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ARTICLE

Emotional Relations in the Early Cold War: Power, Politics and the French Gratitude Train to Americans, 1948–1949

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This article argues that practices of gratitude were central to Franco-American relations in the early Cold War. Through the story of the French Gratitude Train to the American People in 1948–1949, it brings the diplomacy of gratitude to the heart of the post-war years, reflecting on the complicated relations between the two countries and on the ability of emotional performances of gratitude to shape as well as nuance post-1945 dynamics. Rather than focusing on political elites, this is a grassroots story which revolves around lace doilies and metal toys; women, children and veterans; lingering traumas mixed with genuine amazement. Through the lens of gratitude practice and performance, the article highlights the importance of ordinary citizens, material culture and feelings in the ideological battles and geopolitical reconfigurations of the mid-twentieth century.

Introduction

On a crisp morning in February 1949, a cargo ship slowly approached Manhattan Island. Painted on its side were large white letters which could be made out by those waiting on shore: 'MERCI AMERICA!'.[1] The *Magellan*, which had left the French port of Le Havre a couple of weeks beforehand, was arriving in New York City with a most extraordinary cargo: forty-nine French antique railway boxcars, refurbished and decorated with provincial crests. These boxcars dated back to the First World War, when they had been used to carry French and also American soldiers on the Western Front – important pieces of cultural and military heritage. But it was not the boxcars themselves which held the most value at the time: it was what was inside them. The boxcars were transporting 52,000 objects which had been chosen by French men, women and children as gifts for the American people.[2] The objects ranged hugely in shape, size and monetary value: from precious Sèvres vases and gigantic hand-woven tapestries to small toy cars and simply embroidered handkerchiefs. Almost all of them came accompanied by messages of thanks from their French donors, either written in separate letters accompanying the objects, or inscribed on the objects themselves. Why were the French making such an extravagant gift when they had only just emerged from occupation and war? Edouard Noguès, who had witnessed the German massacres at the liberation, wrote in the cover of his book: 'To the great and generous American Nation. From all our heart we say, thank you'.[3]

[1] 'The French Have a Word for It: Thanks!', *Daily Mirror*, 3 Feb. 1949, Archives Historiques Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (AH SNCF), 0020 LM 0511, III-Train de la Reconnaissance Française.

[2] The number 52,000 is the one commonly used, or '5 tons of gifts'. See 'The "Merci" Train', *Life Magazine*, 28 Feb. 1949. However, there is no full inventory of all the objects, meaning that it is difficult to gauge the exact number. Moreover, duplicates of gifts were made, whilst donors sometimes gave more than one object. Equally, some of the gifts were made of different material entities, and the letters and labels could also count towards a count of 'objects'. Finding an exact number is therefore almost impossible.

[3] E. Noguès, *Les Allemands à Saint-Astier* (1945), North Dakota State Archives (NDSA), MSS 10237, Box 2.

Four years after the liberation which had signalled the end of German occupation, French people were sending this French Gratitude Train (*Train de la Reconnaissance Française*) to show French recognition and thanks towards Americans.[4] Perhaps it had all begun in late 1947, when the French themselves had received a Friendship Train from Americans which contained 4,000 tonnes of dried goods to help them overcome the ongoing food crisis in post-war France.[5] The brainchild of the famous American political journalist Drew Pearson, the Friendship Train was a series of physical trains which traversed the United States collecting food donations from ordinary civilians and businesses to send to the starving French and Italian populations. Before the cargo from the Friendship Train was even unloaded in Le Havre in December 1947, the French railway director Louis Cast was already writing a letter to the French Ministry of Public Work and Transports about his idea to show French thanks for this American aid.[6] Faced with the generosity of the Americans, he wrote, France 'had to make a gesture worthy of Her, worthy of Those who, twice in a quarter of a century, had bled for her Liberation and the preservation of her genius'.[7]

The idea of the French Gratitude Train was thus born. The railwayman André Picard was at the root of this plan to organise the donation of these First World War-era boxcars which had transported American doughboys and to fill them with French gifts and letters of gratitude. A committee of eight people organised it over the following months. Cast was the president, Picard the General Secretary and Guy de la Vasselais, who was also General Secretary of the First World War Franco-American commemoration project *Voie de la Liberté*, was the General Commissar.[8] One woman, Anne-Marie Max, was the committee's propaganda delegate reporting to the press.[9] The project developed over the course of 1948 through a series of negotiations between the committee, French ministries of foreign affairs, national education and the interior, as well as consulates and embassies in both countries. A series of decisions were made about what kind of objects should be sent; how they would be gathered and organised; how transport would be financed; and, of course, how the objects would be distributed once they reached the United States. Crucially, it was agreed that the objects should reflect the charms of France, and that once the cargo was unloaded in the United States each boxcar would be transported to one of the forty-eight states, with the final forty-ninth boxcar divided between Washington, DC and the territory of Hawaii (not yet recognised as a state but that had contributed to the Friendship Train in 1947). The boxcars arrived in each state capital with great pomp and ceremony, not least thanks to a massive political and media campaign spearheaded by Drew Pearson. Many gifts were then put on display in fixed or travelling exhibitions for a few weeks or months. Governors and local state committees then decided how to preserve the boxcars and objects: in general, collections were dispersed, with most objects donated to local museums, institutions, communities, or even individual civilians. However, some governors decided to retain all or part of their collections in state archives and/or museums.

The Gratitude Train has been all but absent from post-war historiography, barely featuring in academic work and generally an unknown incident amongst scholars of this period.[10] And yet, the sheer

[4] In French, the term 'reconnaissance' means both 'thanks' and 'recognition' or 'acknowledgement', giving the word a greater depth than the simpler 'merci' which is often used to describe the train. For my research, I have chosen to translate it as 'Gratitude Train' because the word 'gratitude', unlike the word 'thanks', captures these ideas of thanks as well as recognition and acknowledgement.

[5] 'Food Gets to France', *Daily Mirror*, 17(?) Dec. 1947, AH SNCF, 0020 LM 0511. III-Train de la Reconnaissance Française.

[6] Letter from Louis Cast to Ministre des Travaux Publics et des Transports, 18 Dec. 1947, AH SNCF, 0020 LM 0511 (III).

[7] Ibid.

[8] The *Voie de la liberté* commemorates the path taken by General Patton's army. 'Le débarquement en 10 questions : que représentent les bornes et la voie de la liberté ?', France 3 Normandie, available at https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/normandie/2014/04/25/le-debarquement-en-10-questions-que-sont-les-bornes-et-la-voie-de-la-liberte-465987.html (last visited 19 July 2023).

[9] Other committee members were André Lobjois, vice-president; Pierre Maurice Artiguenave, treasurer; Guyon, secretary; Le Roizic, propaganda delegate for radio.

[10] Nick Saunders' work on trench art briefly alludes to some of the trench art objects in the Gratitude Train. He emphasises the complicated status of this trench art, both as treasured gift and as discarded object after the Second World War. See Nicholas J. Saunders, *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 156–7.

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size of the Gratitude Train – forty-nine boxcars filled with 52,000 objects donated by six million French people[11] – was highly unusual, making it a particularly ostentatious expression of gratitude between nations. As this article will argue, a close study of the train reveals important things about the inner workings of emotional practice and performance in post-war transatlantic relations, exposing the emotional roots, frameworks and structures of international diplomacy and high politics in the American century. The Gratitude Train showed that civilian emotions were crucial to navigating the post-war period: a Franco-American friendship depended largely on political, military and economic relations, but also required emotional connections. Furthermore, the train cannot be disassociated from its chronological significance. In the case of the Gratitude Train and its predecessor, the Friendship Train, these were both organised in the dawn of the Cold War, and the relationship between the two trains, communism and democracy was particularly significant.

Research on the Gratitude Train contributes first and foremost to our understanding of Franco-American relations. We tend to think of relations in terms of economic, military, political, social or cultural factors; but as this article argues, Franco-American relations were also emotional. This article firstly confirms the complicated relationship between the French and the Americans after the liberation, one in which admiration and tension, sympathy and frustration, intimacy and anger, gratitude and ingratitude, co-existed. In the last two decades, scholars have successfully highlighted this strong but fractious relationship in the immediate aftermath of the Allied landings.[12] Looking further into the late 1940s, the train shows how these complicated and at times contradictory rapports continued for several years. Yet the train was also a way to try to re-shape those relations. As the United States was becoming a global leader, France's empire was dissolving, its international reputation in tatters, and the French people were experiencing an acute material crisis.[13] This article therefore shows that emotional relations were not uni-directional. Rather, through performance, language and objects on the train, the expression of French gratitude was an attempt to both consolidate new post-war alliances in view of the commuinst threat, but also to challenge the power dynamic of American domination. Expressing gratitude to Americans may have ensured humanitarian aid and a democratic, anti-communist future, but it was also a way to restore France's dignity and greatness, and especially its cultural superiority. Indeed, the objects were transported in the opposite direction of the otherwise West-East transatlantic spread of Americanisation and show a counter-wave of European material culture across North America.[14] This overlaps with what Philip Nord and others have argued, that post-war France and Europe more broadly were not purely defined by their dependence on the United States, but also on their own desires for cultural continuation or renewal.[15] Crucially, it highlights the complexities – but ultimately the importance – of emotional relationships between states.

The train also emphasises the importance of everyday life and material culture in the Cold War. Many excellent works have explained the tense relations between France and the United States at

[11] The exact number of donors is also very hard to calculate, but these are the figures most frequently referred to.

