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**Provinciaux et provinciales à Paris sous la III République
Vers une analyse du genre/
Men and Women in Paris, 1875-1925
Gender and Migration
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Studies of French Migration

In European studies of internal migration, the differences between the migration process for men and women and the ways in which migration is a gendered process remain quite in the dark. (This remains true in many cases for studies of transnational migration as well.) This ignorance or lack of curiosity is particularly important because virtually every European city (with perhaps the exceptions of Rome and Berlin at some points in its history) has had a majority of women.¹ France is particularly poor in its attention to women and gender, whereas acute research has been done by Lotta Vikström on Sweden and George Alter on Belgium.² This paper, then, is a chapter in “the ongoing struggle of bringing gender into the study of migration” – in this case, internal migration, and in France especially.³ We have very fine knowledge about the movements of French men, given that there are no population registers or other forms of population tracking for the French. This is primarily the case because the state cares about its men – as tax payers and tax collectors in the old regime – and so it noted when men absence prevented men from performing these functions, as Abel Poitrineau indicated in his study of the men who left their highland homes.⁴ The state cares particularly about its conscripts, and missing potential soldiers were the inspiration for the great Napoleonic inquiry into

¹ Adna Weber, The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century (1899. Reprint: Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press).

² George Alter, Family and the Female Life Course: The Women of Verviers, Belgium, 1849-1880 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Lotta Vikström, Gendered Routes and Courses: The Socio-Spatial Mobility of Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Sundsvall, Sweden. Umeå: Umeå Universitet, 2003.

³ Patricia R. Pessar and Sarah J. Mahler, “Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In,” International Migration Review 37, no. 3 (2003), 838.

⁴ Leslie Page Moch, “Migration and Destination: The Case of France.” Historical Sample of the Netherlands Workshop on Large Databases: Results and Best Practices. Amsterdam, May 2001; Abel Poitrineau, Remues d’hommes : Essai sur les migrations montagnardes en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Paris : Aubier Montagne, 1983).

migration which has been used to great advantage for the study of young men and of migrations about the turn of the nineteenth century.⁵ The conscript records (which trace every change of residence for eligible men from age 20 to age 45) from the III Republic are the source for the finest national study of migration to and within Paris.⁶ But it is a study of male migration, and is unable to provide any information on the context for the individual moves (such as work or family life) or women's and children's migration.

The study of three thousand French families was undertaken in the 1980s to give a national picture of French internal migrations and family patterns during the nineteenth century. Using civil status records of birth, marriage (1803-1902), and death, along with censuses and inheritance records, the study was meant to capture family histories.⁷ Two features of this rich study reduce its coverage of women. First, the senior-citizen volunteers who recorded the information, like the state, exhibited more interest in men than in women and as a consequence, women were somewhat undercounted. Second, the genealogical nature of the study, based on patronyms beginning with the letters T, R and A lost women after marriage, unless they married a man whose name began with these letters. The only women whose lifetime migrations were traced were those of single mothers whose children married, and who appeared in the marriage records of their descendants.⁸ In addition, the key sources (birth, marriage, and death records) are unreliable in their recording of women's professions.

Nonetheless, Paul-André Rosental was able to capture the premarital migrations within France of men and women from the study and compare them in his 2004 article "La migration des femmes (et des hommes) en France au XIXe siècle." He attests that women "pioneers" on the move had been able to help their younger siblings become established elsewhere – although there is no quantitative validation of this finding. What could be quantified, however, is the likelihood of leaving one's birthplace and the

⁵ Jan Lucassen, Migrant labour in Europe, 1600-1900 : the drift to the North Sea (London : Croom Helm, 1987).

⁶ Jean-Claude Farcy and Alain Faure, La mobilité d'une génération de français. Recherche sur les migrations et les déménagements vers et dans Paris à la fin du XIXe Siècle (Paris: INED, 2003).

⁷ Jacques Dupaquier and Denis Kessler, eds., La société française au XIXe siècle: Tradition, Transitions, transformations (Paris: Fayard, 1992).

