally Scholz's theoretical framework of Solidarity and apply this theory to Ozouf's theory of French Singularity. I will demonstrate how French Singularity, once detached from its problematic underpinnings and understood through the lens of Social Solidary, stands as a useful historical explanation of French gender relations in the 1990s.

Chapter 1: French Singularity

A Response

Women's Words was a reaction to the militant feminism of the 1990's, (primarily the Anglo-American feminism of difference), which cast males as the universal oppressor. In the introduction of *Women's Words*, Ozouf asks "why does feminism in France, when compared to the forms it takes in other countries, have a tranquility, a moderation, even a timidity about it, according to the various views? Other feminists, Anglo-Saxons in particular, loudly deplore that moderation."[3] Ozouf claims that the catastrophizing discourse, such as French's pronouncement that there is a global war on women, which, according to Ozouf, was typical in the United States, would not be accepted in France. She notes that, given the rate of women's achievements in France, the meager success of the French suffragist movement, and the stark absence of women's history departments in French Universities, some might have expected a revolt among French women. However, no such rebellion has taken place. "How then", she asks, "are we to explain this? To what should this French Singularity be attributed?"[4]

Ozouf uses the words of ten famous female writers to answer this question. She begins with a portrait from the 18th century, Madame du Deffand, before moving on to portraits of those women who experienced the French Revolution (Madame de Charriére, Madame Roland, Madame de Staël, and Madame Rémusat). Next comes George Sand, Hubertine Auclert, Colette, Simone Weil, and Simone de Beauvoir. Why start in the 18th century to answer for the state of French feminism in 1997? Because "anyone who wishes to understand French Singularity [is]

[3] Mona Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, Mots Des Femmes. English (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), xi.
[4] Ibid., xii.

inevitably led back to that momentous event."[5] Additionally, Ozouf published her book after the proliferation studies about the Revolution's bicentennial, during which the idea that the Revolution "signaled the historic defeat of the female sex" was presented.[6] After dedicating one chapter to each woman writer, Ozouf presents her argument in an essay on French Singularity that starts in the Ancien Régime and ends in the 1990s, Ozouf's essay on French Singularity is the focus of chapter one.

A timeline

Ozouf's argument is best understood within the context of the history of French government, beginning with the Ancien Régime. The Ancien Régime includes 15th century France through the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789. The first phase of the French Revolution lasted until 1792, at which point the First Republic was created, lasting until Napoleon I took the title of Emperor of France and established the First French Empire in 1804. Napoleon I first fell in 1814, and from 1814 to 1848 France saw eight different rulers. The Revolution of 1848 saw Louis Philippe I flee France, and France's Second Republic was born. This Republic lasted until 1852, before giving way to the Second French Empire led by Napoleon III. The Second French Empire fell in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, and the French Third Republic was formed. This government stayed in power until the fall of France to Germany in 1940, and the establishment of the Vichy Government.

Ancien Régime

Ozouf begins her essay by offering her view of how different historical figures would define French Singularity. Although each writer approaches the question differently, all attribute

[5] Ibid., xiv.
[6] Ibid.

French exceptionalism to the unique mixing of the sexes that existed in France in the 18th century. In David Hume's view, France's absolutist monarchy, a government which did not require men to politically participate, and in fact, busied them defending their social statuses, provided women with more power than their non-French counterparts. Hume cites the Salon, which Ozouf calls a corrective to absolutism, as the source of this power. According to Ozouf, it was the Salon that gave "civilized French society intellectual and moral harmony."[7] Salons played an integral role in French culture and intellectual activity and provided a space for the aristocracy to cultivate sociability. In early modern Revolutionary France, Salons were a woman's domain, a space in which she could exercise her uniquely French power. Hume attributed France's predilection for frivolity and tolerance for adultery, to the mixing of the sexes and the power wielded by French women that the Salon embodied but considered these failings a fair price to pay for social peace and civilized relations between men and women.

Montesquieu, a firm believer in the virtue of Republics, was more inclined to focus on the negatives of this arrangement.[8] He believed that in Republics women must be separated from men, because men must devote themselves to political activity. Conversely, women must be fulfilled by domestic obligations, noting that said domestic inclination comes from nature. However, Montesquieu agrees with Hume that a nation in which women become invisible is a nation with no society at all. In his 1748 treatise, *De l'espirit des Lois* (The Spirit of the Law), Montesquieu declares:

> if ever there was a nation in the world that had a sociable mood, openness of heart, joy in life, taste, and facility for communicating its thoughts; that was alive, agreeable, vivacious, sometimes imprudent, often indiscreet, and that had in addition courage, generosity,

[7] Ibid., 230.

[8] French judge, historian, and political philosopher, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (b. 1689, d. 1755), known for his advocacy for the separation of powers in constitutions

> frankness, and a certain point of honor, one would not want to disrupt its manners with laws, so as not to disrupt its virtues.[9]

According to Ozouf, "that nation, unique in the world, where familiarity of exchange between the sexes triumphed, was *bonvivant* France."[10] Voltaire confirms the desirability of this dynamic, judging societies "that confine women unsociable, and sees French courtesy as an unprecedented refinement, produced by the reciprocal education of men and women."[11] When Voltaire references societies who confine women, he means the English, but he is speaking more generally about the difference between woman's place in an absolutist monarchy versus her place in in a more egalitarian state.

Rousseau agrees with Montesquieu and Voltaire in that the French Monarchy, which encouraged the mixing of the sexes, produced weak men and immodest women. Yet, he deems the argument that women helped men become better versions of themselves as insufficient redemption these for vices. According to Rousseau, the root of the weak men lay in the monarchy and the root of French women's immodesty in the "superficial gallantry that concealed contempt" for those men.[12] In Rousseau's mind, the only solution was a state headed by a Republican government in which the sexes were separated as prescribed by nature.

Ozouf notes that late 20th century feminists lambasted Rousseau for his suggestions of domestic confinement, female subordination, and the image of a woman as an eternal child but failed to acknowledge his questioning of whether or not the difference between the sexes mattered at all. Rousseau's social contract provided a model for the interaction of not only men

[9] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 235.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid. French writer, historian, and philosopher François-Marie Arouet, (nom de plume Voltaire, b. 1694, d. 1778), widely known for his criticism of the Catholic Church
[12] Ibid., 237.

and women, but all individuals.[13] In the social contract, women are fulfilled by their roles as wives and mothers. Since women needed to raise virtuous males, and thus required no less education than males, women's education, as well as their educational function, would bring "women out of their domestic prisons."[14] Rather than reviling women, Rousseau diminished the importance of sexual difference to stay true to his Republican ideals. Ozouf claims there is a historical precedence for this different reading of Rousseau, citing nine out of the ten women discussed in *Women's Words*. While educated women engaged with Rousseau's ideas before the Revolution, this engagement only increased after 1792.[15] With the Revolution, "Montesquieu's equanimous vison vanished into thin air. From then on, all women – and men – belonged to Rousseau's world."[16]

What Was the Revolution's Impact on Women?

While women's significance in the French Revolution is undisputed, there is still a question of whether or not the Revolution truly benefited the female sex. There are those who imagined the Revolution as a period of liberation for all individuals, including women. The Revolution brought about many benefits for women: it established equality among female and male children, made children reach majority status at the same age, and removed primogeniture. One large victory for women the Revolution brought, Ozouf claims, was its disruption of marital power. Ozouf notes that while American feminist Carole Pateman has praised the Revolution for contesting paternal rights and criticized it for having reinforced patriarchal rights, when marriage was discussed at the National Convention, the entire institution was deemed ridiculous by the

[13] Originally known as *On the Social Contract: or, Principles of Political Right*. Published 1762. States that freedom can only be experienced by individuals if they live in a society that ensures the rights of it's citizens, which requires subitting to the greater good

[14] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 240.

[15] Ozouf refers to written debate with Rousseau's idea. Rousseau died in France in 1778.

[16] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 241.

politicians of the First Republic.[17] Nevertheless, Ozouf concedes that the ideals of the Revolution did not play out in reality. Fundamental to Revolutionary ideals was an opposition to any constraint that one person placed upon another without their consent. George Danton and Camille Desmoulins conceded that the institution of marriage could create such a situation. The remedy to a situation in which the marriage contract violated the freedom of an individual was the introduction of divorce, which constituted an unprecedented change in the relationship between men and women. In this way, the Revolution sought to change everything in women's lives.[18]

Others, Ozouf notes, claimed that the Revolution was "ungrateful to women and portended a discriminatory 19th century."[19] The argument could be made that the Revolution did not change any actual conditions for women, as coercive laws returned in force after the happy years, married women's incapacity was reestablished, and marital authority was reinforced. However, Ozouf deems this argument weak, asserting that blaming the Revolution for the regression that occurred during the Second French Empire needlessly reduces the glory of the Revolution. A stronger argument that the Revolution was disastrous for women is that that Revolution "manifested a violent revulsion for women's political existence, conceding with great difficulty only a decorative participation, and then deliberately excluding women and closing down their clubs."[20] Indeed, the Revolution gave many men, such as Pierre Chaumette and Jean

[17] *Convention National* was the assembly that governed France from September 1972 through October 1795.
[18] George Danton was a French lawyer, leading figure in the French Revolution. Camille Desmoulins was a French journalist and politician, influential in the Revolution. Desmoulins was tried and executed alongside Danton by the Committee of Public Safety in 1974, Was responsible for the September Massacres of 1792. Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 242.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 243.