[12] Olivier Wieviorka, *Normandy: The Landings to the Liberation of Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008). trans. M. B. DeBevoise; Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Stéphane Lamache, *La Normandie Américaine* (Paris: Larousse, 2010). See also Jean-Luc Leleu, *The Canadians at Falaise, 16th/17th August 1944* (Louviers: YSEC Editions, 2007); Jean-Luc Leleu, ed., *Le Débarquement: De l'Événement à l'épopée. Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de recherche d'histoire quantitative au Mémorial de Caen du 21 au 23 mai 2014* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018); Régine Torrent, *La France américaine: contreverses de la libération* (Brussels: Racine, 2004).

[13] The problem of Indochina was a growing concern for France, particularly in 1949. See Georges-Henri Soutou, ed., *Documents diplomatiques français: 1949 Tomes I et II* (Paris: Peter Lang, 2014). For recent overviews of France in the Cold War, see Georges-Henri Soutou, *La Guerre froide de la France, 1941–1990* (Paris: Tallandier, 2014); Sylvie Le Clech and Michel Hastings, *La France en guerre froide. Nouvelles questions* (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2015).

[14] Ludivine Broch, 'The 52,000 Gifts of the Gratitude Train: Objects, Emotions, and Franco-American Relations after the Second World War', *French History* (in press).

[15] Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

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the highest political levels,[16] but the growing literature on Cold War cultural history encourages us to look away from the main superpowers and politicians and to focus more on ordinary life, objects and feelings.[17] If the Gratitude Train story is deeply entangled in political and ideological considerations at the highest levels, it remains a story of grassroots feelings and realities. Many of the train gifts were humble, like the small bell and button which arrived in Nebraska, whilst the attached letters highlighted the emotional depth of many of these gifts. When the donor of the bell and button described his small donation, the objects he gave became loaded with trauma and memory: 'Small bell made on the front by a veteran of the Great War with a German 77 shell fuze, and a button taken from a German prisoner'.[18] Other letters were thoughtful and intimate, an attempt to connect with strangers across the world: 'Dear Unknown friends, here are "Santons Lanquedociens" which will decorate your celebrations this Christmas which I hope will be pretty and gay'.[19] Americans were 'charmed' by this 'international friendship gesture' and thousands braved the cold winds and snow across northern states to greet the boxcars as they arrived in state capitals in February 1949.[20] Shifting our gaze onto civilians and everyday objects in the early Cold War shows not only the intimate lives and materialities of this period, but a desire for authenticity and closeness.

Finally, the study of gratitude stretches our understanding of emotions in the twentieth century. The hard sciences have positioned emotions in the realm of the universal and the physical, but historians have shown them as deeply embedded in, and shaped by, different cultural, social, economic and political structures. Concepts of emotional regimes and emotional communities developed by William Reddy and Barbara Rosenwein respectively at the turn of the last century have been particularly influential in showing that, far from being fixed, individual concepts, emotions are fluid and collective, existing within a range of spaces, power structures and hierarchies.[21] Since the 1980s a growing line of historians of emotions have shown these structural and collective understandings of human emotion.[22] More recently, historians have joined political scientists in exploring the emotional world of international relations.[23]

The specific role of 'gratitude', though, is often overlooked in histories of emotions. This article shows the centrality of gratitude in international relations in the mid-twentieth century. New power dynamics played out subtly between giver and receiver and carried heavy connotations of

[16] Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): Gérard Bossuat, *La France, l'aide américaine et la construction européenne 1944–1954. Vols I et II* (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 1997).

[17] Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Annette Vowinkel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn, 2012); Philippe Buton, Olivier Büttner and Michel Hastings, eds., *La Guerre froide vue d'en bas* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2014); Frederico Romero, 'Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads', *Cold War History*, 14, no. 1 (2014): 685––703; Simo Mikkonen, Jari Parkkinen and Giles Scott-Smith, 'Exploring Culture in and of the Cold War', in *Entangled East and West: Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War*, eds. Simo Mikkonen, Giles Scott-Smith and Jari Parkkinen (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), 1–12.

[18] Handwritten note by Bivert Vapaille, Nebraska History Museum (NHM): French Gratitude Train Collection (FGTC), 7144–270.

[19] Handwritten note signed Bastard from Montpellier, NHM: FGTC, 7144–233.

[20] 'Kansas Citians Brave Sleet to Cheer "Thank You" Train', *The Wichita Sunday Eagle*, 13 Feb. 1939, Lyndon B. Johnson Library (LBJ): Drew Pearson Personal Papers (Pearson) G306–1, French 'Merci' Car Makes Friends in Kansas.

[21] William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press, 2006).

[22] For useful introductions to the (historical) study of emotions, see Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Katie Barclay, *The History of Emotions: A Student Guide to Methods and Sources* (London: Red Globe Press, 2020).

[23] Todd Hall, *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Karl Gustafsson and Todd Hall, 'The Politics of Emotions in International Relations: Who Gets to Feel What, Whose Emotions Matter, and the "History Problem" in Sino-Japanese Relations', *International Studies Quarterly*, 65, no. 4, (2021): 973–84.

indebtedness, inferiority and humiliation as well as thanks, friendship and acknowledgement.[24] This article thus simultaneously broadens traditional ideas of post-war emotions – mourning, grief, trauma, angst – and shows the darker, and more political, implications of 'positive' emotions.[25] The specific politics of *ingratitude* come into sharp relief in the archives, showing how the refusal to be grateful was a threat to post-war diplomacy, international relations and democracy itself. This builds on recent work by scholars who have explored how positive emotions were heavily present in the post-war landscape. The political scientist Simon Koschut has argued that 'feeling rules' – what he describes as emotional forms of governance – helped to create and consolidate international alliances and draw clear lines between insiders and outsiders, and the works of historians Ilaria Scaglia and Rachel Applebaum are valuable case studies which illustrate this.[26]

This is not to say that there have been no studies of gratitude. Often, they are reserved to psychological and scientific fields, and the edited volume by Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough offers an excellent introduction.[27] One set of studies has highlighted the centrality of gratitude within the moral economies of the post-war periods. When E. P. Thompson developed his concept of moral economy in 1971 he was referring to practices of exchange and reciprocity which were rooted in morals, ethics and ideas of decency, but which disappeared in the advent of the capitalist economy.[28] Scholars have nuanced this chronology to show how morals and values continuously shape different economic systems.[29] Claude Barois, Bruno Cabanes and Guillaume Piketty have described the mutual obligations which arose after the First World War and argued that a moral economy of gratitude lay at the very heart of relations between civilians and soldiers after 1918: the former had to express gratitude for the sacrifice of the latter. Through speeches, decorations, monuments and commemorations, the symbolic power of gratitude had a more profound impact on soldiers than their often measly financial compensation, and created new moral hierarchies.[30] It is not the aim of this article to address the concept of moral economy in full, but the Gratitude Train shows the inescapable link between morality, exchange and power in twentieth-century international relations.

This article draws on the rich material, visual and textual archives of the Gratitude Train found in archives across France and the United States. The diplomatic archives in France show that the Gratitude Train needs to be understood within the wider cultural diplomacy between France and the United States. The departmental archives add a civilian perspective, as prefectures acted as important hinges in the distribution of aid and, in this case, the collection of gifts. In the United States, presidential libraries hold important personal collections, not least the papers of Drew Pearson, who organised the distribution of the Gratitude Train in 1949 due to his earlier role in the Friendship Train. These collections show that the train was embedded in a wider network of food relief for Europe and anti-communist

[24] Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, eds., *The Psychology of Gratitude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See in particular the foreword by Robert E. Solomon and the Introduction by Emmons and McCullough.

[25] Frank Biess, *German Angst: Fear and Democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Other scholars have complicated the history of positive emotions, such as Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness 1680–1790* (London: Penguin, 2022) and Gerda Wielander and Derek Hird, eds., *Chinese Discourses on Happiness* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018).

[26] Simon Koschut, 'A Critical Perspective on Emotions in International Relations', in *Handbook of Critical International Relations*, ed. Steven C. Roach (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2020), 72–89. See Ilaria Scaglia, *The Emotions of Internationalism: Feeling International Cooperation in the Alps in the Interwar Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[27] Emmons and McCullough, eds., *The Psychology of Gratitude*.

[28] E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76–136.

[29] Ute Frevert, ed., *Moral Economies* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rprecht Verlage, 2019).

[30] Claude Barrois, *Psychanalyse du guerrier* (Paris: Hachette, 1993); Bruno Cabanes, 'La démobilisation des soldats français', *Les Cahiers de la paix* 7 (2000): 55–65. Guillaume Piketty, 'Economie morale de la reconnaissance. L'Ordre de la Libération au péril de la sortie de Seconde guerre mondiale', *Histoire@Politique*, 3 (2007) 5-5. CAIRN.INFO, shs.cairn.info/revue-histoire-politique-2007-3-page-5?lang=fr.

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propaganda. But it is in the specialist collections of state museums, archives and historical societies that we can truly grasp the unique nature of the Gratitude Train. It is in Carson City, Nevada, in Phoenix, Arizona, in Bismarck, North Dakota, and in Lincoln, Nebraska, that we find hundreds of letters and gifts from the French donors which introduce us to the private lives and materialities of the mid-twentieth century: 'Piece obtention(?) by my mother at fifteen years' wrote one donor, sending over the jewellery she had inherited from her mother.[31] Such sources help to capture the intimacy, emotion and messiness embodied in this transnational gift made at the very heart of the age of extremes.