⁸ Danièle Rebaudo, "Filles mères et enfants naturels: vingt-cinq ans après, que sont-ils devenus?" in La société française au XIXe siècle: Tradition, Transitions, transformations, eds. Jacques Dupaquier and Denis Kessler (Paris: Fayard, 1992), pp. 417-437; Paul-André Rosental, « La migration des femmes (et des hommes) en France au XIXe siècle », Annales de démographie historique (2004), 107.

distance traveled between birth and marriage – substantial findings.⁹ Women proved to be more sedentary than men – less likely to move, more likely to stay in their commune of birth, although they became less sedentary as the nineteenth century went on. Women moved shorter distances than men. However, during the nineteenth century, each generation of women traveled farther than the last, as did men. “Was migration sexed?” asks Rosental. Not significantly, he concludes. Rosental does push beyond case studies to demonstrate that, nation-wide, French men and women differed in their likelihood to leave home and in the distance they traveled. The evidence that can be documented by the 3,000 families’ study – about women as short-distance migrants -- is congruent with earlier observations like those of Ernst Georg Ravenstein in the late nineteenth century (although it does contradict Ravenstein’s contention that women were more likely to leave home than men).¹⁰

Rosental’s findings are also congruent with earlier French demographic studies, like that of Yves Tugault based on census records, which shows that each generation of French women born in the nineteenth century was more mobile than the last; by 1901, about a quarter of men and women lived outside their department of birth. As the generation of women born in the 1890s grew up, they were more likely than men to leave their home département.¹¹ During the nineteenth century, women joined the migration streams from highland areas into cities that previous had included village men almost exclusively.¹²

Rosental also ascertains that these findings about the gender differences in human mobility (i.e. about distance and likelihood of leaving home) may not be the most interesting observations to make. Fortunately, we also have evidence that migration is gendered in several interesting ways that may be worth exploring in the French case: auspices of migration/sponsorship and networks or *filières*; the role of sexuality;

⁹ Rosental, « La migration des femmes (et des hommes) en France », Annales de démographie historique, 108-109. This same kind of help has been cited by Bretons regarding their older sisters who preceded them in Paris ; see Patrick Prado, “Le va et vient. Migrations Bretons à Paris,” Ethnologie française 10 (1980): 161-196.

¹⁰ E. G. Ravenstein, « The Laws of Migration, » Journal of the Statistical Society 48 (1885) 167-227 and 52 (1889): 241-301 ; Rosental, « La migration des femmes (et des hommes) en France au XIXe siècle », Annales de démographie historique (2004) :108, 109, 116-117

¹¹ Yves Tugault, La mesure de la mobilité : Cinq études sur les migrations internes (Paris : INED, 1973), 28, 32.

¹² See, for example, Pierre Guillaume, La population de Bordeaux au XIXe siècle (Paris : A. Colin, 1972) ; Jean-Pierre Poussou, Bordeaux et le sud-ouest au XVIIIe siècle (Paris : Editions de EHESS, 1983).

employment; and intermarriage patterns. I will explore these four areas using examples from Western Europe, France, and my study of Bretons in Paris.

Migration Networks and the Auspices of Migration

There is abundant evidence that men leaving home often traveled together, worked together, and lived together while away from home, including agricultural workers, forest workers, and urban workers like the famous mason Martin Nadaud. No woman rented space in the garni, inexpensive urban ‘flophouses’ for newcomers. There was an element of friendship and ties in such group travel, work, and accommodations, but also an often a collective move and working life at destination for many men. The evidence for women’s travel, work, and urban residence is quite distinct. It suggests that relatively rarely did women participate in state or collective recruitment programs.¹³ We know only that orphaned young women, *les filles du roi*, were recruited by the French State to be marriage partners for settlers in seventeenth-century French Canada.¹⁴ Also, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, silk and cotton mills recruited young single women workers who would live in dormitories and work together, supervised by nuns or “respectable” families who would protect them, and keep them in line.¹⁵