Pierre Amar, an opportunity to forge domestic confinement into an explicit value of Republicanism.[21]

Ozouf presents these arguments, that the Revolution conveyed malice towards women, so she can disagree, asserting that the Revolution's impact on women was nothing short of an enigma. Quinet says it best: "from the dazzling promise of freedom inscribed at the threshold of the Revolution, the Reign of Terror issued forth, from the liberation promised women, a new servitude emerged."[22] How is this enigma explained? One explanation is the legacy of Jacobinism. The Jacobin Club was a radical political club dedicated to defending the rights of "property, security, and resistance to oppression."[23] The club, led by Maximilien Robespierre, controlled France from 1773-1774. Jacobinism embraced explicitness and exhibition, reviled interiority and secrecy, and violently repressed any action in pursuit of private interests. Women, agents of the past, creatures of feminine interiority, threatened to interfere with the unity of the Republic, and were therefore deemed a threat. Ironically, it was that very desire for unity which excluded women: "the revolutionary era, advent, and triumph of fraternity, showed no tenderness towards women because nothing excludes women more than an assembly of brothers."[24]

This pursuit of unity, imagined by the men of the Revolution to include both sexes, met unexpected resistance from women. In these men's minds, the reason for this resistance was that women were overly influenced by the Catholic Church. Any person whose choices were unduly influenced by private interest groups presented a threat to the sanctity of the French Revolution's universalist ideals. Thus, women could not be trusted to participate in political society.

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[21] Pierre Gaspard Chaumette was a French politician, key figure in Revolution, served as the president of the Paris Commune and played a leading role in the establishment of the Reign of Terror.
[22] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 243.
[23] "Declaration of the Rights of Man," (Paris, France1789).
[24] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 244.

Yet, true to her style throughout her entire essay, Ozouf says things are not so simple. She claims that the social mixing of the sexes did *not* disappear from memory or practice and that women maintained as much power as they had before the Revolution, but their power was expressed differently. Further, she claims that many women took to this new role willingly. According to Ozouf, Republican marriage, coupled with Republican education, granted Republican French women access to a much larger sphere than is historically credited. Republican marriage supposedly guaranteed solidarity and free communication between spouses, dispensing with the need for direct political participation from women.[25] In Ozouf's view, the men of the Revolution did not seek to exclude women, but rather to provide women with a new path for fulfillment.

Scholars Geneviève Fraisse, Joan Wallach Scott, and Carole Pateman, argue that the Revolution did not favor women. Fraisse's hypothesis is that in reaction to the democratic leveling produced by the Revolution, men intentionally aggravated the segregation of the sexes. Scott and Pateman claim that "the scandalous paradox of the French Revolution was the incarceration of the universal in the particularity of the white man," thus establishing the link between misogyny and democracy, and placing women's exclusion at the foundation of French Republicanism.[26] Ozouf rebuts these conclusions, arguing that it is "wrong to maintain, as women historians in the United States do today, that the Revolution endeavored to worsen women's subordination."[27] Ozouf argues that the Revolutionary innovation of equal education would lead to the liberation of all.

[25] Ibid., 249.
[26] Ibid., 251.
[27] Ibid.

Social Mixing Endures

Ozouf agrees that it is easy to believe that social mixing of the sexes was eliminated after the Revolution as the introduction of the Napoleonic code, enacted in 1804, dramatically increased male authority. Additionally, the populist Revolutions of 1848 consecrated the cult of domesticity. Yet, Ozouf aggressively aims to disprove this misconception, and identifies the continued mixing of the sexes in the post-revolutionary period as a marker of French Singularity. Renan wrote:

> The certainty of France's invincible superiority over other countries, [would] last as long as that social mixing endured. 'When [another] nation produces what we produce with our frivolity, when it creates a nobility more elevated than our own was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women more charming that those who smiled at our philosophy, a society more sympathetic and more witty that that of our fathers, then [the French] shall be vanquished.[28]

Renan agrees with Ozouf that this superiority, and therefore the mixing of the sexes, was well intact in Post-Revolutionary France.

Ozouf further attacks the notion that the mixing of the sexes had been eliminated by the Revolution by calling upon Tocqueville's image of the American cloister as a foil of French mixing of the sexes. By examining the true separation of the sexes that existed in the United States, Tocqueville noted that French intersex relations were, by contrast, quite fluid.[29] According to Tocqueville, natural differences were simply misunderstood in France, a country that was willing to look past the natural inclination of the sexes in pursuit of extreme equality. In fact, Tocqueville worried that the mixing of the sexes in French society had perhaps gone too far

[28] Ibid., 253. Late 19th century French Orientalist & Semitic Scholar
[29] Early 19th Century French aristocrat and intellectual, active in French politics

and feared that it would result in what Ozouf described as indifferentiation (the intentional reduction of differences between any individuals but in particular between the sexes) in France[30]

The Third Republic

With the establishment of a lasting republic in 1870, the dilemma of universal equality and women's exclusion reemerged. During the Third Republic, women achieved civil rights, and, key to Ozouf's argument, were the center of Republican educational efforts. To prove her point, Ozouf cites the rationale behind the French educational model before introducing the creation of the married teacher unit as well as the mere existence of female teachers. Ozouf states that the Camille See Law of 1880 has been perverted by scholars to illustrate how the French rejection of coeducation could be seen as a founding pillar of Republican education.[31] These scholars claim that the sexual segregation in schools was introduced with malicious intent towards women. In this understanding, women are no more than Revolutionary propogandists. Ozouf, like Jules Ferry, disagrees. Ferry wavered between positivism, girls' education in the name of social utility, and rationalism, girls' education in the name of individual rights, but in the end felt that the only path towards unity was absolute freedom and equality. If we are to believe the administrative reports, programs, and manuals of the late 19th century, this idea was borne out in the realty of the law, in which girls and boys were taught in different classrooms but had the same academic curriculum.

Ozouf attributes the emergence of the married teacher unit to French Singularity as well. She cites an 1876 report that compares the temporary and interrupted (by childbirth) teaching careers of women in the United States with the teaching experience of French women, which, by

[30] Tocqueville was an early-mid 19th century French aristocrat, diplomat, political scientist, political philosopher and historian. Known known for his works Democracy in America and The Old Regime and the Revolution. Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*. (256-7)

[31] The Camille See law of 1880 established further secondary schools for girls

contrast, constituted legitimate careers. Gréard writes that a tolerant France "does not think that the mother of a family must be systematically separated from the functions for which nature has marvelously prepared her."[32] Once more, the universalist understanding of sexual difference in France is celebrated, not rejected, in equal education. Women's function as teachers in 19th century France further supports Ozouf's point that women were not overly segregated, and that they maintained access to the male world thanks to Republican education. She quotes Pécaut talking to his female students, when he states that people throughout France "dared to entrust women, in high schools and normal schools, with the highest education in science and letters. That is a boldness that no country of Europe, even the most advanced, appears as yet willing to allow."[33] Thus, access to the male space, granted to women by Republican education, represented a French Singularity that would later translate into an opportunity for French feminism**.** Ozouf cites Simone Weil and Simone de Beauvoir as products of this French Singularity to solidify her point.

In Ozouf's mind, the Third Republic gave way to a new relationship between the sexes, one where female difference was never denied, but was "vigorously subordinated to the equality of reason and the rights of the individual."[34] Therefore, we must not believe that the Republican education of the Third Republic rested on a foundation of sexual segregation. Here, Ozouf addresses what she believes to be an anachronism: that the Third Republic French model of education only appears unacceptable to her and her contemporaries because they had inherited the legacy of sameness which French Republican education helped build.[35]

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[32] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 265. Quoting Gerard's *Education et instruction* (Paris: Hachette, 1895), 286. Octave Gréard was a mid/late century French educator

[33] Ibid., 264. quoting Félix Pécaut's 1907 *L'education publique et la vie nationale.* Pécaut was a 19th century pastor who resigned his Pastorate before founding a French teacher training school).

[34] Ibid., 265.

[35] Ibid., 267.

The paradox of French Singularity

Ozouf notes that during the twentieth century France had more female students and employed more women than other European countries, arguing that this was not due to a vigorous women's movement in France. Instead, she argues that "French suffragism was timid, feminist organizations exerted only very modest pressure on the government, and the reforms that changed women's lives came more from the state than from interest groups."[36] Ozouf continues, noting that even in modern day, "French women do not constitute a political force, and France has one of the lowest rates of female participation in public life."[37] (In Chapter Two, I will explore the work of Claire Duchen, who disagrees that women's groups lacked influence and that their activity was minimal.)

Ozouf's ready acceptance of the fact of limited female political participation in late 20th century France is fundamental to her argument, which is not that French feminism needed to be defended from attacks of timidity, but rather that this timidity was underpinned by a French uniqueness. She called this uniqueness French Singularity. The beginning of this chapter demonstrated that Republican education was part of French Singularity. Ozouf claims that France's shocking lack of female participation in public spaces, particularly France's late granting of female suffrage, is part of that same French Singularity. Here we have yet another paradox. Ozouf asks why France, built on a legacy of equal education, would block female participation in politics at every turn? One answer can be found in the paradoxical Jacobin legacy. Ozouf pins 19th century French Republican men as "fundamentally faithful to the revolutionary idea that those who depend on others in the exercise of their choices must be

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

excluded from voting."[38] As discussed previously in this chapter, women in Revolutionary France were thought to be under the influence of the Catholic Church, thus could not be granted suffrage.

Pierre Rosanvallon takes the Jacobin legacy explanation further, asserting that France denied women the vote due to a Revolutionary legacy of aversion to private interest and its inability to see women as independent individuals. Therefore, women were "excluded more radically and for a longer time in the country of abstract individualism, which was loath to conceive freedom as the product of some group identity."[39] If we are to believe Rosanvallon, as Ozouf does, it was the radicalism of the French sense of democracy, not the timidity of the feminist movement nor the malice of French men, that explains the delay in female suffrage.