The first section introduces the complexity of Franco-American relations at the liberation of 1944, and traces the emergence of the label of French 'ingratitude'. The second focuses on the Gratitude Train, which challenges ideas of French ingratitude but also captures the more politicised hopes for a democratic future and a peaceful transatlantic alliance. By including the example of the Friendship Train, it underlines how gifts and gratitude were used to reinforce social bonds. Yet as the final section argues, positive emotions such as gratitude were thornier than expected. More than a 'thank you' expressed to ensure international friendship, the Gratitude Train also challenged the idea of American cultural supremacy, showed the importance of intimacy in high politics, and revealed the limitations of American anti-communist propaganda. In the end, this unique case study highlights the political significance of gratitude in the twentieth century at all societal levels, and of the desire for intimacy in the international relations of the early Cold War.

Liberation, Aid and French 'Ingratitude'

Most of us are familiar with the photographs of French people joyfully celebrating their liberation from German occupation in 1944, often heartily welcoming American soldiers, arms wrapped around them, smiles on their faces. There is more than a kernel of truth in these images: Americans were greeted with concerts, and young French women danced with them in town squares.[32] One photograph shows a little French girl from Normandy greeting an American GI with a kiss.[33] Although this may have been staged by her mother or the photographer, it is also true that children were especially taken with American soldiers, who were much more open than the British or Canadians.[34] Infantryman Thomas H. Brusveen recalled this euphoria combined with gratitude: 'the French people were just tremendously grateful to the Americans comin' in because they knew this was their liberation'.[35] In Central Europe, Agnès Humbert became loyal friends with an American soldier following her liberation from Nazi camps.[36] The loss of American life had been significant during the liberation of northern France (on 6 June 1944 alone, 160,000 American men arrived in Normandy; 14,000 of them were injured or killed on that first day[37]) and of Europe later on, so should the French (and Europeans more broadly) not be grateful?

But from the first days of the landings in Normandy, Franco-American relations were ambiguous, a combination of relief, joy, calm, frustration and sadness. Mixed in with the euphoria of liberation photographs was a resentment for the Allied aerial bombings which had killed so many Frenchmen. Brusveen remembered the bombings over Omaha Beach before the landings, and how 'some Frenchmen [were] killed there'. The French 'held [it] against us quite a bit', he remarked.[38]

[31] Husson, inherited from her mother, Delph Briscoe Centre for American History (Briscoe): 2449a UT Texas Memorial Museum (TMM) Collection (2003-142) Letters etc. TX23. 955-269-2A and 2B.

[32] Wieviorka, *Normandy*, 324. See his chapter 'Liberators and Liberated' in particular.

[33] 'The kiss of the liberation', photograph by the American GI Tony Vaccaro, 83rd Infantry Division, Saint-Briac, 14 Aug. 1944, in Anaïs Guilpin, 'Le baiser de la libération', *Histoire par l'image*, available at histoire-image.org/etudes/baiser-liberation (last visited 23 Dec. 2022).

[34] Lamache, *La Normandie Américaine*, 22.

[35] Thomas H. Brusveen, Infantryman, United States Army, WWII 1999, 19, Wisconsin Veterans Museum (WVM), Oral History Transcripts, OH 209.

[36] Agnès Humbert, *Resistance: Memoirs of Occupied France* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).

[37] These numbers are from Torrent, *La France américaine*, 13.

[38] Brusveen, 1999, WVM, OH 209.

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Equally, American GIs were wary of French civilians, fearful of death and betrayal: they approached them with caution, sometimes using locals to scope out areas they feared might still contain Germans. This would leave uncomfortable, if not traumatic, memories on the local population.[39] Meanwhile Normans did not always assist the incoming American army. 'It was difficult', reported one soldier, 'because the farmer would tell us to go left but be simultaneously pointing to the right. Sometimes, this was done on purpose, because Americans were not always welcome in Normandy'.[40] Most often, Wieviorka noted, Normans were calm in greeting the Americans; a calmness which was sometimes misinterpreted as indifference.[41]

As time went on things got even more complicated. American rudeness, their involvement in theft and in cases of sexual assault – this 'tsunami of male lust' which Mary Louise Roberts described – caused relations to deteriorate.[42] Allied aerial destruction of local sites continued after the landings, such as the church tower of Bouvron in November 1944.[43] American attempts to control aspects of French daily life, such as sexual commerce, were also deeply unappreciated by the French.[44] If some French people had dared believe in 1944 that the American and British were 'messengers of freedom', many had soon 'opened their eyes to the realities of the liberation' following 'a series of disappointments'.[45]

A myth of French ingratitude emerged from this intense cocktail of emotional reactions. The hostility, ambivalence and even calmness of parts of the French population towards GIs, but also Allies more broadly, was quickly labelled as 'ingratitude'. The label of ingratitude is a serious one: Seneca described it as one of the 'great vices';[46] Aquinas considered it a sin.[47] For Immanuel Kant, ingratitude was the 'essence of vileness', a devilish, inhumane vice.[48] For David Hume, it was 'the most horrible and unnatural crime that a person is capable of committing'.[49] In 1944, one Canadian soldier had been 'disappointed by the French attitude', which he considered 'ungrateful and capricious'. He resented how the French were constantly complaining, 'and their inability to recognise the sacrifices made by the Allies who came to their rescue'.[50] In 1945, journalist David Lawrence had gotten wind through

[39] Lamache, *La Normandie Américaine*, 11–13.

[40] Dir. Christian Baueur, 'Les Ritchie Boys', documentary released 25 Feb. 2007 on Arte (Germany, 2004), 93 mins, cited in Lamache, *La Normandie Américaine*, 12.

[41] Wieviorka places emphasis on this sense of calm. See 'Liberators and Liberated', in Wieviorka, *Normandy*.

[42] Ibid.; Peter Lieb, 'Ampleur et limites de la violence lors de la bataille de Normandie', in *Le Débarquement*, ed. Leleu, 107–99. Jennifer Schuessler's review of Roberts' book was one of many which picked up this term, a term which horrified some sections of the American public who struggled to accept the demystification of American military heroism. See Jennifer Schuessler, 'The Dark Side of Liberation', *The New York Times*, 20 May 2013, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/21/books/rape-by-american-soldiers-in-world-war-ii-france.html (last visited 24 July 2023).

[43] Gildea, *Marianne*, 363.

[44] The attempt to control intimate relations in France is something that Roberts explores in 'The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease and the American Military in France 1944–1946', *American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (Oct. 2010): 1002–30.

[45] Marcel Ferney, 'La politique anglo-saxonne et les résistances européennes', *Esprit* 140, no. 12 (1947): 853–8. Marcel Ferney was then writing for the left-wing literary review *Esprit*, run by the ex-resister Emmanuel Mounier. For more on *Esprit*, see '*Esprit*, une revue dans l'histoire. 1932–2002', available at https://esprit.presse.fr/historique (last visited 22 Oct. 2022).

[46] Edward J. Harpham, 'Gratitude in the History of Ideas', in *Psychology of Gratitude*, eds. Emmons and McCullough, 19–36.

[47] Peter Leithart, 'Acquinas on Gratitude', 30 Mar. 2006, available at https://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2006/03/aquinas-on-gratitude/ (last visited 25 Aug. 2022).

[48] Immanuel Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). On questioning this definition of gratitude and ingratitude, see J. L. Navarro and J. R. H. Tudge, 'What is Gratitude? Ingratitude Provides the Answer', *Human Development* 64 (2020): 83–96.

[49] Robert A. Emmons, *Gratitude Works! A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), vi.

[50] Jean Martin, 'Un officier canadien avec la 3^{e} armée américaine en 1944, de la Normandie à la Lorraine en passant par l'Anjou', *Revue historique des armées*, 266 (2012), available at http://journals.openedition.org/rha/7437 (last visited 24 Dec. 2022).

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French media of growing feelings of bitterness towards Americans: he warned that the isolationist sentiment could easily increase in America if 'ungrateful French politicians' continued to attack the United States.[51] It was not just French *attitudes* which injured the feelings of certain Americans, but the return to normalcy itself. What impressed Americans, one journalist reflected, 'is the fact that the French, after we have spent money and lives to help liberate them, have been so ungrateful as to resume a semblance of normal living'.[52]

But was ingratitude something that the French truly felt regarding American sacrifice? Archives actually reveal that French gratitude for American liberation and aid was far from absent. Ernest Hemingway was 'struck' by the 'immense gratitude' amongst the French towards the Americans, and there are many accounts of friendly and quasi familial relations between the liberating armies and the local population.[53] In Saint-Briac-sur-mer, a small Breton town, three American soldiers died on 14 August 1944 as they liberated the town. Once the Germans left and the fighting stopped, people re-emerged into the streets; a photograph of a little girl kissing an American soldier became a global symbol of French liberation by the Allied. A memorial to the American soldiers who had been killed was paid for by the local citizens, and to this day annual ceremonies celebrate Franco-American friendship.[54]

If there are many examples of French gratitude after 1944, it is important to understand that these were often expressed in a specific geopolitical context. This is most evident when looking at political performances of gratitude. In August 1946, Georges Bidault, then head of the provisory government, officially thanked the Americans following the outcome of the Blum-Byrnes agreement: 'France is a great enough lady to say "merci"' he declared.[55] This agreement had been negotiated over a period of months, and saw the official wiping away of France's $2.8 billion loan, as well as an additional $650 million loan.[56] Wiping away the lend-lease loan was undoubtedly symbolic, since American reluctance to erase France's debt after the First World War had caused such resentment in France. But in many regards the decision had been taken long before negotiations in Washington had even begun. As for the additional loan, its long-term impact was almost negligible: 'The $650 million enabled France to survive another year', Irwin Wall has explained, 'but barely'.[57] More than anything else, the Blum-Byrnes negotiations had made evident the clashing visions over Germany: whilst Bidault wanted to limit German economic and industrial power, not least by bringing the Saar region into France, the Americans wanted to rebuild Germany as a central European power.[58] Bidault's statement thus came at a time when Franco-American relations were extremely tense. In light of this,

[51] *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 8 Feb. 1945, 12, available at https://newspaperarchive.com/cedar-rapids-gazette-feb-08-1945-p-12/ (last visited 21 Aug. 2022).

