

point of criticism. The volume excels in mapping the broad range of moral responses to economic inequities associated with trade.

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PRIGENT, ALAIN. Madeleine Marzin. Bretonne, résistante et élue communiste de Paris. Editions Manifeste/Le Merle Moqueur, Paris 2022. 388 pp. Ill. € 23.00.

Alain Prigent, a secondary school history teacher in Lannion and the author of several hundred biographical entries for the *Maitron* (*Dictionnaire biographique, mouvement ouvrier, mouvement social*), is one of the driving forces in the Maitron Association in Brittany. A historian of the French labour movement, he has conducted research on the communists of the Côtes-du-Nord (1920–1945) and on teachers there during the Third Republic. His biography of Madeleine Marzin – a schoolteacher sentenced to death as a member of the Resistance under the German occupation (but pardoned by Pétain) and, subsequently, a leading executive of the Parti communiste français (PCF), holding important elective offices in Paris from the Liberation until the late 1970s – reflects this scholarship. While this book is mainly about Madeleine Marzin, two of her brothers, Gustave Marzin and especially Francis Marzin, figure prominently as well. The work is clearly locally anchored, as scholarly knowledge of the protagonists imbues hundreds of entries in the *Maitron*, combined with scholarly knowledge of the careers of teachers, serving the dual purpose of scholarship and memorial.

In the historiographical context of the development of gender studies, the biography of an exceptional woman is certain to pique interest, even if, as we shall see, the research, which lacks sources likely to give substance to the intimate and gendered dimension of this militant destiny (testimonies, personal diary entries, correspondence), seems incomplete. Only the hundred or so letters that Madeleine Marzin sent to Renée and Louis Guilloux between 1928 and 1940 (kept at the Louis Guilloux archives) are ego documents. Her celibacy remains an enigma, despite being far from unusual among politically and intellectually emancipated women teachers.

From this perspective, while ostensibly a biography, in Prigent's study the subject, because of its singular nature, largely escapes analysis. Even the author regretfully qualifies his research as incomplete "due to the total absence of Madeleine Marzin's personal papers" (p. 347). Three aspects of this biography merit careful review, as they reveal important factors: her career as a revolutionary schoolteacher from the working class; the Rue de Buci incident during the occupation, which led to her becoming part of the communist martyrology (from which the PCF benefited after the war); and her election as a Parisian woman to important offices, albeit with only regional responsibilities.

Relying on his correspondence with the Guilloux family (Renée Guilloux was a highly respected teacher and Louis Guilloux a dedicated young writer) and on his own works on teachers, Prigent traces Madeleine Marzin's educational trajectory (École Primaire Supérieure in Rennes, after which she passed the competitive entrance examination for the École Normale de Saint-Brieuc at age seventeen in June 1925) and highlights how specific her background was. Notwithstanding the republican meritocratic myth of social advancement through the École, which, in fact, applied to only a minority of women teachers, she overcame her working-class background, carrying on an initial family cycle of success in this respect: one of her uncles had been the republican and secular mayor of Louargat. Interacting with *normaliennes*, who hailed from the lower middle classes, she considered applying to the École Normale Supérieure de l'enseignement primaire for young ladies (Fontenay-aux-Roses). However, she proved unable to adhere to the practice of gathering encyclopaedic knowledge "with no grasp of reality and entirely out of line with my expectations", she wrote (p. 31). Deeply sensitive and excessively original, she wrote to Renée Guilloux that "not a day goes by without someone calling me anarchist" (11 November 1928). She thus belonged to that minority of teachers who questioned the liberating virtue of the republican school, despised warmongering patriotism, and she was indifferent to hierarchical relationships. She "ascended" to Paris in July 1931, enrolled at the Sorbonne to study literature, then abandoned the programme: "I fled the insubstantial Sorbonne, as one might flee a corpse" (September 1931). She then joined the trade union circles of unity and communism.

Although her opinion on the German–Soviet Pact remains unknown, she identified as an activist during the World War II. In 1942, following the invasion of the USSR by the Wehrmacht, the PCF engaged in fierce resistance to the occupying forces. Madeleine Marzin was tasked with organizing the demonstration by women that took place on Rue de Buci (31 May 1942) to demand the redistribution of food products, as the author describes and analyses.² Harshly repressed, the event led to several arrests, including that of Marzin herself, who was tortured and sentenced to death on 25 June 1942. She managed to escape, but she resumed the struggle only seventeenth months later, along the periphery of the underground movement. After the war, Marzin, who remained loyal and disciplined, was elected a Deputy for Paris (1951–1958) and chairwoman of the communist group at the Paris City Hall. Thanks to her self-discipline, she avoided becoming involved in the crisis of the Paris Federation of the PCF (the Fiszbin affair) and then retired, living modestly and exemplifying self-denial, even, by analogy with Christian martyrs, an ambivalent figure of self-effacement and total commitment.

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²See also Paula Schwartz, *Today Sardines are Not for Sale: A Street Protest in Occupied Paris* (Oxford, 2020).