Ferdinand Buisson and Tocqueville agree with Rosanvallon, but they go further, claiming that France's tendency to embrace extremes contributed to this delay. In their minds, Republican France could not assign women one piece of democracy without making them entirely equal citizens. However, because the idealist state was so unreachable, given the reality of women's lives, France was forced to wait until the entire system could be changed all at once. Sociologist Gisela Kaplan studies the general poverty of women's rights in France and confirms the French state's radicality and aversion to creating a situation that singled out any type of individual (including women). Kaplan claims that "for the French, the only alternative to exclusion seems to be complete assimilation and absolute equality."[40] In opposition to Kaplan, cultural critic Michèle Sarde explains the delay in French women's rights by contending that French women internalized the natural representation of female difference, and instead of fighting for suffrage,

[38] Ibid., 268.
[39] Ibid., 269.
[40] Ibid., 271.

sought power of a different kind within their prescribed realm. After explaining these scholars' different interpretations, Ozouf asserts that the reason French women have less need for militant feminism is because they experience womanhood in a less anguished way than American women. The reason they experience less anguish is because, in France, differences are subordinate, not contrary, to equality. French women see themselves first, as free and equal individuals. Safe in that knowledge they have the freedom to experience sexual difference without resentment. Thus, they "can cultivate [their sexual difference] with joy and irony, and refuse to essentialize it," a privilege which Anglo-American women have long been deprived.[41]

French Feminism Versus American Feminism

Ozouf concedes to one formidable objection to her argument: that 1960s and 1970s France is often called the cradle of radical feminism. She engages directly with preeminent French feminists Helene Cixous and Lucie Irigaray, noting how their rhetoric "promise[s] nothing less than new world, a new woman."[42] This promised world is the opposite of its patriarchal history, one where relationships between men and women are free from male power and rules. The goal of this proposed utopia is an "absolutely unprecedented female *jouissance*."[43] Ozouf's use of the French word *jouissance* here is noteworthy. In French, *jouissance*, a word coined by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, means enjoyment in the realms of rights, property, and sexual orgasm, whereas the English translates simply to enjoyment.[44]

Certainly, Cixous and Irigaray's ideas have been picked up and extrapolated upon by American feminists. Like Lucie Irigaray, Adrienne Rich establishes the mother-daughter relationship as the primordial relationship. Like Cixous, Carol Gilligan maintains that women's

[41] Ibid., 274.
[42] Ibid., 275.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundemental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (WW Norton & co Inc, 1981), 281.

behaviors are determined by their sex, being more caring and compassionate, and will be the salvation of the world. Like Irigaray and Cixous, Carole Pateman asserts that "women's particular relation to nature through childbirth makes them incapable of entering the social contract as autonomous individuals."[45] Given these overlaps, it would seem that the French and American feminisms of difference are similar.

Yet, according to Ozouf, hidden within the apparent symmetry between French and American feminism lies another paradox. Ozouf claims that the feminism of difference is disadvantaged in France because its expression has been limited to the intelligentsia. Cixous and Irigay, well known in elite academic circles, had very little influence on the overall female population of France. In contrast, Ozouf claims that the differentialism, the celebration of and enforcement of differences of all kinds, entrenched in American society provided a space for the feminism of difference to be widely embraced. In Ozouf's mind, American feminism of difference has become a feminism of identity. This kind of American feminism concludes that the only safe space for women is a space from which men are excluded, which Ozouf finds unacceptable.[46] Ozouf asserts that that no such fearmongering can be observed in France, due, again, to French Singularity.

She posits that the "articles of faith," of the American feminism of difference show the gulf between the American and French women's movements and highlight French Singularity.[47] The first article of faith of American feminism is that women are victims. Ozouf holds French responsible for this idea, citing *The War Against Women*, in which French women accuses all men of being tormenters of women, and noting that the American conception of rape is

[45] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 276.
[46] According to Ozouf, this type of Feminism makes overly sweeping statements that the female universe is globally under siege.
[47] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 266-7.

emblematic of American extremism. Conversely, Ozouf states that hostility towards men on principle is absent from French feminism due to the long tradition of civil exchange between the sexes. The second article is that women must come to understand their own oppression (they must see that human universality has been appropriated by men) in order to find true freedom. In the United States, consciousness raising groups demand radical reconstruction of the self. Ozouf acknowledges that this also occurs in France, with Cixous and Irigay demanding this reconstruction, but that it has been resisted by French women. Ozouf claims that French feminism "has resisted the complete revision of the lexicon and syntax undertaken by certain American universities by enacting revisionist language codes."[48] Ozouf is convinced that this resistance stems from France's national certainty about universality, and that French feminism is, itself, universalist. Ozouf returns to a mantra we have heard before, which is that French women demand rights as individuals and not as women.

Thus, the principal difference between feminism in France and the United States is that the former is universalist and the latter is differentialist. French women do not, and cannot, consider themselves minorities, while in the United States, the land of minorities, according to Ozouf, women see themselves as one minority group among many others. Ozouf considers American women's self-identification as a minority by the fact of being women a problem. Further, she sees this problem as compounded by alliances between women's movements and other sexual and ethnic minorities that were established in the United States in the late 20th century.

Ozouf provides an example of the French aversion to differentialist arguments that is found in the afterword of the French translation of *The War Against Women.* Francoise Ducout agrees with French's lamentation of the burdens women have endured, but ends her afterword by

[48] Ibid., 279.

pointing to the successes of exceptional French women such as Marguerite de Yourcenar and Carrere d'Encausses without discounting their election to the Academy as elitist and therefore not representative of female power. Docout ends her afterword by saluting "the dawn of an unprecedented harmony," that she sees emerging in France.[49] She looks forward to a land in which we can experience a "'mutual and respectful recognition of the honor of the sexes, and hence of the individuals.'"[50]

In "hence the individuals" Ozouf sees the French alliance between the memory of the old world and the reality of the extreme democracy. The result of this alliance is a "particular society, where the demand for equality among individuals remains fundamental but can be combined with an emphasis on differences which are always held to be subordinate."[51] In this particular society, French women never renounce the certainty that men and women are bound in unity of the common goal of absolute individual freedom. For Ozouf, this certainty is the heart of French Singularity and contemporary French feminism. Ozouf fears that French Singularity is under attack. She fears that Particularist feminism has already replaced Marxism in France.[52] After all, Particularist feminism and Marxism can easily be situated in the same intellectual schema. Both link "the individual to the group within which it is inserted, [making] group membership the primordial given of existence."[53] It is this very schema, the mediator of group membership, that Chapter Four will address by looking at frameworks of solidarity.

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[49] Ibid., 281.
[50] ibid. Quoting "Hexagone: L'etat des lieux", afterword *to La Guerre contre les femmes*
[51] Ibid., 282.
[52] Ozouf does not define her definition of particularism, however the most likely definition is the political definition in which Particularism is "the political theory which states that "each political group has a right to promote its own interests and especially independence without regard to the interests or the larger group" ("particluarism." Merriam-Webster.com 2022. http://www.merriam-webster.com (4 February 2022).
[53] Ozouf, *Women's Words : Essay on French Singularity*, 282.

Critique

For the 21st century reader, many aspects of Ozouf's argument are alarming, while others simply inaccurate. My first criticism of Ozouf's argument is one that many scholars writing in the late 20th century are guilty of: considering the time between women's suffrage and May '68 the first death of French feminism. In Chapter Two, Claire Duchen provides an excellent historical context as well as the historical reality that, actually, quite a lot happened during the years in which feminism was presumed dead in France. Duchen's analysis provides the necessary context to understand French feminism on its own terms, rather than understanding this movement as an auxiliary or even an inferior counterpart to American feminism.

My second critique is Ozouf's rather narrow survey of the understandings of sexual difference in France during the second wave. Ozouf declaratively states that the French understanding of sexual difference was universal, when in fact there were multiple understandings of sexual difference. Ozouf's conspicuous lack of mention of Psych et Po's Lacanian understanding of sexual difference, in which French women could not be less united with men, weakens Ozouf's credibility. Aided by Duchen, and Dorothy Kauffmann-McCall, I rectify this gap in Chapter Three.

My third critique lies in my conviction that the German Occupation of France drastically impacted the relationships between the sexes. This claim is hardly novel and has been written about extensively. We have seen how Ozouf contends that, due to the lasting influence of gender relations of both the Ancien Régime and French Revolution, French women were fulfilled regardless of their political exclusion, leading to a uniquely peaceable brand of feminism in the Fourth Republic, which accounts for women's seeming acceptance of their continued political exclusion. While I support the overarching importance of the Revolution in shaping gender

relations in France for centuries, I cannot accept that the legacy of the French Revolution provides an answer to the state of French feminism in the 1990s without also examining the impact that the German occupation had on France's gender relations. (In Chapter Four, I discuss how this relationship was impacted in more depth.)

With my last two critiques of Ozouf's argument, I want to be careful to not judge too harshly an argument laid out in the 1990s by contemporary standards. Ozouf's French Singularity comes dangerously close to being an apologist theory for French women's institutionalized exclusion in contemporary France. It can easily be seen as seeking to validate women's exclusion from politics and the slowness of the French Feminist movement, on the basis that French women were not truly being excluded. While parts of Ozouf's argument are academically sound, the argument is off-putting, as would be any theory that seemed to deny that there has been an oppressive gender dynamic in France for the past two centuries. Her argument rests on a world in which, first, we accept the truth that France is superior to other countries (the lack of militant feminism being, to Ozouf, proof of this superiority); second, the truth that mixing of the sexes is needed to sustain this superiority; and third, the truth that women's inevitable second-class citizenship is a fair price to pay in order to maintain France's superiority. (In Chapter Four, I will discuss a way of looking at the theory of French Singularity through the lens of Solidarity, which can help us understand this theory in a way that is more useful than seeing French Singularity as apologetic universalism.)

In my conclusion, I touch on the impacts of my final critique of both Ozouf's argument, which is a complete lack of intersectionality. It seems too easy to criticize Ozouf for basing her argument on the words of ten highly educated, upper class, white women, yet the fact cannot be ignored. More alarming, though, is the rejection of intersectionality in favor of universalism. For

example, Ozouf criticizes American feminists for "dignify[ing] homosexual relations," and their alliances with sexual and ethnic minorities.[54] She claims that this is due to identity politics running rampant in the United States, which effaces the individualism that France prides herself on. Before discussing Ozouf's preference for universalism, I will address my historical critiques in the next chapter.

[54] Ibid., 276.