[52] *Statesville*, North Carolina, 31 Oct. 1944, 4, available at https://newspaperarchive.com/statesville-daily-record-oct-31-1944-p-4/ (last visited 21 Aug. 2022).

[53] Hemingway had also remarked on the figures of French women, who had been rationed and became keen cyclists. According to Liebling, Heminway was 'struck by the Parisians' immense gratitude to Americans and how the years of the occupation, with their food rationing and forced dependence on biking for transportation, had endowed the girls of Paris with the best figures in the world'. See A. J. Liebling, 'Letter from Paris', *The New Yorker*, 6 Sept. 1944, 62, available at www.newyorker.com/magazine/1944/09/30/letter-from-paris-37 (last visited 17 Jan. 2024).

[54] 'Three Americans Memorial-83rd Infantry Division', American War Memorials Overseas, Inc., available at www.uswarmemorials.org/html/monument_details.php?SiteID=892&MemID=1200 (last visited 5 Dec. 2022). 'Saint-Briac-sur-Mer. La Ville célèbre le 77e anniversaire de sa libération', *Ouest-France*, 14 Aug. 2021, available at www.ouest-france.fr/bretagne/saint-briac-sur-mer-35800/la-ville-celebre-le-77e-anniversaire-de-sa-liberation-710723a9-b796-4114-8803-192f9ecbeb64 (last visited 5 Dec. 2022).

[55] Déclaration de Georges Bidault, *Le Monde*, 2 Aug. 1946, available at www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1946/08/02/declaration-de-m-georges-bidault_1877752_1819218.html (last visited 22 Aug. 2022).

[56] For an interesting take on the Blum-Byrnes accords see Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, 'L'arrangement Blum-Byrnes à l'épreuve des faits. Les relations (cinématographiques) franco-américaines de 1944 à 1948', *Revue d'histoire du cinéma* 13 (1993): 3–49. See also Wall, *The Making of Postwar France*, 55.

[57] Ibid.

[58] For more on this specific question see Bronson Long, *No Easy Occupation: French Control of the German Saar, 1944–1957* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015).

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Bidault's official thank you to the Americans in August 1946 has a different ring to it: the phrasing implied that thanks was given as a result of France's grandeur, rather than American generosity.

French Gratitude, Transatlantic Alliances and Civilian Diplomats

For centuries, gratitude has been deeply tied to ideas of virtue, ethics and morality. Classical philosophers saw the expression of gratitude as central to divine and earthly relationships: when given a gift, not least by God, one was morally bound to show recognition and thanks. Gratitude was a great virtue, whilst ingratitude was a terrible vice. The moral imperative of expressing gratitude is still visible in the modern age. Recently, Cabanes and Piketty have argued that the moral economy of gratitude was central to the world wars, both during and immediately after the conflicts.[59] Expressing gratitude was part of a mutual obligation necessary not only to recover from wartime trauma, as Claude Barrois had highlighted, but also as a way to collectively move forward. More than a spontaneous, reactionary feeling, the moral economy of gratitude reflected deeply-rooted rituals and obligations in the modern age.

The moral qualities of gratitude ensured its centrality to societal relations. Adam Smith understood gift-exchange and gratitude as generating cycles of reciprocity and binding people together alongside theories of self-interest and economic exchange.[60] For Pierre Bourdieu, the uncertainty of reciprocity – of gratitude for and acknowledgement of the gift – was precisely what made the gift-giving process so important to ensuring social bonds: 'The most ordinary and even the seemingly most routine exchanges of ordinary life, like the "little gifts" that "bind friendship", presuppose an improvisation, and therefore a constant uncertainty which, as we say, make all their *charm*, and hence all their social efficacy'.[61] The centrality of gift-giving and gratitude to social relations was made especially clear in the essay by the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, in the early twentieth century. There was no such thing as a free gift Mauss explained, for a gift bound men together precisely through the expectation of a return of the gift. The return could come in many forms – including, of course, the expression of thanks – and over a period of time, but the expectation of this return was nonetheless there.[62] Through giving, receiving and reciprocating, men enter into a potentially endless cycle of giving and returning, of gift and gratitude, thereby creating lasting social bonds. In sixteenth-century France, popular sayings were instilled with understandings of the gift rhythm: 'One favour begets another' or 'A thing well given is never lost'.[63] The absence of this return, however, put social relations in peril.[64]

Bidault's quote in 1946 embodied this moral economy of gratitude after the war and reflected its social as well as political significance. He was not the only one to recognise the importance of saying 'thank you', of course. According to the American journalist Drew Pearson, the French were accepting American humanitarian aid in the mid-1940s without much gratitude, only 'as a matter of course'. By contrast, he stated, they had received a Soviet cargo of wheat in 1946 in Marseilles with great fanfare: '[F]lags flying, bands playing. There were street parades, a municipal holiday and paeans of praise for the great benefactors of the French people – Soviet Russia'. Pearson was convinced that the absence of overt gratitude was a problem for Americans, as it prevented them from understanding the need for

[59] Bruno Cabanes, 'Sortir de la Première Guerre mondiale (1918-début des années 1920)', *Les sociétés en guerre: 1911–1946* (Paris: Armand Collin, 2003), 79–97; Piketty, 'Economie morale de la reconnaissance'.

[60] On social bonds see Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Cosimo Books, 2007) and Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge Classics, c.1925; 2005). On a potentially never-ending cycle, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 108, where she refers to the 'gift rhythm'.

[61] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 99.

[62] Mauss, *The Gift*.

[63] Davis, *The Gift*, 20.

[64] Although many have complicated and/or criticised Mauss's theory, his essay remains one of the foundational texts for understanding the practice, performance and significance of gift-giving and gratitude, a cycle of reciprocity central to human existence. For discussions of this, see Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); James Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange & Western Capitalism since 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

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American interference in Europe at the time. 'It seems to me', he argued, 'the hardest job we face is making sure this [American] food is genuinely appreciated by the people of Europe as a friendly sacrifice'.[65] French officials agreed: 'A good many people in this country [the United States] are of the opinion that … the European people are not grateful enough to the United States'.[66]

The Friendship Train emerged from Pearson's desire to not only publicise the performance of American humanitarianism and aid, but also to 'dramatize the story of America's sacrifice' which, he hoped, would bring about French gratitude. He suggested 'running a Friendship Train straight across the United States through the heart of America, collecting food as it went, inspiring housewives and farmers of the nation to spare a bag of flour … as their contribution toward friendship with the people of Europe'. This, he believed, would ensure European gratitude and friendship towards the United States at a time when communism was spreading. Indeed, a vast humanitarian project run by civilians meant that humanitarian aid appeared genuine to the recipients. He organised for this heavily decorated train to travel across the United States, starting in Hollywood on 7 November 1947, and gather food donations in cities across the vast American territory. Following a massive media campaign, flour, evaporated milk, pasta and sugar were donated by individual Americans at every train stop (see Figure 1). By the time the train had arrived in New York City on 18 November, 4,000 tons of food had been donated to the 'poor French'.[67] The train was then transported across the Atlantic and arrived in France in Le Havre on 19 December, ready for distribution across France.[68]

The French state understood well the need to make their gratitude visible for the Friendship Train, which was, unlike the Marshall Plan, a grassroots project. Ministries of the interior, of foreign affairs and of public health notified local authorities that they should organise celebrations 'as big as possible' so that 'the American public can feel … the echo of their generous action'. Local children were involved in these celebrations to give them 'their desired shine'.[69] One girl from Dijon handed flowers to Drew Pearson's wife at the official ceremony: 'In [the name of French children], we express our greatest gratitude'.[70] Images and films of French gratitude were broadcast all over the United States, not least thanks to Pearson's political and media ties. Americans were being reassured that the grateful French had come out in their hundreds and thousands to welcome the food donations, with French children writing messages of thanks in their neat school script.[71] Other expressions of thanks included an album of children's drawings, organised by French personalities and journalists, and the *Merci des Enfants de France* and recordings of them singing regional songs.[72] The French believed these could have a big impact on the United States, since Americans were 'great sentimentalists'.[73]

Gift-giving was a common form of expressing international and diplomatic gratitude, and civilians were regularly involved in these practices in the early twentieth century. After the First World War, Belgians embroidered the sacks of flour sent by Hoover's Relief Commission for Belgium with messages of friendship and thanks. French children also sent letters of thanks to American soldiers

[65] Drew Pearson, 'Merry-go-Round', 10 Oct. 1947, Harry S Truman Presidential Library (Truman Library), White House Central Files (WHCF), Official Files. Box 703 OF 174 – F Misc (1/2).

[66] Speech, 'The People of France…', Feb. 1949, 3, Archives Diplomatiques de la Courneuve (ADC), 174-A-Train de Reconnaissance. Annexe I.

