IN THE WEE HOURS of 6 June 1944, Angèle Levrault, a sixty-year-old schoolmistress from Sainte-Mère-Église, awoke with a start. She rose from her bed and exited the back door to use her outhouse. She heard odd fluttering sounds. What she found in her backyard was stranger still: a man with a face streaked in war paint had landed in her garden and was trying to cut himself free from a parachute. Madame Levrault stood frozen in her nightgown. The man's eyes met hers. He raised his finger to his lips, signaling her to be silent, and then slipped away into the night. Although she did not know it at the time, Madame Levrault had just met Private Robert M. Murphy of the Eighty-Second Airborne Division, one of the first Americans to land in France on D-day.¹ A few hours after their encounter in the garden, thousands of Murphy's countrymen would take their first step onto French land at Omaha and Utah Beach. Thousands of others would take their last step on that sand, if they took a step at all. Before the end of that day, 2,499 Americans would perish on the beaches of Normandy.² They would reach the shores of France but die before they met even a single French person. Still others, of course, survived the beaches and fought their way across the north of France. Those soldiers are the subject of this book.

For good reason, the Normandy landings have become a sacred event in the American imagination. Historians, politicians, and filmmakers have celebrated the campaign as a great moment in the his-
tory of the Second World War. There is no doubt they are right. But the story, at least as it has been told by American historians, suffers by focusing too narrowly on military strategy. As the new military history has demonstrated, wars cannot be separated from the values and preoccupations of those peoples fighting them. It is also crucial, then, to widen our analytic lens in order to consider the encounter between the American soldier and the French civilian. That relationship began at dawn on the sixth of June in places like Angèle Levault’s garden; it ended in Le Havre some two years later when the last GI got on a boat home.

Because historical narratives focus almost exclusively on the day-to-day heroics of the American GI, they slight the French and leave half the story untold. French civilians appear only at the peripheries of the scene, their roles reduced to inert bystanders or joyous celebrants of liberation. In short, they form nothing more than a landscape against which the Allies fight for freedom. Stephen Ambrose’s very popular histories of the Normandy campaign typify this marginalization of the French. In *Citizen Soldiers*, a history of the army from Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge, Ambrose mentions the Normans only once, implying that they were collaborationists: “[The landings] came as a shock to the Normans, who had quite accommodated themselves to the German occupation.” In Ambrose’s three histories of the campaign, he recounts only one incident in which the Normans help the Allies, and several in which they betray the GIs. Otherwise, they appear to be children eager to kiss the Americans’ hands, delighted at their liberation, but largely passive and mute. In sum, Ambrose reproduces what he sees as the general GI view of French civilians—as “ungrateful, sullen, lazy and dirty.”

One aim of this chapter is to amend that view by revisiting the Normandy campaign as it was seen through French eyes. What was D-day like for the Normans? How did they respond to having their homes, their fields, and their farms turned into a theater of war? Norman accounts of the invasion, recorded in diaries, letters, and memoirs, give us an extraordinarily fresh, vivid account of the months prior to and after the invasion. If Normans appeared to be “ungrate-

ful” and “sullen” to the GIs, as Ambrose believed, they had good reason to be. For them, D-day did not begin on the sixth of June. Rather it started in the fall of 1943, when the Allies initiated preinvasion bombing on northern France. The Normans watched their rail-ways, bridges, workplaces, and homes burn to the ground. For this reason, they dreaded as much as awaited the landings. The war came as a distant thunder, then crashed like an angry storm. As it broke, it produced horrific sights and smells—the rot of animal and human flesh, the stench of death. Normans recounted their encounter with death in a terrible grammar of sounds, sights, smells, and tastes. An estimated 19,890 civilians lost their lives in the Battle of Normandy. During the first two days of the campaign alone, about three thousand were killed—roughly the same number of Allied soldiers killed in that period.

Nevertheless the Normans also felt profound gratitude to the Allies for restoring their freedom. However horrible the squall of war, it eventually delivered Americans, with their funny-looking jeeps, their spectacular boots, and their honey-smelling cigarettes. Every Norman remembers the moment when they saw their first American. “We simply did not believe our eyes,” recalled Jacques Perret. “After so many years of occupation, deprivation, alerts, bombings, there were our liberators, ‘our Americans.’” Jacques-Alain de Sédoü, a boy of eight in 1944, remembered his first GI in this way: “He could have been a Martian who had fallen out of the sky and we would not have examined him with more curiosity. I could not take my eyes off this man who had come from his distant land in order to liberate France.”

Revisiting the campaign from the French side not only gives us a novel, more comprehensive view of the campaign, but also corrects Ambrose’s portrayal of French civilians in three crucial ways. First, far from being traitors or passive bystanders, ordinary Normans readily joined the Allies in their struggle against the Germans. Besides taking up arms, civilians provided crucial intelligence about the terrain and the enemy. They also risked their lives to hide fallen parachutists, harbor stranded infantrymen, and care for the wounded. With
very few exceptions, they were comrades and fighters. Second, while there is no question that French civilians welcomed their liberators with wonder and gratitude, it is too simple to portray them as happy celebrants of their own liberation. Although Normans felt enormous relief when the Germans at last departed, they were also forced to endure the war in their own backyard. A fundamental contradiction characterized the Allied mission: the GIs were to both conquer and liberate, demolish and reconstruct. As one journalist said of the civilians in Caen, “their liberators are also destroyers.” In this part of France, anger, fear, and loss stripped the moment of its bliss. Liberation was a harrowing experience in which happiness had to share the heart with sorrow. Putting Franco-American relations at the center of the story revises our understanding of the costs paid in the Norman campaign. The Americans did not have a monopoly on suffering, nor did they fight alone.

Lastly, a transatlantic approach alters our view of the American experience in Europe. By focusing on encounters between GIs and civilians, we can appreciate the full extent of the soldiers’ precarious position in the ETO (European theater of operations). Not only were they warriors fighting for their lives, but also strangers in a strange land. An incident recounted by infantryman John Baxter evokes this sense of alienation. One morning, Baxter’s unit drove by convoy through a small village. A French peasant stood and watched them pass through. “We stopped briefly at an intersection and one of our Arkansas soldiers, a man named Mathis, leaned out of the truck and addressed the old man. ‘Hey, Mister!’, he barked, ‘How far are we from Okalona, Arkansas?’ It broke up the convoy.” Mathis’s joke rested not only on the Frenchman’s ignorance of Okalona but also on the idea of the GI as a tourist. It presented the American soldier as a lost traveler trying to find his way home. Unlike tourists to France, the Allies did not expect a warm greeting on Omaha Beach. A good thing, too, as the Germans decidedly did not give them one. But like travelers, they were deposited in an alien landscape, forced to navigate unknown streets, witness unfamiliar customs, and converse with people in a language they did not understand.

The full complexity of the American mission in Europe emerges only when we see the campaign in this way: as an encounter between two allies as well as two enemies. While France was a battlefield, it was also an unknown place, and as such, experienced by GIs in terms not unlike those of a tourist. Such cultural encounters have been overlooked by military historians reluctant to take their eyes off the battlefield. But for millions of GIs, the discovery that a very different world indeed lay beyond the Jersey shore—or San Francisco Bay, for that matter—was central to their war experience. For the GIs, the recognition of cultural difference was unavoidable, astonishing, and often life changing. “From the moment we hit the beaches,” wrote infantryman Aramais Hovsepian to his brothers, “you could tell it was a different country. The air even smelled different!” “England was a little like home but France is really a foreign country,” recorded Jan Giles in his diary. GI Orval Faubus titled his memoir of France A Far Away Land. With the awareness of difference came the excitement of being in a strange, distant place. Minutes after Charles E. Frohman’s company arrived in Normandy, someone pointed out a French street sign. “Everything else was forgotten in a series of awed ‘Oh’s and ‘Ah’s,” remembered Frohman, who was from Columbus, Ohio. “It was the first distinctly French thing we had ever seen. It looked like something out of a fairy tale book. It just didn’t look real.” Like many visitors to France, the GIs peered over maps, babbled in high school French, wondered why the second floor was called the first floor, and stared in utter bewilderment at bidets.

The recognition of cultural difference, with its lessons of tolerance and humility, became a legacy of the war for a generation of American men, and thus merits closer historical attention. Thinking about the GI as a tourist can also help to explain the arrogance he often felt toward the French. As soldiers, the Americans bore weapons and wielded enormous power. But as tourists, they were dependent on civilians for local knowledge of geography, language, and customs. In this way, they tacked back and forth between authority and dependence, command and vulnerability. Like many tourists, the GIs dealt with their helplessness by making large (and largely unfounded) gen-
eralizations about the French. When in their discomfort Americans succumbed to this reflex to categorize, they made sex the defining element of French civilization.

Countless GIs arrived in Normandy with the notion that France was a playground of easy women and loose morals. Once there, they gave candy to children, shook the hands of young men, learned about the woods from peasants, and saved the lives of old women. In other words, they interacted with civilians in complex, very different ways. At the same time, when confronted with a strange culture, the GIs clung to prejudices they already held about the French. In particular, they focused on French behaviors concerning the body, including public nudity, kissing, and love making. By the end of the summer, the French had become—as an entire people—primitive and oversexed. This view of the Gallic race as uncivilized echoed American imperial thinking in the past. Here it would degrade French efforts to restore an autonomous government, as well as justify US military management in matters of health, sanitation, and transportation.