Most migration to cities, it seems, was arranged by the family, a friend, or the women themselves. The only direct evidence we have of contacts and connections that brought newcomers to Paris is from two surveys, the first by Françoise Cribier and Catherine Rhein that investigated the lives of about 200 future Parisians born about 1907 who came to Paris in the 1920s: about one in six had come to the city knowing nobody (17 percent of the women and 22 percent of the men), but family was important: 64 percent of the women and 59 percent of the men had a relative in Paris. Those who came

¹³ See, for example, Lucassen, Migrant labour; Martin Nadaud, Mémoires de Leonard, ancien garçon maçon (Paris : Hachette, 1976) ; Poitrineau, Remues d’hommes ; Françoise Raison-Jourde, La colonie auvergnate de Paris au XIXe siècle (Paris : Ville de Paris, 1976) ; Marlou Schrover, “Living together, working together: Concentrations amongst German immigrants in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century,” Continuity and Change 18, (2) (2003), 280.

¹⁴ Yves Landry, Les filles du roi au XVIIe siècle: Orphelines en France, pionnières au Canada (Montréal : Lemeac, 1992) ; Colette Piat, Les filles du roi (Paris : Ed. du Rocher, 1998).

¹⁵ Some light is shed on this underexplored phenomenon by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, Women, Work and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 109; Madelyn Holmes writes about the recruitment of Italian girls by Swiss manufacturers in Forgotten Migrants: Foreign Workers in Switzerland before World War I (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988); and Rosa Cavalleri remembers village recruiters in Marie Hall Ets, Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1970).

on the strength of an acquaintance were 11 percent of the women and 17 percent of the men. About one-fifth came with their parents.¹⁶ Historian Catherine Omnès studied two groups of women (born in 1901 and 1911) who came to greater Paris in the 1920s and at the end of the 1930s economic crisis. Over a third arrived alone, and about a third overall had no relative in Paris. Of the first group, 40 percent arrived with their husbands, and of the second group 46 percent arrived with parents.¹⁷ These findings reveal the importance of family migration, on one hand, and the significance of traveling alone, on the other.

In the case of Bretons, independent travel was a matter of getting on the train that connected this rural province directly to Paris. For example, in 1882, Yvonne Yven traveled with a friend who had obtained jobs for both of them with a bourgeois family in Paris; in about 1908 Marie Mathurin followed her elder sister from a country town to the Paris suburbs, and then into Parisian hospitals; in the 1920s, Germaine X boarded the train at age 16 and picked up job prospects from fellow passengers.¹⁸ In most extant biographical *récits de vie*, family relations – or at least family circumstances – were a push away from home, as were working conditions for young women in the provinces; the women’s own stories show why they traveled without their family. Many fled cruel and impoverished families, humiliating work conditions, and sexual harassment. As Annie Phizacklea writes, migration decisions are difficult to understand “if we fail to unpack institutions such as the household in a gendered way.”¹⁹

Female Sexuality

Women going to the city were seen as particularly vulnerable. This “perceived vulnerability” emphasized by Marlou Schrover was not without reality, of course, but it played an important role in the treatment and understanding of women away from

16 Françoise Cribier and Catherine Rhein, « Migrations et structure sociale : une génération de provinciaux venus à Paris entre les deux guerres, » *Ethnologie Française* 10 (1980), 141-143.

17 In the first group, 35 percent arrived alone, then 40 percent in the second group ; those with no relative in Paris were 40 percent in the twenties, but only 22 percent in the 1930s. Catherine Omnès, « Les provinciales dans la formation des populations ouvrières parisiennes, » *Villes en parallèle* 15-16 (1990), 175-191; Catherine Omnès, *Ouvrières parisiennes : marches du travail et trajectoires professionnelles au 20^e siècle* (Paris : Editions de l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1997), 271-288.

18 Paul Chabot, *Jean et Yvonne, domestiques en 1900 : souvenirs recueillis par Michel Chabot* (Paris, Editions Terma, 1978) ; Jaques Michel, *François et Maris de Bretagne* (Brest : Editions « le Télégramme, » 2002), 10-26; Catherine Rhein, *La vie dure qu’on a eue : neuf récits de vie de travailleuses parisiennes retraitées* (Paris : CORDES, 1980). Rhein did not give the full names of her interviewees.

