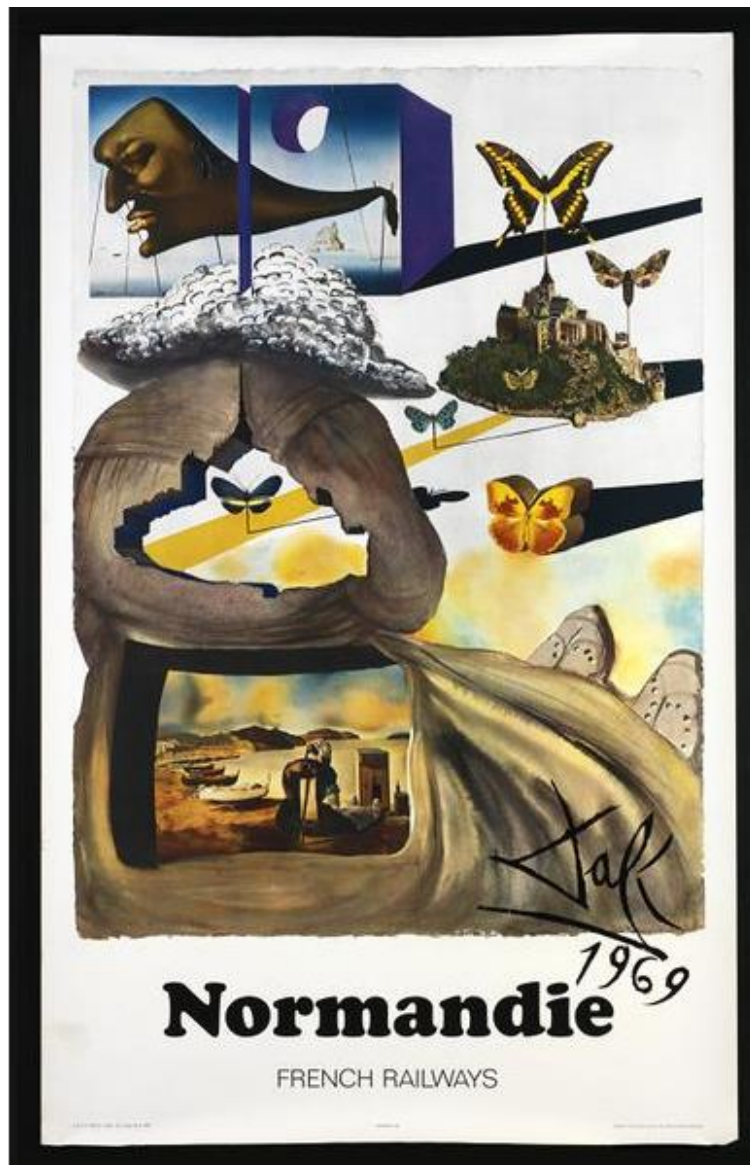




# Franco-American relations and the reconstruction of Normandy's tourist gaze post-WWII



Salvador Dalí, 1969. Poster: Normandie, French Railways. London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Casey Yuscavage  
S1005328  
Master Thesis Tourism and Culture, Radboud University  
Prof.dr. J.G.M.M. Rosendaal  
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## Abstract

This thesis analyzes the influence of Franco-American Relations on the reconstruction of Normandy's tourist gaze post-WWII to present, demonstrating how international relations can affect tourism narratives in a particular country or region. In the case of Normandy, the development of the supposed "Myth of Liberation" and Americanization of the tourism narrative are examined by analyzing and travel literature from both before and after the war, tour offerings, accounts in popular media such as *LIFE*, *The New York Times*, and *Rapports France-États-Unis*, as well as commemoration speeches by heads of state from 1978-present. Upon examination, it becomes clear that although the United States made major contributions to France's tourism sector through Marshall Plan aid, undeniably influencing the physical and emotional reconstruction of Normandy, this process was not a unilateral or imperialistic in nature. France willingly accepted and promoted the Myth of Liberation as a means to cope with their physical and emotional trauma from the war and used tourism as a way to show their resilient nature and cultural assets, offsetting perceived weakness and victimization. This research also examines France's nomination to inscribe the landing beaches on the UNESCO World Heritage List, which serves as an optimal setting to explore current trends in Normandy's tourism sector and the complex relationship between history, memory, tourism and international relations. By analyzing Normandy's tourism narrative vis-à-vis the convoluted narrative of Franco-American relations, this research highlights the important role that international relations play in the tourism sector.

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## Introduction

*“In other parts of Europe, he saw scenery of incomparably greater grandeur, vistas more dramatic, colours more vivid by far, yet through all the years that first impression remained unimpaired and he continued to find in Normandy a tranquility that shells could not shatter nor bombs destroy”<sup>1</sup>*

Since the days of the Grand Tour, France has been one of the most beloved tourist destinations in the world, just like its fine wines, getting better with age. The statistics speak for themselves: France was the most visited country in the world in 2016, attracting 82.6 million tourists, providing over 2 billion jobs and contributing over 90 billion dollars to the overall GDP.<sup>2</sup> Even with this success, the French government initiated a Tourism Development Strategy in 2015 aimed at the expansion of France’s tourism industry, setting a target goal of 100 million international tourists by 2020. A major goal of this initiative was to promote different regions in France by diffusing tourists away from Paris and encouraging their overall length of stay in the country.<sup>3</sup> This strategy combined with regional initiatives and progressive commemoration of WWII, led the Normandy region to become increasingly popular as a tourist destination in the past decade. The self-proclaimed “Land of Liberty” boasts medieval architecture, charming French countryside and beautiful beaches all within 2 hours of Paris. Of course, it is also famous for being the setting for one of the most famous battles in Western Military History: Operation Overlord, or D-Day.<sup>4</sup>

Today, it is easy to take for granted that the D-Day “liberation” narrative has been firmly intertwined with the Norman landscape ever since the Allied soldiers set foot on the beaches in June of 1944. With a glut of museums, memorials and WWII sites, 108 to be exact, WWII and more specifically the D-day landings, is the focal point of the region’s carefully constructed tourist gaze and it is difficult to imagine the region without them.<sup>5</sup> However, before they received their new names, Omaha Beach was simply known as the town of *St. Laurent-sur-Mer* and Utah Beach, *Point de la Madeleine*. Along with the mutilated landscape, the tourist gaze of the earlier decades was also left in ruins. The “Land of Morning” with its refreshing green countryside, medieval buildings and magic shores, became the “Land of Mourning” strewn with visible signs of death and destruction.<sup>6</sup> Along

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<sup>1</sup> Vivian Rowe, *Return to Normandy* (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1951), 9.

<sup>2</sup> “Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2017: France”, World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017, <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2017/france2017.pdf>, 1. ;

<sup>3</sup> “A Tourism Development Strategy,” Gouvernement.fr, 12 June 2015, accessed 20 July 2018, <https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/a-tourism-development-strategy>.

<sup>4</sup> “The D-Day Landing Beaches”, Normandie Tourisme, accessed 15 July 2018, <http://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/sites-and-attractions/the-d-day-landing-beaches-5-2.html>.

<sup>5</sup> “D-Day Sites and Museums”, Official Normandy Tourism Website, accessed 15 June 2018, <http://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/cultural-heritage/~~~~battle-of-normandy~~~~/offres-6-2.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Normandie Travel Guide, *Chemins de fer de l'état*, 1931.

with the livelihood of its inhabitants and its devastated towns, the tourist gaze of Normandy went through a period of tedious and sometimes painful reconstruction, which took decades.

Despite the inconceivable destruction that occurred in Normandy from 1944-45, tours began just two years later. Tourism was as important as ever because it was a way to help stabilize the economy and bridge the dollar gap with the United States as American cash flow was the cornerstone of the postwar reconstruction effort.<sup>7</sup> Through tourism, dollars were flowing into France not from the American treasury, but from the pockets of the tourists themselves, something beneficial to both countries. Considering the relationship with the United States was so crucial, and that the Marshall Plan was so influential in the reconstruction of France, one must look at the reconstructed tourist gaze through a critical lens. American tourist dollars became a central part in the revival of the French postwar economy and as such, France became a sight for American eyes.

As Bowen, Zubair and Altinay clearly remind, tourism planning and development is a political process in which stakeholders make decisions to implement policies and political agendas.<sup>8</sup> As tourism progressed from picturesque to politicized landscapes in the postwar era, one cannot deny the political components of the tourism industry. Without a doubt, the reconstruction of Normandy's tourist gaze was more than just a way for the United States to commemorate their fallen soldiers and celebrate a victorious liberation, it was an act of cultural diplomacy aimed at education, promoting US interests in France, and securing an important geo-strategic location on the eve of the Cold War. In addition to being a tourist attraction, the D-Day sites associated with the region have become symbolic, carrying various associations, links and influences – most of which support American policy. As Dolski remarks, D-Day became a story of America and how Americans perceive themselves as heroes. It is a story of white men fighting and dying in the name of liberty, returning to the USA as the "Greatest Generation." What is so remarkable about this narrative is not just its endurance over the decades but its relationship to the French national narrative, and the tourism narrative in particular.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis will analyze the influence of Franco-American relations on the reconstruction of the tourism sector and the tourist gaze in postwar Normandy from 1944 to present. Treating Normandy's tourism as a continuous narrative, this thesis analyzes travel accounts from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to present in order to uncover how the traditional "Norman" gaze was altered in the postwar era, and how it has developed over the years vis-à-vis political events. This thesis will question the

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<sup>7</sup> Act of April 3, 1948, European Recovery Act [Marshall Plan]; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.

<sup>8</sup> D. Bowen, S. Zubair, and L. Altinay, "Politics and Tourism Destination Development: The Evolution of Power", *Journal of Travel Research* 56, no.6 (2016):725-743.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Dolski, "The Portal of Liberation: D-day myth as American self-affirmation" in *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration*, ed. Dolski, Edwards, Buckley, 43-84. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2014).

role of both the United States and France in the increasingly popular “Myth of Liberation” and its impact on the tourism narrative in the Normandy region. Lastly, it will discuss the recent developments concerning France’s nomination of the Landing Beaches to become a UNESCO World Heritage Sites and possible implications for the tourism narrative in Normandy as well as French national memory.

This research is critical because as Silberman puts it, our generation is consumed with “Memorial Mania” with an obsession with remembering that leads to an increasing number of spaces dedicated to commemoration and remembrance. However, the timing of this frenzy could not be more ironic. At the same time that there is increasing interest and “mediatization” of WWII sites and their associated memories, the witness generation that forged these memories first-hand are dying out. This leads to a heavy reliance on museums and memorial sites to keep stories alive for generations to come. Yet, one must consider the stories they choose to present and which narratives they exclude.

In this context, it is important to consider the relationship between memory ,narrative and international relations to critically reflect on which memories are being presented as both a national, and in Normandy’s case, an increasingly international narrative. As Ashplant, T., Dawson, G., & Roper, M. Clearly demonstrate in their work, taking raw memories and shaping them into national memory involves cultural politics, with different groups having different leverage to make their memories heard.<sup>10</sup> Although met with many challenges, France’s aggressive nomination to inscribe the Landing Beaches as a UNESCO World Heritage Site further instills the American D-day narrative into French soil, and further preaches it as “the” story of D-Day in an international arena, while repressed civilian and reconstruction narratives are still yearning for their place on the beach. This questions the sustainability of the dominant D-day narrative as well as tourism’s impact on national narrative, something that has not received enough attention by recent scholars.

While some researchers such as Silberman and Dolski have considered the relationship between memory and history, and others war and memory (Ashplant et al, Winters, Hobsbawm, and Aderson), very few scholars have connected their work to the field of tourism and international relations. Therefore, this thesis will tie in these different avenues of research while focusing specifically on the reconstructed tourist gaze of Normandy and the corresponding narratives. It will apply the research of Golsan, Bruckner, Todorov and Lemay concerning the French “Duty to Memory” and France’s complex history of repression and bridge the work of Wiley and Wall concerning the effects of the Marshall Plan in France and McKenzie, Dolski, Endy and Levenstein who

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<sup>10</sup> T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, Michael Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: contexts, structures and dynamics” in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*. Ed. T. Ashplant, G. Dawson and M. Roper, (London: Routledge, 2000), 3-51.

specifically focus on America's influence on France's tourism industry. While the former consider tourism in their analysis, all but Dolski focus on Paris and fail to acknowledge the region of Normandy and its complex political undertones. While Dolski has cleverly presented six different versions of the D-day narrative, he still puts heavy emphasis on the Allied experience. His overview of the construction of the American Cemetery as a tourist site, provides an insightful overview of the emergence of the American narrative, but fails to critically reflect on the contested nature of the site, conflicting narratives within French sites of memory in the region and more importantly the lasting impacts of this reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> This absence is echoed by Hitchcock when he comments on the gratitude of the Norman people: "visit the humble coastal towns of Normandy...admire the hundreds of allied flags unfurled in the sea breeze ... and bask in the genuine sense of trans-Atlantic solidarity".<sup>12</sup> Statements like this lead the reader to wonder if Hitchcock missed the point that he seemed so desperate to make, that is, that the liberation was more than just a military operation, but a cultural operation and more importantly a memory operation which is still heavily influenced by Franco-American relations. Resentment and pain lie in the shadows of reconstructed cities covered with American flags, proving that while the physical reconstruction of the area was relatively quick, the emotional reconstruction is just starting to emerge.

This thesis will not be the first to deconstruct the traditional D-day narrative, but it is unique considering its focus is centered on the role of the tourism industry and international relations. Questions surrounding the perplexing dilemma of celebration vs. resentment concerning the Allied invasion were recognized even before the liberation of Paris, but perhaps the first work to question it in an informed and public way was Wiley's analysis of the SHAEF interviews in 1947.<sup>13</sup> However, his analysis was plagued with bias and it was unfortunately not until the early 2000s when this subject would appear in the academic arena again. These include the works of Clout, Footitt and Wiewiorka all of whom question the idea of the liberation as a joyous moment of gratitude within France. Yet, it is Hitchcock's groundbreaking book *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A new history of the liberation of Europe* which was one of the first to fully grasp the scope of this perceived memory clash and shed new light on WWII commemoration and remembrance. This thesis will enrich Hitchcock's findings by analyzing national narratives and international relations within the context of the economic and political influence of tourism. More importantly, it will cover a point that the author missed completely, the existential nature of tourism and the notion of intangible heritage.