Chapter 2: Landscape: French Women's Movement 1945-1968

Liberation

In her 1996 monograph, Duchen attempts to understand how and why the Fourth Republic failed in its supposed commitment to gender equality.[55] She focuses on the post-war period because of the perceived lack of tangible or historically visible legislation for the women's movement between women's suffrage in 1946 and the Marriage Reform act of 1968. As discussed in Chapter One, Duchen contends that, although no legislation was being passed, the groundwork was being laid for the birth of second-wave feminism in France during these years of supposed stagnation. In addition, Duchen notes that her contemporaries had considered France before 1968 to have been a period of no feminism, with May '68 being the starting point for second-wave French feminism, a belief which Duchen, and I, disagree with. Duchen notes that profound ambiguity is evident between French women and the French state regarding women's societal roles as France rebuilt itself after World War II. The main points of contention surrounded the labor market, family dynamics, motherhood, and reproduction.[56] Duchen writes that during the period of the liberation (1944-1946),

> French women had to contend with increased material hardship combined with legislation that placed them firmly in the maternal role, yet the liberation brought a change in women's political status and the economic situation of France required their participation in the labor market, their public, if not their private role had changed.[57]

France's occupation had left the French economy and infrastructure in shambles, and the government stepped into every sphere of public and private life in order to set up new "industrial and political frameworks" as well as to deal with "immediate human needs" for civilians and the

[55] Claire Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.
[56] Ibid., 2-5.
[57] Ibid.

returning prisoners of war.[58] By the end of the war, domestic life had entered the public eye. Duchen continues, "women's experience during the liberation was based on women's experience during the war, women were involved in resistance, collaboration, and survival," and each of these groups of women's experiences in the liberation was based on the public's knowledge of their wartime activities.[59] Much has been written about how, as is typical in times of war, defeat, and occupation, gender roles were disrupted, and along with it, the sense of French masculinity.

Recent acquisition of women's suffrage in France compared to every other Western country has long been a National embarrassment to France. In fact, French women were expected to have gained the vote ahead of World War II. The *Union française pour le suffrage des femmes*, (The Women's Suffrage Union, UFSF), founded in 1909, set aside their fight for suffrage to actively support France during The Great War and at the end of the war, it was expected that women would receive the vote in recognition of their contribution. In May 1919, the Chamber of Deputies passed a female suffrage bill, but the bill was blocked by the Senate repeatedly throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Frustrated, the USFS became more militant, but their militancy was cut short by the Nazi Occupation in 1940 during which the UFSF ceased all suffrage related activities. In April 1944, Charles de Gaulle signed an ordinance that detailed a plan to establish a new democracy in France. The first article in this ordinance considered drafting a new constitution that codified suffrage for adult women and men. This bill specifically stated that women would now be able to vote and run for office. French women voted for the first time in April 1945, which was the first French election since 1936.[60] Women's suffrage was

[58] Ibid., 11.
[59] Ibid., 12. Celebrating male participation in Resistance activities in the immediate post war years was commonplace, and countless Resistance memoirs were published (by men) during this time. Women did not start to publish their Resistance memoirs until the late 1960s.
[60] Ibid., 35.

widely assumed to be a reward to women's participation in the French Resistance and was claimed as a victory by the political Left.

After the liberation, women started to disappear from French politics. In 1946 women made up six percent of the National Assembly and the Senate; by 1958, it was only one percent.[61] In 1945, the *Parti Communiste français* (French Communist Party, PFC), the strongest party in France at the time, and *Mouvement républicain populaire* (Popular Republican Movement, MRP) had the most support from women. Due to the Cold War and fears of communism, the PFC had lost much of its power by 1951. The MRP, rooted in Gaullism and Catholicism, gained traction with women and the electorate in the immediate post-war years. After the 1958 legislative election, in which de Gaulle returned to power and the Fifth Republic was formed, communism and leftist women were effectively eliminated from French politics.

Thus, the 1958 election led to the 1960's being a "confirmation of Gaullist hegemony" in France.[62] The 1950s had seen the continued marginalization of women in France, and this was institutionalized by de Gaulle. Duchen writes, "de Gaulle himself did not favor women in politics and stood in the way of them participating freely in political life, and he was not shy about this," actively campaigning to keep women out of positions of power.[63] This view is shared by many academics. For example, Claire Andrieu goes as far as to say that perhaps the true reason why de Gaulle decided to grant women the right to vote at the end of the Second World War was to "put an end to the recurrent [gender] debates of the interwar years," and move on from the topic of women's rights entirely. [64] Due to women's systematic exclusion from formal politics by the governing power, women took their political activity to political clubs.

[61] Ibid., 38.
[62] Ibid., 60.
[63] Ibid., 63.
[64] Andrieu, "Women in the French Resistance: Revisiting the Historical Record," 23.

Campaigns

For those who actively campaigned for women's rights, family legislation was of the utmost importance. The 1920 and 1923 laws that outlawed abortion, the distribution of contraception, and any information regarding abortion or contraception were still in effect. This, combined with the fact that population decline was cited by the French government as one of the reasons for France's swift defeat during World War II and the efforts to increase population in the immediate post-war years, put immense pressure on women to procreate. The marriage laws in France were still based on the 1804 Napoleonic Civil Code but had been slightly modified over time: divorce was reintroduced in 1884 and women gained control over their own salary in 1907. However, by the end of World War II, men still had rights over their wives' property and assets. In 1945, a new effort was organized to reform the marriage laws, but the first proposal did not reach debate until 1959, and the law was not actually modified until 1965.[65] To be sure, family policy in France from 1945-1968 "reflected increasing government ambivalence toward the role of the mother in a changing society."[66]

Two major women's rights reforms in the 1960s sought to increase women's autonomy: control of her assets and control of her body; in the same decade, the conversation went from small women's groups to Parliament. Fifteen proposals reforming the marriage law were put forward between 1945 and 1959. The new law, which maintained many patriarchal structures but did give wives control over their own assets, passed on July 13, 1965. Women's groups were underwhelmed. The government was ambivalent. Regardless, the new law did challenge a husband's supremacy in the family for the first time and "provided a chink in the patriarchal

[65] Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*, 95.
[66] Ibid., 126.

armor," which paved the way for the 1970 law that reduced paternal authority and the 1974 divorce law.[67]

The second major women's rights campaign of the post-war /pre-68 period was the fight to revoke articles 3 and 4 of the 1920 and 1923 laws concerning information on birth control and the availability of contraception. Between 1946 and 1956, there were three attempts to change these laws, though none were amended until 1967. The struggle to overturn the 1920s law was the most controversial issue concerning private life in the 1950s. Support to overturn the law came from the non-communist Left, the Left Press (*Liberation, L'Express, L'Observateur*, *Combat*), the Popular Press (*Elle and Marie Claire*), the Association of Women's Rights, and others. Within Parliament there was dissent among the Left: three proposals were made in 1956, none of which ever reached debate.[68] Opposition came from the Catholic Church, the MRP, the medical establishment, and the Communist Party, all of whom opposed birth control for their own reasons. The 1960s led to a change in public awareness around contraception due to increased media coverage generated by the development of the pill and work of the *Mouvement francais pour le planning familial* (French Family Planning Movement, MFPF).[69]

The government did not react to widespread support of reform, but in 1965 the Communist Party changed its position. In December of 1965, presidential elections were held, and Francois Mitterrand, the Left's main candidate, put birth control in his electoral program. This forced the other candidates to take stands, and 250 articles were published about birth control in October of 1965. In the same year the Minister of Health set up a commission to study the effects of birth control and determined that there were no ill effects. In 1966, the pill was

[67] Ibid., 179.
[68] Ibid., 174.
[69] Ibid., 182.

prescribed to thousands of French women under pretexts other than preventing pregnancy. Also, in 1966, Gaullist Deputy Lucien Neuwirth brought forward a proposal to abolish articles 3 and 4. The government supported the proposal and the law passed unopposed.[70] However, the Gaullist government made it clear that they took this action only to avoid illegal abortion, not in pursuit of women's rights. According to Duchen, "they did not accept birth control as a principle, a women's right."[71]

Thus, two major women's rights campaigns were waged in the 1960s: reform of the marriage laws and reform of contraception laws. Still, no legislation was passed. Nevertheless, the increased focus on changing women's legal positions and the introduction of open conversation about women's bodily autonomy laid the critical foundation for the legislation that would eventually pass in the 1970s. These groups included women's sections in political parties and trade union movements, women's groups with particular religious associations, women's professional associations, and single-interest groups. Many of these groups called themselves political, regardless of the majority's lack of formal connection with party politics, and almost all continued the 19th-century tradition of feminism through charity. The audiences of each individual group were limited, as none of the groups wanted to become a mass movement. [72]

Women's Groups

Of the women's groups, two camps founded before World War II who continued their works post-war considered themselves conservative groups that promoted women's rights. The *Conseil National des femmes françaises* (National Council of French Women, CNFF), founded in 1901, was pro-marriage and birth control reform. The *Comité international de liaison des associations féminines* (Liaison Committee of Women's Association, CLAF) was birthed from

[70] Loi Neuwirth lifted the ban on birth control in France
[71] Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*, 183-5.
[72] Ibid., 165-66.

the *Parti républicain de la liberté* (Republican Party of Liberty), a Gaullist party. CLAF group united over 50 smaller women's groups but was too diverse to take a strong stance on any controversial topic.[73]

Three stand-out groups catered to a specific, privileged audience. *Association française des femmes diplômées des universités* (The Association of French Women University Graduates) and *Union professionelle feminine* (Union of Professional Women) focused on education and women's representation in professional careers. Through their publications, these groups brought attention to the lack of opportunities for professional women, though the groups did not fight for change. *Ligue Française pour le Droit des Femmes* (French League for Women's Rights), "rightly thought of as bourgeois and dismissed rather hastily as such by later feminists," were, in fact, the only group to embrace the label "feminist" in the post-war years, as it had done since its founding in 1869.[74] Andree Lehmann, the main figure of the group throughout the 1950s and 1960s, who published the bi-monthly *Le Droit des femmes*, typically stayed out of controversial areas but in 1960 published articles on birth control and sex education.[75]

These groups were the most well-known, but many others like them existed. As Duchen notes, without suffrage as an issue, there was no unifying cause for those concerned with women's issues, leading to malaise in the woman's movement in France. During this stage, women's rights were not progressive, but rather they focused on a privileged few. *Union féminine civique et sociale* (Women's Civic and Social Union, UFCS) and *La Union des femmes de France* (Union of French Women, UFF), who placed women's rights into the context of their greater political or religious goals, had much stronger bases than those focused solely on women.