19 Annie Phizacklea, “Gendered Actors in Migration,” in Jacqueline Andall, ed., *Gender and Ethnicity in Contemporary Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 33; see also Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, “The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration,” *Oral History* 7 (1979): 26-32.

home.²⁰ Women's travel without parents or a husband inspired organizations for the protection of traveling women, such as greeters at railroad stations to protect women from procurers and seducers. In the urban Netherlands, these organizations would in many cases be part of Catholic and Protestant church outreach. Jewish organizations also did their part to protect young women.²¹ In the case of Bretons in Paris, it was the Catholic Church and associated missions. In every case, however, the protection of women was a protection from seduction and pregnancy; the emphasis was on the sexual vulnerability of young women. Newspapers, such as the patriarchal Breton de Paris, often ran stories about ruined girls – whose ruin came from their own naiveté as newcomers. When this newspaper was downsizing its format with the outbreak of World War I, it still made room in the 9 August 1914 issue for a story titled “*Les aventures d'une bretonne à Paris.*” This was the tale of sixteen-year-old Marie-Jeanne Floch, arrived a week earlier and staying in a hotel run by compatriots near the Gare Montparnasse while looking for work. Approached by a man who said he could arrange employment with a wealthy family, he took her out for a drink and was joined by a male friend. A little drive before dinner took them to the boulevard Massena on the southern outskirts of town, where the two took her to an obscure hotel; Marie was subject to “*toutes sortes de violences,*” her purse with 50 francs was stolen, and she was left locked in the hotel room.”²² Stories such as this were the brutal and sensational counterpart to the host of more subtle poems in newspapers directed to newcomers with titles such as “*Restez au pays,*” [“Stay at Home”] where the reader was warned that the bright lights of the city hid “*une pente bien lisse/Ou petit a petit de plus en plus l'on glisse...*” [A quite slippery slope/Where one slides little by little.]²³ Even into the 1950s, the Breton Mission had a poster in the Gare Montparnasse depicting a young woman with a suitcase

²⁰ . Marlou Schrover, “Differences that make all the difference. Gender, migration and vulnerability,” paper presented at the meetings of the Social Science History Association, November 2005, Portland, Oregon.

²¹ For the protection of young women by Protestant, Catholic and Jewish organizations for France, see Emily Manchen, University of Mississippi and publications by such organization as the Association Catholique Internationale des Oeuvres de Protection de la Jeune Fille; for the Netherlands, see Barbara Henkes, “Maids on the move: Images of femininity and European women's labour migration during the interwar years,” in Pamela Sharpe, ed., Women, Gender and Labour Migration: Historical and Global Perspectives (New York: Routledge, 2001), 227-230

²² Breton de Paris (Le): Journal hebdomadaire paraissant le dimanche, 9 August 1914.

²³ “Restez au pays.” Le Breton de Paris 26 May 1912.

shadowed by a large man, warning “Young women – dangers stalk you. Where will you stay? Where will you work? Reject deceptive offers.”²⁴

The emphasis on the youth of the women and their vulnerability to seduction is linked to the sexualization and sexualized image of immigrant women. This is true of many women immigrants and of domestic servants, but seems to have been emphatically so of Bretons as they were seen in III Republic Paris.²⁵ Even when it was a fledgling anticlerical newspaper for Bretons in Paris, Le Breton de Paris, made fun of Breton women in published jokes, in this case in June of 1899. When asked by the employment agent why she left the service of a Monsieur Seul, the young maid replied, “Because he snored!”²⁶ Breton women had the reputation as streetwalkers near the Montparnasse station. They were portrayed as both ignorant and easy sexual marks by novelists beginning with Emile Zola, who in 1882 painted a nasty realist portrait of an ignorant Breton maid at the lowest rung in Parisian society in Restless House.²⁷ In the year 1900, when Breton migration to Paris was more visible than ever, well-established writer Octave Mirbeau published the salacious Diary of a Chambermaid, a sort of Candide of bourgeois sexual depravity told through the eyes of the Breton chambermaid Célestine. Twenty-two years later, Roger Martin du Gard published the first volume of his Nobel Prize-winning masterpiece The Thibaults, which featured another Breton woman marked by easy sexuality and awkward attempts to overcome her rural ways.²⁸ These stereotypes are based on a pernicious grain of truth, since Bretons were prominent among the women arrested for soliciting around the Montparnasse station, and they figured disproportionately among the women who gave birth in the Maternity Hospital for the Indigent in the same neighborhood.²⁹ Nonetheless, they show how if male migrants are viewed as a sexual danger, women newcomers are viewed as available.