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<sup>11</sup> Dolski, "Portal of Liberation", 43-84.

<sup>12</sup> William Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom : A new history of the liberation of Europe*(1st Free Press hardcover ed.), (New York: Free Press, 2008),18.

<sup>13</sup> John, W.Riley, "Opinion Research in Liberated Normandy", *American Sociological Review* 12, no. 6 (1947), 698.



The first chapter of this thesis will provide a brief historical overview of the D-day landings, the summer of 1944 and the immediate postwar years from the Norman perspective. The second chapter will focus on the terminology and methods used in this paper. These include Cultural Memory, Memory Management, the Myth of Liberation, Templates of Commemoration, the Economy of History, and Memory Sites. The third chapter will analyze the construction of the “D-Day gaze” by considering the initial press reports of the event, tourism and travel literature during the Marshall Plan era, and broader changes in tourism as a form of cultural exchange. The fourth chapter will further nuance the uncovered relationship between tourism and international relations by analyzing travel literature and commemoration speeches vis-à-vis political events, primarily from the 1980s onward. This chapter will also explore France’s contribution to the Myth of Liberation and the current UNESCO nomination for the landing beaches. Within this context, this thesis will conclude by highlighting significant dangers with the current narrative and the sustainability of Normandy’s tourist sector and present a few recommendations for stakeholders in the area to create a more sustainable and inclusive narrative.

## Chapter 1: Historical Context

*“Here I am watching over a peaceful green garden, the French people say they are scared but they really don’t seem to be – terrific bombardment, this is the most horrific land and air bombardment, bombs so close they are shaking the house – but (the French) seem to be rather pleased about it all”<sup>14</sup>*  
-reporter covering the bombardment of Cherbourg,  
June 25, 1944

### An Alternative D-Day Narrative

Crowds of people huddle into a church; others find shelter in a cave, some brave enough to emerge onto unrecognizable streets, walking among the charred ruins of their family home, their businesses, void of any sustenance. The stench of burnt flesh and rotting livestock melt into the scorched earth and fill the heavy summer air. Braids of molten train tracks steam in the distance, gaping holes looming where bridges once stood, centuries old architecture crumbled to the ground in an instant. Water and electricity obsolete, basic sanitation a luxury and food stocks dwindling—small prices of freedom. Entire families obliterated, friends, neighbors, parents and siblings, after all, bombs do not discriminate between friend and foe. Following the downpour of bombs— a tornado of emotions: fear, distrust, happiness? New uniforms flood the countryside, bringing with them destruction unlike any other— is this liberation?

A sharp contrast from the peaceful, green and eerily nonchalant liberation portrayed by some media accounts such as the one at the opening of this chapter, the depiction of liberation above is much different from the commonly mediatized version. One that was almost entirely absent from the tourism sector until the opening of the *Memorial des Civils dans La Guerre*, located in the town of Falaise, in 2016. While popularized narratives do often portray death and destruction, they lack one important feature: Norman civilians. Pictures of ruined villages flooded Western media after the invasion, but where were the French people? The consequences of the liberation for Norman civilians tends to be masked by the heroic actions of the Allies, with the French only making brief cameo appearances to pass out wine, throw flowers onto liberating tanks and if they are lucky enough, to take some pieces of candy out of their liberator’s hands.

This is quite the rosy picture: the powerful Allies storm the beaches, driving all of Germans out of the land, swiftly restoring democracy and bringing peace. Roaring cheers replace the thunderous sound of bombs, flowers emerge from the scorched earth and unprecedented celebration follows. All of the political and social tensions in the region are resolved, life returns to normal and the world is now a better place as it makes strides towards world peace thanks to the

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<sup>14</sup> Reportage Americain sur la Liberation de Cherbourg, 25 June, 1944 99AC 1253, Plage 9, Departmental Archives of Le Manche, St-Lo, France.

jolly young Americans.<sup>15</sup> This narrative, combined with popular imagery of the joyous liberation of Paris, a city relatively untouched by war, has eclipsed the true cost of liberation in France, where Normandy paid the highest price.

### D-Day: The Norman Civilian Experience

While D-day brought an exaggerated heroic status for American soldiers, it brought rampant death and destruction for Norman civilians. D-day, a static day in history, has come to symbolize a speedy liberation of Europe from the evils of the Nazi regime. As the decades pass, although the complexity of the battle itself is credited, this process of liberation seems to get shorter, seemingly reduced to a fantasy of a swift and painless victory. This could not be further from reality. In order to understand the relationship between Franco-American relations and the tourist gaze in Normandy, one must understand the lesser-known aspects of the Norman D-Day and Liberation narratives. The following section will aim to give a brief, yet comprehensive overview of this liberation experience, which officially took 337 days, and the reconstruction, which took decades.<sup>16</sup> This overview in no way aims to characterize the Norman civilians exclusively as victims because doing so would undermine their own fight for freedom and their own resilience that is so often overlooked. Far too often, when scholars valiantly bring forth the narrative of the French civilian experience, they end up doing the French a grave injustice by over-emphasizing their role as victims, undermining their role in the resistance and their resilience through the reconstruction period. Inadvertently, this appears to resurface the Western, Americanized D-Day narrative, a narrative which such authors such as Dolski, Hitchcock and Clout try vigorously to discredit.

Before D-day even launched, bombings killed over 6,000 Norman civilians.<sup>17</sup> On D-day alone over 3,000 civilians died, a number matching or even exceeding the death toll of American soldiers. Yet, that was just the beginning; and the worst was yet to come. The summer of 1944 proved to be increasingly brutal and is often considered the deadliest part of the war on French soil. By mid-August, 20,000 civilians in Normandy perished, more than half the livestock depleted and over a million structures destroyed along with most bridges and railroad tracks. Food was at an all-time low, clean water and electricity almost non-existent. Yet since the immediate postwar era, both American scholars and the French tourism sector alike often overlook this liberation experience.<sup>18</sup> In light of this alternative narrative centered around the Norman civilians, one may ask themselves: What about the pictures of crowds cheering in the streets, smiling civilians and soldiers walking hand in

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<sup>15</sup> Gabriella Gribaudi, Olivier Wieviorka, Julie Le Gac, "Two Paths to the Same End? The challenges of the liberation in France and Italy", in *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War : Europe, 1943-1947*, eds. Hoffman, Olivier Wieviorka, Sandrine Kott, and Peter Romijn, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016),91.

<sup>16</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road*,11-19.

<sup>17</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road*,21.

<sup>18</sup> Gribaudi, Wieviorka, Le Gac, "Two Paths",95.

hand, American flags waving alongside the French, cheering crowds engulfing American tanks, a champagne haze lurking over the villages? Certainly, these images exist and can't *all* be staged.<sup>19</sup> As Sissley Huddleson wrote in his memoir, the civilians depicted by the media who were graciously welcoming the soldiers did exist and there was a sense of relief regarding the arrival of the Allied forces. However, images of glorious celebration represented only a minority of Normans, not the overall sentiments of the time.<sup>20</sup>

### Civilians vs. Soldiers: A new chapter in Franco-American relations

In fact, relations between the American soldiers and Norman civilians were tense. To the Americans, the Normans seemed a little too somber, cold and hardened. It was not until they arrived in Paris that the Americans got the grand welcome that most expected, and felt they were entitled too.<sup>21</sup> Were the liberators really that out of touch with the liberated? Were they unable to see their victims with a human face or even as victims at all? Instead of being shocked at the state of the civilians in Normandy, many remarked that they actually looked well-fed and in overall good condition.<sup>22</sup> If only the psychological scars were more visible, perhaps the soldiers – and the American people – would have a more empathetic lens. As for the Normans, Huddleson describes it well: “Most Parisians were resentful of the Allies, but since the city was spared, those feelings faded within a few years.” This was not so much the case in Normandy. Huddleson remarks that it “is better not to even ask the survivors (of Normandy) what they think. Under the official friendship with us and (the Allies) is a smoldering sense of injury and resentment that nobody has written of the French feelings.” He calls it a conspiracy of silence and states that people should realize the “deep anger that the air raids on France awakened.” Perhaps his closing remark on the issue is the most poignant: “I don't pretend to judge military necessity but I do judge human feelings.”<sup>23</sup> Huddleson is not the only person to question the excessive bombings and loss of life. In some cases, the military campaigns seemed wasteful and haphazard, for example, in the battles for Caen and Falaise. Even though D-day was deemed as a successful liberating mission, the summer was filled with failed military operations and setbacks which led the Allies to use more intense measures to secure Norman cities, costing thousands more lives and billions of dollars in damages.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The idea of staged photos comes from Hitchcock, “The Bitter Road to Freedom”. In his photo insert, he suggests that a photo of a French woman sewing an American flag was a photo staged for the press.

<sup>20</sup> Sissley Huddleson, *France: The tragic years : An eyewitness account of war, occupation and liberation*, (London: Holburn, 1958), 249.

<sup>21</sup> Riley, “Opinion Research”, 698.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Bruller Vercours, “A Plea for France”, LIFE, November 6, 1944.

<sup>23</sup> Huddleson, *The Tragic Years*, 248-9.

<sup>24</sup> Michel Boivin and Jean Quellien, “Resistance in Lower Normandy: definition and sociology”, in *La Resistance et Les Francais: Enjeux strategiques et environnement social*, (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1995), 163-73.

Despite all of this, one should not be too quick to demonize American forces as self-entitled demi-gods pillaging the land and searching for praise. After all, there were over 1.5 million US soldiers in the region and there exist accounts from both ends of the spectrum; from looting and rapes on the one hand, and lasting friendships on the other. As Bruckner mentions, one should not be so quick to create such a sharp dichotomy between heroes and villains because both good and evil inherently lie within all peoples.<sup>25</sup> While some civilians despised the Allied forces, others fostered life-long friendships. Soldiers often provided much-needed medical care, dental care and even English lessons.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the most fruitful information obtained from civilian memoirs, aside from their personal struggles, is the personal struggles of the American soldiers. Although they been prescribed a certain persona over the decades, the liberating forces were not necessarily freedom fighters that came to risk their lives to redeem Europe and secure world peace. As Sergeant John Babcock from the 79<sup>th</sup> infantry division comments: “Our bunch of GIs was not fighting for mother, country and apple pie. Bullshit. We wanted to live. Our ties were to those unfortunates fighting next to us, sharing the same fate”<sup>27</sup> A woman speaking of her personal experience in Normandy supports this sentiment when she speaks of her personal interactions with American GIs. She explained that the soldiers were homesick, scared and desperate for family connection. Her family welcomed handfuls of soldiers in their home to help them escape the realities of war, to chat with them about their families, and their lives back home. They soldiers were desperately seeking a shelter from the war that consumed them – which perhaps hints that the soldiers and civilians in Normandy had more in common with one another than previously thought.<sup>28</sup>

However, despite these heart-warming accounts, not all of the GIs were on their best behavior. There are reports of soldiers refusing to pay for their purchases, thefts and even more extreme crimes such as sexual assault and murder. The historian Michel Boivin has estimated that in the department of La Manche alone, there were 208 reported cases of rape and about 30 murders committed by American troops.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Pascal Bruckner, *The Tyranny of Guilt : An Essay on Western Masochism*. Course Book. Ed,( Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010),139-66.

<sup>26</sup> Audio recording:Franck Towers Le Veteran Americain 355 AV/15, Plage 15, Departmental Archives of Le Manche, St-Lo, France.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted by Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road*,11-19.

<sup>28</sup> Audio recording: Hopital Americain Relation avec les Soldats Americains, 327 AV 1/24, page 24, Departmental Archives of Le Manche, St-Lo, France.

<sup>29</sup> Gribaudi, Wieviorka, Le Gac, “Two Paths”,100.

Michel Boivin and Jean Quellien, “Resistance in Lower Normandy: definition and sociology” in

## The Purge

However tense the soldier-civilian tensions may have been, nothing compares to the terror that unfolded among French civilians in the summer of 1944. Commonly referred to as “the Purge” it was a lawless time of suspicion, chaos, and confusion when thousands of suspected collaborators were executed or imprisoned. As Lottman explains, the liberation of France also meant the liberation of years of repressed anger, which came to a terrifying head in the summer of 1944.<sup>30</sup> Anyone suspected of collaboration with the Germans was viciously persecuted. Rouquet defines this uneasy time as a way to redistribute collective guilt over the fact that France had in many ways cooperated with Vichy and Nazi rule. This phenomenon is particularly alarming because it created a civil war among victims.<sup>31</sup> Hitchcock paints the scene very well by showing two pictures in Cherbourg just a few streets apart: same day, same time, two very different parades. As some civilians were conducting a parade to celebrate the first “free” Bastille Day since the occupation, others were shaving the heads of women suspected of having relations with German soldiers, before parading their naked, humiliated bodies around the town.<sup>32</sup> Businesses were marked with swastikas, thousands were thrown into prison and thousands more sentenced to death. Even the beloved singer Edith Piaf was forcefully questioned for her performances in Germany. There was rarely any rule of law when it came to the purges and “collaboration” was a grey area that took on many meanings. Perhaps a shop owner who sold goods to German soldiers, a sixteen-year-old girl overcome with natural instincts or someone who was the unfortunate target of a vindictive neighbor or rival. Even though the purges were under control for the most part by 1945, many people freed from prison, it was a horrifying time that left hundreds dead and an indelible mark on the French.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Herbert Lottman, and Mazal Holocaust Collection, *The People's Anger : Justice and Revenge in Post-Liberation France*, (London: Hutchinson, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Francois Rouquet, “The Victims of the Purges in Liberation France: between memory, oblivion and catharsis”, in *Memory and Memorials: The commemorative century* (Modern economic and social history series), ed. W. Kidd and B. Murdoch, (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004), 191.

<sup>32</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road*, photo insert

<sup>33</sup> Lottman, *The People's Anger*

## Displaced Persons (DPs)

There was also another, less violent struggle among civilians centered on Displaced Persons (DPs). DPs include those civilians who were returning to France from work camps in Germany, from concentration camps in Eastern Europe and French Prisoners of War. Their homecoming created a dichotomy between interior and exterior war victims who could not understand one another's experiences.<sup>34</sup> A less than joyous occasion, their homecoming was usually the start of a new, painful chapter in their lives. Testimonies and letters from the DPs were used to gather more information about the nature of Nazi war crimes, later published in the press in order to help inform the public about the extent of suffering that the DPs experienced. One DP gave a testimony of her experiences at Ravensbrück camp to a French police officer. At the end she writes, "I was very disappointed when I returned to France, I thought I would find a life completely different than the one that's happening right now."<sup>35</sup> This feeling proved to be a common sentiment of the time as reintegration was a difficult task.