[73] Ibid., 166-67.
[74] Ibid., 167.
[75] Conspicuously, there was never any mention of Simone de Beauvoir among most of the women's groups in political parties, or trade unions.

The UFCS, a Catholic, conservative organization founded in 1925, promoted women's suffrage in the context of the traditional family. Their reach was wide, with their publication selling 20,000 copies per week. The UFF, a communist organization founded in 1944, stuck strictly to communist party positions on key issues. They fought for better conditions at work and home, and, within the communist context, for women's civic and political rights. These two groups had the biggest audiences, but, of course, the two never worked together.[76]

In the 1950s and 1960s, the term "feminist" was not appropriate for women who fought for women's rights in the post-war period because it evoked the prewar feminism of the 19th century. In the post-war era, feminist was the opposite of the feminine, that is, the feminist was a woman who tried to occupy male space. In fact, the term was disliked by women and men alike. Duchen claims that Simone de Beauvoir, Andree Michel, Evelyn Sullerot, Francoise Giroud,– none of them would accept the term feminist (as it was understood at the time, oriented to achieving rights still denied to women), but they do fit a more recent understanding of feminism in that they put women in the center of their analysis and sought to increase women's autonomy. Duchen writes,

> feminists today seeking to locate feminism in France in the 1950s and 1960s would recognize contemporary understandings of the word in the work of a number of groups and the thinking of a few individual women – either slightly ahead or frankly at odds with the time – which served as precursors for a later more radical brand of feminism: Jeunes Femmes; Mouvement francais pour le planning familial; the Mouvement Démocratique Féminin.[77]

Jeunes Femmes, a protestant young women's group, founded in Paris in 1946, was a small but influential group that discussed taboo topics such as female-male relations, psychoanalysis, and birth control.[78] They read and discussed Simone de Beauvoir, talked about the perspective of the

[76] Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*, 168-69.
[77] Ibid., 170.
[78] Only 500 subscriptions monthly

Bible and Protestantism vis-à-vis Catholicism, and they had no particular party affiliation. By 1967 there were 6,000 members and 270 groups, including most leaders in the family planning movement.[79]

Founded in 1961 as part of the non-Communist Left, the MDF played a "pivotal role in the development of feminism in France in the 1960s and 1970s with individuals in the group active both in pre '68 women's rights campaigns and in the post-'68 women's liberation movement."[80] The goals of the MDF were to "help women achieve their liberation and their advancement and give them the means to make a choice and achieve fulfillment according to their individual qualities, in the family, in their profession, in society, in the country."[81] Key figures of the group included Yvette Roudy, Marie Therese Eyquem, and Collette Audrey. Their strategy was to leverage political parties to achieve their goals. The group took stands on all controversial issues, coming out strongly in favor of birth control, against part-time work for women, and against the 1965 marriage law. The MDF worked with the Communist Party and trade unions, as well as with MFPF and *Junes Femmes*, when their interests overlapped. The MDF was one of the few groups that would have, in fact, called themselves feminists. This group took credit for bringing contraception to the attention of Francois Mitterrand which permanently changed the direction of the contraception question in France. The MDF was "crucial in developing a feminist consciousness within the non-Communist left," though when the *Partie Socialiste* (PS) was formed in 1971, many MDF women joined the PS and the group lost its momentum as a stand-alone club.[82] *Association Maternité Heureuse* (The Happy Motherhood Association) led the charge on birth control reform. Sociologist Evelyne Sullerot founded the

[79] Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*, 171.
[80] Ibid., 172. Quoting *La femme au XXe siècle*, No. 1, no date, p. 1
[81] Ibid., 172, (9).
[82] Ibid., 173.

group in 1956, and rejected the feminist label, instead positioning her group as a pro-family women's health group. In the mid-1960s, they changed their name to *Mouvement francais pour le planning familial,* allowed men into the group, adopted the slogan "freedom begins in the womb," and increased the scope of their conversations to include the health of overall sexuality.[83]

Given this activity, Ozouf's claims that post-war French women were unconcerned with political participation due to their fulfillment in their roles as wives and mothers in the Fourth Republic is not borne out in the empirical history. Nor is her claim that the French government could be depended on to advocate for women. In the next chapter, I will explore another crack in the foundation of Ozouf's argument, namely, the idea that one universal understanding of female difference existed in the second-wave French feminist movement. Additionally, we will see how, actually, the French women's movements of the 1970s and 1980s were plagued by unique challenges, stemming from a lack of unity.

[83] Ibid., 173-74.

Chapter 3: Birth of the MLF, Currents, & Challenges

In this chapter I will explain my second critique of Ozouf's argument, in which I question her narrow survey of the French understanding of sexual difference. Using the student protests of May 1968, I will show how it was, in fact, the very failure of French universalism within the movement which forced women to realize that men were not their allies, and to set out on their own. Looking into Psych et Po's non-universal understanding of difference drives this point home. Finally, examining the challenges faced by second-wave French feminism further degrades Ozouf's argument that French feminism lacked militancy due to a lack of need and better relationships with men.

Kauffman-McCall's 1983 article entitled "The Politics of Difference" aims to demystify how the French group Psych et Po treated gender difference and outlines the many dilemmas the French women's movement faced in the post '68 years. McCall first lays the groundwork for the founding of the MLF, noting, as Duchen has also observed, that the women participating in the radical Left groups that sprung out of the 1968 events quickly realized that the "*gauchistes*, despite their rhetorical desire to change society, were not changing their power relation to women. Radical discourse notwithstanding, they were merely acting out new forms of the old sexual division of labor and the old sexual exploitation. Women decided that they needed a movement of their own," thus the birth of the MLF. [84]

1968 Student Protests

[84] Dorothy Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterrand," *Signs* 9, no. 2 (1983): 283.

The protests of May ’68 began at the University of Nanterre and spread to other Parisian universities and eventually to most of urban France. Participants included students, school children, and workers. Events took the form of strikes, occupations, marches, meetings, and discussions. The central ideas involved challenging the constraints of the French university, of bourgeois society, and of capitalism. There were political, social, and cultural elements. The spontaneity and chaos of the movement were prized by those involved. Duchen summarizes that the goal of the movement was to “replace the alienation of capitalist society with a new way of interacting, new forms of work, new forms of community.”[85] May ‘68 achieved reforms in the way of the Grenelle agreements and eventually the reform of the university system; however, the main importance of the movement was “in its effect on those who experienced it, in the way it changed lives and perceptions.”[86]

Duchen agrees that May ’68 was pivotal, writing that "the women who were involved in women's rights in the 1950s and 1960s, and in the women's liberation movement (MLF, Mouvement de Libération des Femmes), in the 1970s, all speak of the impact of the events, describe May as a point of no return or a moment of heightened awareness that was to change the way they perceived themselves and the society they lived in.”[87] The May Movement was credited for changing attitudes towards women and towards sexuality, with women's lib heading the values. There were no women mentioned in the events, and there was no discussion of gender relations. Women’s activities during May '68 were similar to that of the Resistance, but there was a sexual division that trivialized women’s efforts or kept them out of the limelight. Though it was not revealed until years later, it was the marginalization and patrimony of the men’s words

[85] Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*, 193.
[86] Ibid., 192-5.
[87] Ibid.

during the ’68 events that led to the birth of second-wave feminism in France. Duchen writes, “women, at first anyway, accepted a secondary role, more concerned with their sexual relationships than with politics and not at that time making a link between the two.”[88]

The “sexual liberation” that took place in the 1960s was all within the context of marriage. It was liberation because it was validating sexual pleasure outside of procreation, but it was far from full sexual liberation, since the liberation was confined to heterosexual, monogamous, married sex. Only just before May ’68 was sexuality put into a revolutionary context. The “sexual liberation” of the ’68 movement was about pleasure and freedom, understood as a rejection of celibacy and monogamy… Sexual activity was equated with revolution,” but it was not about women’s sexual freedom. [89] It was more about men’s rights to have women available to them outside of monogamy. It was not until women started writing about their own experiences of the events that it became clear that the May '68 sexual liberation movement was not, in fact, pro-women.

The Birth of the MLF

According to Duchen, “the MLF only appeared as women realized that their hopes would not be fulfilled in the May Movement and that the anti-hierarchy discourse of the men was contradicted by their political practice.”[90] Throughout the events of May '68, there were no women representatives on radio, on television, or in meetings. Women discovered that the revolution was not going to make any personal difference to them. While women did benefit from the cultural shift of May ’68, it was their negative experiences that moved them to establish the women’s only liberation movement that still exists in France today, the MLF.

[88] Ibid., 195.
[89] Ibid., 197-8.
[90] Ibid., 201.