24 « Jeunes. Des dangers vous guettent ... Ou logerez-vous ? Ou travaillerez vous ? Defiez-vous des offres trompeuses. » This poster is pictured in Didier Violain, Bretons de Paris: Des exiles en capitale (Paris : Parigramme, 1997), 21.

25 See, for example, Jacqueline Andall, Gender, Migration and Domestic Service. The Politics of Black Women in Italy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

26 Breton de Paris (Le): grand journal hebdomadaire pour Paris et la Bretagne. paraissant le samedi, 4 June 1899 ; 29 June 1899. The politics and editor of the journal changed at the turn of the century.

27 Emile Zola, Restless House (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953).

28 Octave Mirbeau, Diary of a Chambermaid (London: Elek, 1966); Roger Martin du Gard, Les Thibaults (New York : Viking, 1946), twelve volume of this family saga were published 1922-1940).

29 Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris ; non-numbered registers of commissariats : 53rd quartier, Montparnasse, 1910 ; 56th quartier, Plaisance, 1896 and 1910 ; Rachel Fuchs and Leslie Page Moch. “Pregnant, Single, and Far from Home: Migrant Women in Nineteenth-Century

Employment

What is so gendered as the labor force? Before the expansion of white collar work in the twentieth century, outside the agricultural sector, women were engaged almost exclusively in textiles, needle trades and service – working in spinning mills, sewing garments of all kinds, performing household chores and maintaining personal services for others. Even through the workers recorded in 1911 Paris, most trades were dominated by men or by women in the city and suburb. Women workers dominated textile production, the needle trades, and especially domestic service (where there were 120,000 women workers and 18,000 men). Only one occupation was shared by men and women: that of journalier/manoeuvre (day laborer), an occupational category that covered a host of distinct – and gendered -- tasks and in which there were about 35,000 men and 33,000 women.³⁰

It has long been known that since single women have moved into the city, they have been especially inclined to work as servants upon arrival; this has been important because it is a dual question of lodging and protection. Lodging for women alone did not exist with the kind of protection – however fictive – that domestic service was to offer in the family setting.³¹ In a detailed and nuanced study of women in the twentieth-century Parisian labor force, Catherine Omnès shows how migrant women came to occupy certain niches in the industrial and commercial economy of Paris; they paid a heavy price for their rural origins, lack of education and apprenticeships. As a consequence, newcomers had different experiences than other women both of domestic service and factory work, being unable to avoid domestic service which most women eschewed or to find skilled factory positions. Like Mme. A.R. from the Finistère, who worked as a domestic for six years until her marriage, then found a job as an unskilled worker in an electrical factory, many Breton women used domestic service as an entrée to Paris life

Paris.” American Historical Review 95 (1990):1007-1031; see also Violain, Bretons de Paris, 80-83, 95.

³⁰ Statistique générale, Résultats statistiques du recensement générale de la population effectué le 5 mars 1911 4 vols (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1915-1917), 2 : 6-8, 4 : 100-111.