While schemes were put into place throughout Europe to get DPs back on their native soil, there was little thought given on how to reintegrate them into society once home. This laid the groundwork for a multitude of tensions. On the one hand, it fostered disconnect between the "interior" French victims who were just coming out of a four-year occupation, with "exterior" victims returning from abroad. Indeed, those who remained on French soil heard some stories about the horrors taking place in the camps of Eastern Europe, but they did not know the extent of the torture that DPs endured and were not prepared to hear the kinds of stories that these persons would tell. Suspicion loomed in the air. Some feared that workers returning from Germany had anterior motives and some stories of suffering were thought to be exaggerated or untrue.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, there was a sharp divide between expectation and reality for the returning DPs. The thought of returning to their glorious homeland and seeing their families again is what got many people through their struggles abroad. However, when they finally made it home they were often disappointed in the state of affairs within France and if returning to an area such as Normandy, they returned to unmeasurable destruction forcing them to stay in temporary housing for years to come.

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<sup>34</sup> François Cochet, "The Impossible Political Movement of Prisoners, Deportees, and Repatriated in the Marne: the time of misunderstandings (1945-1947) in *Memory and Memorials: The commemorative century* (Modern economic and social history series), ed. W. Kidd and B. Murdoch, (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004), 313-323.

<sup>35</sup> Renseignements recueillis auprès d'une rapatriée du camp de Ravensbrück, Cherbourg, 13 July 1945, Cote : 1310 W 115,

Série W : Préfecture (since June 1940), La Manche Archives, St-Lo, France.

<sup>36</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road*, 249-282.

## Reconstruction and The Marshall Plan

Perhaps even more ignored than the civilian liberation experience are the “emergency years” as Clout calls them, and the reconstruction period that took place in the decades following the war. In fact, in March of 1954, almost a decade after the fighting stopped, almost 50,000 Norman civilians were still living in temporary housing units. Hugo Clout wrote a series of articles concerning the reconstruction of different departments within the Normandy region. This reconstruction deserves its rightful place in the liberation narrative because as Clout notes, it is “profoundly different from the battles, the beaches and destruction conveyed by publications and the media” and is an important link between loss and recovery, capturing the renaissance nature of the region and the resilience of the Normans.<sup>37</sup> While this was a time of opportunity to improve living conditions and modernize the area, it did not come without its sacrifice. Modernity trumped conservation efforts and as one of the lead project managers and architects, Marrast, commented: “relocation would not give rise to major difficulties provided the population could accept inconvenience of a sentimental order”.<sup>38</sup>

The tourism potential of the area played a major role in the reconstruction efforts. The planning committees introduced new road patterns to regulate traffic flow, provide optimal views and highlight landmarks and natural scenery. They constructed parking lots, especially around areas of cultural value.<sup>39</sup> These changes began to shaped the new tourist gaze of the era, drawing more attention to the “glories” of D-day when convenient, and hiding other atrocities when necessary. An example of this lies in the city of Falaise, which bore the brunt of the liberation’s wrath with intense fighting centered in the Falaise pocket, reducing the city to rubble.<sup>40</sup> Ironically enough, postwar tourism literature made little mention of the destruction that took place and Falaise, and it was restored to be a recreation of a traditional Norman town to complement the touristic value of the surrounding Chateau.<sup>41</sup> Until the opening of the *Memorial des Civils dans La Guerre*, a museum which presents the civilian wartime experience from 1940-45, there was little mention or evidence of WWII within Falaise itself. Yet even this museum fails to give much-deserved attention to the reconstruction efforts and rehabilitation in the decades following the war as it only focuses on the years of occupation, 1940-45.

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<sup>37</sup> Hugh Clout, "Reconstruction in the Manche Département After the Normandy Landings", *Modern & Contemporary France* 16, no.1(2008):3-5.

<sup>38</sup> Clout, "Reconstruction in the Manche", 17.

<sup>39</sup> Hugh Clout, "Beyond the Landings: The Reconstruction of Lower Normandy After June 1944", *Journal of Historical Geography* 32, no. 1 (2006): 143.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Holmes, and Imperial War Museum (Londen). *The D-Day Experience : From the Invasion to the Liberation of Paris*, (London:Carlton Books 2004).

<sup>41</sup> Clout, "Beyond the Landing", 117.



In some ways, the reconstruction efforts provided a fragile, makeshift façade over a region desperately trying to hide its deep scars, both literally and figuratively. Oftentimes, houses and buildings were reconstructed with cookie-cutter concrete models and then covered with stone cladding, to create an aura of authenticity.<sup>42</sup> However, stone cladding would not prove to be enough to recapture the essence of the area. Some remarked that after 30 years of reconstruction, the area had been sterilized, its character diminished along with its soul. However, this topic will be discussed in more depth in chapters three and four.

It would be impossible to discuss the reconstruction of Normandy without the Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Act. As the realities of the postwar set in, world leaders soon realized, that France's seemingly swift recovery in 1945 was a false alarm. A bad harvest season, coal shortages, rising inflation and mother nature soon made it clear that Europe needed additional assistance to stabilize.<sup>43</sup> Under the Marshall Plan, the United States provided the funds needed to lay the foundation for European recovery. As outlined in the preamble, it was not a "shopping list" for Europe, but an "outline of targets, measures and steps to be taken for the recovery of Europe". For the United States, "World peace and happiness lies within economic security" and the plan aimed at creating economic cooperation in Europe, avoiding the perceived mistakes committed post WWI. The plan aimed at reducing the dollar gap, which forced countries to reduce their imports of desperately needed food and raw materials, and was the main source of European instability. Aside from economic motives, the plan also promoted US interests in Europe, undermining the influence of Communism by showing the "superiority and desirability of the American way of life."<sup>44</sup>

## The Role of Tourism

How does this all relate to Normandy's tourism sector? Within the context of the Marshall Plan, tourism was seen as an invisible export that France could rely on as a means of balancing their accounts with the United States. Attracting more American tourists to France was a way of bringing more dollars into the France straight from the tourists' bank accounts, rather than the American treasury.<sup>45</sup> Even though portions of France still lie in ruins, tourism to France was heavily promoted by both American and French tourist offices almost immediately after the war ended, with both countries dedicating large sums of money to tourism infrastructure. This research suggests that tourism was not only a way for France to import dollars, but to ease the humiliation of American

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<sup>42</sup> Clout, "Reconstruction in the Manche", 11.

<sup>43</sup> European Recovery Act (Marshall Plan), Section 1.

<sup>44</sup> European Recovery Act (Marshall Plan), Preamble.

<sup>45</sup> European Recovery Act (Marshall Plan), Section 5.

charity and showcase their recovering, yet robust country- putting French cultural sophistication front and center.

Considering its ideological motives at the dawn of the Cold War, the United States was not discreet in its generosity. When financing projects such as schools and hospitals, Congress made sure that their generosity was showcased by establishing the bronze plaque initiative. Projects involving housing, schools and hospitals were required to prominently display a bronze plaque stating that the project was graciously funded by the United States.<sup>46</sup> These measures, along with other jabs at the French government, undoubtedly nursed an inferiority complex in the French national arena.

Clearly, this political environment changed the nature of tourism after World War II. The postwar era was a time when tourism came to embody a complex political undertone. It was more than just sightseeing and revenue, it was a way to strengthen public relations (a concept very new to France), and achieve foreign policy goals. Endy would go so far as to say that tourism was a branch of America's Cold War foreign policy, and a means to spread cultural propaganda.<sup>47</sup>

By catering to American tourists, did France inadvertently Americanize themselves while sanitizing their own distinguished culture? While some would argue this is true, Wall argues that the perceived "Americanization" of France was simply much-needed "modernization". McKenzie adds that while American culture did indeed permeate through France, it was not an intimidating force. The French were not brainwashed by American ways, but instead willingly re-appropriated American customs and habits to suit their needs.<sup>48</sup> Endy adds that it is too simplistic to think of this trans-Atlantic tourism in terms of a one-way exchange. Americans were also carrying French customs and cultural practices back to the United States.<sup>49</sup> Even still, American tourist dollars had an undeniable influence on how the French constructed their tourist gaze to cater to American tastes, however, the impact that their Americanized tourism sector has on French identity, and their D-day narrative, has yet to be explored.

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<sup>46</sup> Irwin Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France 1945-54*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 174.

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 12.

<sup>48</sup> Wall, "Making of Postwar France", 4.

Brian McKenzie, *Remaking France: Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan (Explorations in Culture and International History)*, Berghahn Books. Kindle Edition.

Brian McKenzie, "Creating a Tourist's Paradise: The Marshall Plan and France, 1948-1952", *French Politics, Culture and Society* 21 (2003): 35-54.

<sup>49</sup> Endy, *Cold War Holidays*, 6, 209.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The study of war memory and commemoration has become increasingly popular in the last few decades, a time referred to by scholars as the “memory boom”(Dolski) and “memorial mania”(Silberman), with the number of memorial sites, museums and commemorations skyrocketing. Before analyzing the reconstruction of the tourist gaze in Normandy, attention must be given to the existing literature and theoretical concepts relating to the complex relationship between memory and history, which underpins this research. The following chapter will give an overview of the existing theoretical concepts relating to this memory culture and in the context of tourism. It will also provide insights on the gaps that this research seeks to fill. The following analysis will start with the more general topics of war memory, the relationship between memory and history, and memory politics followed by the more specific topics of French WWII memory, the United States and the liberation myth, and US influence on French tourism. Finally, there will be a brief discussion of the methodological approach and the ways in which this research utilizes these topics to help uncover the effect of Franco-American relations on Normandy’s tourist gaze and the D-day narrative.

### Theoretical Framework

#### The Relationship between Memory and History:

The relationship between memory and history is complex and at times, the two fields seem to be opposing forces. As Silberman describes, history is regarded as having a factual and objective tone, at least by the common person. On the other hand, memory is much more subjective and while it feeds on history, it targets the present. Although known for its subjective nature, memory is progressively given the status of authenticity.<sup>50</sup> There are different arguments concerning the relationship between memory and history and how the two should or should not be related. Silberman and Dolski both agree that the fields of history and memory studies should be viewed in an interactive way, as mutually beneficial to one another, not as opposing forces. Not all historians would agree. Diamond and Garrara are much more skeptical and fear that using history in such a mediatized environment, threatens a demarcation to the field and an increasingly memorial approach to history.<sup>51</sup> While taking an interactive approach to memory and history can be beneficial as Silberman and Dolski suggest, Diamond and Garrara’s warnings are not without merit. While witness testimony is increasingly popular, it draws skepticism on its reliability because it is often used

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<sup>50</sup> Silberman, “Lessons in Memory and Politics”, 213-226.

<sup>51</sup> M. Dolski, S. Edwards, J. Buckley, *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration*. Denton, (University of North Texas Press, 2014), 1-15.  
Diamond and Garrara, “Occupation Memories”, 233.

to evoke an emotional response instead of conveying a particular truth.<sup>52</sup> This research will take an interactive approach to history and memory on the basis that the two can be mutually beneficial to one another, especially regarding the history of tourism. Since existential experiences are increasingly important in the tourist experience, it is important to consider emotional experiences and connections that both tourists and locals have with a particular site, regardless of their factual basis. While it is not wise to rely exclusively on personal stories and accounts for research, they can certainly enrich other archival material by providing insights that have yet to make their way into popularized historical narrative.

### *Templates of Commemoration*

What Ashplant, Dawson and Roper term, “templates of commemoration” serve as good examples of where history and memory intersect. According to these scholars, templates of commemoration are pre-memories, existing cultural narrative, myths and tropes that affect one’s current understanding of an event. These powerful templates have the power to direct memory and alter the construction of narratives as they potentially influence one’s understanding of a situation vis-à-vis past events.<sup>53</sup> One clear example of a template of commemoration is the image of US firefighters raising the American flag over the smoldering rubble of the Twin Towers on 9/11, mimicking the famous Iwo Jima memorial.<sup>54</sup> Another example is the naming of the World Wars. World War I was known as the “Great War” until WWII happened; after which time it was renamed to WWI.<sup>55</sup> Powerful influencers, these templates also have a subdued aura of vulnerability, as they are often used by certain agencies and political figures to achieve a certain goal. This research will show how this is arguably the case in Normandy. As an example, Dolski remarks that the United States most likely used D-day as a template to justify military operations during the Cold War, Vietnam, Korea and Iraq by reinforcing the positive image of the liberating American soldier.<sup>56</sup> With the notion of human rights taking center stage in today’s international arena, and more and more civilians being killed or affected by conflict, these templates are sure to be challenged or modified, which raises questions towards the sustainability of war narratives in general.

### **War Memory:**

Scholars tend to discuss the concept of war memory from two main standpoints. The first is of a political nature (Hobsbawm, Anderson) which focuses on how war memory converges with national identity and the political agendas involved in solidifying and promoting national narratives.

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<sup>52</sup> Diamond and Gorrara, “Occupation Memories”, 233.

<sup>53</sup> Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, “The Politics of War Memory”, 34-36.

<sup>54</sup> W. Kidd and B. Murdoch, *Memory and Memorials: The commemorative century* (Modern economic and social history series), edited by W. Kidd and B. Murdoch, (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004), 1-9.

<sup>55</sup> Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, “The Politics of War Memory”, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Dolski, “Portal of Liberation”, 70-84.

Alternatively, the psychological approach (Winters) places a heavier focus on the existential feelings associated with war memory instead of political constructions. This includes the expression of mourning in itself and different responses to death and destruction.<sup>57</sup> While some scholars prefer to slant towards politics or psychology, Silberman encourages taking a combined approach.<sup>58</sup> However, for the purposes of this paper the political nature of war memory will be the focal point as the psychological aspects are beyond this scope of this research.