A Surrealist Mixed Spectacle of Deliverance and Death

While everyone in Europe awaited the invasion, what it meant for an individual depended on where he or she happened to be in the summer of 1944. Anne Frank was in hiding in Amsterdam. For her and her family, the “long-awaited liberation” meant hope. “It fills us with fresh courage and makes us strong again,” she wrote in her diary on the sixth of June. Anguish was what Françoise Seligman was feeling in Paris that morning. “A kind of inner panic paralyzed me,” the French woman remembered. “If they fail, if they leave, the proof will have been made that France has become an impregnable bastion of Nazi power, and we will never ever be liberated.” For the civilians in Normandy, where the battle claimed both homes and human lives, the landings took on yet another meaning. A woman named Yvonne living near Mortain called her day of liberation a “surrealist mixed spectacle of deliverance and death.”

The burden of loss was not new on D-day. The invasion had created a reason for the French to endure the weary days of scarcity, humiliation, and deprivation. At the same time, for months before the landings, Allied bombardment had wreaked havoc with Norman lives. Military planners had launched a bombing campaign the previous fall to prevent the Nazis from moving troops and supplies to the front in the opening weeks of the Normandy campaign. So as not to betray the location of the Allied landings, bombing occurred over all of France, with the targeting of bridges, roads, and railways as well as oil depots and other German installations. In the year 1944 alone, 503,000 tons of bombs fell on France, and 35,317 civilians were killed. The populations of Nantes, Cambrai, Saint-Étienne, Caen, and Rouen all suffered heavy casualties, with hundreds or thousands reported dead or wounded. A bombardment of B-17s on a train in which resistance member Jean Collet was traveling appeared to him as a “strange ballet of death: you saw the bombs unleashed from the plane and falling in your direction. They then disappeared from view due to their rapidity of speed. Then one instant after a terrifying whistle they would explode in a dreadful crash. Meanwhile we were flattened against the ground to avoid the explosions.” Civilians suffered the devastation of homes, workplaces, and farms. As a result, many felt more fear than hope about the coming invasion. “The landings are both yearned and dreaded,” wrote a Caen prefect in early 1944, “one hopes for a decisive victory while also making a selfish wish that it won’t happen where one lives.”

It was only human to want the Allies to come—only somewhere else. But specific circumstances also aggravated fear and resentment. For one, the Nazis chose to use bombardment like a hammer to nail in anti-Allied feeling. In widely disseminated handbills and other forms of propaganda, the Germans claimed that the United States had a “Machiavellian plan,” which was to take over the French Empire, destroy France, and colonize Europe itself. (See figure 1.1.) Because they could kindle anti-Allied feeling with the destruction caused by the bombing, the Nazis provided neither a warning system nor a temporary shelter for the Normans. To counter such propaganda, the
clenched French fist for missing its target so often. The Normans considered the British to be superior to the Americans in precision bombing. As early as October 1943, the Gaullist resistance organ CFLN (Comité français de la libération nationale) reported that the French were sick "of accumulating ruins and deaths without results." While some civilians found comfort in the French adage that to make an omelet, you have to break eggs, others wondered, "why was it necessary to break so many?" Nor did civilians perceive any rational plan, according to the CFLN. Bridges were destroyed several times over in a period of days, then left alone for months, so that the Germans could rebuild them. The bombings were "barbarian," and they should be stopped. In their reports on public opinion, the CFLN claimed civilians believed Nazi warnings concerning American imperial ambitions. Besides economic greed, the Americans were guilty of harshness in the Versailles treaty, indifference to German rearmament in the 1930s, slowness in entering the war, and collaboration with Vichy official Admiral Darlan in North Africa. Even the delay in the invasion became a kind of "treason."

Because the CFLN, following de Gaulle, distrusted the Allies, it no doubt exaggerated the anti-Americanism rippling through the French population. But you didn't have to be in the Gaullist resistance to be fed up with Allied bombing. French refugees interviewed by the BBC after their arrival in England also complained of the "appalling" effects of bombing throughout the nation. In Nantes, they related, "there was such violent irritation" that when an American pilot, shot down on French soil, offered a Civilian a cigarette, he spat on it. Another refugee complained of Modane, near Grenoble, where the Allies dropped their bombs four kilometers away from the railway station despite having been given detailed maps. The deep-down, gnawing fear was that the bombs would keep coming while the invasion would not. France would be destroyed but not liberated. "It would be possible to annihilate Europe without annihilating the war," wrote Alfred Fabre-Luce in his journal just before the invasion.

The prelanding destruction of the French countryside eroded faith in the Allies. For months, civilians' feelings toward them had been a
muddle of admiration and rage. Allied victories in North Africa had given the French their first reason to believe that the Nazi war machine could be beaten. American success in bringing clothes, cigarettes, and food to civilians in Tunisia and Algeria raised hopes everywhere on the continent. But anger still warped the joy of liberation.

"Having stood by impotent, enraged and revolted by the savage destruction" of his hometown, Augustin Maresquier was determined to suppress his happiness upon seeing his first American. But his joy, he realized, was stronger than his own resolution not to feel it. Fourteen-year-old Claude Bourdon had the same "strange surprise" when she was liberated: despite her fury concerning the destruction of her home, "my heart began to beat violently; I was ready to burst into sobs of joy."

The damage—and resentment—would only increase after the landings. Neither the destruction nor the anger stopped. The Battle of Normandy was long, discouraging, and costly. In contrast to the battle-weary residents of northern and eastern France, Normans had not experienced a war firsthand for many generations. Strategic coastal towns such as Cherbourg and Saint-Malo were heavily bombed. Le Havre was nearly destroyed, as were Caen and Saint-Lô. The wreckage was psychological as well as physical. "Nothing could be more painful," wrote George Duhamel in the fall of 1944, "than to be wounded by one's own friends." Once again, superfluous bombing sparked outrage. Civil Affairs reported on 28 July that the French were furious about "what is considered to be unnecessary bombing and shelling of towns." While the Allied objective was to destroy German installations and troops, in many cases, such as Caen, bombing continued even though the Germans had supposedly left. In Le Havre, French officials angrily pointed out that some three thousand civilians had been killed while fewer than ten German bodies had been found. As late as mid-October, Civil Affairs was still reporting that "resentment is more widespread and does not appear to be lessening" in Le Havre.

The results of the bombing were personally devastating. "Our faces were lit by flame light," remembered Antoine Anne, "you could see the fear, emotion, and horror inscribed upon them. Facing the inferno, we became all too aware of those buried under the flames. A crushing silence fell upon us. He had lost his entire family except the child he held in his arms. Countless other children witnessed death for the first time. Twelve-year-old Robert Simon, for example, watched a close friend die, then greeted the Americans with "an inner wound and a heavy heart."

As thousands of Normans found themselves homeless, they took to the road, seeking out family and shelter in distant villages. The constant walking was hard on the legs and feet, particularly those of the elderly and children. When some weeks later they returned, everything was gone. "My house, my childhood, nothing. There was nothing left," remembered Madame Dolrats-Lomet about her homecoming in Saint-Malo. Of Saint-Lô, Jacques Petit wrote in his journal: "my town no longer exists. How many weeks of madness were necessary to wipe all traces of my childhood? How can I possibly find them again?"

Saint-Lô, in particular, became a "martyred village," its churches "murdered" and "amputated." Civil Affairs reported "embittered" complaints from refugees declaring the bombing "excessive." All was macabre desolation," remembered one Civil Affairs officer of Saint-Lô. He wondered, "how could a city so shattered ever survive?"

"The city looked as though it had been pulled up by its roots, put through a giant mixer then dumped back out again," remembered Frank Freese. "The desperate despair of destruction" was how Chester Hansen, aid to Omar Bradley, described it. "Mounting ruins on a cracked, punctured, blistered terrain"—this is what one young Norman saw when he emerged from a shelter. Refugees going through on their way home described the city as wrapped in "a silence of death." "We go through Saint-Lô in a deathly silence," wrote one Norman in his diary. "The town is nothing but an enormous field of ruins, without a soul." American radio operator Sim Copans had the same response: "There was absolutely nobody in the streets, and the atmosphere was eerie. . . . It was really a horrifying sight." When résistante Lucie Aubrac returned to France after the Liberation, she also traveled through the town. "I had no fear at any
moment,” she later remembered, “except perhaps at Saint-Lô. The town had been terribly bombed by the Allies. The houses collapsed like paper cartons! It was spectacular and frightening.”

Even in towns less damaged, the war left its mark. “Think of taking a drive on a maze of narrow country roads,” urged reporter Andy Rooney, “where every farmhouse is an armed fortress, every church steeple a sniper’s observation post, every stone wall conceals infantry with rifles and machine guns, and where, at every curve in a road, there may be a tank with an 88mm gun trained on the curve you’re coming around. That’s the way it was in Normandy in June and July of 1944.”

Overnight Normandy had become a war zone. Booby traps transformed the famous hedgerows into deadly weapons. Fine wires lay across roads to trigger explosions. Apple orchards harbored German mortar stations. Barns hid German artillery. Knowing that the GIs were souvenir hunters, the Nazis also left behind military paraphernalia rigged with explosives. When Raymond Avignon picked up a German helmet, an American soldier saved his life by making him put it down, showing him an iron thread that would trigger an explosion, then removing it with “meticulous” care.

The effect of this transformation was to deliver up the uncanny—to render the known unknown. “Familiar places appeared unrecognizable,” noted Charles Lemeland, then twelve. “It seemed there was now something horrible and monstrous hiding there. The endless road, bordered by houses and farms, was absolutely deserted except for dead animals—a German shepherd and a pig side by side—and a few dead men.” After the front moved on, “spread over miles was simple ordinary war garbage,” he continued “clothing, food, ammunition—an immense yard sale gone crazy.” The task of removing debris, filling holes, and restoring a countryside “sterilized by the passage and mechanisms of war,” as one journalist put it, seemed overwhelming.