[67] The image of a pitiful France was everywhere at this point: 'Friendship Food Gets to France', *Daily Mirror*, 17(?) Dec. 1947; Dreux, 'Le Train de l'amitié', *L'Ordre de Paris*, 14–15 Dec. 1947, 1–2; 'En train, puis en bateau, "L'AMITIÉ" vient vers nous,' *Le Monde*, 14 Dec. 1947, AH SNCF: 0020 LM 0511 (III) Coupures de Presse.

[68] 'Arrival at Le Havre' (date and source unknown), AH SNCF: 0020.LM.0511. (III) Coupures de Presse.

[69] Letter from Ministre de l'Intérieur, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Ministre de la Santé Publique to all Prefects, 3, Archives Départementales (AD) Drome, 500.W.00155, Passage du Train de l'Amitié, Valence.

[70] 'Le passage à Dijon du "Train de l'Amitié"', *Bourgogne Républicain* (date unknown) 3, AD Côte d'Or, 1189.W.313. Train de l'Amitié.

[71] 'The Friendship Food Train', 7 Nov. 1947, Vol. 6, Truman Library, Dick Dickson Papers 1947–8, three scrapbooks on Friendship Train.

[72] Letter from Roger Vincent to Direction des Unions Nationales, 20 May 1948, 2, ADC, 174-E-Merci des Enfants.

[73] Letter from Association de la Presse Indépendente to Monsieur Lamarle, Directeur des 'Unions', Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 8 May 1948, ADC: 174-E-Merci des Enfants.

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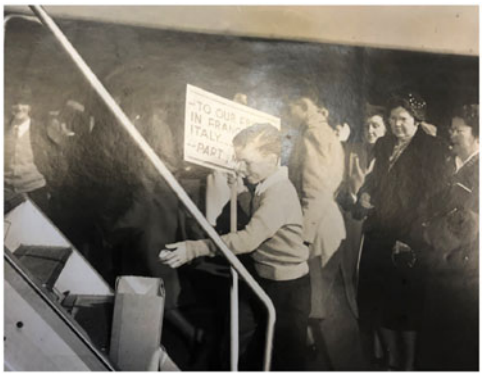

Figure 1. A child is photographed taking part in the donations to the Friendship Train: 'Little boy doing his bit', Sacramento, CA. 'The Friendship Food Train', 7 Nov. 1947, Vol. 5, 48. Dick Dickson Papers 1947–8, three scrapbooks on Friendship Train. Courtesy of the Harry S Truman Library.

after 1918, thanking them for their guardianship.[74] After the Second World War, the Dutch sent a carillon consisting of fifty clocks to the United States to thank them for Marshall Aid. Meanwhile, the Italians sent several cultural artefacts to thank Americans for their own Friendship Train.[75]

The Gratitude Train, generally described as a response to the Friendship Train, fits within this broader movement of European thanks for American military and humanitarian aid. However in the French case, the sheer size of the Gratitude Train project – from the involvement of so many sectors of the French population, to the fact that these French gifts were reaching such a vast geographical area on the other side of the earth – is mind-boggling. The 52,000 gifts came from the smallest *bourgs* to the biggest cities, and donors ranged from the French president and the brother of Charles de Gaulle to French orphans and a blind woman in northern France (see Figure 2). The gifts then reached every corner of the United States, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the great lakes to the Mexican border. Never before had French cultural diplomacy been so widely diffused across the United States.[76]

The organisation of the Gratitude Train, but also its reception in the forty-eight states, helps us to better understand its important political purpose. In France, news of the train spread mostly in the autumn of 1948. Calls for gift donations were centralised through the national press, radio and cinematographic services, and enabled individuals across the country to become aware of the train. But the information also passed through prefectures, where prefects and sub-prefects received a detailed note from the Gratitude Train Committee. The note gave the background of the initiative, as well as instructions to contact local institutions, organisations and associations to encourage donations.[77] The committee also associated itself with the nation-wide veteran associations, which comprised five million members, and who apparently joined the project with enthusiasm. So information spread through a series of national and local networks. Meanwhile, a quarter of the committee were specifically dedicated to relations with the press and radio; in addition to this, many of the committee members held prominent roles in other institutions and associations which would have facilitated a word-of-mouth effect. Anne-Marie Max was a journalist for *France Soir* and the French magazine *Realité*; M. Lobjois

[74] 'A World of Thanks: World War I Belgian Embroidered Flour Sacks', Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, Flour Sack Exhibit, available at https://hoover.archives.gov/flour-sack-exhibit (last visited 24 July 2023).

[75] A book of woodcuts was one of the many expressions of thanks from Italian localities: Omaggio della Provincia di Gorizia, LBJ, G306 – 1. The Netherlands Carillon sits in the George Washington Memorial Park in Washington, DC. 'Netherlands Carillon', available at https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/historyculture/netherlandscarillon.htm (last visited 24 July 2023).

[76] Claire Henden shows the uneven circulation of travelling exhibitions of French impressionists across the East and Mid-West regions between 1883 and 1907. Claire Henden (2019), 'French Impressionism in the United States' Greater Midwest: The 1907–8 Traveling Exhibition', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 18/1 (2019), available at https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring19/hendren-on-french-impressionism-in-the-united-states-greater-midwest-the-1907-8-traveling-exhibition (last visited 20 May 2021).

[77] Letter from sub-prefect of Béziers to prefect of Hérault, 30 Nov. 1948; Note on the 'Gratitude Train', AD Hérault, 2 W 57. Train de la Reconnaissance.

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Figure 2. Orphan girls at the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul bring their presents for the Gratitude Train. Merci Train Pictures, Drew Pearson Papers, G730. Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library & Museum.

and M. Artiguenave were vice-presidents of the national railway veteran association, the Fédération *Nationale des Anciens Combattants des Chemins de fer Français*, and Lobjois was president of the National Association of Mutilated Eyes; Cast and Picard were, respectively, president and general delegate of the national railway veteran association, whilst the Commandant Guy de la Vasselais was the General Secretary of the *Voie de la Liberté*. M. Guyon was also honorary president of the *Union des Anciens Combattant de la Région Ouest de la SNCF*. These strong connections with veteran associations and the press would have been extremely useful in the dissemination of information. Crucially, the message was for French people to donate gifts from their homes which they believed represented the charms and strengths of France. Civilians then brought the gifts to local railway stations, where they were transported for free to Paris and distributed amongst the boxcars.

What seems interesting is that by late November 1948 – only weeks before the train was planned to arrive in the United States – there was a firmer push to actively involve prefectures in garnering public donations. It is quite possible that enthusiasm had not been so easy to achieve, or messages not so easy to spread at the national level, such that few donations had initially come in. Then, the transportation of the boxcars and gifts, originally planned for December, had to be pushed back at the last minute to mid-January because of the availability of the *Magellan*, which was supposed to transport the boxcars, gifts and certain members of a French committee. So it was only in early February that the train arrived in the United States. There, a special committee spear-headed by Pearson had arranged for celebrations in New York City, Washington, DC and then every state capital across the country. On the first few days, the mayor of New York City, William O'Dwyer, welcomed the French committee who accompanied the train across the Atlantic.[78] 'The dream was beginning', wrote Michel Junot, who was part of the French delegation accompanying the train in 1949, and witnessed the water canons and sirens welcoming the *Magellan* into New York harbour. After festivities in New York, the boxcars were divided across the country and greeted in cities and capitals with ceremonies, parades and grand dinners. The French committee split up, with small groups of them following different clusters of boxcars across the country.

[78] Michel Junot, *J'ai connu trois républiques* (Versailles: Éditions de Paris, 2008), 198.

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The excitement of seeing America was incredible for someone like Junot. As he watched the parade in New York City, he was intrigued by the 'curious mix' of military detachments and cheerleaders, and describes what can only be understood as an intense sensorial experience. Some children had been taken out of school that morning, and small pieces of paper were falling from the skyscrapers as the crowds clapped below: 'I could not believe my eyes, or my ears. Never had myself nor my companions ever seen anything like it'.[79] After New York, the boxcars were separated to travel to every single state, each time welcomed by crowds and celebrations (see Figure 3). Junot himself travelled to the South, visiting Georgia, Louisiana and other states. He described his stop in Montgomery, Alabama as simple and charming, dining with the governor and his wife, and honouring the war dead by laying a wreath on the grave of Free French pilots who had died in training in 1944. Once the boxcars had arrived in the state capitals the objects were unloaded and displayed in town halls, museums or schools. Sometimes, they toured the state. In Wisconsin, dozens of mayors – from Manitowoc to Green Bay to Chicago – had written to the governor asking for the objects to come through their town.[80] The media frenzy around the train was actively challenging the label of French ingratitude: the French, in fact, knew how to say 'thanks'.[81]

The welcome ceremonies emphasised the ideological closeness of both countries, a way of drawing the two countries and cultures together around ideas of republicanism, revolution and democracy. In his speech, Governor Tuck from Virginia underlined that France and the United States held 'common aspirations, mutual respect for the rights of individuals, an abiding faith in the principles of democracy'.[82] The mayor of San Francisco, Elmer Robinson, also commented: 'Today out of a Europe that is anxious and apprehensive at the stirrings of a new tyranny, this car and its gifts come to us as a symbol, but far more, I believe, as a pledge. It is a pledge, a simple, strong pledge, that the people of France and the people of the United States are at one in their fundamental beliefs'.[83] Many of the donors and recipients seem to have understood the train as part of a much longer cycle of gift-giving and reciprocity between the United States and France due to their shared history and ideology. 'For centuries', declared French officials at state ceremonies, 'the United States and France have been linked by the strongest bonds of community of ideals, forged on the battlefield of two World Wars in a single generation for the defence of democratic rights, justice and freedom'.[84] The large photographic print of Lafayette's office found in the Texas boxcar is a fairly common example of gifts which highlighted the shared revolutionary and republican past of the two nations.[85] Lafayette was an iconic figure symbolising Franco-American friendship and republican brotherhood, but the Marquis's image also hinted that the French, too, had given to the United States: through the person of Lafayette, it was the French who had given the original gift of aid and support during the American Revolution. Eugène Fleurant donated a bust of Lafayette, who had 'appeared in the eyes of Washington and his troops, in the sinister and heavy sky of the American Revolution, like a lucky star'.[86]

But for this alliance to be taken seriously, it had to appear genuine. The Gratitude Train was successful precisely because of the intimacy of its hundreds of objects and letters. There was something deeply personal about thanking Americans, and some of the messages accompanying the Gratitude Train objects show a poignant connection. The small commode from 1748 from Marguerite

[79] Junot, *J'ai Connu Trois Républiques*, 198.