### ***French Memory: The Duty to Memory***

Although well-known in the States, the memorialization of WWII in France did not emerge on a national level until the late 1980s. Richard Golsan has done significant work in dissecting France's repression of WWII memory and the emergence of the so-called Duty to Memory in the late 1980s and early 1990s surrounding the Papon Trial. This trial convicted Maurice Papon, the prefecture of police in Bordeaux and later a prominent French politician, of crimes against humanity for his role in the deportation of French citizens. This trial marked a turning point in French national narrative because the French began to examine their role in the Vichy government and collaboration with the Nazi regime.<sup>59</sup> In his analysis, Golsan echoes Torodov and Bruckner in concluding that this shift towards remembrance was not necessarily positive and highlights the danger of memory, especially when it becomes politically charged towards a certain group.

Focusing exclusively on trauma can easily eclipse other aspects of the past, both positive and negative, as well as current events. It can also lead to a phenomenon which Golsan calls the "competition of the victims." This happens when victims exemplify the role of their self-image and try to distinguish themselves from other victims by creating a hierarchy classified by the danger they faced, the number of lives they saved, the amount of suffering endured, how much risk they took, etc.<sup>60</sup> This often leads to a civil war of incompatible memories as Bruckner explains because there will always be groups who do not recognize themselves within a given narrative.<sup>61</sup> Torodov warns that there is a danger in putting so much distance between perceived villains and ourselves because ultimately we are all human and have the same potential for destructive actions. More relevant than creating a dichotomy between accused and accusers, is to gain a sense of understanding of the underlying conditions that contributed to such destruction.<sup>62</sup> This background knowledge, along with corresponding criticism from French scholars is important to keep in mind because not only did the

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<sup>57</sup> Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, "The Politics of War Memory", 3-7.

<sup>58</sup> Silberman, "Lessons in Memory and Politics", 213-226.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Golsan, "Paradoxes of Remembrance: dissecting France's 'Duty to Memory'" in *Memory and Postwar Memorials: Confronting the Violence of the Past*, eds. M. Silberman and F. Vatan, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 199-200.

<sup>60</sup> Golsan, "Paradoxes of Remembrance", 206.

<sup>61</sup> Pascal Bruckner, *The Tyranny of Guilt: An Essay on Western Masochism*. Course Book. ed., (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 143.

<sup>62</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, "Memory As Remedy for Evil." *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 7, no. 3 (2009), 447-62.

American and French have different WWII experiences, they also differ in the ways in which they memorialize these experiences.

### Memory, Politics and International Relations:

How do memories become national narratives? It would be impossible to discuss the notion of memory without mentioning its inseparable political components. Indeed, memories start out belonging exclusively to the persons experiencing and event, but they also have the power to be influenced by, or to transform into national narrative.<sup>63</sup> Yet, as Ashplant points out that cultural memory is only effective if it relies on *authentic* individual memory, however, as mentioned above, these seemingly authentic individual memories are framed by pre-existing templates and recent current event.<sup>64</sup> When discussing authenticity and memory side-by-side, it is important to keep in mind this paradox.

Concerning the relationship between tourism, politics and memory, Bowen, Zubair and Altinay remind that tourism planning and development is a political process concerning power relations among stakeholders to make decisions and to achieve a particular means or ends.<sup>65</sup> This further nuances Silberman's idea that memory is not simply recalling a particular event but the reconstruction of a meaningful narrative. Which memories are used for what means? Race and class should not be undermined here, as it can certainly affect the visibility of narratives. For example, it is interesting to consider the Norman's role as peasant farmers vis-à-vis wealthier Parisian political figures and American agencies such as the American Battle Monuments Commission. Capedivilla brilliantly reminds that WWII was not only a diplomatic and military operation, but just as much of a memory operation.<sup>66</sup> When contextualized within the notion of war, there are victors and losers in memory operations too. How is this memory managed? The American Battle Monuments Commission and their oversight of the interpretation of the American D-day sites, is a prime example of how government agencies can control memory and the influence this can have on a particular region's identity.<sup>67</sup>

Yet it is not justified to assume that everyone wants his or her voices heard and memories nationalized. Ashplant et al. remind that public commemoration can lead to tensions between private and personal experiences and the public sphere, in some cases the soldiers and victims becoming involuntary memorials to a certain traumatic event. In other cases, national narratives can

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<sup>63</sup> Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, "The Politics of War Memory", 60.

<sup>64</sup> Idem

<sup>65</sup> Bowen, Zubair, and Altinay, "Politics and Tourism Destination Development"

<sup>66</sup> Golsan, "Paradoxes of Remembrance", 206.

<sup>67</sup> Dolski, "Portal of Liberation",

mold local narratives to suit their needs.<sup>68</sup> This is important to recognize especially considering that for the most part, the commemoration of D-day is a government-sponsored undertaking.

### **The Myth of Liberation**

The myth of liberation is a notion that has received increasing attention (Dolski, Weiss, Wieviorka) in the past decade as more and more commemorations take place, and WWII becomes increasingly memorialized, leaving more room for contestation. This line of research analyzes the “romantic nostalgia” surrounding D-day and the liberation of Europe. This questions the popular narrative in which the violent and gruesome nature combat is refined, masked by the notions of redemption and sacrifice of courageous heroes.<sup>69</sup> The traditional narrative tends to give the Allies a noble status, forgiven of the destruction they caused and undermining the lives involuntarily “sacrificed” in the name of freedom. This myth questions the notion of liberation, as popular narratives have seemingly reduced the liberation to a short, static period in time, when in reality it took years and brought with it its own form of oppressions for each country involved.

While scholars are quick to point out the myth of liberation, they tend to focus solely on perceived American imperialism and rarely mention the French acceptance of this narrative. After all, as already mentioned, narratives and memory need to be – to some extent- accepted by the general population, even if this acceptance is achieved by carefully constructed schemes. Dolski hints at this ever so slightly when he alludes to “portals of liberation” in which people focus on the romanticized version of WWII to repress facts that are harder to accept, including death, destruction, genocide and collaboration.<sup>70</sup> In some regards, it is too cynical of an approach to think that Americans simply planted their flag of cultural imperialism and transposed their interpretation of D-day on French soil. While it wasn’t without some resistance, many French people accepted this narrative on a national and local level. A reason for this could be that it was easier for the French people, in the midst of so much death and destruction, to let freedom wash away the signs of their past, instead of reconciling with it. Put more simply, it could have just been a way for them to remember to forget.

### **The Role of Tourism**

#### **The (Sanitized) Tourist Gaze**

The notion of the Tourist Gaze, popularized by John Urry, places vision in central to the tourist experience, defining not only the way that tourists consume sites, but how sites are constructed to meet tourists’ expectations.<sup>71</sup> Many scholars such as Jenkins agree, Jenkins herself

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<sup>68</sup> Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, “The Politics of War Memory”, 72.

<sup>69</sup> Dolski, “Portal of Liberation”, 43-50

<sup>70</sup> Idem

<sup>71</sup> John Urry & J. Larsen, ‘Vision and photography’, in: *The tourist gaze 3.0*. LA/London/New Dehli/Singapore/Washington DC, Sage, 2011, 155-188.

coining the notion of the Circle of Representation, which highlights peoples need to translate the images they see into reality. She mentions how travel experiences are usually based on previous representations of a site, feeding a repetitive image of pictures and narratives. However, both Lisle and Chaney critique these ideas as being too simplistic. In her reimagining of the war and tourism divide, Lisle says that sites of commemoration allow people to access the war from a safe distance creating a sanitized tourist gaze that consists of clear winners and losers and that this gaze acts as a barrier, promoting historical amnesia.<sup>72</sup>

Chaney refers to the tourist gaze as merely a tourist glimpse, claiming that it is too static and does not account for movement or reciprocity in tourism. As much as tourists see, they also act, encounter and leave their mark. While Urry's notion of the tourist gaze is undoubtedly significant, and Lisle's and Chaney's claims relevant, they both seem to underestimate the tourists who do raise questions and think critically about the site. This research will explore what Lisle called the diplomatic gaze which she analyzes by looking into the actions of soldiers on foreign soil.<sup>73</sup> While the scope of this paper will not necessarily cover how Allied soldiers were tourists per se, it will analyze how their presence, especially in a diplomatic sense, influenced the area as a tourist site.

### *The economy of History*

As Foulk describes, history and historical monuments can be a driving force for economic activity within the tourism industry.<sup>74</sup> This notion is important to consider within this research because not only is battlefield tourism in Normandy linked to memory and international relations, but the economy of the region too. D-day tourism brings many visitors to the area, creating stable jobs and cash flow for restaurants and small businesses. Some people living in the area, very much depend on the current D-day narrative for their livelihood, even if it is not wholly representative of their personal beliefs.

Sometimes business interests, tourism demands and memory clash. As an example, LeMay remarks that there sometimes exists an "inappropriate celebratory spirit" in Normandy, especially concerning re-enactments. Memory tourism needs to remain ethical and not create a circus-like atmosphere which undermines the gravity of combat and the losses experienced in the region.<sup>75</sup> This

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Olivia Jenkins, 'Photography and travel brochures: The circle of representation', in: *Tourism Geographies*, 5:3, 2003, 305-307.

<sup>72</sup> Lisle, Debbie. (2000). Consuming Danger: Reimagining the War/Tourism Divide. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 25( 1). Zones of Indistinction: Territories, Bodies, Politics , 98.

<sup>73</sup> Idem, 105.

<sup>74</sup> David Foulk, "The Impact of the Economy of History: the example of battlefield tourism in France," *Mondes du Tourisme* 12 (2016), 2-4.

<sup>75</sup> Kate C. LeMay, "Gratitude, Trauma and Repression: D-day in French Memory" in *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration*, eds. Dolski, M, Edwards, S., Buckley, J, ( Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2014), 159-188.



leads to potential clashes between heritage tourism and memory as there exist different opinions on “how far is too far” in order to make profits. Who controls the story of war and the way in which it is told? The economy of history is important to consider in this research considering tourism was the main import that France had in the postwar era and leads to questions concerning how this narrative was exploited to gain more American tourist dollars. It is even more significant when considering France’s current UNESCO nomination for the landing beaches, and the economic stakes in their inscription.

### *Personal memory tourism*

Sabine Marschall defines what she calls Personal Memory Tourism as travel motivated by memories of one’s own past and focused on the revisiting of sites and destinations associated with key moments in a person’s life or tracing a memorable journey, such as the path of a soldier. In this way, travel becomes an extension of the process of remembering. There can be a variety of personal motivations including closure, catharsis, identity, purpose or connection to the area or event.<sup>76</sup> This research considers personal memory tourism within the context of French civilians visiting Allied war graves immediately after combat, and continuing to care for them throughout the decades, which is easily perceived as an act of gratitude. However, this research attempts to nuance this simplistic thought by considering that French civilians may have been visiting the graves as a coping mechanism to come to terms with their own loss and suffering, since they lacked a designated outlet for their grief.

### *The Language of Remembrance*

Geert Buelens did a remarkable study on the role of language in remembrance noting that every speech about a particular event, is a way to remember it.<sup>77</sup> Hilary Footitt also studied the role of language in re-framing and representing events with a particular focus on the liberation of France. Language, that is to say verbs and grammatical positioning, can provide important clues to power relations during the era. For example, many Western media accounts, perceived the French as passive, scared receivers and the Allies active and macho. In the rare occasion that the French are credited with a heroic or meaningful action, they are cited as secondary helpers. Footitt likens this to an imperial relationship between soldiers and foreign natives.<sup>78</sup> A more simplistic example is given by Peter Lagrou when he says that “being liberated” is too passive a term to be able to celebrate the recovery of independence.<sup>79</sup> Their former research is beneficial because the following two chapters

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<sup>76</sup> Sabine Marschall, “Tourism and Remembrance: the journey into the self and its past.” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 12, no 4.(2014): 335-348.

<sup>77</sup> Geert Buelens, “The Languages of Remembrance” in *Languages and the First World War: Representation and Memory*, eds. C. Declercq and J. Walker, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 199-213.

<sup>78</sup> Hilary Footitt, “Liberating France without the French”, 167-77.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Lagrou quoted by Hilary Footitt, in “Liberating France without the French”, 171.

will discuss how travel literature, particularly travel guides, can provide clues to how the tourist gaze of Normandy shaped over time by analyzing the language used.

### *Tourism and politics in the postwar world*

The relationship between tourism and international relations is a growing, yet under-studied field. Dolski, McKenzie, Endy and Levenstein have all studied the relationship between The Marshall Plan and French Tourism, and the mutual relationship between tourism and politics; however most of these scholars focus exclusively on Paris.<sup>80</sup> Another shortcoming in their analyses is the failure to discuss the state of tourism in France before the war. France was a popular tourist destination among Americans even before the outbreak of the World Wars, so it was not that a tourist gaze was constructed from scratch, but rather reconstructed and re-framed to meet the demands of a new era and new diplomatic pressures.

Although Paris is a beloved example, it does not capture the changes in the tourist gaze after WWII because it was largely spared and required little reconstruction. While its infrastructure may have been damaged, and resources lacking – it was able to accept tourists rather quickly post-liberation. Moreover, it had a well-established rapport with American tourists in the interwar period and this gaze was largely untarnished by the events of WWII. Another shortcoming with prior research is that while some tensions are highlighted between tourist and host, more thought is not given to how the cultural and diplomatic interactions between tourist and host shape the way that tourists perceive the France, and the way France perceives themselves. This paper takes a much narrower focus by fixating exclusively on Normandy and the lengths France was willing to go to mask the scars of war in order to profit from the tourism industry. This paper also considers the research of Lisle concerning the war and tourism divide, in which she suggests that soldiers in themselves exhibit the same actions as tourists, especially regarding the collection of souvenirs.<sup>81</sup> Her research provides new insights considering that many scholars do not consider the travels of soldiers, and the lure of going abroad, even if it is to take part in war.

The biggest contribution of this research is treating both Franco-American relations and tourism in Normandy as a continuous narrative that is molded and shaped over time based on current events and world sentiments, not just by static moments in time. Taking into consideration the its reliance on memory, which is ever-changing, this thesis suggests that the tourist gaze in Normandy is also a changing narrative in danger of being “fixed” under the mask of world heritage.

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<sup>80</sup> See: Endy, *Cold War Holidays*; Levenstein, *We'll Always Have Paris*; Dolski, “Portal of Liberation”, McKenzie, “Creating a Tourist’s Paradise” and “Remaking France”.

<sup>81</sup> Lisle, “Consuming Danger”, 106.