Even in December 1944, with the front now hundreds of miles away, Normans were still reeling from the devastation. A Caen editorial declared it “the saddest Christmas we have ever known. Because we still live in a world in flames, in a murdered France, in a ravaged region. No more houses, no more roofs over our head, and grief everywhere around us.” On the eighth of June 1945, the same paper remembered D-day as “so beautiful and yet so cruel.”

The destruction would have been easier on the Normans if their victory had been assured. Part of Norman anguish in the early weeks of the campaign resulted from the uncertainty of the battle’s outcome. During the very hard fighting on the Cotentin Peninsula in June and early July, villages in the region between Cherbourg and Caen were passed back and forth between German and Allied control. At times the Americans were forced to retreat from villages they held, so that Normans would taste freedom only with a bitter flavor. The mayor of Sainte-Mère-Église reported to his superior that on D-day, when US military reinforcements did not arrive, “the women cried and begged: ‘do not abandon us!’” The Americans reassured them “we will never abandon you, we will die on this spot.” According to the first US military report on the local Norman population, civilians “could not be certain that we would be able to hold our ground. They do doubt, though, of denunciations, arrests, etc. should we move out.”

Even after civilians were reassured that freedom—and the Americans—were there to stay, shock took a huge toll on the population. “Men and women everywhere stood crying and rocking back and forth as though in prayer,” recalled John Hurkala. “Obviously they were wondering whether or not everything had taken place was true. It was.” In the faces of civilians returning to Caen, journalist Jacques Kayser saw “eyes overflowing with anguish and visions of horror, but also eyes that know how to say ‘thank you.’” “Every family had lost someone,” recalled Andy Rooney. “It was true that they were being freed but at the cost of the total destruction of everything they had.”

In Valognes, Guillaume Lecadet remembered how when the Americans appeared, “there was a little enthusiasm, but alas, a screen of terrible visions stood between us and joy.” The liberated also worried about loved ones caught up elsewhere in the chaos of battle. After the Americans passed through his village, Jean-Pierre Launay remembered “a strange feeling invaded my spirit. We were liberated but the war was not over.”

Far from being blind to Norman suffering, the GIs were angered,
shocked, and saddened by the effects of bombardment. Due to censorship, news of the destruction had not reached home. In November, for example, Life magazine refused to publish parts of a report from France that referred to "all these deaths, all these villages destroyed" by Allied bombers. After American pilot Henry Hodelik jumped from his plane to safety with a Norman family near Rouen, he was horrified by the extent of nearby bombing. As his French keepers remembered, "he was ready to leave, to try and cross the line and tell Allied troops, 'You're crazy! You've bombed Neufchâtel. Where's the military objective?"' "I must say, I feel sorry for the French," wrote Morton Bystis to his mother. "In order to get back their freedom, they have to see their country ravaged all over again from another direction." Robert Easton imagined that Normans at Saint-Lô reasoned in the following way: "When the Germans were here they did not trouble us greatly; at least they left us our homes. Now the Americans have left nothing." "It gave me a curious, displaced feeling to look at the damage that can be done," noted Jan Giles about the bombing. He was particularly saddened by the destruction of the beautiful cathedral at Carentan.

The destruction was all the more painful because the GIs had fallen in love with the French countryside. Although they complained about "those bastard hedgerows"—thick bushes that presented obstacles in the breakout from the beachheads—the Americans also expressed rapture for Normandy. Even the war could not erase its splendor. "Sunrise and sunset are both awe-inspiring on favorable weather days," wrote Sidney Bowen to his wife. Orval Faubus noticed "the change from one day to the next, from the grim and terrible scenes of Mortain Hill to the pretty villages and towns and beautiful countryside . . . from the stench of the battlefield to the fragrance of flower gardens along the roads." "It is very beautiful country," wrote Corporal Crayton to his parents, "the birds have begun their daily practice, all the flowers and trees are in bloom, especially the poppies and tulips which are very beautiful at this time of year." "The ride toward Brest was an experience that made us forget the war and the fact that we were headed for another uncertain existence," remembered Paul Boesch. "France, so beautiful in the summer, and the Brittany peninsula, one of the more picturesque sections." "I was struck by the sheer beauty of the countryside," recalled Robert Rasmus, "the little villages, the churches." For Frank Irgang, the French coast was "alluring" even if "treacherous." Jan Giles had only one gripe about the Norman countryside: the insects. "I know one thing for sure about France," he wrote in his diary, "They have the biggest and most mosquitoes I ever saw in my life."

Both French anger and GI guilt concerning the devastation of Normandy inevitably found its way into the currency of Franco-American relations. "Their attitude was understandable," noted Frank Freese as he described the sour glares he got from civilians. "But it gave us an uncomfortable feeling and we wanted to tell them that we had no desire to be there either." French signs of friendliness inspired surprise. Infantryman Charles Haug was amazed that after "we had to hurt the French people so," that they "were still able to smile and they waved at us as we drove past." "In Isigny where our 72 B-26 bombers leveled the town," noted Chester Hansen in his diary on the ninth of June, "they talked when we spoke to them despite their 69-70 dead and the smoking ruins of the town." Civil Affairs officers were also taken aback by civilians who "seem to bear no rancour whatever against the Allies for the suffering imposed by military operations." Faubus was stunned when a Norman wounded by a bomb wanted to visit with him in a hospital. French courage inspired admiration. In a letter to his mother, Morton Bystis wrote how moved he was by the sight of an elderly French couple who "sat with beaming faces on the ruins with the French flag flying above their white hair. A gallant people, I must say." Raymond Gantter realized that the ruins had taught him "a proper humility." He had resented the war and the sacrifices it had demanded of him. But when he saw French civilians "kneel and start patiently to separate the whole tiles from the broken, the good timbers from the useless splinters; when they turned from their labors to smile at us and run smiling to pin flowers on our jackets—I woke up. I saw that life goes on, and that's a good thing."

American soldiers and Norman civilians shared something with
each other they couldn’t share with anyone else. For both the war was real and they were in it together. French civilians living farther east and south would never really grasp the price paid by Normans for freedom. Similarly, no girlfriend in the United States could begin to understand what the GIs had gone through in Normandy. Herbert Enderton tried to explain it to his wife by comparing the France in the travel posters back home with the France he was now witnessing: "The winding streams running through the valleys are remembered only because our doughboys got their feet wetter there or because the artillery got stuck there." The GIs’ daily encounter with a “murdered France” reminded them they had come as soldiers not tourists. Despite the hell they shared, however, the Americans and the French ultimately lived in two very different Normandys. For the Americans, it was a battlefield—a place to survive. The idea was to move through it as quickly as possible on the road to Germany and—with any luck—back home. By contrast, for the French, Normandy was home—the seat of family, the scene of childhood memories, the site of struggle and achievement. Some GIs were sensitive to such differences, for example, Jan Giles. With his buddy Mac, Giles entered one damaged house and looked at the wet, ruined sofa, the clock stopped on the mantelpiece. "I kept thinking, somebody lived here. This was somebody’s home—and now look at it. I said, ‘Let’s get out of here.’" Similarly, Capt. Dale Helm admired a small abandoned farm enclosed by a stone wall with a small well-kept house. Counting toys and beds, he guessed that the family had four children. "The smashed toys made me think how thankful I should be that the war was being fought in a country other than home."

But just as often a GI could forget that Normandy was home to someone. Françoise de Hauteclouque remembers the first few moments in 1944 after her house had been bombarded. "With hearts pounding," she and her family emerged from the cellar to inspect the damage. "And what did we see? Huge gaping holes, a pile of dust, stones, bricks, and broken furniture. And in the midst of this scene of devastation, ... an American rummaging through drawers while his friend relieved himself on the floorboards.” In his war memoir

Lt. Col. Claude Hettier de Boisbriant begins by mourning his Norman home, destroyed except for a roof and a few bare walls stripped of everything remotely valuable. By a freak chance, he was bivouacked there with the GIs when serving as a member of the French Army. Boisbriant told no one that the company was occupying his own home. But when a young officer made a fire in his kitchen with wood from his doors, Boisbriant quietly asked him, "Did it ever occur to you that this house belonged to someone?" "I haven’t given it a second’s thought," replied the officer.89

The Dangerous and Incoherent Murmur of War

For much of the world, the Allied invasion was a distant display of might, a symbol of hope, and a reason to pray. For the Normans, by contrast, it was a singular mix of sounds, sights, smells, and tastes. Norman memoirs revolve around the sensory details of the Liberation—the sound of artillery, the first glimpse of an American jeep, the smell of death and decay, the taste of chocolate. What results is an extraordinarily vivid picture of hell in the bocage.