[80] Merci Train Correspondence 1947–9, Wisconsin Historical State Archives (WHSA), Series 975 MAD 4 /81/E3, Box 1. State Historical Society of Wisconsin. State Historical Museum. Museum Exhibits File, 1949–57.

[81] 'French Have a Word for It: Thanks!', *Daily Mirror*, 3 Feb. 1949, AH SNCF, 0020 LM 0511 (III).

[82] 'Ceremonies at Capitol, Parade Attend Arrival of "Merci" Boxcar Here', *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 Feb. 1949, LBJ, Pearson. G312-3 The Merci Train – Richmond, VA.

[83] Remarks of Mayor Elmer E. Robinson accepting French 'Thank You' Car, 23 Feb. 1949, San Francisco, CA, LBJ, Pearson, F125-3 French Train Miscellaneous.

[84] Speech 'The People of France…', Feb. 1949, 3, ADC, 174-A-Train de Reconnaissance. Annexe I.

[85] Photograph, Le cabinet de travail de Lafayette, Briscoe, 2449a UT Texas Memorial Museum Collection (2005–9). Prints etc. TMM 955-French Gratitude Train Folder 2. 955-151-2.

[86] Letter from Eugène Fleurant to Prefect of Pas de Calais, 14 Dec. 1948, AD Pas de Calais, M.5017.002 Train de la Reconnaissance.

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Figure 3. This parade in Quantico, VA, was typical of the welcome celebrations organised in cities across the United States. Merci Train Pictures, Quantico, Drew Pearson Papers, G730. Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library & Museum.

Stromeyer was sent out of personal, as well as traumatic, memories: 'Gratitude to the Americans for 1918 and 1944! In memory of my brother Lieutenant André Stromeyer who gave his life for France in 1916. In memory of the American soldier I saw coming down in a parachute in the Parisian sky and who I hope was spared!'[87] A little girl, Yvette Ferrari, gave a doll with a black bow on her head: '[Thank you for] having spared Draguignan during the landings, and to have liberated us without too much destruction. Despite everything we lost in Toulon we managed to save some things which we hid in Draguignan. This is the most precious thing I have'.[88] A veteran from the First World War, Marcel Rispal, gave a trumpet. 'This trumpet has her own personal story', he wrote: 'in 1918 on 11 November I [used it to] play in Paris the joy of the Allied Victory at the arc of triomphe, day of the Armistice …. The day of the Liberation August 1944 I let my trumpet's beautiful sound ring again under the arc of triumph'.[89] One father dedicated a photograph of his son, René Pierre Lacheney, to the Americans. On the back, he explained how he had lost his son. René was shot down by a German plane, 'fell into the sea and found on 19 June 1940 on the Gravelines beach'.[90] The messages accompanying these objects – a trumpet, a doll, a photograph – infuse them with emotional power. Once ordinary, the objects now tell stories of a violent past, of broken families, of memories of loved ones, of loss, of mourning.

Drew Pearson ascribed the French donors who participated in the Gratitude Train with a crucial, and sincere, diplomatic role: it was one thing to pay taxes, he wrote, and for a small part of those taxes to support diplomats and consuls in foreign countries; but to give these gifts, these personal donations, was something else entirely. French civilians, he said, had been turned into French diplomats (see Figure 4).[91]

[87] Postcard, Woman in Folk Costume. From Marguerite Stromeyer, Paris, Dec. 1948, NHM FGTC, 7144-245 (or 137).
[88] Letter from Yvette Ferrari, Nimes, 14 Nov. 1948, NHM, FGTC, 7144-294.
[89] Letter from Marcel Rispal, Briscoe, 2449a UT TMM Collection (2003-142) Letters etc. 955-238-2B.
[90] Livre D'Or Hommage de Paris de l'Ile-de-France au peuple Américain, LBJ, Pearson, G312-2.
[91] Letter from Pollet Cambrouze, 29 Apr. 1949, with a clipping from *Elan Social* which had translated one of Pearson's articles, LBJ, Pearson, F125-3 Clippings for French Scrap Book.

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Figure 4. Drew Pearson standing before crowds welcoming the Gratitude Train boxcar in Richmond, VA. Merci Train Pictures. Richmond, Drew Pearson Papers, G730. Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library & Museum.

French Greatness and Ungrateful Communists

As part of a cycle of gift reciprocity, gratitude also carries with it a series of expectations, obligations and complexity. Indeed receiving gifts, particularly in the form of aid, can carry feelings of indebtedness, inferiority and humiliation.[92] The careful planning of French gratitude in this train, however, suggests that the French were using thanks as a way to redress this imbalance between the giver – the Americans – and the receiver – the French. Moreover, ingratitude was not always just an absence of gratitude but could be an active rejection of this cycle of reciprocity, a rejection of the feeling rules and obligations imposed by the new world order.

One need only study the Gratitude Train objects more closely to see that this was not an ecclectic mix of things found in attics but the material embodiment of France's ongoing quest for cultural superiority. Indeed, the objects themselves were the materialisation of the desire to re-establish French greatness. As mentioned earlier, the Gratitude Train committee made clear that they wanted to send products which would show the best of France, its art, its industry and its regional production.[93] Civilians were told to send over objects which would evoke 'the thought, traditions, charm and taste of our Country': 'glassware, crystals, porcelains, objects of art, potteries, paintings, embroideries, lace and costumes of the Provinces and, in general, all things from the world-renowned French industries and artisanship'.[94] The gifts could be put on display in New York City, the committee suggested, where they would 'honour France' and 'serve its cause'.[95] The gifts could – at least symbolically – redress the new imbalance between France and the United States. They sent over Sèvres vases; silk wedding dresses from Lyon; tapestries; a carriage from Louis XV (see Figure 5). Crucially, even the smaller gifts continued to project an image of a great France: toy cars were sent by Renault, France's foremost car manufacturer; leading fashion designers sent over a series of forty-nine customised fashion dolls; there was highly prized French lace and figurines representing French provincial traditions. Hundreds of tourism books on France and its regions were sent over, as well as hundreds of postcards of Paris and other main tourist cities and sites. It was a way of extending an invitation for Americans to return as tourists.

Personal messages of thanks made this desire to redress the image of France even more clear. The donors of books on General Leclerc and the artist Alfred Nakache inscribed a very brief message of

[92] Emmons and McCullough, *The Psychology of Gratitude*.
[93] Letter Cast, 18 Dec. 1947, AH SNCF, 0020 LM 0511 (III).
[94] Appel des préfectures, 4-page note, AD Pas de Calais, M.5017.002.
[95] Letter Cast, 18 Dec. 1947, AH SNCF, 0020 LM 0511 (III).

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Figure 5. One of the hundreds of French craftsmen who constructed models of coaches, here putting the finishing touches on a Louis XV coach which will be included in the cargo of the French Gratitude Train, bearing gifts from the people of France to the people of America in grateful thanks for the American Friendship Train. The French Gratitude Train Committee Circle. Merci Train Pictures, Drew Pearson Papers, G730. Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library & Museum.

thanks to the Americans on the front cover, but many of the messages were longer and were specifically aimed at praising the qualities of French military skill, patriotism and artistic '*power*'.[96] One donor wrote on the cover of a beautiful book on Van Gogh: 'To one of our American friends in the hope that this reproduction of a famous painting will allow him to better know our great painters'.[97] Even the children who drew the journey of the Gratitude Train drew France imposing over the Atlantic in a completely disproportionate way.[98] After the shame of Vichy, and of being recipients of such quantities of aid, France's honour could be restored through the double-edged sword of gratitude.

Of course Americans – and even the French – understood that French 'greatness' needed to be managed. If the French needed to be grateful, they should not over-do it. The French needed to show a degree of restraint in order to be taken seriously. When they first heard of the idea of the Gratitude Train in spring 1948, the Cooperative Council of Voluntary Agencies in the United States immediately remarked that the American psyche would struggle to grapple with the idea that France, who was supposed to be so 'poor', and to whom they had just sent so much in terms of goods and money, was now sending back luxury products as a 'thank you'. If they had such luxuries, why ever did they need American aid?[99] Drew Pearson shared these concerns: at the time the Marshall Plan was being launched, the French could not be seen to be brimming with luxuries to the point that

[96] Le General Leclerc, 1902–1947, Album hors-série édite par France-Illustration pour l'Association des Français Libres; Georges Turpin, *Armand Nakache* (Paris: Editions Claude Imbert, 1948), NDSA, MSS 10237. Box 1, books.