³¹ An entry point for the vast literature on the history of domestic service begins with Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family; Abel Chatelain, “Migrations et domesticité féminine urbaine en France XVIII siècle -XX siècle,” Revue d’histoire économique et sociale 47 (1960), 506-528; Theresa McBride, The Domestic Revolution (London: Croom Helms, 1976); Anne Martin-Fugier, La place des bonnes: La domesticité féminine en 1900 (Paris: Grasset, 1979) for the question of protection, see Fuchs and Moch. “Pregnant, Single, and Far from Home.”

before finding work outside service or taking on their own household.³² In the spring of 1911, Brittany supplied about a sixth of the cooks and domestic servants to Paris and its suburbs, and about half the employed Bretonnes in the city of Paris worked at these jobs.³³ Like many immigrant groups, Bretons worked as domestics – but only Bretons had Bécassine.

Bécassine, a Breton cartoon character who appeared in 1905 and was the heroine of her own books beginning in 1913, was “stupid, naive, ignorant and clumsy, faithful maid-of-all-work, she [was] the archetype of the backward Breton.”³⁴ “Bécasse,” the female woodcock, became a slang term for a stupid woman. Breton and non-Bretons alike referred to Breton women servants as Bécassines. By 1939, this image was both degraded and controversial: thus Bretons objected when a statue of Bécassine was molded for the Musée Grévin, Paris’s famous wax museum. The same year, a film was made of Bécassine that was so insulting it could not be shown in Brittany. (Bécassine gave her breast to a piglet and took it to bed with her.) Although this character was young and naïve, caricatures of her, gape-jawed and pregnant, linked her to easy sexuality and ignorance.³⁵ Yet publication and sales of the cartoon volumes have continued, and since the 1970s a reinterpretation of Bécassine has been underway. Bécassine is increasingly perceived as a beloved childhood character, a heroine and a model for young people whose good will and adaptive capacities inspired generations of children. Now the French market Bécassine dolls, dishtowels, and postcards; in addition, her 100th birthday was marked by the publication of Becassine: A Legend of the Century (*Bécassine: Une légende du siècle*) and a large, red commemorative stamp.³⁶

³² Catherine Omnès, Ouvrières parisiennes: Marchés du travail et trajectoires professionnelles au 20e siècle (Paris: Editions de l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1997), chap. 9, 279.

³³ That is, some 20,332 of the 40,714 women from Brittany employed in Paris; Statistique générale, Résultats statistiques du recensement générale de la population effectué le 5 mars 1911, 1 :88-89, 110-111.

³⁴ « ...sotte, naïve, ignorante et maladroite, fidèle bonne a tout faire, est l'archétype de la Bretonne arriérée, » Michel LeGall, “Bécassine,” in Dictionnaire du patrimoine Breton (Rennes, Editions Apogée, 2000). Bécassine was translated and distributed abroad ; see a Dutch edition Toosje Tontel (Haarlem: de Spaarnestad, n.d.). I would like to thank Marlou Schrover for her gift of this book.

³⁵ Violain, Bretons de Paris, 80-83.

³⁶ Marie-Anne Couderc, Bécassine inconnue (Paris : CNRS Editions, 2000) ; Bernard Lehembre, Bécassine: Une légende du siècle (Paris : Hachette, 2005) ; Rémy Puyuelo, Héros de l'enfance, figures de la survie: De Bécassine à Pinocchio, de Robinson Crusoé à Poil de Carotte (Paris: ESF éditeur, 1998).

Not all Bretons were Bécassine, of course, and indeed their marriage records in Paris show where they were in the labor force after some years in the city.³⁷ A closer look at Bretons in two areas of Paris is revealing. The XIV arrondissement borders on the Boulevard Montparnasse and the railroad station where Bretons disembarked and stretched out to vacant lots, farms, and the fortifications south of Paris. In this industrial, commercial and institutional area, over 15,000 women worked in the textile industry and needle trades, 6500 as domestics, 6400 in commerce and about 2,000 as hospital workers in 1911. Thirty percent of the 152 Breton women who married there in 1910 were domestics and cooks; another quarter worked as couturieres and at other skilled trades. One in ten was a hospital worker, but only one in twenty was a day laborer. These were women in the longstanding areas of work for migrants, but also those who were able to move into the needle trades where daughters of Parisians and women in more established immigrant groups found work.