In August 1970, several women gathered to place a wreath at the Arc de Triomphe yet did not dedicate the wreath to the unknown soldier, but rather to his wife. Shortly after, the women were arrested. The French media who covered the event named this group of women *Mouvement de libération des femmes,* which was thereafter adopted by the group. In the following months, the MLF organized events intended to shock the public and garner media attention and started the first feminist publications. The most well-known among them, *Libération des femmes anee zero* and *Le Torchon brûle*, intended to "break women's silence" on their marginalization in French society.[91] As we examine the women's movement, which became synonymous with the MLF during this period, it is important to keep in mind that, as Duchen notes, "the way that women experienced the events they had been involved in and led to the formation of the concept of sexual politics, which, as an examination of sexual and social relations deriving from a gendered social hierarchy, did not yet exist."[92]

In the wake of the formation of the MLF, more feminist groups were formed, with "some wanting to spread a particular feminist message, others simply wanting to demonstrate solidarity between women; women in far left mixed groups began to speak out against the sexism of their male comrades and to organize separately as feminist."[93] The standout event of 1971 was the April 5th publication in *Le Nouvel Obseurvature* of a manifesto signed by 343 women, including famous women such as Simone de Beauvoir, claiming to have had abortions. Shortly after, the group *Choisir* (Choice) was formed in order to defend the signatories from prosecution. Starting

[91] Claire Duchen, *Feminism in France (Rle Feminist Theory) : From May '68 to Mitterand* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 1986), 9-10.
[92] Ibid., 7.
[93] Ibid., 12.

as a single issues pro-choice group, *Choisir* eventually developed into a broad-reaching reform-seeking organization.[94]

In 1973 Psych et Po formed a new publishing project, *des femmes. Mouvement pour la Libération de l'Avortement,* an abortion rights advocacy group, was created, as well as the *Féministes Révolutionnaries* (Feminists Revolutionaries). In 1974 the differences within the feminist groups became more apparent. The Feminist Revolutionaries split depending on their interests. These included disseminating information, fighting sexism in legislation, providing shelter for battered women, and publication. Most notably, the Left current of the MLF was formed for those who wanted to "explore feminism from the perspective of its relationship to the Left," and Psych et Po opened their first *des femmes* bookshop in Paris. The opening of this bookshop would retroactively come to be seen as the first move Psych et Po made to co-opt the entire MLF.[95] In 1975, the United Nations declared International Women's Year, but feminists chose to focus their attention on violence against women rather than celebrating women's "victories." 1975-1980 saw the same campaigns continued, with Psych et Po becoming increasingly overbearing among women's groups.

Currents

The women who formed the class struggle current of the MLF were typically former members of the Socialist Party and were reluctant to cut ties with formal politics, which caused constant questions of allegiance between socialism and feminism. This current was caught in a catch twenty-two from the beginning, having two distinct and often mutually exclusive goals. One goal was to extend the "role of women in the working-class I revolutionary movement."[96]

[94] Ibid., 13-15.
[95] Ibid., 16.
[96] Ibid., 27.

The other was to “examine the connection with women and the working class from a position of feminist autonomy.”[97] The primary publication of this group was the *Femmes travailleuses en lutte* (Women’s Worker’s Struggle), which "saw no distinction between the woman’s struggle and the struggle for socialism."[98] This publication aimed to use the feminist struggle as a platform to spread the message of socialism, hoping that upon hearing the "true origins" of women's oppression, feminists would join the socialist movement. This did not happen. The internal struggle of this current meant that by 1976 the current had ceased to exist.

The second current within the broader MLF during the 1970s included those who were concerned with women's rights in terms of oppression and equality but did not subscribe to an established theoretical framework. These feminists, stemming mainly from the Feminist Revolutionaries, embodied a type of feminism that started to evolve later in the 1970s and matches the type of feminism most third-wave feminists of the 20th and 21st century subscribe to. This type of feminism achieved its goals by getting different, small groups to work together. This group was most concerned with the lived experience of women and how oppression and exclusion materially impacted everyday life. Duchen notes that the best way to define this group was in its understanding of its own plurality. This group rejected all established politics and therefore was not plagued by the same types of confusion that was found inside of Psych et Po (which will be discussed in Chapter Three). Nor was the non-aligned current plagued by questions of allegiance so common in the Marxist current. Their goal was to:

> encourage all women to take charge of their own lives, think for themselves, be creative while refusing to integrate into the [flawed] society we live in. By feminist, they meant, above all, for women and with all women, and by revolutionary, they meant we do not want to improve the conditions of our detention, we want to turn the whole place upside down.[99]

[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 28.
[99] Ibid., 40-41.

The impact of these currents on the progression and stagnation of French feminists will be discussed further in the next section.

The final and most theoretically oriented current of second-wave French feminism was the Lacanian current. This current has been held responsible for many of the challenges second-wave French feminism faced. Duchen writes, "At first, Psych et Po was accepted as one group among many, one approach to women's liberation in a movement which valued its diversity and multiplicity of approach."[100] However, by the end of the 1980's, "actions taken by Psych et Po meant that there were two MLFs in France, which would have nothing to do with each other."[101] McCall explains that, in the end, the "fundamental theoretical opposition between Psych et Po and the true feminists of the MLF can best be understood through the opposing values each assigns to the notion of difference."[102] Feminist groups rejected the concept of gender difference, whereas Psych et Po embraced it. For Psych et Po, it was "precisely woman's difference, repressed by what they call the phallic order patriarchy, that [was] the source of her potential liberation."[103] As such, the group saw feminists, whom they deemed "pillars of patriarchy" as threats to true female liberation. Indeed, McCall goes as far as to say what distinguished Psych et Po from the larger MLF was the "messianic fervor of its antifeminism."[104]

Psych et Po was unconcerned with class struggles, concerning themselves rather with the 'libidinal economy,' and aiming to radically change the understanding of the feminine. They did this by "consistently emphasizing the psychosexual dimension of women's oppression: that is,

[100] Ibid., 32.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterrand," 284.
[103] Ibid., 285.
[104] Ibid.

how women or femininity is constituted in the first place."[105] To understand Psych et Po's perspective, one must understand that Psych et Po accepted Jaques Lacan's psychoanalytical interpretation of how the child becomes a social subject:

> For Lacan, the resolution of the Oedipus complex marks the child's acquisition of language and simultaneously his/her entry into the Symbolic. That is, through the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the child (hopefully) rejects the mother's body, identifies with the father in whom the authority of society resides (and is accepted by the mother) and begins to function as a social subject. The child does not merely use language, but is constructed by language at the same time: language is not simply the medium for social interaction, but structures the way that thought itself is formulated, organized and expressed. It is the way that the patriarchal organization of society enters into the unconscious and, if we are to function adequately in society, absorbs us all into it.[106]

For Psych et Po, this process of social structure on which society is based negates the viability of the feminine to exist in any person. For them, there exist both a feminine and masculine libidinal economy, but in accordance with Lacanian psychoanalysis, the feminine libidinal economy has never been allowed to exist. Because society is governed by patriarchal norms, femininity can only exist as a negative pole of masculinity, thereby always being less than. Participating in this misogynistic world, women have "unconsciously internalized masculinity, and do not yet know what women could be."[107] Thus, Psych et Po's mission was to make this existence possible by deconditioning their own internalized misogyny and eventually eliminating all elements of misogyny in their lives. Only once all women had understood that they themselves were carriers of misogyny, could they work to correct this and appreciate the feminine.

A key pillar of Psych et Po's theory is that femininity can only be understood, developed, and expressed in autonomous female spaces, and that participation in the patriarchy-led world

[105] Duchen, *Feminism in France (Rle Feminist Theory) : From May '68 to Mitterand*, 32.
[106] Ibid., 34.
[107] Ibid., 35.

would prevent this progress. Psych et Po's goal was to radically upset "the entire conceptual framework in which we think and act, so that the feminine can be inserted into a totally new relation between masculinity and femininity."[108] The first step of this process was to attack the way that patriarchy acted upon women by reversing the hierarchy of values, "rejecting all characteristics qualified as masculine, and praising all that is supposedly feminine."[109] Duchen gives the example of *Le Torchon Brule's* description of masculine and feminine power:

> Women's power isn't legal, patriarchal, sadistic, pederastic, it isn't concerned with representation, with leadership, with names, with rape, repression, hatred, avarice, knowledge, order, individualism, with abstractions.
> It's a non-power of the matrix, of birthings, givings, chaos, differences, of collective freedoms, of openings, of bodies, of recognitions, of lifting censorships, of pleasure, outside the law, it's a power-to, act-think-do, by/for all women, all.[110]

According to Duchen, Psych et Po's desired end goal was the "construction of an autonomous women's Utopia" in which women's autonomy was thought of in non-patriarchal terms, which meant "placing themselves outside patriarchy."[111] Due to this end goal, Duchen believes that Psych et Po's act of trademarking the MLF's name and logo was the logical conclusion to their analysis. In the Lacanian analysis, their movement was the only true women's movement, and therefore could not accept the validity of another. Psych et Po saw themselves as "saving the MLF from 'feminism', that is, from what they define as feminism, which encompasses all politically active non-Psych et Po women, from the sister of the Shah of Iran to Simone de Beauvoir, from conservative women politicians to anarchists."[112]

Nevertheless, when Psych et Po registered MLF as their own property in 1979, they were met with resistance and legal action was taken against them. Towards the end of the 1970's

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[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., 36.
[110] Ibid. (Le Torchon Brule No 3, 1972)
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 37.

much of the MLF's energy was spent "publicly discrediting Psych et Po, who were able to appear aloof and aggrieved."[113] This conflict continued to dominate the internal life of the MLF until they began to lose power in the late 1980s. Due to Psych et Po's unlimited funds, the organization was able to seemingly take control of the entire women's movement. But by the end of the 1980s there were two distinct MLF's in France, leaving behind a schism that would never heal. Psych et Po's "co-option strategy seem[ed] to have failed; they [had] not benefited from the change of government; they [had] not silenced other women; they [had] not taken over the MLF's life. In 1984, no-one in the MLF *{marque non-déposée)* [gave] Psych et Po much thought; new problems seem[ed] far more pressing."[114]

Challenges

This section will focus on Duchen McCall's explanations of France's failure of feminism. She emphasizes the movement's plurality, which directly contradicts Ozouf's argument of a unified France. The first issue was that within the MLF there was disagreement over the relationship of the women's struggle to the class struggle and whether the larger oppressor was capitalism or the patriarchy.[115] The second issue "that had existed in France since the early 1970s [was] over the existence of a specifically feminine difference."[116] The fact that this obsession had actually existed since the 1700s is the basis for most scholars' explanation for why French feminism is unique.