[97] Frank Elgar, *Le Pont de l'Anglois, Van Gogh* (Paris: Le Musée des Chefs-d'Oeuvre, 1948) Inscription showing they want to 'educate' the Americans. NDSA, MSS 10237, Box 2, books.

[98] Series of student paintings from 3ème and 4ème. École Paroissiale de la Trinité, Paris, 9ème arrondissement, NHM, FGTC, 7144-53, Drawing(s), Map and Ship, Lafayette; Watercolor; etc….

[99] Letter from Mme Poinso-Chapuis, Ministre de la Santé Publique et de la Population, to Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères (Direction des Unions Internationales), 21 June 1948, ADC, 174-A-Train de Reconnaissance.

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they were just giving them away.[100] Luxury commercial goods, such as champagne, could not be included.

Indeed, part of the performance of gratitude was the need to express emotional authenticity through intimacy. The personal messages, hand-woven lace, home-made photo albums, small children's toys or drawings – all of these objects of little monetary value added depth to the gift. Without authenticity, the classical philosophers had always said, gratitude had no value. And here, Americans were delighted to see humble, intimate gifts. Granted, some of the more symbolic and valuable gifts were mentioned in the press – but it was the small things that truly moved them: the toy cars, the dolls, the tin soldiers, the lace, the souvenir boxes. 'It is like opening Grandmother's "Memory Box"', wrote one observer, 'long hidden in some attic with other rusted and moldered treasures … little bits of ribbon, lace and gilt that once meant so much and now discarded' (see Figure 6).[101]

If the French Gratitude Train challenged ideas of the 'American century' through its reassertion of French cultural superiority, American rhetoric surrounding the boxcars and gifts used the intimacy of the gifts to reinforce France's 'littleness' – a reminder to themselves of how powerful the United States had become. It started with the rhetoric around the boxcars, repeatedly described as much smaller than American rail cars.[102] Journalists referred to the 'little grey boxcars' which were 'too narrow' to fit American rail lines.[103] The language of littleness spilled into descriptions of French gifts, and even French people: one journalist commented on 'This little note from a grateful French family';[104] others repeatedly mentioned how little the French had had to offer: their gifts had come from 'the bottom of their barrel',[105] the books that they sent over came 'from what was left of their great collections'.[106] So whilst the French expression of gratitude nuanced the shifting power dynamics of the post-war world, and reminded their American friends of past French gifts and also French greatness and cultural superiority, the Americans used French gratitude to reinforce the new political reality.

The Gratitude Train was therefore a story of transatlantic bonds as much as it was a story of transatlantic tensions, of power and, of course, of ideology. Who, in fact, had donated the gifts? Were they, as the train's title claimed, all from French people?[107] Fifty-two thousand objects sound like a lot, but if we consider that there were approximately forty-one million people living in France at the time, the number suddenly seems much smaller. To capture the meaning of French gratitude we must also think of who *did not* donate. In many ways the answer will forever escape the historian: there are too many unknowns for us to determine with absolute authority why individuals gave or refused to give. Many may not have even known it was happening, whilst others may have tried to give but not had time or the logistical possibility. However, the French departmental archives are rich in examples of active ingratitude towards the Americans, allowing us to see the train's political and ideological contours.

It is necessary to go back to the Friendship Train, where we can already see that gratitude was not always the response following American humanitarian aid. Because if humanitarian aid is often studied from the perspective of those giving aid, the reception of aid is a great deal more complicated. French departmental archives show the disappointed and disgruntled French people, frustrated either because they did not receive aid from the Friendship Train, or because they felt that the list of those who could receive aid (almost exclusively children) was too narrow. 'The donations from the Friendship Train were not distributed to secular schools', wrote Mme. Bergougnan in the

[100] Letter from Ministre des Affaires Étrangères to Madame Ministre de la Santé Publique et de la Population, ADC, 174-A-Train de Reconnaissance.

[101] Letter from Mrs W. T. Fowler, Lexington, to Drew Pearson, 21 Feb. 1949, LBJ, Pearson, G311-2 Merci Train Newspaper Clippings (Misc.).

[102] Cris Hall, 'Symbol of Friendship From France Arrives', *The Clarendon-Ledger,* Jackson, MS, 14 Feb. 1949, LBJ, Pearson, G311-2.

[103] *Life Magazine*, 28 Feb. 1949, 73.

[104] Story of the Merci Train, American Legion – Grande Voiture of Minnesota 40 et 80 (Minneapolis), ADC, 174-A.

[105] '"Merci" Train Reflects the Spirit of France', date unknown, likely from a Cleveland, OH, paper, LBJ, Pearson, G311-2.

[106] Story of the Merci Train (Minneapolis), ADC, 174-A.

[107] For a digital map of where donors came from across France, see Broch, 'The 52,000 Gifts of the Gratitude Train'.

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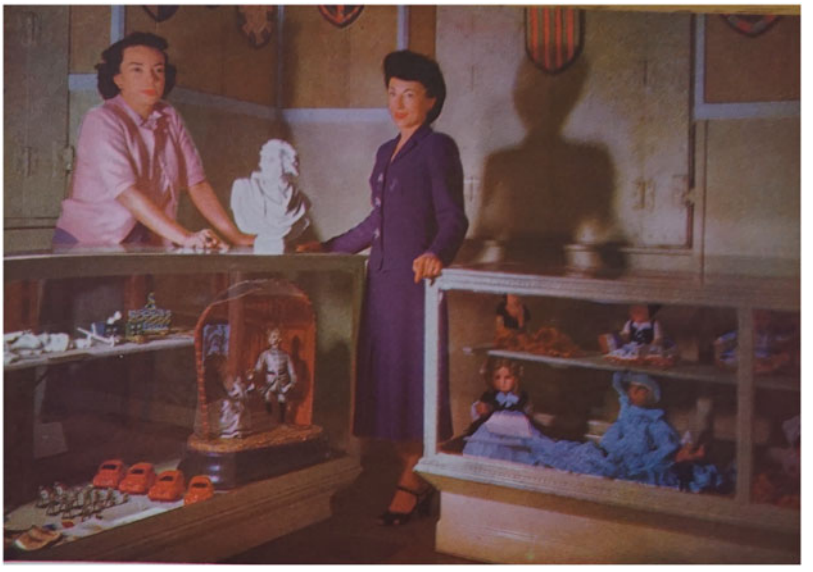

Figure 6. One of the object displays in Nevada. 'French Show Gratitude by Merci Train Gifts to Nevada', *Nevada, Highways and Parks* (1949), 5. Merci Train Newspaper Clippings (Misc.), Drew Pearson Papers, G730. Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library & Museum.

Haute-Garonne.[108] 'We can hope that if more donations occur in the future, the territorial and local bases will be wider than in the first Friendship Train', wrote one journalist.[109] Another commentator denounced the black marketing and selective distribution: 'One of the leaders in the Mennonite Church in Middlebury, Indiana went across [to Europe] with stuff gathered for the Drew Pearson Freedom Train, and he … saw with his own eyes food and clothing supposed to be given to the needy people auctioned off to the highest bidder'.[110] But there were other concerns, not least with quality. One French baker found the wheat very difficult to work with: 'I made bread for 54 days instead of 51 as initially discussed, despite the fact that American flour is hard to yield'.[111] 'It is wholly desired that the provision of corn meal be removed during the warm season', said one head of a nursery school. 'We used 3kgs, to make a soup, not appreciated by the children'.[112]

Although this was not widely broadcasted or publicised in the American press, Drew Pearson's papers show that he was aware of the problem. For him, however, the absence of gratitude was not due to a problem with the distribution of American aid, but rather because of communist activity. When one Italian reverend wrote that the 'Pentecostals and other Protestants in Italy have not received a single pound of food that was sent on the Friendship Train', his criticisms were labelled as communist propaganda. 'While we were in Italy the Communist press began to blare forth with headlines to the effect that "the Friendship Train's terminal is the Vatican"', wrote Drew Pearson to Dr Henry Hedrick in 1948. 'For that reason, we leaned over backward to make sure that the Vatican did not receive any greater preference than any other group'. For Pearson, there was no doubt that negative press came from this negative communist influence: 'I strongly suspect that the very unfair allegations made by

[108] Letter from Prefect of Haute-Garonne to the Inspector of the Académie, Toulouse, 18 Feb. 1948, AD Haute-Garonne, 2008.W.14, Friendship Train Committee.

[109] 'Le Train de l'Amitié', *Dernières Dépêches*, 3 May 1948, AD Côte d'Or, 1189.W.313. Train de l'Amitié.

[110] Letter from Minister Frank A. Webb (Michigan) to Pearson, 24 Jan. 1949, LBJ, Pearson, F117-2 Friendship Train – Distribution.

[111] Letter from J. Vialette, Boulangerie-Patisserie, to the Maire Adjoint, 13 May 1948, Municipal Archives of Lyon (MAL), 981.WP.413.

[112] Letter from Nursery School, 2 Place Général André, to the City of Lyon, 16 June 1948, MAL, 981.WP.413.