## Methodology

This thesis will analyze how Franco-American relations, starting with D-Day itself, influenced the reconstruction of the tourist gaze in postwar Normandy, catering to the so-called myth of liberation. One shortcoming of existing literature on the topic, is the failure to recognize the tourism narrative in Normandy as a continuous process rather than isolating static points in time. Tourism in the area existed before the outbreak of WWII, albeit not as popular among Americans, and was carefully reconstructed around the events of 1944, based on diplomatic and economic pressures. Treating tourism as a narrative, this thesis compares travel guides from the early 1900s with those from the decade following WWII to note changes and analyze these potential changes vis-a-vis key moments in Franco-American relations. This section also delves into issues of *Rapports France Etats-Unis* which was a publication put forth in France by the United States to educate the French people on the Marshall Plan. This research will consider Newspaper and magazine articles portraying the events of D-day and tourism in France, but following Footitt and Buelens example, a heavy emphasis will be on the language and the sorts of tropes used to uncover patterns and missing narratives. This research also seeks to find examples of resistance to the “American” narrative by both French and Americans.

Then, this thesis will trace the tourism narrative by looking at speeches given by heads of state at key commemorations of D-day to detect possible political agendas. Lastly, this paper will analyze and discuss France’s nomination to make the landing beaches of D-day a UNESCO World Heritage Site by looking at official press releases and statements. Discussing the UNESCO nomination and its challenges is important because it presents a narrative endorsed by French leaders and one that if successful will further engrain a particular D-Day narrative into French memory. Furthermore, leading scholars in the field have not discussed this topic.

The decision to analyze travel guides, travel literature, and newspapers in tandem with official government reports, publications and commemoration speeches was chosen to help show the relationship between political affairs and tourism. The official documents show intent, while the travel guides and travel literature show the product, and changes within Normandy’s tourism sector.

Although elaborating on key moments, by treating tourism as a narrative, this thesis will provide deeper insights on changes and their potential triggers and political influences. As previously mentioned, this thesis does not attempt to victimize the Norman civilians, as it is clear that they have suffered, rather, it seeks to discuss the potential reasoning for their lack of commemoration until very recently and the absence of their narratives from popular depictions of D-Day and the Liberation. While a variety of travel guides were used, there was a common thread to promote consistency, Normandy guides in English from the French National Railway (SNCF) were used because they covered the time period in question. However, it is important to note that state network of

railways, known as *Chemins de fer de l'État* ceased to exist in 1938, and was replaced by the current SNCF.

*Rapports France Etats-Unis*, An American-sponsored publication in France is used side-by-side with *LIFE* magazine to uncover narratives being promoted by the United States in both France and the USA because they both have very similar writing styles, layouts and intentions. The author has been to Normandy personally on three different occasions in 2007, 2011 and 2013. Due to travel restrictions, archival material for this thesis was found using online resources from the Marshall Foundation (USA), The National Archives (USA), Library of Congress (USA), La Manche Archives (France), and the Archives Nationales (France) and the Utrecht University Library in the Netherlands.

As mentioned, other scholars have researched the relationship between diplomacy and tourism in postwar France, however, most scholars place a specific emphasis on Paris. Paris, although the capital city, is not the most desired example to uncover the changes that took place in the French tourism sector. This is because Paris was already an established tourist destination for Americans before the outbreak of WWII, there were already a large number of ex-pats living in the city. Moreover, there was little reconstruction in Paris. It already had existing infrastructure to accommodate tourists – albeit it needed some repair. That is not to say that Paris cannot provide useful information, but it leaves a lot of territory left unexplored. For the most part, the major monuments and attractive sites in Paris survived the war, along with an intact tourist gaze. Just months after liberation, Paris was once again a major tourist hub and within a few years, WWII's imprint on the city was long forgotten. This was not the case in other parts of France, most notably Normandy.

This thesis does not delve into the psychoanalysis of war and memory, and only draws on the existing foundations of scholars such as Winters for reference. It must also be said that there are disproportionate archival materials available on the topic, in regards to the United States and France. While the reconstruction is well-documented by the French, most of the immediate postwar analysis of Norman civilians, such as interviews and surveys, were carried out by Allied forces which certainly affected the responses. Moreover, there are accounts of Norman civilians who were interviewed about their experiences by French counterparts, but this was done decades after their experience, and as already mentioned in this analysis, memory is a subjective force that changes and re-shapes with time. These accounts all seemed to be positive, which is not discredited, but met with skepticism.

## Chapter 3: Normandy Tourism from D-Day to the Marshall Plan

“Bulldozers cleared away more than ruins, there have been worse ways of winning friends than inscribing on tanks, hi chum, no gum. With the operative word being chum.”<sup>82</sup>

-DW Brogan, October 15 1944

Despite the severe destruction that took place from Normandy in the summer of 1944, by 1947, “groups of tourists were covering France faster than Patton’s tanks”, and France soon reclaimed its position as the number one tourist destination in the world thanks to Marshall Plan aid and a strong transatlantic promotional campaign.<sup>83</sup> By 1947, there were even packaged tours to Normandy, despite the fact conditions were still deplorable and that D-Day wreckage had yet to be cleared – offering American tourists a look at the destruction *in situ*. In fact, there only existed proper hotels in Cherbourg and Deauville, otherwise tourists were required to stay in temporary dorm-style establishments, however, this was not a major deterrent as rooms were usually fully booked.<sup>84</sup> As John Radosta commented in a *New York Times* article, everything was normal “if you are only willing to only look to the surface”, hinting at the deeper physical and emotional impacts that would take decades to reconcile.<sup>85</sup>

The following section will build upon the background information presented in the first chapter by providing examples of how the destruction in Normandy following the invasion of 1944 was presented to the American people via news outlets such as the *New York Times* and *LIFE* magazine, both distributed on a national scale and quite popular among Americans. Then, it will examine selected travel guides from 1902 to present to note major changes and trends. Lastly, it will contextualize these findings by referencing broader shifts in tourism during the postwar period.

### D-day in the News: first responses

Naturally, D-day was a major press event, and coverage of the invasion of France appeared in all major news outlets throughout the summer. These accounts presented conflicting images of destruction, *joie de vivre*, gratitude and resentment. An overwhelming, yet unsurprising trend in American news accounts of the summer of 1944 is the lack of American accountability for the destruction that occurred in the Normandy region.

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<sup>82</sup> DW Brogan, “The Great Symbol”: The Bulldozer”, *New York Times* (New York), October 15, 1944.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph Barry, “Europe Likes Tourists and Their \$\$”, *New York Times* (New York), July 10 1949.

General George Patton was a senior officer in the US Army, commanding troops in France and Germany after the Allied invasion.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Giniger, “Normandy Battle Area Tours”, *New York Times* (New York), February 2 1947.

<sup>85</sup> John S. Radosta, “Touring France on \$15 a Day”, *New York Times* (New York), July 6, 1947.

In their August 1944 issue, *LIFE* magazine published a six-page spread highlighting the effects of the bombardment in France in areas such as Le Havre and St. Lô. While this portrayal powerfully grasped the scale of devastation, the captions underneath the photos are the most shocking. According to the fine print, the Americans emerged clean-handed as the destruction of people's homes along with the pitted landscape were said to have been the work of German bombs, as the American bombs were not as powerful and simply grazed the land, rather than destroying it.<sup>86</sup> This notion of Americans having a secondary, passive role in the bombings in relation to the Germans echoed throughout the summer.

Another theme in the press was the "friendship" between the United States and France, arguably planting the seeds for the Myth of Liberation. America simply came to rescue a friend (France) in need, with destruction being an unfortunate side effect. However, in the very same *LIFE* issue showing the ruins, an alternative narrative is tucked away in the back of the issue. William Bullit, the former American Ambassador to France wrote a piece which addressed the ignorance and thoughtlessness of the American people chastising them for their seemingly naïve outlook on the liberation, failing to realize its toll. Mr. Bullit is perhaps one of the first Americans to publically address the "myth of liberation" (unknowingly so) by bluntly saying that it was not gratitude that led the United States to liberate France in WWII, but America's own interests, especially concerning France's strategic geopolitical location.<sup>87</sup> Another hint of American wrongdoing came in October of 1944, when reporter Anne O'Hare M'Cormick for the *New York Times* depicts a bleak and somber situation in the Havre: two-fifths of the city destroyed, only 40,000 out of 170,000 residents remaining and 5,000 civilians killed in an air raid *after* the Germans had already left the city.<sup>88</sup> The three "G's" usually emphasized in liberation articles - gratitude, glee and gaiety- were absent. However, it is important to note that her story was covering DeGaulle's visit to the region, a *French* politician. It would be interesting to see how she would depict the same situation had it been President Roosevelt or Prime Minister Churchill visiting the freshly destroyed region. After all, most media accounts covering British and American government officials Normandy during the summer of 1944, paint a picture of immense celebration and gratitude.

An even greater disconnect with the gravity of the situation is expressed in a *New York Times* article from November 1944- less than half a year after D-day. In "France Makes Startling Comeback" Callender chastises Americans for having such a bleak outlook on the reconstruction and says that the French, they themselves surprised at their own recovery, are physically and morally intact and

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<sup>86</sup> "Effects on Bombardment in France", *LIFE*, Aug 14 1944, p 19-24.

<sup>87</sup> William Bullit, "The Future of France", *LIFE*, August 14, 1944, 75-83.

<sup>88</sup> Anne O'Hare M'Cormick, "DeGaulle Tours Normandy Towns", *New York Times* (New York), October 9 1944.

unified as a country.<sup>89</sup>The background chapter presented at the beginning of this thesis shows that this could not be further from the truth. The effects of the purge were still rippling throughout France, many people in Normandy were still displaced or homeless and many displaced persons still remained in camps throughout Europe.

These initial accounts of the destruction of 1944 in popular media outlets are important because they set the foundation for the Myth of Liberation, which heavily influenced the American tourist gaze in Normandy. The media influenced American expectations and perceptions of the area, which in turn influenced the French, eager to meet American expectations. Now, if one only wants to consider scholars like Urry and Jenkins who (over) emphasize the role of pictures in defining the tourism gaze, one might totally discredit the idea, thinking that these pictures of death and destruction would *discourage* Americans to want to go to Normandy and experience it for themselves.<sup>90</sup> However, it was not as much the pictures of destruction and the loss that were attracting Americans to the area, it was the tropes that these news outlets associated with the area. In avoiding accountability, the American press liked to use words such as “liberty”, “freedom”, “courage” and “gratitude”. This area of French soil came to re-affirm America’s self-image as freedom fighters, and the place where the “greatest generation” came to life.<sup>91</sup> Arguably, Americans were visiting Normandy as way to connect with their own American identity, and it was a display of American patriotism, rather than an expression of empathy. In denying accountability for their part in the destruction, Americans created an alternative narrative which would come to dominate both national and touristic narrative, which in Normandy go hand in hand.

### Guidebooks: From the “Land of Morning” to the “Land of Mourning”

Before the World Wars, Normandy had been an increasingly popular tourism destination with the English. True to the tropes of the time, Englishman Gordon Home describes Falaise in his 1902 guidebook as, “romantic and stage-like picturesque”.<sup>92</sup> Later, this town would be completely annihilated during the intense fighting within the Falaise pocket. He describes brilliant greens, rolling cathedral bells and a revitalizing serenity unlike any other - a cheerful, quaint place to connect with nature. Ironically enough, Gordon regrets that so many of the original fortifications of St. Lô and Bayeux were destroyed by sieges, and that Caen had a “fictitious newness” about it, hostile to the city’s restoration work.<sup>93</sup> Little did the author know that less than 50 years later, these quaint towns

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<sup>89</sup> Henry Callender, “France Makes Startling Comeback”, *New York Times* (New York), November 19, 1944.

<sup>90</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*; Olivia Jenkins. ‘Photography and travel brochures: The circle of representation’.

<sup>91</sup> Dolski, “Portal of Liberation”, 43-84.

<sup>92</sup> Gordon Home, *1902 Normandy Guidebook: The scenery and romance of its ancient towns*, (London: JM Dent and Co.), 1905, 79.

<sup>93</sup> *Idem*, 185, 203.

would be ravaged by war and almost completely re-built from the ground-up.

It was not until the inter-war period that Normandy became more popular among American tourists. This was largely due to the surge of transatlantic tourism as well as improved transport throughout France. More Americans were travelling overseas to Paris and looking to see more of France than just the capital. During this time, Green Star Tours offered bus tours leaving from Paris every day taking a 5-8 day tour of the Seine valley and major cities such as Roen, Lisieux and Falaise.<sup>94</sup> The “Fairyland of France” offered tourists refreshing air, golden sands, blossoming orchards and shaded groves, one travel guide even describing a visit to Normandy as “liberal education of the mind.”<sup>95</sup> Another point of emphasis was the gothic architecture, namely the many intricate Cathedrals throughout the area.

Certainly, after the summer of 1944, the landscape was anything but serene and the cathedrals were crumbling, yet, surprisingly there did exist a guidebook. The *1944 Pocket Guide to Paris and Cities in Northern France* highlighted the traditional narrative of Normandy centered on cathedrals and peaceful landscapes. The US Army Information Branch prepared the guide and distributed it to military personnel stationed in the area. In the beginning of the guidebook, soldiers are encouraged to take advantage of being in Europe on the army’s dollar, and to see as much as they could.<sup>96</sup> The author of this guidebook (unknown) anticipated the heavy damage that was to come by reminding the reader that they were presenting the Normandy from “back in the good old days” and that sites described in the book may not be sites to see any longer, unless by “a stroke of good fortune may be left intact.”<sup>97</sup> This highlights previous research done by Debbie Lisle, in which she examines the connection between war and tourism and discusses the notion of soldiers as tourists. In reimagining the war and tourism divide, she outlines how soldiers can exhibit tourism practices while stationed abroad including taking photos and collecting souvenirs.<sup>98</sup> This is seen in the summer of 1944, not only with the GI Pocket Guide, but also with soldiers collecting souvenirs, such a rocks, sand and bullet shells, which they brought back to the United States.<sup>99</sup>

This divide between war and tourism, or lack thereof, can also be analyzed within the context of commemoration. What about the veterans or their family members returning year after year to visit the graves of their fallen comrades or loved ones?<sup>100</sup> This ritual fits into what Marschall calls

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<sup>94</sup> *Set Forth Somewhere! See the Romantic Countryside of Normandy and Brittany*, Green Star Tours, Paris

<sup>95</sup> *Normandy*, Chemins de Fer de L’État, 1931, 1937

<sup>96</sup> *1944 Pocket Guide to Paris and cities of Northern France*, US War Department, Washington D.C, 1944, IV.