The Normans heard the war before they saw it. “Tuesday, June 6, around midnight, awoken by continuous bombing along the coast,” wrote Jacques Perret in his diary. “Shortly afterwards, numerous planes flying overhead.” At four o’clock in the morning, teenagers Bernard and Solange de Cagny, on vacation in Rots, were awoken by what they thought was a terrible storm. “It took us almost a half hour to realize that no storm could be so violent, so it was probably the Allied landings on the Norman coast.”82 Farther inland that morning, Jacques Lepage also heard the noise. As a veteran of 1914–18, however, he knew better: this was the sound of war.83 In Saint Sens, Maurice Quillien also recognized a “different sort of sound” that day. “In the preceding weeks and months, we’d heard thousands, hundreds of thousands of planes but they were at a higher altitude, and the humming lasted for hours. This was different.” The planes, he realized, were flying lower and reaching land targets. As the battle got
underway some days later in La Haye-du-Puits, Charles Lemeland remembers “the dangerous and incoherent murmur of war” coming from every direction, “building up, slowing down, starting again, breaking out in absurd and wild starts.” Over the entire region, Normans heard the low rumbling of planes. They developed expert ears, and could discern the difference between the sound of a bomb as it passes over your head versus the whistle of one headed straight for you. They also learned to use the sounds of artillery to determine the location of the front, and whether the Allies were advancing or retreating.

It was a giddy morning. The invasion—so long awaited, so long anticipated—had at last arrived. Winks were exchanged as people shook hands. The murmur of three words passed from one Norman ear to another: “C’est le débarquement!” in a matter of hours, no one would need to be told. As “the thunder of war approached,” the Germans shut down the towns. Pierre Despraries remembered the atmosphere as a strange mix of fear and hope. When the first bombs hit, remembered Antoine Anne, “personally I thought my lungs were going to burst.” “The bombs are beginning to fall quite near us,” wrote Michel Braley in his diary, “the machine gun has started to fire constantly. Because of it, we completely forgot to eat. We can no longer distinguish between the German and the American bombs. It is a constant rotation with bombs falling around the house.” Fernand Broeckz was paralyzed by fear that his house was going to fall down on his family. “The walls were blown open, the floorboards rose and fell. You could hear the tiles falling and the windows breaking.”

A bomb literally wrapped a wall around his wife. In his diary of 6 June, the young Jacques Petit expressed his disbelief that he and his friends had looked forward to this moment with “romantic enthusiasm”: “Huddled together, we believed our last hour to be near, and while the bombs whistle, we wait for that direct hit which would at last bring our agony to an end.” Remembering 1914, older men dug trenches near their houses and sheltered their families in this way. Villagers crowded into the basements of the local châteaux, not only because their thick walls offered solidity, but also because no one wanted to die alone. “Solitude was feared,” remembered one civilian. The only Normans exempt from the racket were the hard of hearing. Antoine Anne recalls that as the dust from one bomb cleared, he saw his deaf grandmother sitting in a chair, holding his brother in her arms, completely calm.

There was no getting around the fact that the liberators were bringing the war with them. But then again, the war was bringing the liberators. The French had been waiting a long time. The signs of their arrival were sometimes quirky. Chanoine Berthoux heard someone shouting orders but not in German. A serpentine trail of cigarette smoke drifting over a hedgerow provided the first glimpse of another American. Still another sign was the sound of trucks and tanks. As a child, Christiane Delpière linked the coming of the Americans with the “rumbling of motors.” “Down the road you could hear a constant droning,” remembered Jean-Jacques Vautier. “We went to the edge of the road, our hearts beating fast. At the high point appeared a helmet, helmets, a car. Slowly the convoy descended. When the first car, a sort of ‘scout car,’ had come down to our level, we all burst out cheering.” That “scout car” or jeep made an indelible impression on the French. “Are the Americans really winning the war with these contraptions?” wondered Robert Clausse. Still others considered it to be American magic—the eighth wonder of the world.

There was little opportunity for formal introductions. In many cases, GIs and civilians caught their first glimpse of each other through a storm of bullets. In Remilly-sur-Lozon, Jacques Lepage at one point realized he was literally standing between the Allies and the Germans with artillery passing over his head. He evacuated his house, and when he returned, he found three dead Germans in his kitchen. Auguste Pouillard’s home in Remilly switched back and forth between German and Allied control, at one point serving as a prison for German POWs. Also in Remilly, Marguerite Pottier and her family “were between two fires because the Germans were only a few meters from us.” The Americans shouted that her family should leave: “Grand Combat!!!” they screamed. In the same town, the Germans planted a bomb in the chimney of one house. In the heat
of the battle, the Americans deactivated but did not remove it. When a refugee went to cook pot-au-feu in the fireplace, she got a bomb inside her pot.\textsuperscript{125}

As the fighting moved into their backyards, Normans joined the battle. They informed Americans concerning German positions, and showed them shortcuts and hideaways in the woods.\textsuperscript{126} Particularly in the first few hours of the invasion, as soldiers from the Eighty-Second and 101st Airborne parachuted into a wide area around Caen and Sainte-Mère-Église, civilians came forward. When two hundred GIs parachuting into Graignes fell into the marshes (flooded on purpose by the Germans), locals rescued them by boat, took them into their houses, cared for the wounded, and fished the parachutes out of the water before dawn so that the Germans would not see them.\textsuperscript{127} Arthur and Berthe Pacary also cared for stranded parachutists in the region of Remilly by bringing them whipped cream and other provisions. "They badly needed to be cared for and cleaned," recalled the couple.\textsuperscript{128} Marguerite Pottier's parents were relieved when they discovered paras hiding in their garden, as they had wondered what unknown animal was stealing their cabbage. For their part the Americans were happy to eat something else.\textsuperscript{129} Still other Normans smuggled paras back to the American lines by dressing them as civilians and equipping them with maps.\textsuperscript{130} According to Pierre and Yvonne Ferrary, two paras wandered Grandcamp-les-Bains in broad daylight, their guns beneath their arms, laconically asking, "the port, the port?"\textsuperscript{131}

Still other Normans cared for the wounded. Michel Braley recorded in his diary how a badly wounded American soldier had staggered into their farm. They could not do much for him except give him coffee with eau-de-vie and show him the location of the first aid station. As he was leaving, the GI took out his New Testament and a photograph of his parents for one last look. "We tell him that we are also protestants. He thanks us and leaves. The bombs continue to rain down on us."\textsuperscript{132} Thirteen at the time, Odette Budes of Sainte-Mère-Église remembers that when a wounded soldier who sought shelter at their house could not walk to the first aid station, her father proposed that he carry him on his back. The soldier refused, saying that if a German took a shot, both of them would be killed.\textsuperscript{133} Sometimes entire villages mobilized to help the Allied soldiers. Virtually all the women in le Mesnil-Vigot, northwest of Saint-Lô, devoted themselves to tending to the wounded there, even when the village was still under German control. Besides taking GIs into their farms and homes, these women carried them under German fire to a nearby hospital. One woman, Madame Dépréiers, also risked her life by walking to nearby Remilly-sur-Lozon in order to get a surgical probe for a GI.\textsuperscript{134}

Despite such shows of comraderie, however, GI and civilian often met under an umbrella of mutual mistrust. The Allies worried about German ambushed, particularly in the scrappy field-to-field fighting of the early campaign.\textsuperscript{135} They were given orders not to trust the French, and to assume that all French people were spies or collaborators.\textsuperscript{136} It did not help that British journalists reported rumors that more than half the Normans were not to be trusted, and that they had no wish to be liberated.\textsuperscript{137} Paratrooper Donald Burgett refused a Norman's offer of wine because "I just didn't feel like being poisoned."\textsuperscript{138} In turn, eleven-year-old Louis Blaise was terrified when two GIs with "blackened faces and furious expressions" searched her house in the morning of the sixth of June.\textsuperscript{139} "Paralyzed by fear," the nearby Bré family also huddled together while an American searched their house.\textsuperscript{140} Young French men who wandered around American-held beaches were arrested or interrogated.\textsuperscript{141} Resistors eager to provide crucial intelligence were ignored or detained.\textsuperscript{142} The schoolteacher Germaine Martin fell prey to suspicion when the GIs found on her person a map revealing the location of a German radio post. Even though, as she explained, she had picked it up by accident, she was accused of being a spy. When the Americans discovered their error, they apologized and gave her two boxes of chocolate.\textsuperscript{143}

The French were also wary of the Americans. Frank Irgang remembers that as the Normans walked past him, "they gave me a hurried glance of distrust which made me feel unwanted."\textsuperscript{144} Bombing had left a sour taste in the Norman mouth. German propaganda had shaped views of the Americans and British more than anyone wanted to admit.\textsuperscript{145} By the end of June, Allied Headquarters, concerned enough to
do a survey about Norman attitudes toward Americans, discovered a
generally positive attitude despite some grumbling about looting.146 In
general, military officers preferred to attribute whatever coolness they
experienced to "the dour and undemonstrative nature of the
Norman."147 Civil Affairs officers were warned that the Norman "is by
nature reserved, a fact which may prevent too open a manifestation
of welcome."148 If the Allies "expected to find caricatures of Southern
Frenchmen eager to kiss them on both cheeks," claimed one French
pharmacist, they would be badly disappointed.149 Normans also
acknowledged that they had greeted their liberators with "no wild
enthusiasm but instead a dignified satisfaction as well as smiles and the
shaking of hands."150 They, too, explained this response as an effect of
the Norman character. When a French soldier traveling east with the
British Army noticed that the village atmosphere had suddenly be-
come more friendly, he was not surprised to discover that his unit had
left Normandy.151 Despite the war's anguish and liberation's euphoria,
noted Danièle Philippe, "most folks remained true to themselves. Les
Normands, c'est du solide! [The Normans are tough stock]."152

In fact Norman aloofness can be understood in circumstantial
terms. As we have seen, during the summer of 1944, the Allies were
far from winning the war. Fearful of reprisal if their villages fell again
to the Germans, Norman civilians had the sense not to talk to ei-
ther side.153 Only after they witnessed the massive numbers of Allied
troops, tanks, and guns being unloaded onto the beaches did they be-
lieve the Allies planned to stay. "Very soon they were opening up to
us," noted one military report, "not only their hearts, but all their
possessions."154 "The civilians began to realize that we were there for
good," remembered Edward Rogers: "French flags appeared, flowers,
fruit and eggs were given to us as we passed villages and farms."155

Meanwhile, Norman stoicism was on stunning display. A young
couple, Juliette and Georges, planned to marry at Sainte-Mère-Église
on the sixth of June. Despite the landings, they pressed on with the
ceremony, and were attended by an American captain and two lieu-
tenants.156 The journalist Alan Moorehead found a Norman railway
ticket master at his post in a railway station, ruins all around him.