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the gentleman whom you quote in your letter were inspired by Communist propaganda. I am not insinuating that these gentlemen are Communists but I am afraid that the usual cleverness of Communist propaganda made an impression upon them'.[113]

The Gratitude Train files in French departmental archives allow us to build on this, as they show very clearly that the refusal of French people to donate to the train was, at least for some, rooted in communist activism. One worker, René Madosse, wrote in the communist paper *L'Humanité*: 'Our gratitude is not on this train. … I may have a twisted mind, but it bothers me when I hear people insisting that our follow citizens, who have been ruined by war, give "a little something" to the good Samaritans on the other side of the Atlantic'.[114] 'The irony', wrote someone in the local communist paper, *La Champagne*, is 'that the Archbishop of Reims, Monseigneur Marmottin, is calling for donations for the Gratitude Train. Not long ago he fumed against the Americans, flattered Pétain and flattered the Nazi occupier'.[115] Indeed, Marmottin was one of several religious figureheads who supported Pétain: 'It is my moral duty', he had declared during the occupation, 'to obey the head of the nation, to serve him, to support him, and a Catholic sins when he takes the side of the rebels'. The archbishop's closeness to the Vichy regime had been highly controversial at the liberation, and now sat at odds with calls to his congregation to thank Americans for their help during and after the liberation.[116]

The sub-prefect of the Hérault department, nestled in the south-west of France not far from the Pyrenees, wrote to the prefect Aldérique Lecomte that the local population was not, in fact, happy to partake. 'The national interest of this initiative', he wrote, 'has not escaped me'. But before approaching organisations to discuss it with them, he went on, he had approached the local representative of the national railway veteran association – the same one which Cast, Picard, Lobjois and Artiguenave were leading. Far from embracing this initiative, the local representative explained that 'his colleagues decided in quasi unanimity to abstain from participating in any significant way to this manifestation of sympathy and gratitude'.[117] Furthermore, he added, the short notice 'will not allow us to realise something serious or important', and the 'time of year seems ill-chosen to bring forward this kind of project'.[118] This letter not only points to the pivotal role of the prefectures in contacting associations and organisations to donate, as well as to the creation of local committees to help organise donations, but also to divisions within national organisations about whether or not they should express such thanks to the Americans.

There were a multitude of reasons for not donating to the Gratitude Train, but anti-American sentiment was never far from it. Paul Mesplé, for instance, found the train almost laughable: 'The bankers must be laughing, telling themselves: "We're getting rid of these pointless antiques we have no room for, and we're pleasing these generous Americans, to whom we owe everything, and whom we are repaying in peanuts"'.[119] There was a more pointed frustration in his commentary, not least referring to Allied destruction at the liberation: 'All those things destroyed by aerial bombings, although they could have been preserved, had Americans been concerned by preservation. If they're interested in

[113] Correspondence between Pearson and Dr Henry Hedrick, 7–16 July 1948, LBJ, Pearson, F117-2.

[114] 'Notre Reconnaissance n'est pas dans ce train', *La Défense*, 10 Dec. 1948, 3.

[115] 'Un peu de pudeur, Monseigeur', *La Champagne*, organe régional du Parti communiste français, 14 Nov. 1948. The works of Marmottin are listed in the Bibliothèque Nationale catalogue, available at https://data.bnf.fr/fr/see_all_activities/12450744/page1 (last visited 3 Dec. 2022). This includes a publication in 1941 entitled *Pour Refaire la France*. His appointment as Archbishop of Reims under Vichy, and his position throughout the occupation, were controversial.

[116] Monique Gruber, 'La résistance spirituelle, fondement et soutien de la Résistance active. L'exemple des *Cahiers clandestins du Témoignage chrétien (1941–1944)*', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 78, no. 4 (2004): 466. Citation originally found in F. Bédarida, *La Résistance Spirituelle (1941–1944)*, 16.

[117] Letter from sub-prefect of Béziers to prefect of Hérault, 30 Nov. 1938, 1, AD, Hérault 2 W 57.

[118] Ibid., 2.

[119] Paul Mesplé, Editorial, *L'Auta: que bufo un cop cado més: organe de la société les Toulousains de Toulouse et amis du vieux Toulouse*, Dec. 1948, 116–18.

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historical monuments, they are the ones who should help us put them back into shape'.[120] Anti-American sentiments were not only related to the war, though; many had emerged already in the interwar period, not least among left-wing circles. Simone Martin-Chauffier, the wife of the famous editor and resister Louis Martin-Chauffier, raged against the United States in her memoirs, deeply concerned that they might be under the impression that France owed them anything, or was entirely dependent on them.[121]

French gratitude and ingratitude were thus counter-culture expressions on a number of levels, whether they challenged the supremacy of high politics through its injection of intimacy, or of the 'American century' through its re-assertion of French cultural greatness, or as a bulwark against anti-communist propaganda. Classical philosophers already saw ingratitude as a form of breakage, a dangerous practice which could tear away at societal bonds. In the mid-twentieth century, gratitude and ingratitude were more than a virtue or a vice, or even a feeling; they were political statements which broke with dominant feeling rules, and gave civilians emotional agency to express their intimate lives.

Conclusion

The transfer of gifts and thanks from France to the United States in 1949 shows the politics of gratitude. First, because the train is a rich example of emotional performance, and in this case of who gets to – or has to – express gratitude. More specifically, the train was entangled with anti-communist and republican rhetoric, and expressing gratitude was understood to ensure a democratic future against Soviet communism. Carefully managed by the Americans, the reception of the Gratitude Train was orchestrated to reinforce a transatlantic democratic alliance (see Figure 7). The calm passion of gratitude was very different to the furious passions of fascism and communism the world had just witnessed in the first half of the twentieth century; it is perhaps for this reason that gratitude, but also ingratitude, had an important place in the emotional landscape of democratic nations in the post-war era.

Yet gratitude is more than just a positive emotion. Psychological studies of gratitude have already warned that we 'should not expect any simple relationships between gratitude and happiness', and this historical study allows us to see how and why this is the case.[122] The practice of gratitude after the Second World War involved a range of different meanings, feelings and dynamics, many of which are far from being labelled 'positive'. The train's performance highlights how gratitude was deeply tied to notions of indebtedness and obligation, but was also concerned with sincerity, or at least with the appropriate amount of feeling, which could convey important messages of recognition and thankfulness and reinforce social bonds. The wrong amount of gratitude – or rather, its absence – could do the opposite. The expressions of gratitude in the train were also often linked to ones of loss and mourning, giving this practice an altogether different tint. This is something which Cabanes and Piketty have also highlighted in their work: how gratitude for French soldiers and resisters after the world wars was not straightforward but full of tension and hierarchy. Gratitude thus captured the emotional complexity of the post-war years and allowed people to express a range of emotions which went beyond the Manichean dichotomy of gratitude/ingratitude.

The Gratitude Train also suggests that this was a time when the need for human connection and emotion was true at a private, personal level, as well as at a public, collective level. As this article has shown, the performance of gratitude, but also its reception, mattered deeply to men, women and children across the Atlantic, from ordinary civilians to political elites. The intimacy of this gratitude, embodied in those thousands of humble objects of the Gratitude Train, made it even more meaningful and righteous. Marisa Linton wrote in her introduction to *Choosing Terror* that whilst contemporary politics is about ambition or egoism, politics in the French Revolution was about much more than

[120] Ibid.
[121] Simone Martin-Chauffier, *À bientôt quand-même* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1976).
[122] Emmons and McCullough, *Psychology of Gratitude*, 9.

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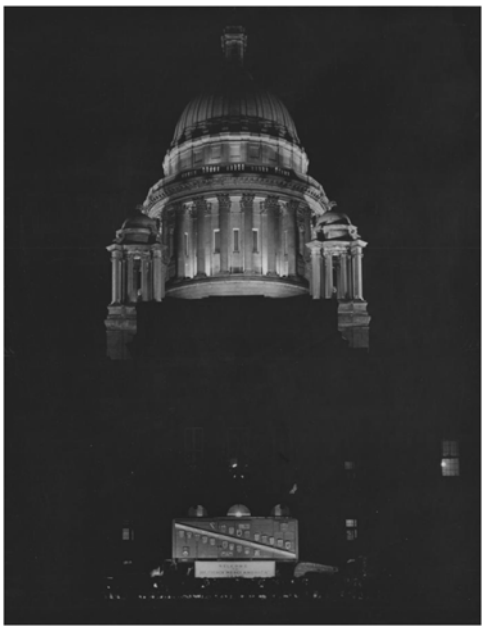

Figure 7. The Gratitude Train Rhode Island boxcar photographed in front of the state capitol. Governor's photographs, Merci America Boxcar photograph album, 1949. Courtesy of Rhode Island State Archives.

that: it was about virtue.[123] Yet as this article shows, ideas of virtue were far from absent in twentieth-century politics. Ideas of morality, of virtue and of emotional authenticity were important for Franco-American post-war rapprochement.

There is a fundamental relationship between power and emotions, and the expression of gratitude brings to the surface these complicated power and emotional dynamics between giver and receiver. In the international context of post-war and Franco-American relations, the Gratitude Train was much more than a righteous, passive, response to receiving aid: it was a powerful tool which allowed civilians to convey, but also challenge, the new status quo. After the war, the gratitude that some French people expressed through the train was almost excessive, imbued with national feelings of honour and greatness; on the other hand, those who refused to show gratitude risked challenging the new transatlantic power dynamics of the post-war period. The train is a material but also emotional embodiment of the 'grandeur and decline' story of post-war France, and of Europe.[124] This is not just a French story, however: expressions of gratitude across Europe to the United States – but also to the Soviet Union – underline the importance of feeling rules and emotional relations in the post-war world and highlight the significance of grassroot diplomacy and its civilian diplomats in what is often considered the peak of geopolitical tensions and international affairs.

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[123] Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

[124] Emile Chabal, 'Grandeur and Decline', in *France*, ed. Emile Chabal (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 62–86.

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