Employment was quite different for the Breton women who married in the industrial suburb of Saint-Denis labeled “the Manchester of France.” Of the 100 Breton women married there in 1910, 30 percent were domestics and cooks (the same proportion as in the XIV *arrondissement*), but the resemblance ends there. One in five Breton brides was a day-laborer; only one in twenty worked as a *courtière* or at other skilled trades; only one was a hospital worker.³⁸ Breton women in the industrial suburb were just as likely to be domestics as their compatriots in the city, but otherwise their jobs were those at the bottom described by Catherine Omnès. They were more likely to be day laborers than workers in the needle trades. As Breton women spent enough time in the city to marry, then, they became part of a large and complex labor force that provided a range of employment to women with different skills and resources. They remind us that long before the sex trade or domestic service became as international as they are today, they were regional, and national in large cities.

37 Marriage records do not show post-marital career, however, which probably include Breton shopkeepers. An investigation of the *Registre de Commerce* for Paris, 1920-1930 (Archives de Paris) will bear fruit; see Judith Rainhorn and Claire Zalc, “Commerce à l’italienne: Immigration et activité professionnelle à Paris dans l’entre-deux-guerres,” *Le Mouvement Social* 191 (2000): 49-68. I would like to thank Marlou Schrover for alerting me to this source. Although Bretons were notoriously inept at commerce according to Raison-Jourde, *La colonie auvergnate*. Bretons fondly recall the bars and hotels run by compatriots : Sylvie Bonin and Bernadette Costa, *Je me souviens du 14e arrondissement* (Paris : Parigramme, 1993) ; Voilan, *Bretons de Paris*.

³⁸ Marriage records, 1910, from the Archives de l’état civil du XIV arrondissement and Saint-Denis.

Marriage Partners and Intermarriage

Immigrant marriages historically have been understood as marriages between partners from the same place -- often for men who are already in place -- including brides imported from the home village to the U.S. (or picture brides from Japan in the U.S.). The same image holds historically for rural men in a city like Paris, who send for a bride from home, go home to get one, or meet a compatriot in the city -- a “*pays*” in any case.³⁹ The assumption is equally as strong for Breton men in Paris. Until recently, nobody has asked whom migrant women in the city marry.

In the effort to answer the question “How did people become Parisians?,” Alain Faure analyzed at the marriage patterns of migrants in Paris in 1910 and 1911. One in seven men and women born in the provinces married someone from their home département, but nearly 45 percent of women married a fellow migrant from elsewhere in the provinces and over one in four married a Parisian (about 42 percent of men married a fellow provincial and 31 percent married Parisians).⁴⁰ The city, then, was a melting-pot, especially for the newcomer. Maurice Garden surveyed Paris marriages in 1885 and found that nothing showed the city was a melting-pot more than intermarriages across regions -- and the lack of marriages among “*pays*.” The tendency to marry compatriots was strong among foreigners, but not among the French -- even the Alsacians, Auvergnats, and Bretons “whose communities,” according to Garden, “had given off the image of an intense solidarity among the uprooted of Paris.” Bretons from the département of Côtes-du-Nord were the only exception. Perhaps more important, grooms from most regions outnumbered brides in the capital city and Brittany is one of the few exceptions to the rule: Breton women were more likely to marry in Paris than Breton men. Because the bride’s home was the traditional location of the marriage, it is suggestive that Breton women were especially likely to marry in Paris. This is particularly the case because Breton women -- like migrant women in many cities -- married at a later age than Parisians; in the case of Bretons, the difference was most

³⁹ Raison-Jourde, La Colonie auvergnate, 301 and *passim*.