"There have been no trains here since Tuesday," he conceded.157 Still
another Norman peasant complained to the Allies that for several
ights he had trouble sleeping because of a bomb that had landed
on his bed. Could they come by sometime soon and deactivate it?158
Locals doggedly milked their cows and churned their butter, even if
it meant walking across battlefields.159 One peasant was quite intent
on planting his green beans despite bombs falling nearby.160 Lt. Col.
Francis Sampson noted one farm woman who didn't miss a stroke
milking one of her herd, all while the bombs fell around her.161 Still
another Normande, when warned of the war in her backyard, turned
to her daughter and urged her to milk anyways. "It will be a little bit
earlier than usual," she conceded, "but when we are finished, these
American gentlemen will have cleaned out the corner."162 In fact, the
Normans paid a price for such forbearance: a woman and her son
were killed when she refused to stop doing her cleaning at the pub-
lic laundry, even while guns fired all around them.163 So close to the
battle did the Normans come that the GIs sometimes suspected them
to be German spies.164

If the GIs admired the Norman countryside, they fell in love with
the "wonderfully clean and beautiful little" children.165 "Don't believe
I ever saw children any handsomer than the French children are,"
 wrote Giles in his journal. "I've not seen a real ugly one yet."166 The
well-known journalist Ernie Pyle described the region as "certainly
a land of children. . . . And I'll have to break down and admit that
they were the most beautiful children I have ever seen." In fact, Pyle
was more impressed by the children than the adults. "Apparently they
grow out of this," he speculated, "for on the whole, the adults looked
like people anywhere—both good and bad."167 When he arrived at
Le Havre, Joseph Edinger came to the same conclusion in his diary:
"Coming out we all noticed the French people themselves. Most
of them are short and somewhat stocky. They aren't very good look-
ing, the women, but the children are beautiful. They must change at
or in their adolescence."168

Predictably the very first Normans to open their hearts to the GIs
were these children. Fifteen-year-old Bernard Gourbin remembers
the wink he got from a GI fighting outside his window. Parents cringed at their children’s lack of reticence with soldiers. Nevertheless the GI lap became a valuable piece of real estate for the smallest Normans. It did not hurt that the soldiers had big pockets bursting with candy and chewing gum, pockets that Gilles Bré noticed right away on D-day, even while the scary Americans were furiously searching his house. Children appeared with large eyes and empty spoons at the windows of makeshift mess halls. They could depend on the GIs to take more than they needed for dinner, then share food. With hearts aching for their own families, the Americans did everything they could to protect children from harm. As Norbert Koopman’s unit was passing through Saint-Lô, they came upon about two dozen children under the care of nuns. “The children were frightened by what was happening,” remembered Koopman. “They didn’t know if we were friend or foe. We stopped and comforted them. It was sad to see these children so upset.”

Norman children remember the American soldiers during the summer of 1944 as “demi-gods haloed with a kind of supernatural prestige,” who showered them with love and attention. With the GIs, remembered Charles Lemeland, twelve years old in 1944, “it was the wonderful world of laughter, play, and permissiveness: candy galore, the thrill of getting inside tanks and other fascinating machinery and touching all those levers and pedals.” Norman children also learned skills from the GIs, like how to play gin rummy and make scavengers. A fatherless child of six crippled by polio, Francine Leblond lovingly remembers an American parachutist whom her parents hid from the Germans. Calling her “Francisca” after his hometown of San Francisco, the GI would take her in his arms, carry her around the yard, and show her American planes through his binoculars. “When he left, I was inconsolable,” remembered Leblond. Christine Delpierre also remembered crying like “a girl abandoned by everyone” when the GIs left, despite all efforts by her father to cheer her up. For Norman children as well as adolescents and young men, the war was a great adventure, the most exciting thing that had ever happened to anyone ever.

The parents and adults also had vivid memories of the Americans. They were dirty and dusty; they looked tired; their teeth were quite white. “Big children, somewhat primitive but very nice,” was how Françoise de Hautecloue described the GIs. And they were big—“tall as a building,” “giants,” “huge devils,” and “solid as bombs.” Also, they looked like cowboys, with their colts slung on their hips. Most surprisingly, they did not look at all like each other. The bewildered Comtesse de Tocqueville remarked in a letter to her husband that “Americans of all coats and colors” had invaded her chateau. “What a mix of races!” exclaimed de Hautecloue. “It is common to meet a soldier whose father is Greek and mother German. And yet they all come together under the star-spangled banner.” Danièle Philippe was astonished to realize that the first two Americans he met were Italian and Scandinavian. What then was “American”? Finally, there were the boots. “Their yellow shoes are superb!” enthused Madame Destors in her diary. Long-deprived of leather by the Germans, Normans could not take their eyes off American boots, with their soft uppers and heavenly rubber soles. Unlike the clicking of German boots, they were deliciously silent when the GIs marched through town. Jacques Petit was ecstatic when he found an abandoned pair of American boots at an old camp. “They fit me like a glove!” he gushed in his diary. As for those “old clochidders with wooden soles,” they soon found their way to the back of his closet.

The Odor of Death

Liberation had a smell as well as a sound and a sight. It was the smell of death. Cows, horses, sheep, and goats were strewn across the fields of Normandy, stiff and bloated “under swarms of festering flies,” and emitting horrible smells. The Normans, predominantly small-farm owners, grieved these animals not only as their means of livelihood but also as members of their family. They buried them while smoking two or three cigarettes at a time in order to cover up the smell of putrefaction. As they worked, other peasants came searching, hop-
ing to reclaim their own cows or sometimes to steal them by claiming ownership.191

The “pestilential odor, the odor of death” also emanated from the bodies of soldiers. As one GI put it, “the most horrible aspect of infantry combat cannot be depicted in pictures or adequately described in words. It is the smell—the piercing, penetrating, ever-present, sickening stench.”192 That smell was particularly traumatic for children such as Christian Letourneur who had to walk past hundreds of corpses at Carquebut: “step by step we passed in front of these rows of bodies. Never has a field seemed to me so big! It was so hard and I wanted so much to leave!”193 When nineteen-year-old Monsieur Morin went down to the beach near St. Laurent-sur-Mer in order to see the landings, “a noxious odor infiltrated our nostrils, an odor of spoiled meat which poisoned the air all around us.” The smell, he discovered, emanated from a long line of body bags in the process of being buried.194 Eleven years old at the time, Marcel Jourdain remembers plugging his nose and turning away from what he described as a “chef-d’oeuvre de la guerre”: an enormous pit filled with stagnant water, German bodies, and the corpses of animals, including a horse staring into space with its mouth wide open.195 Bodies lay abandoned in the embankments on the side of the road, in fields, and under trees in orchards, in and around houses.196 Eleven-year-old Louis Blaise remembers emerging from his house after the bombs had stopped only to trip on the dead bodies that lay strewn all around.197 Below Christian Letourneau’s bedroom window passed American trucks “from which, sometimes, the leg of a dead soldier would emerge.”198

The Normans treated the bodies of German and American soldiers very differently. The bodies of dead Germans aroused feelings of anger and bitterness; they lay exposed for several days and were often kicked around.199 Those blackened with decomposition presented an ugly irony. As French journalist Jacques Kayser put it: “the blond Aryans, newly dead on French soil, had been transformed into horrendous negroes.”200 Children, in particular, robbed the corpses of German soldiers.201 While a German body was left face up and bereft of belongings, an American one remained face down, a bouquet

of flowers on his back.202 American deaths were mourned by Normans.203 GI bodies evoked in them empathy and gratitude. Caught between the lines, Monsieur Le Bourg and his son Bernard walked around bodies in a field saluting the “ten American soldiers who have already died for us.”204 In recounting the campaign fifty years later, one anonymous civilian remembered foremost the sight of a dead American soldier “having come to the Norman earth to pay with his life for the freedom of others.”205 Despite the “stinking atmosphere” at the landing beach, Monsieur Morin was not distracted from the fact that “these young soldiers have come from distant American lands where they could have very well lived in peace. By hundreds and thousands they have lost and continue to lose their lives in the name of freedom.”206

Many French people took risks to give American soldiers a proper death and burial. During the battles of the seventh of June, a Norman priest discovered some GIs behind bales of hay near Emondeville, north of Sainte-Mère-Église. “They were in the process of dying right in front of my eyes. I did not know what to say to them. And then I remembered the ‘Our Father’ which I had learned in English. I recited it kneeling in front of them.”207 Even when the village of Gorron was under Nazi control, the unmarked grave of an American soldier was heaped with flowers, and a crown of laurel leaves adorned with a tricolor ribbon. The Gorronais had risked imprisonment to pay their respects.208 The same phenomenon occurred at Thieux, north of Paris. Four Americans had been killed nearby when a plane was shot down. The Germans forbade a mass or flowers to commemorate the death. Nevertheless a thousand people attended the burial, and the caskets were covered with flowers.209 Normans often buried American soldiers themselves while awaiting the authorities. One village buried sixty in a common grave, blessing each individually with holy water.210