<sup>97</sup> *Idem*, III, 37.

<sup>98</sup> Lisle, “Consuming Danger”, 94, 106.

<sup>99</sup> Rock from Normandy Beaches June 4, 1944, Object 2012. 8.2.1, Object 2012.8.2.2, National Museum of African American History and Culture.

<sup>100</sup> One French woman speaks of an American veteran named Frank Towers, who she met during his time in the service. The two became life-long friends and Mr. Towers returned to Normandy over 20 times, his first stop always being the cemetery (La Manche Archives)



Personal Memory Tourism, in which travel is an extension of the process of remembering. These are just a few simple examples of how the line between war and tourism, although seemingly clear, becomes quite blurry and how Normandy quickly became established as a *lieux de memoire*, or Memory site, after the war, caught in a gray area between war zone and tourist destination.<sup>101</sup>

While many American GI's toured Normandy immediately following the liberation, it was not until around 1947 when American civilians frequented once again. The first highly publicized tour to Normandy was that of the American Legionnaires in 1947. Since the end of WWI, prominent members of the American Legion, a veteran's association, would make regular visits to France to honor their dead. While at first sight, this can seem to be a case of imposing Americans, it was actually the other way around. The French government invited 1500 legionnaires to make a pilgrimage to France for the inauguration of the *Voie de la Liberté*, or Liberty Highway, a project initiated by France to commemorate the route taken by the American Forces from Utah Beach to Bastogne, on the Belgian border. The French ambassador encouraged the legionnaires to "spend three days in Normandy to see the beachheads and destruction *in situ* as repairs have not yet commenced." The French ambassador was quite upset when the American Legion initially declined, then reduced the number of attendees to 500.<sup>102</sup> It is quite surprising to see a Frenchman promoting devastation and destruction as a tourist site while the wounds were still so fresh, especially since only three years had passed since the war.

A rushed response would imply that France was so desperate for tourist dollars and a good repertoire with the United States that they would be willing to exploit their suffering in order to make a good impression on a group of Legionnaires. However, this analysis only credits the purely economic impact of tourism. The liberation narrative not only filtered over the destruction to make it more appealing or merely acceptable to American tourists, but it also helped the French repress, or channel their humiliation into resilience, showing off these war sites as places of national pride.

This thesis would argue that examples such as the one above allude to the reciprocal nature of tourism, as well as its existential components. In the postwar period, France was not only desperate for dollars to rebuild its country; it was desperate for respect in order to rebuild its ego. However, this last notion is often undermined in tourism analysis. Tourism was not a unilateral exchange, nor was the Marshall Plan. Yet, France's vulnerability at this time was a difficult concept for Americans to grasp. As Jean Bruller writes for *LIFE* magazine in 1944, France was not simply ailing from hunger, cold, fatigue and physical destruction, it steeped much deeper. He noted that the

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<sup>101</sup> Marschall, "Tourism and Remembrance",

<sup>102</sup> "September Tour to France, Plans are Revealed", *The National Legionnaire* 13, no. 6, June 1947, 1.

Digest of Minutes, American Legion National Executive Committee Meeting National Headquarters, May 5-7 1947, 145-6.

average American is not able to understand the shame and humiliation that France was suffering during that time, and responses to his article prove this true. Many Americans, including soldiers on site, thought that the Norman people didn't look so bad after all – they were smiling, relatively well-fed and enjoyed delicacies such as butter and cheese. However, Bruller sternly advises the American people “a country does not die because it becomes naked and poor. A country is first of all a soul. To kill either a nation or a man, it is necessary to first tear out the soul.”<sup>103</sup> Through tourism, France found an outlet to display its cultural sophistication, the resilience of its people, and its capabilities for performing in the international arena once again. It was a way to look towards the future, instead of focusing on the past.

France was certainly aware of the gaze that it was creating, and took an active role in creating it. Arguably, France was not trying to discredit its victims by whitewashing their wartime experiences, but did not want to emphasize its role as a victim, choosing instead to emphasize its honorary – yet involuntary -role in serving as the platform for the liberation of Europe. While the United States certainly influenced the reconstruction of France's tourism sector, bolstering tourism was one of France's major concentrations in the postwar era. France's main goal was to bring as many American tourists to France as possible. They wanted to show these Americans a strong, innovative country – not one ravaged by war. The side effect of this being that many war victims were left to suffer in silence and France would publically repress its involvement in WWII for over 40 years.

George Bernier wrote in his piece for *Rapports France Etats-Unis* in 1953, that the role of travel agents and tour operators, was not as middlemen to book transport and hotel accommodations, but as ambassadors that would show France to the world. He pushed for advertising promotions to move beyond cultural clichés and show modern and industrial aspects of France. This included more eye-catching postcards in higher resolution, professional photographs and the publication of thought-provoking cultural pieces to educate both the French and American public.<sup>104</sup> This was France's opportunity to show the world, and more specifically the American people, that their *je ne sais quoi* existed well before the assistance of the Marshall Plan and that nothing, not even the horrors of war, could take that away.

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<sup>103</sup> Jean Bruller Vercours, “A Plea for France”, LIFE, November 6, 1944.

Responses to this article can be found in the “Letters to the Editor” section of the magazine in the proceeding issues.

<sup>104</sup> George Bernier, “Venez en France”, *Rapports France-Etats-Unis*, no. 71, February 1953, Paris, 29-44.

## Tourism as Cultural Exchange

As mentioned, the reconstruction of the tourist gaze in Normandy is much more nuanced than a passive, static moment in time. While media accounts of D-day set the stage for American tourists, and the myth of liberation helped whitewash the realities of war, the narrative does not end there. During this period, perhaps more than any other time in prior history, tourism shifted to a means of cultural exchange. That is not to say that tourism was a unilateral exchange prior to WWII, but at this time the cultural implications of tourism became much more recognized and much more deliberate. Going to France was not just about seeing the notable monuments, checking off major museums and regurgitating the classical gaze of the Grand Tour. It was a dialogue, a variety of experiences and most importantly, it was about an interaction between people of different cultures. As Bernard Kalb advised his readers, they should be more than just passive “façade gazers” and reach a greater depth by talking with locals, eating local foods and appreciating the arts<sup>105</sup>

Tourism provided the opportunity for both tourist and host to act as ambassadors for their respective country. However, relations were not always peaceful. Curious American tourists, often ignorant and insensitive, pleasure-seeking GIs and French citizens trying to put their lives back together would amount to a cocktail of tension in the decade following the war. Joseph Barry, an American journalist, had quite a stately and slightly imperialistic outlook when he describes Americans as “solemn tourists asking solemn questions” stimulating the French to rethink their own monuments and ways of living. Americans were multi-tasking good Samaritans, who were not only going on vacation, but saving the (European) world all at the same time.<sup>106</sup> However, this imperial narrative was not accepted by the French, who were often hostile to American tourists. Just two years following Barry’s advice, a French journalist likened tourists to “locusts and cicadas”<sup>107</sup> while American travel writers were encouraging Americans to bargain for prices within France, or else they were not only paying for their goods and services, but next year’s Marshall Plan as well.<sup>108</sup> If it ever existed, the “honeymoon phase” between France and the United States was definitely over.

These mounting Franco-American tensions led to the publication of a popular book entitled, *112 Gripes about the French* in 1945. This “manual” was a publication by the United States Military intended for active servicemen in France and included 111 pages of advice on how to better understand the French people. Using a question-and-answer style, the book seeks to resolve the common misconceptions that Americans have about the French, pointing out that the two cultures

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<sup>105</sup> Bernard Kalb, “Tourism Made Easy: tips and tricks to lighten the burden, financial and otherwise of travelers in Europe”, *New York Times* (New York), February 19, 1950.

<sup>106</sup> Barry, “Europe Likes Tourists”.

<sup>107</sup> Christine de Rivoyre, “Paris-Vacances”, *Rapports France-Etats-Unis*, no. 65, August 1952.

<sup>108</sup> Kalb, “Tourism Made Easy”.

are actually more alike than different. Repeatedly, the book taunts Americans for having “short memories”, forgetting the role of the French Army in the American Revolution and in their own liberation just one year prior.<sup>109</sup> Although the constructed D-Day Liberation narrative relied heavily on the friendship between France and the United States, this is a clear example of how they were more *frenemies* than anything else.

.Although on the surface this book seemed to aim at easing tensions between the French and American peoples, a critical trend in this publication is the victimization of the French people. By reminding Americans of how much the French have suffered, it classifies the French as sad and resentful people. It speaks repeatedly of French suffering and despair, but fails to mention their perseverance. Considering this, the book did not facilitate a deeper understanding of the French, but reinforced their subordinate position vis-à-vis Americans and further engrained the Myth of Liberation into the American psyche. Just as initial coverage of D-day and the liberation movement reinforced certain tropes and understandings of the French as inferior, weak, and helpless – so did this book. When analyzed within this context, it was not a breakthrough in Franco-American relations, but a reinforcement of France as a subordinate power. France’s military strength and position as an influential world power seemed to be a thing of the past, as the French were only mentioned as having a significant role during the American Revolution. The book states in its opening that “You don’t have to love the French. You don’t have to hate them either. You might try to understand them.”<sup>110</sup> However, the understanding of the time was that the Allies still refused to take accountability for their role in the unmeasurable destruction of France and exploited the dire situation in France to reinforce their own position of power, not bolster France’s, reinforcing a “template” of the liberation narrative.

Interestingly enough, the book was republished in 2003 by a French publisher under the name, *Nos Amis, Les Francias*, at a time when controversy surrounding France’s lack of support for the Iraq war were coming to a head leading to an American “boycott” of French goods and a decrease in the number of American tourists to France. The publication was well received and soon became a best-seller. Balbino Katz, the editor who was responsible for the project, joked that “The French government should republish it in English and give it as a gift to every American who comes to France.”<sup>111</sup> This resurgence, nearly 60 years later, suggests that the tensions mentioned in this book, as well as the rocky relationship between France and American tourists are still a prominent issue.

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<sup>109</sup> *112 Gripes about the French*, US Military Publication, 1945, 1-5, 13.

<sup>110</sup> *112 Gripes about the French*, 4

<sup>111</sup> Lauren Johnston, “French Stereotypes Nothing Nouveau”, CBS News, September 1, 2003, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/french-stereotypes-nothing-nouveau/>.

France's tourism narrative in the postwar era was strongly influenced by American aid and the French desire to emerge from their humiliation as a world influence. Although under two different motives, both countries contributed to the white washing of the realities of liberation in France. The rise of the Myth of Liberation and the tropes reaffirming France's victimized status in the immediate postwar era, would create a template on which Normandy's tourist gaze would flourish, one that would be a source of national pride for both countries, and symbolize the complex nature of Franco-American relations.

## Chapter 4: Solidifying the Myth of Liberation: 1980's-Present

“Our overseas cemeteries and memorials are tangible representations of American values – of our nation’s willingness in two world wars to come to the defense of our own freedoms and the freedoms of others. These magnificent national treasures instill patriotism, evoke gratitude and teach important lessons of history to all who visit.”<sup>112</sup>

Max Cleary, Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission 2009

The previous chapter analyzed the reconstruction of Normandy’s tourist gaze in the immediate postwar by comparing the tourism outlook and travel literature from both before and after World War II. Undoubtedly, the United States influenced tourism in the region by physically changing its landscape. Normandy could no longer be known as the land of serenity or the land of cathedrals, when the cathedrals were in shambles and the trauma of war was ever-present. However, the following chapter suggests that perhaps the role of the United States in the reconstruction of the tourist gaze is overemphasized during this time, as it would appear that the French willingly accepted- and even supported this pro-American “myth” or narrative of liberation. After all, it was the French who began initiating tours of the destruction in 1947 and the French who initiated the first permanent act of commemoration, the *Voie de la Liberté*, or Liberty Highway. Most importantly it is the French themselves who voted unanimously on the official narrative towards the Allies that liberated France as one of “thanks and gratitude” in 2014, proving that this particular narrative has persisted for over 70 years.<sup>113</sup>

That is not to say that the role of the United States was passive, but rather suggests that the reconstruction of Normandy as a tourist site needs to be understood as a constant narrative, rather than static points in time. If one looks at the period between 1944-52, it is clear that through the Marshall Plan, the United States was eager to modernize France and bolster its tourism sector in order to bridge the dollar gap. However, an imperialistic narrative is perhaps too harsh of a sentence. France willingly accepted the myth of liberation, promoted Normandy’s tourist sites within its framework and continues to do so today. As Dolski points out, it isn’t necessarily remarkable that the narrative of D-day was molded by the United States to fit their cultural and political agendas, as this is to be expected in the realm of politics and from victors of war. However, what is so remarkable about the myth of liberation is its staying power over the years, despite the fact that it is an exclusive

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<sup>112</sup>Prepared statement of Hon. Max Cleary, Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission, “Honoring the Fallen: How can we better serve America’s veterans and their families?”, Hearing before the subcommittee on disability assistance and memorial affairs, The Committee on Veteran’s Affairs, US House of Representatives 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, September 24, 2009, serial no. 111-44

<sup>113</sup> “Débarquement : l'Assemblée exprime sa « gratitude » envers les Alliés”, *Le Monde*, Paris, May 6 2014.

narrative with many gaps, including the Norman civilian experience and reconstruction.<sup>114</sup> For example, Normandy's official tourism website states, "D-day has come to be seen as a great triumph, but that didn't mean the Allies who landed here didn't encounter tough German resistance and suffer some terrible tragedies from the start".<sup>115</sup> This clearly acknowledges the plight of the soldiers, but making no mention of the civilian experience or the last impacts of war on the physical and emotional landscape of the region. While the region is saturated with many museums and war memorials, none pay special consideration to the postwar period, instead focusing on the years 1940-45.

The current state of tourism in Normandy and the persistence of the Myth of Liberation suggests that it is not just specific actions by the United States in the postwar period which influences the gaze in Normandy, but the wider dynamic of Franco-American relations which influences tourism in the region. Taking this into consideration, the following chapter will examine this relationship by looking at key changes in travel guides from 1944-present and what led up to France's bid to include the landing beaches as a UNESCO World Heritage site, an important topic that is missing in many discussions concerning French tourism thus far.