⁴⁰ Alain Faure, “Comment devenait-on Parisien? La question d’intégration dans le Paris de la fin du XIXe siècle, » in Jean-Louis Robert and Danielle Tartakowsky, eds., Paris le peuple, XVIIIe-XXe siècle, (Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999), 43.

extreme: they married on average seven years later than Parisian women, and at an older age than any other migrant women in Paris.⁴¹

Again, closer look at the Bretons in two areas of Paris is revealing. In the XIV^e *arrondissement*, the Bretons were women in the majority, and the Breton women there married grooms from other parts of France, for the most part. Of the marriages in 1875, 1890, 1910, and 1925, many more women married non-Bretons than men who married non-Bretons. There were relatively few marriages between Bretons. This was not the case in the much more male industrial suburb of Saint-Denis where marriages between two Bretons were in the majority in 1890 and 1910. Nonetheless, the proportion of Breton women who married non-Bretons grew to 26 percent, then to 40 percent of the marriages in Saint-Denis that included Bretons in 1910 and 1925. It would seem that Breton women were eager to marry “out” and to avoid replicating their mothers’ lives by returning to Brittany. This confirms M. Garden’s finding that Breton women were more likely to marry in Paris than Breton men and so it belies the myth that these migrant newcomer women would intermarry. The expectations of the time, and of history, are that Bretons would behave like foreigners and marry each other. Like Italians, for example, the men were expected to import a bride and the women to marry their compatriots.⁴² This was not the rule, however, because single Breton women came to Paris and in many cases chose non-Breton husbands. They married, not like foreigners, but like other French women in the melting pot that was Paris.

Marriage patterns demonstrate that Breton women were able to defy the disabilities of rural origins, little education, and expectations of them. Annie Phizacklea writes that we need to “ditch the old theoretical divide between structure and agency, only then do gendered actors in the migratory process become active, resourceful agents.”⁴³ In their marriages, we see an arena of Breton women’s freedom of action and accomplishment, insofar as *concubinage* was a failure to marry; historians have found that in Paris *concubinage* represented a lack of women’s power and the failure of a

⁴¹ Maurice Garden, “Mariages parisiens à la fin du XIX^e siècle: Une microanalyse quantitative,” *Annales de démographie historique* (1998), 116, 122.

⁴² Garden, “Mariages parisiens,” 116; for Italian marriages in Paris, see Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, *Les italiens dans d’est parisien: Une histoire d’intégration (1880-1960)* (Rome: L’École française de Rome, 2000).

⁴³ Phizacklea, “Gendered Actors,” 25.

hoped-for marriage.⁴⁴ Breton women – even among the least fortunate (those with rural origins who were unable to write and had borne children out of wedlock) – found partners to marry. This bears out Anthony Giddens observation that “even the seemingly powerless have the capacity to mobilize and secure ‘spaces of control.’”⁴⁵

Conclusion

In this paper, I have emphasized four interconnected ways that gender and migration interact. In the case of historical internal migrations – the Bretons who flocked to greater Paris after 1875, in this case -- women’s travel and networks of contact are inseparable from perceptions of them as vulnerable sexual beings which, in combination with their backgrounds and education, shape their entry into the labor market. It is in their departures from home, travel to Paris, working lives and especially in their choices of spouse that we see most clearly Breton women’s resourcefulness applied to their move into an urban life. They did not travel, work, or marry like their male compatriots, and were not perceived the same; they did not marry like foreigners, either. The Bretons demonstrate that issues of gender are fundamental to understanding internal as well as international migration.

⁴⁴ Alter, Family and the Female Life Course; Françoise Battagliola, “Mariage, concubinage et relations entre les sexes. Paris, 1880-1890,” Genèses 18 (1995): 68-96; Michel Frey, “Du mariage et du concubinage dans les classes populaires a Paris (1846-1847),” Annales ESC 33 (1978) : 803-829.

⁴⁵ Marriage records, 1910, from the Archives de l’état civil de Saint-Denis. Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984); quoted in Phizackea, “Gendered Actors,” 29; William H. Sewell found the same pattern in Marseille in Structure and mobility : The men and women of Marseille, 1820-1870 (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1985); see also Hilde Bras, “Domestic service, migration and the social status of women at marriage. The case of a Dutch sea province, Zeeland 1820-1935,” Historical Social Research 23, no. 3 (1998): 3-19.