In liberated areas, thousands of Normans attended commemoration events. At one such event in Sainte-Mère-Église, the mayor assured the Americans present that the mothers of the town would care for the graves of “these boys who had died for the freedom of France.”211 In the Argentin region, an ambulance driven by an American woman
was attacked by the Germans on the road. The woman was killed as were the wounded she transported. Even after the bodies were taken away, the ambulance remained, and was for a very long time covered with flowers.212

The Liberation had other smells—gunpowder, tire rubber, gasoline, machine oil.213 If your farm was next to an infirmary or a field hospital, you awoke to the smell of ether.214 But besides the smell of death, the scent most remembered by Normans was a pleasant one: the sweet honey aroma of cigarettes.215 Blond or blended cigarettes were new to the French, who had been deprived of any kind of tobacco throughout the war. The perfume of cigarettes heralded the American arrival.216 According to Jacques Perret, the “curious perfume of their Camels, their Lucky Strikes, and their Chesterfields” became the “aroma of peace, linked for a long time to the presence of Americans in France.”217 “The perfume of luxury cigarettes has entered the town,” observed one French journalist. “You breathe it everywhere: in the streets, in the houses, in the shops.”218 “Ma première américaine, une Lucky Strike!” remembered Jacques Petit, an adolescent in 1944.219

If cigarettes were the smell of liberation, candy and chewing gum were its tastes. As convoys passed by, the GIs handed out chocolate, gum, and cigarettes cartons, particularly to children and pretty girls.220 The GIs also gave children the run of their uniforms, notorious for hiding secret reserves of candy. As a result, the sons and daughters of Normandy came home with pockets bulging with chocolate, bonbons, and chewing gum.221 Once word got around that Americans were a reliable source of such délices, a GI could scarcely set up a tent without setting off a stampede of children.222 For the most part, the parents of these candy marauders found such begging shameful. Yet many adults also learned to salute the Americans and give the V for Victory sign in order to receive chocolate and cigarettes.223 Chewing gum was new to France, and at first Norman children could not grasp the concept: does one just keep on chewing it? Six years old in 1944, Marcel Launay wondered if the gum would cause his teeth to fall out. He hardly cared, and put it under his pillow every night to preserve it for the next day’s chewing.224 In a few weeks time, the children became connoisseurs, with some preferring spearmint and others favoring Juicy Fruit.225 The GIs also passed out oranges when they were available. One Norman took an orange for his four-year-old daughter, simply because “she has never seen the color.”226

The Land of Parley-vous’s

The Normans and the GIs got to know each other in August. By the start of that month, the Allied Army had gained control over the Cotentin Peninsula, and held a front line that stretched from Avranches to Caen. As the front grew to the south and east, the Americans moved into Norman cities and towns, requisitioning property and working with local officials through the Civil Affairs branch of the US Army.227 Large groups of GIs bivouacked in camps near Norman towns. As they were given short day or evening passes, they began to interact with civilians. From the start, such contacts were awkward for the Americans. They struggled to learn new words and to understand French customs. The irony of their situation consisted in this: while they were conquerors of a mighty army, they were also newcomers trying to find their way.

For starters, there was the French language. No other barrier did more to generate anger and misunderstanding between the Americans and the French. At best, language obstacles robbed the GIs of friendship; at worst, they deprived them of life-saving intelligence. “The Land of Parley-vous’s,” as Corporal Alvin Griswold called it, was capable of transforming the mighty liberating army into a group of hapless stutterers.228 Even the most confident GI—the one who had taken “French III” or “French IV” in high school—found himself up against a wall in Normandy. “I had taken 4 yrs. of French and thought I could speak very fluently,” remembered Roger Poehringer. His first encounter with a Norman peasant proved him otherwise. “It was certainly very embarrassing because my buddies expected me to ‘Parle vu France’ excellent, but I just didn’t have it.”229 “Wish I’d studied
French a little harder in H.S.,” wrote Joseph Edinger wistfully in his journal after recounting his efforts to become friends with a French family. A great part of the problem was the speed with which the French spoke their language. “Even if I could make the people understand me,” wrote Giles in his diary, “I couldn’t understand them. They talk too fast.” A rapid babble of incoherent French sounds was how Fred Wardlaw described two Norman women conversing. Another problem was the tendency of the French to make distracting gestures when they talked. According to the Texan Bill Quillen, “these God-damned Frenchmen. If you’d cut the sons-of-b—-s hands off they couldn’t say a single damned word.”

Awkward situations resulted. When Joe Hodges met a pretty French girl, he tried to say “How do you do?” in French but instead came out with “How do you want to do it?” for which he got a slap across the face. Failure to communicate led to a cheese tragedy in one Norman town. American sanitary officials in pursuit of a putrid smell found it emanating from a storehouse. When they opened the door, they staggered back as their nostrils met the olfactory force of ten thousand ripening Camembert cheeses. Acting quickly, the officials secured some gasoline, saturated the building, and set it on fire, all while the cheese maker made frantic gestures in a futile effort to convey the fact that the smell was just right. Joseph Messore remembers that as his infantry division moved into Paris, the guys remarked rather loudly about one woman whom they considered flat-chested. Much to their surprise, she looked directly at them and said in perfect English (she was an English teacher), “I’m sorry, but this is all I have.” Like any other frustrating problem, the language issue eventually landed in the lap of comedians, notably Bob Hope in his traveling USO show. “I was talking to this G.I. the other day,” joked Hope, “who told me he and a couple of friends of his were walking down the street in Paris with a few French beauties on their arms. Well, one of the soldiers cuts loose with this big, loud fart. His buddy says, ‘Hey, it’s not very polite to fart in front of the girls!’ And he said, ‘Ah, that’s okay. These girls don’t understand English!’”

For the average Joe, French products and places were a challenge. The famous perfume became “Chinnel #5.” Joseph Messore reported being flown to “Rheims” and then “Le Horve.” As for Reims, Andy Rooney declared it a terrible choice for the German surrender because “its name is almost impossible for any non-French-speaking person to pronounce.” One GI strategy was just to make up their own names for places rather than try to pronounce them. Béziers morphed into “Brassieres”; La Haye-du-Puits became “Hooey da Pooey”; Isigny, “I seen ya,” and Sainte-Mère-Église, “Saint Mare Eggles.” Talking about a battle meant referring to “St. Something-or-other.” Still other French words and phrases the GIs adopted enthusiastically. “Dear Kids,” wrote Aramais Hovsepian to his brothers, “Bonjour, mes amis, comment allez-vous? Je suis tres bien, merci. Boy, you’re talking to Frenchy now!” “cherchez la femme” was an honored GI phrase, as was “c’est la guerre,” which, Jack Plano thought, “seemed to cover anything and everything that had happened to the French since 1940.” One of the GIs’ favorite songs carried the refrain “Hinky Dinky Parlez Vous!” Chester Jordan remembers during his first days in Normandy that he had his “first exposure to the word ‘beaucoup.’” There were beaucoup Germans, beaucoup planes, beaucoup artillery, beaucoup tanks, and beaucoup miles. I got the drift that it meant many but I was not about to ask for a definition.”

To cope with their fractured French, the GIs used several strategies. One, according to Andy Rooney, was “shouting English louder and louder until the French understood.” Another was to learn the language. In July Stars and Stripes notified its readers that a staff assistant from New Orleans would be offering French classes at the Club Vioire in Cherbourg “for Joes who want to improve their ‘parlez vous fanvais.’” Nobody got very far with the phrasebook because it did not teach grammar. The GIs thumbed through it “in order to find the dialogue necessary to obtain the kiss of a woman,” but it focused on tedious things like medical aid and enemy troop activities. Usually someone in a company could teach some basic French. For Jan Giles that meant “eggs,” “wine,” and “every form of ‘amour.’” In order to trade with the locals, the GIs sometimes had to resort to pantomime. When a peasant did not understand the English word
“egg”—a tortuous œuf in French—a member of Peter Belpulsi’s company had to put his hands under his armpits, cluck, and pretend to lay an egg. Bill Mauldin caught the scene in one of his cartoons. (See figure 1.2.) The GIs were vexed by their inability to master French, even as their mastery of France was being achieved. They may have been the liberators, but they sounded like two-year-olds trying to spell out a proper sentence. One of Andy Rooney’s American colleagues amused himself by going up to French people on the street and saying to them “Vous parlez bien français.” Surprised, they would look up and graciously say “merci!” By making the French into tourists in their own country, the joke played on the GIs’ discomfort with their own “outsider” position.

Although they may have appeared to enjoy the upper hand, the French struggled, in turn, with English. There was a big difference, Danièle Philippe discovered, between the English he had learned in school and the language spoken by the GIs. Despite having won the English prize six years in a row, Jacques Petit could not understand one word they said. Children contented themselves with learning phrases such as “chocolate if you please.” After befriending several GIs, the child Christiane Delpiere came to the conclusion that English was “an apparently easy language dominated by the word ‘OK.’” No problem getting that.” Spelling “chewing gum” was another matter; it became everything from “swing-gamme” to “chouine-gomme” on paper. There were awkward moments for the French as well. When Jean-Jacques Vautier of Saint-Lô visited a field where the GIs had camped, he saw a tomb marked “Old Latrine.” Thinking “Latrine” was an American family name, he made the sign of the cross and paid his respects to the “old” man. As he walked away, he saw another tomb—and another and another—with the same name. “Stupeur!” he thought, realizing the “tomb” was actually the remains of a GI toilet.