### What's in a name? St-Laurent-sur-Mer, Point de la Madeleine

Although the names Omaha Beach and Utah Beach (among others), are easily recognized by many Westerners as the landing beaches in Normandy, they were not exclusively advertised as such in initial postwar travel literature for the area. For example, when Henry Giniger describes Normandy Battle Area Tours for an article appearing in the *New York Times*, he mentions that the tour stops in "beaches and towns in the path of war". However, the beaches are not listed as their military code names of Omaha and Utah, but the French names of the towns *Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer* and *Point de la Madeleine* (la Madeleine).<sup>116</sup> This proved to be a commonality and although seemingly minor, this thesis argues that this name change is quite revealing.

In charting changes in the tourism narrative overtime by looking at small details added to, or removed from travel guides can provide clues to broader changes. Out of the American and French travel guides analyzed, it was not until 1954, 10 years after the invasion, when an American travel guide listed the landing beaches exclusively under their military code names and had the plan of battle drawn onto the included map, emphasizing the significance of D-Day in the area. The 1950 SNCF (French national railroads) Travel Guide does have a very brief sentence concerning the D-day

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<sup>114</sup> Dolski, "The Portal of Liberation"

<sup>115</sup> Official Normandy Tourism Website, D-Day Sites and Museums, <http://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/cultural-heritage/~~~~battle-of-normandy~~~~/offres-6-2.html>.

<sup>116</sup> Henry Giniger, "Normandy Battle Area Tours".

landings, but the guide does not take on a militaristic tone. For example, it mentions the town of Bayeux, but not the American Cemetery just a few kilometers away, something that would seem unthinkable today, as it is one of the area's largest attractions.<sup>117</sup> In the 1953 and 1956 editions of the same travel guide, the names Utah Beach and Omaha Beach in parenthesis underneath the French towns, but the suggested tour does not stop in those locations, in St. Lô or Falaise, presumably due to the massive reconstruction taking place.<sup>118</sup> The 1957 edition lists Omaha and Utah beaches as such, but does not dedicate more than a sentence to the D-day landings or military cemeteries.<sup>119</sup>

D-Day's role in Normandy's tourism narrative gained momentum in the 1950s but seemed to plateau in the 1960s and 1970s, still mentioning D-day to some extent but not mentioning it as a focal point of the region, instead trying to recapture the old-town charm and serenity of the past. However, it would appear that in the 1980s there was a resurgence of this militaristic tone, which has strengthened over time, gaining momentum ever since. Travel guides from the 1980s show increasing interest in D-Day, often dedicating entire sections or chapters to WWII. Also, there were noticeably more travel guides and brochures dedicated exclusively to D-day, only providing details on WWII sites. However, it should be noted that these are just general trends and there are exceptions. For example, an American travel guide from 2003 dedicated less than a half a page to D-day landings and failed to mention the landing sites on its maps.<sup>120</sup> However, the overall trends are clear. First of all, the landing beaches of Utah and Omaha received regular attention since the beginning, albeit their military code names did not become more popular until the 1950s. This is interesting to note, considering that there were 5 beaches in total: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. Second, the D-day narrative became "re-born" in the 1980's. Why the 1980s? Why Omaha? Why Utah? These are questions that next section will consider.

### **Tourism in Normandy and Franco-American Relations**

In his speech at the 40<sup>th</sup> commemoration of D-day, Ronald Reagan said, "For four long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen, Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world prayed for its rescue. Here in Normandy the rescue began... One's country is worth dying for, and democracy is worth dying for, because it's the most deeply honorable form of government ever devised by man. All of you loved liberty. All of you were willing to fight tyranny, and you knew the people of your countries

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<sup>117</sup> *Normandy, Brittany*, French National Railroads (SNCF), 1950.

<sup>118</sup> *Normandy Brittany France*, French National Railroads (SNCF), 1953, 1956.

<sup>119</sup> *Normandy Brittany France*, French National Railroads (SNCF), 1957

<sup>120</sup> John Ardagh, *France*, DK Publishers (New York): 2003, 240.



were behind you.”<sup>121</sup> While many presidents since have used D-day commemorations as platforms to preach their political agenda, this was not always the case. In fact, the first sitting president to make a pilgrimage to the landing beaches was Jimmy Carter in 1978, followed by Ronald Reagan in 1984.<sup>122</sup> The timing of Carter’s and Reagan’s key visits, and the increasing emphasis on D-day in Normandy’s tourism narrative is no coincidence. In fact, this corresponds with a political narrative dating back to the 1950s with the French and American involvement in the Vietnam War and the Cold War, and later Desert Storm and the Iraq War – all which arguably became extensions of the D-day narrative.

The purpose of this paper is not to present a historical analysis of each war, but instead show the relationship between the political agendas of France and the United States and the tourism narrative in Normandy. Seemingly unrelated, the two could not have more in common. By re-affirming the myth of liberation in Normandy’s tourist gaze, both the United States and France re-affirm the idea that war is justified in the name of freedom, or as means to achieve a greater good. Earlier in this paper, it was suggested that France initially accepted the myth of liberation immediately after the war as a way to make sense of the unmeasurable destruction and move forward knowing that the mutilation of the region was a noble sacrifice, necessary to secure freedom and democracy in Europe. In the same way, France continued to accept, and the US continued to promote the liberation myth to help justify each country’s actions in Vietnam and involvement in the Cold War. The United States’ active role in commemorating D-day and its role in Franco-American relations can help explain why Utah and Omaha beaches appear to have a more significant status than the others, after all, these are the two beaches of predominantly American landings.

Analyzing the speeches made by U.S. and French Presidents during the D-Day commemorations is another way to uncover the role of international affairs as they show political agendas and tensions quite bluntly. In 1978, Both President Carter and D’Estaing outline their joint dedication for liberty, the “most precious of all possessions”, at all costs, working “in the pursuit of peace with all those who want freedom to spread throughout the world.”<sup>123</sup> Both Presidents use the D-Day narrative to remind both Americans and French of the heroic and necessary aspects of war as a means to secure peace and liberty, at a time when Vietnam was still so unpopular. The quote at the beginning of the chapter by Ronald Reagan at the 40<sup>th</sup> commemoration, is clearly exploiting the D-day narrative to advance the fundamentals of democracy and position of the United States in the

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<sup>121</sup> Ronald Regan, Speech at Pont du Hoc, Pont du Hoc, France, June 4, 1984: [http://www.speechesusa.com/Transcript/ronald\\_reagan-pointduhoc.html](http://www.speechesusa.com/Transcript/ronald_reagan-pointduhoc.html).

<sup>122</sup> Former President Eisenhower visited in 1964, but he was not President at the time.

<sup>123</sup> Jimmy Carter: "Normandy, France Remarks of the President and President Giscard d'Estaing on Visiting the Site of the D-Day Landings. ," January 5, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29994>.

Cold War. In the 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration, Clinton speaks of how “the forces of freedom turned the tide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>124</sup> The speeches all echo the same tone, but it is President Bush’s speech in 2004, which really re-affirms the liberation myth. He says, “Near the village of Colleville, a young woman on a bicycle raced to her parent's farmhouse. She was worried for their safety. Seeing the shattered windows and partially caved-in roof, Anne Marie Broeckx called for her parents. As they came out of the damaged house, her father shouted, "My daughter, this is a great day for France." As it turned out, it was a great day for Anne Marie, as well. The liberating force of D-Day included the young American soldier she would marry, an Army Private who was fighting a half a mile away on Omaha Beach. It was another fine moment in Franco-American relations.”<sup>125</sup>

President Bush’s romanticized narrative, especially in regards to the French civilians highlights something that all American Presidents commemoration speeches have in common: the failure to acknowledge the Norman experience of D-Day and the lengthy reconstruction process, white-washing of the summer of 1944, reducing it to a seemingly swift fight for freedom. If these speeches show us anything, it is that the events that took place on D-Day and the proceeding summer, were anything but static. The narrative of D-Day has had a rippled through Franco-American relations throughout the decades, especially since the 1980s. If these commemoration speeches speak of D-Day’s ongoing diplomatic influence, than the tourism narrative of the region must also be considered as a continuous narrative and not something that was only influenced by the reconstruction aid under the Marshall Plan. The next section will demonstrate the importance of this continued narrative by examining France’s nomination to make the landing beaches a UNESCO World Heritage site.

### **The Landing Beaches as a UNESCO World Heritage Site**

Undeniably the most influential event on Normandy’s tourism sector, aside from D-day itself, is France’s nomination file to enter the Landing Beaches as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The nomination, submitted in 2014, came just in time for the 70th commemoration ceremonies, uncoincidentally, and includes the five landing beaches, Pointe du Hoc, the artificial harbor in Arromanches, the German battery at Longues-sur-Mer, and underwater remanants. In order to become a UNESCO World Heritage site, the nomination file must show how the propped site has

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<sup>124</sup> William J. Clinton, Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of D-Day at the United States Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, France, June 6, 1944: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50300>

<sup>125</sup> Remarks by President George Bush on Marking the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day, Office of the Press Secretary, Normandy, France, June 6, 2004, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/06/20040606.html>

outstanding universal value and meets 1/10 of the selection criteria.<sup>126</sup> In their submission, France claims that the landing beaches have significant universal value because the Atlantic Wall an example of the military genius of the twentieth century, but also symbolizes the triumph of peace and freedom. The wall separated “the the fundamental values of Human Rights from those that the Nazi domination had imposed on Europe mainland”and breaking through that wall, reestablished a “political and moral tradition in favor of human rights and reconciliation”, values which are still transmitted through D-Day sites today.<sup>127</sup> In addition to proving that the landing beaches have significant Universal value, France also demonstrated how the beaches meet two other criteria in claiming that they are landscapes illustrating significant stages in human history, and directly associated with events, ideas and beliefs that have outstanding universal significance.<sup>128</sup> According to the nomination, the beaches represent the solidarity of allied nations to liberate Europe, places of memory for the dead and a message of hope, peace and reconciliation among peoples. The nomination stresses that the landscape of the beaches symbolize a key moment in the history of the world, in which democracy and human rights prevailed over evil, values still present today, “through collective actions in the memorial field”.<sup>129</sup>

The UNESCO nomination initiatives transformed Normandy’s tourism narrative yet again, over-emphasizing it as the self-proclaimed “Land of Liberty.” Portable touch screen terminals were installed in major tourist areas so that visitors could sign a nomination petition, which currently has 61,787 signatures supporting its candidacy. Moreover, prominent leaders, academic scholars and people of wealth have expressed their support, represented by the campaign as “supporting freedom”. These include the American scholar Robert Paxton, a political scientist specializing in Vichy France, Simone Veil former president of the European Parliament, Kazumi Matsui, the mayor of Hiroshima – and the most recent addition, Christopher Forbes, an American billionaire.<sup>130</sup> These followers alone show the complex political and economic stakes in the nomination.

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<sup>126</sup> Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, World Heritage Centre, WHC.17/01, July 12 2017

<sup>127</sup> UNESCO Tentative List: The Normandy Landing Beaches 1944, Submitted by the Permanent Delegation of France to UNESCO, reference 5883, April 7 2014. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5883/>.

<sup>128</sup> In order for a site to be considered as an addition to the UNESCO World Heritage list, their nomination file must include how the site in question is of significant universal value in addition to 1/10 other criteria. A full list of the criteria, as well as a detailed explanation of the nomination and review process can be found here: Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, World Heritage Centre, WHC.17/01, July 12 2017

<sup>129</sup> UNESCO Tentative List: The Normandy Landing Beaches 1944

<sup>130</sup> Normandie Land of Liberty, Become an Ambassador, accessed August 1 2018: <http://www.liberte-normandie.com/index.php/en/2013-05-16-18-10-53/i-become-an-ambassador>

For example, Robert Paxton was a breakthrough scholar specializing in Vichy France and highly criticized when he released a book stating the France under Vichy rule was eager to collaborate with the Nazis. He even testified at the Papon Trial, already mentioned earlier as the trial for memory. Moreover, France awarded him the honorary title of an officer in the *Légion d'Honneur* in 2009.<sup>131</sup> It is also interesting that the mayor of Hiroshima supported the nomination, considering when the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was inscribed on the UNESCO list in 1996, it raised major concerns. Both China and the United States were not in favor of the inscription stating that it could actually undermine world peace and security by promoting a narrative exclusive of other Asian populations and a lack of historical perspective.<sup>132</sup> Forbes' addition to the list of supporters is also no surprise, as he is a self-proclaimed Francophile owning a chateau and museum in the region, and whose father landed – and survived- the D-Day beaches.<sup>133</sup> What is concerning is Forbes monetary influence on the project, especially since he was named chairperson of the association to “govern” the D-Day beaches just this past year.<sup>134</sup> Not only do these supporters represent stakes held in this nomination, they show the staying power and reinforcement of the Myth of Liberation.

The President of the Basse Normandie region emphasizes the perceived universality of the D-Day narrative stating that “(The UNESCO) application is relevant to the whole world, because the whole world comes to these beaches. There is no doubt that they still bear the scars of the Second World War, but they are one of the rare places where our memory of these battles has been assuaged. They are a universal symbol of peace and reconciliation between those who were once at war,” further stating that young people often come together on the beaches to promote peace and “hold events that commemorate the reconciliation of France and Germany.”<sup>135</sup> These claims of world peace are particularly surprising, as if France is pulling at strings to evoke universal value. It also provokes a clash between history and memory. Historically, D-Day did not symbolize World Peace or Human Rights, as these were not even notions that emerged until the postwar period with the establishment of the UN. These ideals were prescribed to the D-Day sites through the construction of memory, altered by current events. For example, when the major commemorations started in 1978, it was not so much about world peace as justifying wars in the name of liberty and freedom. This continued all the way through to the 2004 commemoration in the midst of the Iraq War. It was not

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<sup>131</sup> Paxton, Robert O, Mellon Professor Emeritus of Social Sciences, Modern Europe, Columbia University Department of History, accessed August 12, 2018, <https://history.columbia.edu/faculty/paxton-robert-o/>.

<sup>132</sup> ICOMOS, “Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts”, April 17 2018, 5-6.

<sup>133</sup> The Forbes Family owns Château de Balleroy, <http://www.chateau-balleroy.fr/en/chateau/>.

<sup>134</sup> Raphael Fresnais, “Debarquement. Unesco: Christopher Forbes soutient la Normandie”, *Ouest France*, September 14, 2017.