The most widely held reason that the French feminist movement was deemed anywhere from timid to nonexistent in the post-war years is that "feminists who had fought before the war for suffrage thought they'd won the battle and that the vote meant equality, so there was no

[113] Ibid., 39.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 18.
[116] Ibid., 20.

further need for 'feminism.'"[117] This factor needs to be looked at in combination with the second factor, which is that in France "feminism" was equated with the loss of femininity. To those who considered both of these sentiments to be true, this meant that feminism not only contained no benefit but also posed an active threat to French society. In reaction to this, many in the women's movement actively rejected the label of feminist, instead positioning themselves as pro-family and pro-women's health. Examples of this abound but one example is that the newsletter put out by the group *Maternitiés Heuruse* constantly reiterated that they were not seeking to lower the birth rate, but rather they were pro-family in their desire to keep women as healthy as possible.[118]

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the three main currents of the women's movement, the class struggle current, the Lacanian current, and the nonaligned current. One takeaway from each of these currents is that the members of each group actively resisted becoming a mass movement. The audience of each of these groups was limited and each group tended to position themselves in direct opposition to other women's groups, thus presenting an additional factor in the failure of French feminism.[119]

Duchen also calls out the "insidious problems connected with the question of leadership that applied to French feminists as to others."[120] The rejection of *explicit* leadership caused its own problems. But more importantly the void this rejection created had to be filled and indeed it was filled, with a system of *implicit* leadership. Duchen looks to Jo Freeman's work in the early 1970's, arguing that "in every group, there is a complicated network of relationships, with in groups and outsiders."[121] And the same was true for French feminism. The rejection of explicit

[117] Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944-1968*, 44.
[118] Ibid., 174. Duchen contends that in certain cases, these groups presented themselves as pro family as a way used to hide their radicalism and could in fact be put in the 'feminist' category
[119] Ibid., 166.
[120] Duchen, *Feminism in France (Rle Feminist Theory) : From May '68 to Mitterand*, 45.
[121] Ibid.

leadership caused easy to spot problems. Duchen's biggest example of these types of problems is that the "absence of formal leadership was intended to allow each woman to participate fully in decision making and to have an equal influence in the group."[122] Its actual effect "was to generate endless discussion before any decision could be reached, and it encouraged the arguments that have plagued the MLF," which stoked the dissatisfaction that still exists today.[123] The other consequence of the lack of formal leadership is that the shadow leadership that emerged from the power vacuum created a more insidious form of potential social exclusion.

Duchen also calls out the class struggle current specifically for posing a problem for the development of feminism in France, noting that "the two heated issues of early twentieth-century feminism in France were the constant question of women's allegiance to class or to sex and the question of women's suffrage."[124] The details of the obstacles the class struggle current of French feminists faced were discussed in depth in Chapter Two, but the impact the struggle had on feminism was that many members of women's groups desperately tried to hold on to their allegiances to socialism, which was their first exposure to political engagement. This prevented them from taking "radical" steps in the name of feminism. This interconnectedness between the class struggle (and later the French Socialist Party) is also identified as problematic by McCall later in this chapter.

There was also an intentional mechanism of exclusion that successfully kept women out of politics or afforded them only the appearance of political participation. In France, once women were given the vote, political campaigns considered for the first time appealing to women's interests. These campaigns focused around slogans such as "duty of citizenship" and

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., 44-45.
[124] Ibid.

"giving birth to a new France." During this period, articles about women's suffrage and education became mainstream in popular culture. The underlying assumption was that women could—and *should*—only understand the importance of their vote in terms of the private sphere which was still steeped in principles of French Republicanism. The anti-feminism factors cited earlier in this chapter explain the obstacles the feminist movement faced. However, the way that voting was presented to French women demonstrates how the conservative French government actively attempted to allow women to vote without encouraging the desire in women to fight for full political equality.

The final dilemma the women's movement faced was the inability of the Left to "mobilize support for its own programs, a difficulty compounded by France's economic crisis, which [had] severely limited prospects for change."[125] Similarly to sentiments around the 1968 events, the "victory of Mitterrand's Socialist party was at once much more and much less than members of the French left had thought possible… Like the Leftists who seem traumatized suddenly to find themselves wielding a power that is both real and limited, feminists, too, [had] not yet adjusted to the need for a change in mentality, a different kind of critical thinking."[126] Kauffman-McCall ends her article wondering if the feminist groups would be able to restoke the fires that were once driven by opposition to France's conservative government in the new world where the Left was in charge.

Chapters Two and Three have exposed flaws in Ozouf's argument by expanding on my critiques of Ozouf's argument based on the false first death of French Feminism, and by proving that the MLF had a multitude of understandings of sexual difference. This plurality stands in

[125] Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterrand," 292.
[126] Ibid., 293.

direct opposition to Ozouf's argument and I find said plurality partially responsible for French feminism's quiescence in the 1990s. Duchen's description of the immediate post-war years begins to address my historical gap critique, which will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4: Solidarity & Gender

In this final chapter I offer the theoretical framework of solidarity as lens through which to interpret French Singularity that leaves Ozouf's theory more approachable. Additionally, in describing certain pitfalls of political solidarity, we will see the ways in which exclusivity and a lack of intersectionality may in fact be pitfalls for certain types of solidarity that are harder to avoid than we may give Ozouf credit. As Joan Scott tells us in *Gender as a Useful Category of Analysis,* gender can be seen as the phenomenon that governs society's understanding of the roles of females and males in society, in other words, the relationship between the two sexes. These relationships change with the fluctuations of the needs and predilections of the state.[127] Scott explains that gender mediates the relationship between men and women. Similarly, solidarity can be seen to mediate the relationship between individuals and the community. French Singularity, once understood as a form of social solidarity, will make Ozouf's theory more approachable.

After a review of the theoretical framework of solidarity, I will examine how Ozouf's theory of French Singularity meets two if not three of the requisite characteristics of solidarity. Then I will examine how French Singularity, which, according to Ozouf was experienced by French women of the 18th and 19th centuries, is an example of social solidarity. But why was social solidarity, which reigned from the French Revolution through the end of the Third Republic, and which, I posit mediated the relationship between French women and the French state, not able to endure the Nazi occupation of France? The occupation profoundly changed French citizens' relationship to the role of gender in their society. This, the location of the

[127] Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1071.

intersection of solidarity and gender surrounding the occupation of France, is what interests me. During the occupation, the needs of the state changed, which in turn permanently changed gender relations.[128] Solidary communities are necessarily dependent on interpersonal relationships, gender relations among them, and this relationship had been forever changed by the Occupation. Thus, in the post war years, the solidary community women were part of was a community of French women and French men united in opposition against Nazi Germany and falls into Scholz's category of political solidarity. While I by no means suggest that the feminist struggle should have been privileged over the struggle against Fascism, I do offer that the presence of this political solidarity between French women and French men did pose an obstacle to the development of French feminism in the years to come.

The Theoretical Framework of Solidarity

Steinar Stjerno and David Miller are highly cited theorists of solidarity in the modern-day European context. Both are primarily concerned with solidarity's role in the modern European welfare state, and the possibilities of international solidarity across Europe and between Europe's historically colonized counterparts. In *Solidarity, The History of an Idea*, Stjerno uses the frameworks of foundation, objective versus function, inclusiveness, and collective orientation, to outline seven different conceptions of solidarity before landing on two key elements for understanding general solidarity. These two elements, "the identification of individuals with others, and the existence of a feeling of community," suggest ways in which we can approach the question of solidarity in what follows.[129]

[128] See my previous work, "The French Resistance: A Gendered Construction of Participation and Memory," a fuller overview of the crisis of masculinity in France after World War II and how this shaped gender dynamics

[129] Aaron P. Boesenecker, "Steinar Stjerno, Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea," *German Politics and Society* 24 (2006): 99.

Scholz also names multiple considerations for shaping conceptions of solidarity. In order to distinguish solidarities from merely shared feelings of oppression, they must have at least one of three characteristics: solidarity mediates the relationship between the community and the individual, is a form of unity, and entails positive moral obligation.[130] Though all solidarities share the previously mentioned characteristics, Scholz identifies three types of solidarity: social, civic, and political, noting that the main difference between the first two types and the third is that in political solidarity there is a reversal in the "ordering between social bonds and moral obligations found in social solidarity and civic solidarity."[131]

Types of Solidarity

Scholz begins her discussion of social solidarity by disclaiming that, in her view, social solidarity is an extension of the solidarity of humanity which some scholars claim to be distinct.[132] Scholz notes that Emile Durkheim explains social solidarity as a name for the good of the community justifying the existence of the rules which govern that community.[133] Within a social solidarity, "customs, social mores, laws, or codes express the expected obligations individual members have to one another… these obligations accrue with group membership and thus may be externally imposed."[134] The moral ties of social solidarity are not explicitly aimed at alleviating injustice or oppression, but rather stabilizing the lives of all individuals in the group. Social solidarity's second concern is the division of labor in order to allow both individuality but also to demonstrate the dependence of each individual on society.[135] In social solidarity, in

[130] Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 18-20.
[131] Ibid., 36.
[132] See Kurt Bayertz, 1999
[133] Sally J. Scholz, "Seeking Solidarity," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 10 (2015): 728.
[134] *Political Solidarity*, 21.
[135] Ibid., 23. While neither Durkheim or Scholz directly cites the division of labor premised on sexual difference, it is in sexual difference is which, in the Republic borne of the French Revolution, dictates that for the good of the community, women must be relegated to the private sphere.

keeping with Rousseau's ideal society, "civil law replaces natural law," for the betterment of mankind.