When civilian and soldier could not understand each other, they found other means to communicate. Sharing pictures of girlfriends and family became common. For one young Frenchman from Caen, such an exchange in an American barracks was pleasantly illuminating. “When I showed them, in turn, the photo of my fiancé, the high whistles emanating from their lips were enough to convince me that in terms of pin-ups, my Jeanine was in an international category.”

In his combat journal, Lee Otts recorded an evening of sharing pictures and wine with a French family. “It was wonderful being with them,”
he concluded, “even if I couldn’t understand them.” Perhaps the most touching example of linguistic resourcefulness concerns two priests in Carquebut, south of Sainte-Mère-Église. A week after D-day, the carnage from the battle with the Germans was accumulating where the US Army lined up bodies in a field. In the effort to give these men a decent burial, the French pastor from the region joined forces with an American military chaplain. The two priests quickly realized they could barely communicate, since the pastor spoke no English and the chaplain no French. To get the job done, they decided to speak Latin, having both learned it at seminary.

French Girls Are Easy

The adage “first impressions count” was never truer than in Normandy. For the Normans, the first impression of the US military was the might of its war machine. It was an accident of war that the Allies unloaded an army big enough to conquer a continent on the shores of Normandy. Nevertheless, they did, and it “stupefied” the Normans. “It is an unbelievable sight,” noted Monsieur Morin as he caught his first glimpse of the landing beaches a few hours into D-day. “Never have I seen so many boats; whether you look right or left, they are everywhere.” Cécile Armagnac noticed the difference between the German occupied zone, “motionless, practically deserted,” and the American zone, “overflowing with materiel and men in motion!” “It’s just unimaginable,” said her friend Brouzet over and over. As the war moved east, literally thousands of tons of war materiel, including trucks, tanks, food, and ammunition, were transported down Norman roads to the ever-shifting front. As a result, civilians in the region got a front row seat on the equipment of the US Army. Monsieur Jacques Popineau of Gouville noted in his diary that from the twenty-eighth of July to the sixth of August, day or night the Americans did not cease to pass by with their “formidable materiel.” Michel Braley also recorded in his journal that “considerable amounts of equipment are passing by. Big tanks, caterpillar tractors, trucks full of men . . .

You should see how they are equipped!” According to Alfred Marie, the population of Avranches “marveled” at the enormous tanks, machine guns, cranes, and “immense platforms transporting engines which we have neither seen nor even suspected their existence.”

The Americans not only had equipment. They knew how to use it. When Danièle Philippe’s father first went and conversed with the GIs at their camp, he came back stunned by their logistical operations. “They have an organization, these Americans!” he exclaimed to the entire family, “C’est purement fantastique!” Civilians throughout northern France had the opportunity to witness the Allied Signal and Engineer Corps at work during the summer of 1944 as they established telephone lines and reconstructed strategic routes. According to Armand Frémont, the population of Le Havre considered the American engineers who rebuilt the harbor there to be “men of genius” whose work displayed their “power of force, technique and mechanics beyond what the Havrais could even imagine.” “Incomparable, an intelligent army. I never would have believed it!” declared one Norman near La Haye-du-Puits. Civilians were particularly impressed with the way in which army engineers could build a bridge across a wide river in five hours time. In one village, the local priest asked if he could be the first to cross the bridge after giving it a blessing. He then walked across, Lawrence Cane wrote his wife, “looking like a kid who’s just gotten a big box of candy.” The arrival of the Americans suggested a new future. “Stupefied by the incomparable means and organization of the Americans,” Jean-Pierre Launey declared that “a new world order had come to be born and established.” Bernard Gourbin could not agree more. Watching the “fabulous” equipment being loaded off boats at Omaha Beach, he concluded that the Americans were “representatives of a new world which had come to save the old one. . . . At this instant, witnessing this enormous accumulation of power, I became aware of great changes which were going to take place in the world.”

If the Normans associated the army with the future, the Americans linked Norman society to the past. To them France was a vestige of a primitive era. “Everything seems old in Normandy,” wrote
Ernie Pyle in *Stars and Stripes*. In Cherbourg, Pyle found nothing but old and worn buildings and was not ashamed to admit he liked the “regular and nice” Californian copies of Norman architecture better. In fact, Pyle admitted, looking at the Cherbourg originals, “I felt, before catching myself, that they had copied our California Norman homes and not done too good of a job.” In his journal Giles also noted that “the buildings, what’s left of them, look like they’d been here since time began.” You really should see some of these places these people over here have as homes,” wrote Charles Taylor to his wife. “Most of them are made of mud or cement, rock with shale roofs or straw thatched roofs.” Even the traditional Norman castle failed to impress. *Stars and Stripes* reported that “life in an old chateau in France sounds romantic but the American soldiers who have tried it say they prefer a cottage on Kalamazoo.” One had to be “either a wizard or a lizard” to be comfortable in “these old hundred-room moss collectors” where “History—with a capital ‘H’—crawled out of the woodwork at you.” To make matters worse, “the sanitation system would interest the Society of Antiquarian Plumbers.” Worst of all was the “seedy old character with a stained yellow mustache, smoking a cigarette by some rose bushes.” He turned out to be the owner of the castle. So much for the aristocracy.

One stereotype generated during the First World War was that the French were primitive in their work and bodily habits. That prejudice was only reinforced in 1944. Once again, it was an accident of war that the Americans, landing in Normandy, began to define “Frenchness” in a rural, peasant culture rather than a cosmopolitan, urban one like Paris. Nevertheless the GIs quickly came to the conclusion that the entire nation lived in a time gone by. For one thing, they assumed that war expediency measures were the norm. Because gasoline was not available, peasants were forced to rely on nonmechanized methods of farming even if they did own a tractor. “They were years behind us in their farming; some even used oxen,” concluded a shocked Leroy Stewart. In a letter back home, Red Cross volunteer Angela Petesch voiced the same opinion: “They are way behind the times—the women still wash clothes in the little streams and pound the garments with stones; the cows and pigs and chickens still live in the same building as the family.” Normandy was not even archaic; it was beyond time altogether. “We marched through a village where the people lived like their great, great, great-grandfathers,” remembered Anthony Hartlinski. David Ichelson considered them downright primitive: “Their homes were made out of dried mud with thatched roofs, and the pigs and chickens were allowed to run around the kitchen. They wore crude wooden shoes when working out in the fields until dark, and their evening meal was soup and bread with an apple for dessert.” Allan Lyon was particularly shocked by the lack of plumbing and the fact that the Normans relieved themselves with the animals. For Charles B. Taylor, it all looked like something out of a fairy tale. “There is a family of French people that live in the big house to my rear,” he wrote his wife. “You would laugh to see them for they sure look funny with their patched clothes and wooden shoes. Yes, they wear shoes just like you used to read about the Dutch wearing. I want to send a pair home to you, but there seems to be no extra pair around here.” Taylor’s condescension was complete. For him Norman shoes represented nothing more than a fantasy souvenir of an antediluvian age.

As a sign of a primitive culture, animal manure became a GI preoccupation. “They’re a hundred years behind in their ways, too,” wrote Giles in his journal. The cow stables, he complained, were right next to the kitchen, where the smells of urine and manure became suffocating. He was particularly appalled by “the manure pile in front of everybody’s doorstep.” Infantryman Karl Clarkson was amazed to see peasants clean out the toilets soldiers were using, take the contents, and spread it on their field. “But that is the way it was, and all the French towns looked and smelled alike.” Chester Hansen noted his impressions of Normandy as he rode through the countryside by jeep: “Foul smell of the yards and the manure. Bad sewage.” Ironically by the end of the war some Americans eventually came to prefer the Germans because, even though they were the enemies, at least they were clean.

GI condescension toward “primitive,” “dirty” Normans echoed
American imperial thinking in Hawaii, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico, where US officials also considered "natives" to need "civilizing" through education and hygiene. 291 "Would be good," wrote one lieutenant in Normandy to his wife, "to be back with civilized people once more." 292 Central to the GI view of the French as uncivilized was their attitudes toward the body and sex. For example, French toilets or pissoirs offended the GIs because in the absence of any enclosure, you just walked up to a wall to relieve yourself. 293 Not only that, French women would greet you while you were doing it. 294 "People would walk by you," remembered Karl Clarkson, "but as they were French and that was their way of life it meant nothing to them." 295 "People who build pissoirs in the open on the streets are people I don't even pretend to understand," wrote Giles in his diary. He was particularly horrified by a French man who "cut loose with women passing right beside him." 296

Again like "native" peoples of the US imperial past, Normans seemed to have no shame. One day while taking a small break in a Norman village, infantryman David Ichelson was stunned by a man who waved to a woman while urinating against a wall: "As a true French Gentleman, he took his hand off his penis and used it to tip his hat to the lady and greet her in French, while holding his penis with the other hand and continuing to urinate." Like many GIs, Ichelson had heard about such "broad, philosophical attitudes, and tolerance" before he got to France. "We also heard that what we considered sex perversion was normal for them." But even the deeply imbedded association of the French with loose morals had not prepared him for this. 297 Even in enclosed men's rooms, the GIs were embarrassed by the presence of a woman attendant, or the fact that women often had to pass through to get to the women's rooms. 298 Chester Hansen told the story of a GI engineer doing a job at an airfield while hundreds of French civilians looked on. When he went to relieve himself at the makeshift toilet, a young French woman peered over the canvas and "chatted merrily to him in French," Embarrassed and unable to understand her, he simply stuttered "Wi, wi," but then to his horror, "she promptly came around, entered and sat down at a hole next to him." 299 Then there was the apparent case with nudity. Paul Boesch recalls a time when he and his men went swimming naked on a beach near Brest in the late summer. He was appalled by one French man who continued to walk his "pretty young mademoiselle" on the beach right by all the naked men. "The only explanation I could hit upon was that the Frenchman must have been sure of his own physical proportions." 300