<sup>135</sup> “Normandie Land of Liberty: The initiative to list the Normandie landing beaches as a UNESCO World Heritage Site”, Press File, Published by Basse-Normandie Region, 3.

until the 2014 commemorations where this notion of world peace and reconciliation emerged, a time when humanitarian crises and human rights infractions were taking center stage with the highly mediatized situation in Syria and the Ukraine. This leads to questions concerning the sustainability of this narrative. Two decades ago it was highly militarized, now world peace and human rights dominate, what will the next 20 years bring?

This research is not the first to raise these types of questions and it certainly will not be the last. Jean Quellien, a professor at the University of Caen would seem to agree that France's nomination is problematic in his interview with *Ouest France*. Mr. Quellien states that it is necessary for France to put the fighting aside and promote freedom. However, this is difficult when the nomination file includes "underwater" heritage such as blockhouses and shipwrecks – things representing war, not peace.<sup>136</sup> Skepticism surrounding France's nomination proved to be serious, as UNESCO recently announced that their decision on the landing beaches would not be released in the summer of 2019 as expected, but a few years later in 2021.<sup>137</sup> This comes after UNESCO and ICOMOS released two reports in 2018 concerning the difficulties in inscribing sites of memory as places of World Heritage, a debate that was sparked with the nomination of the Funeral and Memorial sites of the First World War by Belgium and France.<sup>138</sup>

In this context, it is important to remember that memory is not simply the recollection of the past, but the construction of meaningful narratives. While "eye-witness accounts" and personal stories are revered with an "authentic" status, it needs to be stressed that memory targets the present and it easily molded by time, current events, and a person's self-image among other factors.<sup>139</sup> These concerns are clearly demonstrated in Normandy's D-Day narrative and their shortcomings were addressed by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in their recent report *Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts* (April 2018). It is important that the issues presented by ICOMOS be contextualized within France's nomination of the landing beaches because there is no question that sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List experience a significant rise in the number of tourists. However, more concerning than the change in the number of people visiting the site is the change in management. If inscribed, the Normandy D-Day narratives risks being forever bound to the myth of liberation. In a time when the witness generation is dying out, this can strongly contribute to

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<sup>136</sup> Jean-Christophe Lalay, "Plages du Débarquement. Nuages sur la candidature Unesco", *Ouest France*, July 2, 2018: <https://www.ouest-france.fr/normandie/plages-du-debarquement-nuages-sur-la-candidature-l-unesco-5859885>

<sup>137</sup> Philippe Thomas, "Unesco: un grain de sable pour l'inscription des plages du Débarquement?", *France Bleu*, July 3, 2018.

<sup>138</sup> "Interpretation of Sites of Memory", A project commissioned by the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO and the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Korea, January 31 2018, 1-48.

<sup>139</sup> Silberman, "Lessons in Memory Politics", 5.

the dissipation of other equally important narratives such as those of Norman civilians, displaced persons, and victims of the purge. It also risks shrouding the true consequences of war and liberation under a veil of word peace.

Two main issues to consider are the changing nature of memory (as mentioned previously) as well as the site's ties with national narrative and political agendas, which are rarely inclusive of all peoples. This takes on even greater complexity considering the nature of war. In the ICOMOS discussion paper, the committee states "If history is acknowledged as never being neutral, then neither are conflicts: one side wins the others loose, and narratives associated with sites of negative memory can also be partial. Should the World Heritage Convention be an instrument for celebrating the winners of recent conflicts and their version of history?"<sup>140</sup> While France's nomination bid tries to evoke world peace and reconciliation, it still emphasizes the role of the Allies, discrediting other narratives not only in France, but throughout Europe as a whole. As ICOMOS reminds, the memorialization of conflict is often defined by politics and the influence of a select few, insisting on their own set of truths, leading to partial narratives and the hijacking of memory to promote political ideas. How can UNESCO decide the validity of one memory of conflict over another?<sup>141</sup> If the nomination boasts the landing beaches as a site of world peace, having universal significance, then why aren't the liberation experiences of all nations involved represented?

Although France is promoting consensus in their nomination file, there are some interesting discrepancies to note. First of all, among the 38 institutional partners and 35 communal partners sponsoring the campaign, although Calvados as a whole is listed, the specific communes of Falaise and St. Lô are absent.<sup>142</sup> While this may be coincidental, their absence is quite notable considering that they were known as "hell on earth" and "the capital of ruins", respectively, destroyed in WWII. Falaise is also the location of the *Memorial des Civils dans la Guerre*, a new museum in the region which takes an alternative approach to D-Day, focusing exclusively on the Norman civilian experience from 1940-45. Also, St. Lô has a new initiative to recapture their heritage amidst the sterile postwar reconstruction, a point which will be elaborated on in a few paragraphs.

Secondly, out of the supposed 2 million visitors going to Normandy each year, just over 60,000 signatures were obtained in support of the candidacy. This can be due to a lack of organization, and hesitancy for people to share personal information. However, although 60,000 is a significant number, it only represents over 3 percent of the total number of visitors. This leads to the point that although France can prove their visitor numbers to the D-Day sites, they should not make the

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<sup>140</sup>ICOMOS, "Evaluations of World Heritage", 6.

<sup>141</sup>Idem, 7.

<sup>142</sup>Normandie Land of Liberty, Partners, Accessed August 12, 2018, <http://liberte-normandie.com/index.php/en/partenaires>.

mistake of generalizing visitor motivations. Tourists are not passive and are capable of constructing their own opinions outside of the “gaze”. Tourists visit the D-Day sites for different reasons and have different experiences once there. It also hints at potential tensions among stakeholders and their power in influencing the narrative.

As previously touched upon, the sustainability of Normandy’s tourism narrative comes into question as this research has shown that it has already undergone transformations over the years. As ICOMOS questions in their report, how long is long enough to socially reflect on and historically process an event such as WWII? One of the most obvious examples to show that France is simply not ready to “finalize” their liberation narrative is the very recent reconstruction initiative undertaken by the town of St.Lô. At the same time that the UNESCO nomination file was released, St. Lo released their own initiative called “Reconquering the Heart of St. Lô”, which aims to restore the town’s heritage overshadowed by the sanitized postwar reconstruction which “no longer fully meets the uses and wishes of the current inhabitants of Saint-Lo.”<sup>143</sup> The initiative reminds that reconstruction is not only material, but symbolic and mental as well. Perhaps this line is enough to undermine France’s entire UNESCO nomination, as it is a fierce reminder that Normandy’s WWII scars are still fresh and that the reconstruction is not yet over. While 75 years may be long enough to forget, perhaps it is not long enough to remember. Examples such as this imply that Normandy still has strides to make concerning the reconciliation of its past, and with some tensions just starting to surface now, as the 75<sup>th</sup> commemoration approaches – Normandy is not ready to “fix” the current narrative under a label of universal value.

Fixing particular memories or narratives as having “outstanding universal value” cannot only be unhelpful, but dangerous as it can contribute to divisions, rather than reconciliation, in a given society.<sup>144</sup> Aside from the addition of world peace, another narrative emerging in the past five years is that of the Norman civilian experience during the war, and more broadly France’s experience in general. Considering that some of these alternative narratives have not emerged until the past decade, what would happen to new questions surrounding France’s “Duty to Memory” and civilian representation, if the landing beaches are inscribed with the current narrative? As French scholars such as Bruckner and Todorov warn, France should not only focus on the horrors of the past as it can lead to the undermining of history and an unhealthy obsession with guilt. However, just as Bruckner warns that only paying attention to the accusers can whitewash other important aspects of an experience, both positive and negative, solely focusing on “world peace” and the liberators can whitewash the horrors of war, which are important to understand.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> “Reconquerir le Coeur de Saint-Lo: project de redynamisation du coeur de ville 2016-2022”, 2016, 4.

<sup>144</sup> ICOMOS, “Evaluations of World Heritage”, 7, 9.

<sup>145</sup> Bruckner, “The Tyranny of Guilt”; Todorov, “Memory as a Remedy for Evil”.

As mentioned, the inscription of the landing beaches will not happen in time for the 2019 75<sup>th</sup> commemoration ceremonies. But the question remains, will they, or more importantly should they ever? As for the Funeral and memorial sites of the First World War, it was announced in July 2018 that they did not secure a place on the list, in fact none of the WW1 sites nominated from Slovenia, Belgium, France and Turkey made the cut.<sup>146</sup> However, France remains hopeful in its nomination. Moving forward with the UNESCO nomination, France needs to keep in mind the impact that inscription would have on Normandy. It is not just about an economic boost, but about the sustainability and integrity of the presented D-Day narrative. As the witness generation dies out, there are less and less people to tell their stories, meaning that the WWII generation is increasingly relying on museums and memory sites to make sure their voices are heard. With the current UNESCO nomination, France risks their voices be silenced forever.

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<sup>146</sup> UNESCO World Heritage List, Newly Inscribed Properties:  
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/newproperties/?date=2018&mode=list&inscribed=1>.



## Chapter 5

### Conclusion: Normandy Tourism, Gazing into the Future

Without a doubt, the United States has had a significant influence on the tourism narrative constructed in Normandy. This influence started immediately after the war, strengthened with Marshall Plan aid and continues today, with France's nomination file to UNESCO as a prime example. However, this thesis has demonstrated that this construction was not a unilateral, imperialistic directive, but a dialogue governed by Franco-American relations. While America set the "template" for the Myth of Liberation by refusing to take accountability for their role in the destruction of Normandy, France willingly accepted and re-appropriated this narrative in order to help overcome their victimized status and humiliation after the war. Therefore, instead of focusing on how the United States shaped Normandy's tourism sector, it is more important to consider the relationship between Franco-American relations and tourism.

Although the Marshall Plan aid was necessary for the reconstruction of France, and tourism remains a lucrative addition to the economy, this thesis argues that France was not only in it for the money. Focusing purely on numbers and economics only takes into account the economic components of the tourism industry, denying existential aspects. Tourism is not only a way for a country to make money, but an outlet for a particular country to present their national narrative(s) to the world. France seized this opportunity in the postwar era as it was just as desperate to rebuild its ego, as it was its material structures. By accepting the Myth of Liberation, France was able to come to terms with the mutilation of their country and channel their humiliation into resilience, with D-Day sites slowly becoming places of national pride, instead of mourning. Rather than becoming the victim, France chose accentuate its role as the platform on which the liberation of Europe took place in hopes of reclaiming their position as a world power.

This was not without consequences. The narrative undermines not only the experiences of the Norman civilians, but also of the American soldiers who were not heroes, but young men who witnessed first-hand the hellish experiences of war. In over-emphasizing the liberation as a swift, peace-making mission, many victims in France were left to suffer in silence. This includes Norman civilians, victims of the Purge and Displaced Persons. In this way, the true liberation experience in France, a painful process that took decades, was repressed. However, there are signs of resistance. Events over the past twenty-five years have begun to expose the fissures in this noble myth by resisting the traditional roles of France and the United States in the liberation. Starting with the Papon Trial and the rise of France's Duty to Memory, and more recently the opening of the *Memorial des Civils dans La Guerre* and St-Lô's initiative to "reconquer" the heart of their city. All hint that this liberation myth may not be so enduring after all.

Yet, these initiatives are all overshadowed by France's 2014 nomination to include the Landing Beaches of 1944 on the UNESCO World Heritage List. While France argues that these sites have unique universal value, there are complications when considering universality in the context of memory and war, considering that there are "winners" and "losers", and that the effects of war prove to be long-lasting. Has enough time passed since WWII to even process the scope of its impact? ICOMOS expressed some of these concerns in their 2018 report, and UNESCO recently delayed their decision on the landing beaches from 2019 to 2021 for longer consideration. Inscribing the site onto the UNESCO World Heritage List would further engrain the Myth of Liberation into the Norman landscape, which would be devastating to the integrity of those who experienced the liberation first-hand. In an era when the witness generation to WWII is dying out, museums and memorial sites associated with the war are becoming increasingly important. These sites have the responsibility to help transmit different liberation narratives to younger generations and keep the representation of all parties involved alive. However, by masking the less favorable D-Day and Liberation experiences under a veil of World Peace seriously undermines the nature of World War II and its effect on the Norman landscape. It also fails to hold Americans accountable for their role in wartime destruction, in Normandy and throughout the world, as long as they can justify it as a fight for freedom.

Normandy serves as a good foundation to study the relationship between tourism and international relations due to its highly politicized environment. While this research focused on the political components of memory, it can be enriched by a more psychological study on the relationship between memory, tourism and international relations. This thesis chose the relationship between the United States and France, but similar studies can also be done concerning the relationship between Franco-German, Franco-Russo relations and Normandy tourism. Moreover, there exists a wealth of literature on Franco-American foreign policy in the WWII area, but more countries deserve their rightful attention, in particular Eastern Europe, which has a contrasting story to tell. Tourism's impact on postwar narratives in general would also be an interesting field of study. However, it is the relationship between tourism and international relations, which is often undermined and has yet to receive the critical attention it deserves.

The United States did not single-handedly reconstruct the tourism gaze in Normandy in the postwar era. It was a tedious process nestled within the complex realm of Franco-American relations. Although having different motives, both countries promoted the Myth of Liberation to cater to their national agendas and as a means to maintain civil diplomatic ties. The rise of the Myth of Liberation as well as the tropes promoted in mediatized accounts of D-Day molded a template of commemoration that continues to serve as a justification for war in the name of freedom, while at

the same time paradoxically claiming to promote world peace. Stakeholders in the Normandy region need to promote a more inclusive narrative, one that not only represents the civilian and reconstruction experiences in France, but one that is representative of Europe as a whole. Now more than ever, museums and memorial sites have the responsibility to help preserve and transmit alternative narratives, because if their stories are not preserved, they risk being lost forever. The current Myth of Liberation reinforced by France and the United States glosses over the realities of war and presents danger in becoming a fixed tourism narrative. Having war and extreme destruction justified in the name of perceived freedom and peace does not promote a better understanding of war itself, and why it happened. As Tzvetan Todorov said, images of crying, starving children will shock people, but will not keep history from repeating itself. It is greater understanding of events and conditions that led to its outbreak of war and destruction that help us from making the same mistakes. Justifying war by promising peace does little to help understand the nature of war and empathize with wartime experiences, instead curtailing them into small sacrifices for freedom.

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