Like Steiner, Scholz claims that this understanding of solidarity in modern day Europe is that of civic solidarity, which, like social solidarity, is based on of Rousseau's social contract and is explicitly linked to Republicanism.[136] Others, such as Kees Schuyt, argue that civic solidarity is just an organized form of social solidarity. Civic solidarity differs from social solidarity in that its primary concern is to "ensure the welfare of its citizens."[137] While civic solidarity requires a reciprocal relationship between the individuals and the community, and both are called upon to determine the moral requirements of said solidarity, "the onus usually falls on the formal communal structure to carry out the obligations."[138] Scholz notes that other interpretations of civic solidarity do exist, in which the obligations do not rest squarely on the government, yet she calls this the civic virtue of solidarity, rather than civic solidarity. Michael Sandel and Lena Halldenius theorize that solidarity is a civic virtue of citizens themselves, which further demonstrates the complex and interrelated nature of Scholz's three types of solidarity.[139]

Political solidarity uniquely mediates the relationship between the individual and the community. In opposition to social and civic solidarity, in political solidarity, "the individual appears to have ontological priority over the community, but that priority is somewhat misleading. The conscious commitments of individuals create the unity of political solidarity."[140] Political solidarity meets the criteria for general solidarity but does so in distinct ways. Primarily,

[136] Scholz, "Seeking Solidarity," 730-31.
[137] Ibid., 731.
[138] Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 41.
[139] Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent : America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996)., Lena Halldenius, "Non-Domination and Egalitarian Welfare Politics," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 1, no. 3 (1998).
[140] Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 41.

the relationship between the individual and their community is governed by the solidary group's oppositional nature. Scholz notes that solidarity theorists "recognize that there is something unique about the form of solidarity that emerges in opposition to oppression and injustice."[141] This gives political solidarity an inherently oppositional nature, converse to the nature of social solidary, which is concerned with the survival of a group. Significantly, the term "political," when used to describe political solidarity, does not refer to "organized structures of government, but instead refers to relations between people which have wide ranging implications for social/political policy and practice."[142]

The second criteria of solidarity, being a form of unity, is specified in political solidarity by the necessity of said unity being based upon an objective of liberation. Here, it is necessary to take a moment to discuss what distinguishes a political solidary community from a revolutionary movement. Revolutions seek to destroy existing power structures, while solidarity movements aim to fight injustice while tending to preserve overall cultural values. The existence of violence is also helpful in distinguishing between political solidarity and outright revolution. Scholz states that violence is not consistent with the principles of political solidarity, which rest on solidarity's function as a mediator between the individual and the community. Additionally, political solidarity is not a structure of government. However, Scholz concedes that it can, "of course, morph into a formalized political organization.[143]

The third criteria of solidarity, entailing positive moral obligation, refers us back to the specifics of the oppositional nature of political solidarity. In political solidarity, moral bonds determine the nature of the solidarity. This differs from social and civic solidarity in that in those

[141] Scholtz refers to Kurt Bayertz, Klaus Peter Rippe, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Tommie Shelby ibid., 38.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 68-69.

two types, the solidary community's needs dictate the moral obligations to the individual. Scholz explains, "instead of basing solidarity on varying notions of dependence and group control, the political conception of solidarity highlights individual consciousness, commitment, group responsibility, and collective action."[144]

Feminism is a prime example of political solidarity, especially modern attempts at international feminist solidarity. However, Scholz cautions that political solidarity can include a troubling negative component which often takes the form of nationalism. As we discussed in Chapter Two, because solidarity itself "posits an in-group and an out-group," it runs the risk of excluding the already marginalized, leading to exclusion and an aversion to intersectionality.[145]

Solidarity as Affect

Max Schendler, Scholz explains, claims that social solidarity can be understood as a way of being with others called "feeling with." Feeling with can be most easily understood as the human emotion of empathy, though should not be reduced to such an understanding, in which case it would not be solidarity at all. Deborah Gould has defined affect as "the body's ongoing and relatively amorphous inventory-taking of coming into contact and interacting with the world."[146] Manijeh Nasrabadi explains how solidarity can be seen as a form of affective attachment, citing Gould's argument that "social movement contexts not only offer a language for people's affective states, they also provide an emotional pedagogy of sorts, a guide for what and how to feel and what to do in light of those feelings."[147] Like Stjerno and Scholz, Julie-Françoise Tolliver, in her examination of how solidarity is expressed in French language manifestos,

[144] Ibid., 33.
[145] Scholz, "Seeking Solidarity," 733.
[146] Nasrabadi Manijeh, "'Women Can Do Anything Men Can Do': Gender and the Affects of Solidarity in the U.S. Iranian Student Movement, 1961–1979," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2015): 130.
[147] Ibid., 130-31.

highlights solidarity's origination "in the *Fraternité* of the French revolution."[148] However, Tolliver is more interested in looking at the usefulness of theories of affect in helping us to understand the essence of solidarity. According to Tolliver, since the concept of affect was re-appropriated from psychology into philosophy, it has been widely theorized and debated as to whether or not affect has agency in politics.[149] Ultimately, Tolliver attributes the affective nature of solidarity to the fact that it "involves a high degree of identification and response in the reader and can therefore rally and activate their sense of agency."[150]

Therefore, while it does constitute Schendler's "feeling with" and affective solidarity does have motivational power, the affective nature of solidarity transcends the three types of solidarity. Its affective role may be what makes solidarity so hard to understand and why it is so easily claimed by different groups with different aims. "Solidarity, as an affect and a mode of action, as an emotion and as an imagined kinship, constitutes a building, in the present tense, of a community that can work towards tangible transformations."[151] This is the definition under which I believe French Singularity can be understood – as a form of affective, social solidarity, in pre-World War II France.

We see how French Singularity can be understood as affective, social solidarity in the following way: Ozouf would argue that France did fulfill her side of the social contract in its commitment to its citizens. For women in particular, the state fulfilled its side of the contract through the Republican education model. The French state's duty to provide women with the proper education to enable them to produce exceptional French citizens and the French women's

[148] Julie-Françoise Kruidenier, "Francophone Manifestos: On Solidarity in the French-Speaking World," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 12, no. 2/3 (2009): 271.
[149] See Altieri 2003 and Ngai, 2005
[150] Kruidenier, "Francophone Manifestos: On Solidarity in the French-Speaking World," 279.
[151] Ibid.

obligation to do so, does demonstrate the mechanism of both of civic and social solidarity. Where I find Ozouf's argument lacking is that after the occupation, it is likely that the primary mediator of the gender relations transitioned from social solidarity to political solidary. France had a legacy of social solidary that was difficult to break, but when political solidarity took over as the primary mediating form of solidarity in French women's lives, the solidary community was comprised of French men and women set together in opposition to the Germans and the Vichy Government.[152]

Accepting that that a transformation in the reigning solidary between French women and men took place during the German occupation, I will turn to a foil to prove my argument that it was the strength of the political solidarity between French men and women that made it difficult for the disparate groups of the French women's movements to enter into political solidarity with each other, thus contributing to the timidity of French feminism. Throughout all three waves of feminism in the United States – the fight for the right to vote, the fight for social equality, and the fight for the right for women to control their own bodies – American feminists (1) were united in opposition against the patriarchy (although American feminism had its share of infighting), (2) had the primary objective of liberation, and (3) individual consciousness and collective action dictated their moral obligation rather than the needs of contemporary society (the state's primary need was maintenance of the status quo, yet this was hardly relevant to American feminists).[153]

From the very beginning of American second-wave feminism, American feminists were bonded by their opposition to the patriarchy. Examples of the extremes to which American

[152] Far more of the French population collaborated with the Germans/Vichy France than was reported in the immediate post-war years yet that topics is outside of the scope of this paper. For more on this topic see Milton Dank's *The French Against the French*

[153] In Feminist here I refer to those who considered themselves of Feminist movements

feminists pursued their own liberation at all costs can be traced back to the struggles of the fourteenth amendment in the United States, when the Abolitionists and the Suffragettes withdrew their support for each other's right to vote as it became clear that only one group would gain that right.[154] Another example comes in the form of American feminist Kate Millett, whose attempt at promoting global sisterhood in Iran ultimately ended up making it harder for Iranian women to fight for their own rights. Negar Mottahedeh observes that in *Sexual Politics*, Millett argues that "patriarchy was the central organizing structure of society."[155] In Millet's mind, this made patriarchy the foremost oppressor, to be fought no matter the cost. Millett believed that patriarchy was the dominant oppressor, even over that of class or race, writing "women, therefore, have less of an investment in the class system… and … sexism may be more endemic in our own society than racism."[156]

Oppression was viewed differently by Millet's French contemporaries, whose first engagement with political activism was very likely socialism or the German occupation. Certainly, the enemy was not French men. The feminism that emerged in France, not 20 years after the end of World War II, was a feminism in which the parameters of political solidarity were different than among American feminists of the same time. Duchen and Kauffman-McCall have shown us how in the French second-wave feminism, (1) women were not united in opposition against the patriarchy, (2) had an unclear primary objective, and (3) the moral obligation of particular groups *struggled* to be dictated by individual consciousness and collective action to achieve their goals over the needs of the society in which they lived. Examining the historical relationships between solidarity and gender, as well as how, why, and

[154] S. Jay Walker, "Frederick Douglass and Woman Suffrage," *The Black Scholar* 4, no. 6/7 (1973): 27.
[155] Negar Mottahedeh, *Whisper Tapes : Kate Millett in Iran*, 2.
[156] Kate Millett and Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture., *Sexual Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Equinox Books, 1971), 39.

when these conceptions have morphed over time can lend perspective to the situation of French feminism Ozouf attempted to explain in the late 1990's as well as provide insight into exclusionary politics playing out in France today.

Conclusion

I have reviewed and criticized Mona Ozouf's theory of French Singularity. With the help of Duchen and Kauffman-McCall, I have showed that French feminism was not as dead as had been commonly held in the immediate post-war years, and I have explored the diversity of feminist currents that came out of May '68. I briefly reviewed prevailing theories of solidarity, explaining the differences between the three veins: social, civic, and political. I offered observations that French gender relations were mediated by social solidarity via French Republicanism in a way that was deeply engrained in French society. Political solidarity between French women and men forged during the Nazi occupation made the path more difficult for political solidarity to grow within the French women's movement. Because political solidarity necessitated unity through opposition, what the French women's movement needed was unity against the patriarchy, but their aforementioned solidarity forged during World War II made the process difficult.

While I reject many of the so-called truths posited by Ozouf, looking at French Singularity through the lens of solidarity opens up the possibility of academic engagement with the theory. Engaging with Ozouf's argument, however problematic it may be, provides an example of how useful it can be to engage with and understand reasoning outside of your own beliefs. The obstacles that the women's movements, both in France and in the United States, have historically faced still remain today, and are more numerous than ever. As we continue through the fourth wave of feminism in the modern day, identity politics and intersectionality are key points of discussion. Academic engagement with these topics certainly provides us with the potential for immense growth and greater human connection, but present potential dangers as well. If we can better understand the various motivations and explanations of women's movements of the past, perhaps we can attempt to better navigate some of the dangers we face today.

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