Such stories pose the problem of determining if the GIs were imposing on the French their own preconceptions that women were "easy" and without shame. In the last days before the invasion, remembers Sergeant Dargols, a US army officer of French origin, the GIs overwhelmed him with questions about pretty French girls. 301 Soldiers landing on Omaha Beach brought an army Pocket Guide to France that intoned "France has been represented too often in fiction as a frivolous nation where sly winks and coy pats on the rear are the accepted form of address. You'd better get rid of such notions right now if you are going to keep out of trouble." 302 In fact, the Guide to France had it right that "respectability" was still the imperative for the vast majority of French women. While the tight religious and moral grip on sexual behavior relaxed considerably during the interwar period, standards of modesty remained high, particularly for the urban middle class. Sexual pleasure became more accepted in courtship and within marriage, and adultery was also less condemned. But many women considered gynecological exams distressing and insisted on lights off in the bedroom. Even in rural areas such as Normandy, nudity or sex in public were widely scorned as scandalous, especially for women. 303 The schoolteacher Marcelle Hamel-Hateau remembered how the "unleashing of sexual energy" among the GIs was a "shock" to the Normans given their "austere or at least reserved and discrete sexual mores." 304

To some extent, then, the GIs must have been seeing the Normandy they wanted to see. It was not simply that Americans were stuck in their old Puritanical morality. By the mid-twentieth century, the Victorian restrictions of sexual continence and self-control had largely disappeared from white middle-class American society, partic-
ularly among the younger generation. Heterosexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction were defined as important for personal happiness as well as a successful marriage. Nevertheless, as was the case in France, some traditional rules remained. For women "going all the way" was considered acceptable only in the context of love and commitment. Parents were expected to be sexual guardians who imposed limits, particularly for daughters. When Jordan's unit stayed for the night in a liberated village, some of his men accepted the "hospitality" of two local sisters for the night. "They found it disquieting at first because they were sharing a bed room with MAMA and PAPA but since it didn't seem to bother the host they got on with their business." What amazed the young Jordan was that not even a girl's parents cared to toe the line.306

For the Americans sexual desire was still something to be restrained, lest it overwhelm rationality and moral self-discipline.307 Given these rules, the GIs were inclined to read their apparent absence in France as a sign of immorality. French sexual attitudes became an obsession for them. French women were called "sign language girls" because, it was believed, they could be seduced by a simple set of hand gestures.308 Parisian girls were considered downright aggressive. When Chuck Taylor got lost in Paris, he was relieved to see a priest who could help him. "I was glad to see him," he wrote his wife, "for I almost got picked up—you know these French women."309 Those GIs who entered through Marseille in the late summer were shocked by the sexual practices of this old port town, notorious for its sex trade. "You'd probably like to know something about the 'famous' French girls," wrote Keith Winston to his wife, "I find the French a highly immoral people by our standards. It's said there are 41,000 licensed prostitutes in Marseille—so if that figure is correct—it appears that almost every woman in the city is a whore."310

As we shall see in the following chapters, the GIs saw sexual promiscuity as a metaphor for the archaic and immoral nature of French society. Such a narrow view of the French obscured the truly diverse relations soldiers enjoyed with civilians, who became comrades, friends, adopted children, and even saviors in the weeks after the landings. Nevertheless, American soldiers privileged a set of sexual practices—nudity, seduction, intercourse—as defining the essence of Frenchness. Sexual looseness and lack of bodily shame combined with Norman huts and oxen as irrefutable evidence that the French were uncivilized and in need of social and political management. American prejudices held that so-called sexually excessive peoples (such as "native" societies of the imperial past) were lacking in the rational self-control necessary to maintain a democracy. Because the US military perceived French sexual practices as primitive, debates about sexual management also became contests over the French capacity for democratic self-rule. Moral condescension influenced military policy at all levels of decision making. Confronted with the strange language and practices of "a faraway land," the GIs clung to old stereotypes of the French. While such prejudices helped them to manage French cultural differences, they also had real political consequences. To see the US refusal to recognize French sovereignty as a matter of military expediency or political conflict is to miss the full complexity of the situation.
Introduction


7. Most recently, Jean Edward Smith has argued that Eisenhower favored plans to include General de Gaulle and his CPLN organization in the reconstruction of liberated France. In response to Eisenhower's support of de Gaulle, the War Department sent a representative, John J. McCloy, to the White House in order to convince FDR to soften his stance against the French general. See Eisenhower in War and Peace (New York: Random House, 2011), 38, 8.


Chapter 1

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7 Ambrose, Band of Brothers, 353.
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256 Notes to Pages 20–23
20 Wieviorka, Histoire du débarquement, 151–53. See also Torrant’s thorough discussion of the effects of bombardment on civilians in Régine Torrant, La France américaine: controverses de la libération (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2004), chap. 11, and Eddy Florentin, Quand les alliés bombardèrent la France (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1997).
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30 AN, Fia 3743, “Une opinion sur les bombardements alliés, rapport du 15 mai 1944.”
33 AN, Fia 3743, “Réaction de l’opinion publique française.”
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38 IHTP, FED, Interview with Captain Bucknell, 29 March 1943.
40 ADM, 3656 W, MT, Claude Tatard, “Claude Bourdon, réfugié de St.-Lô—1944 été,” 504.
43 National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group 311, Records of Allied Operation and Occupation. Headquarters, World War II (SHAPE) (hereafter RG 311), General Staff Divisions, G-4 Division, Secretariat, Numeric File, August 1943–July 1946, Entry 41 (hereafter Entry 41), Box 28, Civil Affairs Weekly Summary, no. 7, 28 July 1944.
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87 Irsiuh, Eched in Purple, 19. See also MHI, WWII Survey, Box 5th Infantry Division, Joseph Edinger, diary entry dated 6 February 1945; and Liebling, Normandy Revisited, 103.
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133 ADM, 1366 W, MT, Témoignage de Madame Odette Eudes, 333.


135 ADM, 1366 W, MT, Carnet de Michel Braley, 105.


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251 Giles, G.I. Journal, 27.
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253 Andy Rooney, My War, 255.
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269 Philippe, J’avais quinze ans, 143.
270 ADM, 1966 W, MT, Carnet de Michel Braley, 105.
272 Jourdain, Petites surprises, 119.
273 Cane, Fighting Factions in Europe, 131.
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280 Ibid. For more complaints about the castle, see Petesch, War through the Hole of a Donut, 151-52. For a positive view of a French castle, see Capell, Surviving the Odds, 108-9.
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283 Petesch, War through the Hole of a Donut, 145.
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287 Litoff et al., Miss You, 108. See also Rogers, Doughboy Chaplain, 134.
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300 MHI, Chester Hansen Collection, diary entry dated 9 September 1944.
301 Boesch, Road to Heurtgen Forest in HELL, 92. See also Schrijvers, Crash of Rain, 239.
302 On the nudity issue, see also MHI, WWII Survey, Box 70th Infantry Division, Thomas S. Higley, 1.
303 Le Mémorial de Caen, TE 243. Témoignage de Sergent Chef Dargols, 1.
306 Le Mémorial de Caen, TE 277, Marcelle Hamel-Hateau, “Des mémoires d’un
306. MHI, WWII Survey, Box 9th Infantry Division, Jordan, "Ball Sessions," 85.
308. Hillel, Vie et mort, 163. Not every GI thought such practices were offensive. See MHI, WWII Survey, Box 9th Infantry Division, Bert Darnsky, "Shipping Order____ APO______," 38–39.
309. Litoff et al., Miss You, 237.

Chapter 2

2. Rhetoricians consider photography to be a peculiarly democratic visual form because it calls upon the individual to represent the whole. See Luicas and Hartman, "Visual Rhetoric," Cara A. Finnegan, Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and CSA Photographs (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2007), 118.
4. Ibid., 23.
13. Peter Belpolisi, A GI's View of World War II (Salem, MO: Globe Publishers, 1997), 80; Oral Faubus, In This Faraway Land (Conway, AR: River Road, 1971), 223. See also Aramais Housepan, Your Son and Mine (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1956), 80.
15. French women greeting GIs with delicious happiness was a textual as well as visual element of Stars and Stripes reportage. See "They Don’t Hear English, but It’s ‘Welcome All Right,’" 2 August 1944, and G. K. Hedenfield, "Beer—Ice Cold—Flows in Rennes," 8 August 1944.
18. Stars and Stripes, 9 September 1944.
19. Ibid.
22. Stars and Stripes, 28 August 1944.
23. Stars and Stripes, 29 August 1944.
25. Stars and Stripes, 26 August 1944.
27. Stars and Stripes, 29 September 1944.
28. The six newspapers are Le parisien libéré, Le populiste, Ce soir, France libre, Le franc-tireur, and L’aube.
29. For the vagueness concerning "les libérateurs," see France libre, 26 August 1944. For textual accounts of the Liberation that appeared in these newspapers at the time, and which also contrast sharply with the American version of events, see Suzanne Campeaux, ed., La libération de Paris (19–26 août 1944): récits de combattants et de témoins réunis (Paris: Éditions Payot, 1949).