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The following essay was prepared in response to Meaghan Emery's article and Richard Golsan's response to that article published in *French Historical Studies* 33:4 (Fall 2010).

Of Historical Hindsight and Oversight, and  
Why Reopening Giono's Case Is a Worthy Endeavor

Meaghan Emery

The weight of placing a man's legacy on trial and potentially exposing his memory to the sentence of infamy is not to be taken lightly. Although Richard Golsan does not directly say so, I read his response in part as a review of his past writings on Giono, where Golsan did act as prosecutor, judge, and jury. In 1993, Golsan wrote:

Literary collaborators at *La Gerbe*, then, fall into three main categories. In the first category of 'hardline' collaborators, those who openly support the Nazis or Vichy or who defend the main tenets of their ideologies, are Céline, Drieu [La Rochelle], Châteaubriant, as well as Giono and Montherlant.<sup>1</sup>

However, while in the article in *French Historical Studies* he states that "it is precisely because Giono can be legitimately viewed from such different perspectives that, in human terms at least, he remains an enigma," at the same time Golsan makes new charges, this time against me, by insinuating quite unambiguously that I am a Giono "apologist," willing to "whitewash," "deny," or "misread" evidence of an author's clear guilt (Golsan is apparently fond of categories, and he has placed me in the camp of Giono's "overzealous" or "uncritical" "defenders" of the likes of those who defend Céline, Heidegger, or Paul de Man). Why else would Golsan discuss at such great length the "Heidegger Wars" and the Paul de Man Affair and the pitfalls of scholars playing either prosecutor and judge or fervent advocates on the side of the defense? In response, at risk of intensifying the flow of "vitriol," I have to say that I disagree with the method of hastily applying historically charged terms and labels.<sup>2</sup> In addition, I am heartily disappointed that Golsan—one of the foremost experts in this field who first honored me by agreeing to respond to my article—did not take my work seriously enough to grant it his full attention. He writes the following: "What gets lost in strident attacks and overzealous or uncritical defenses—as well as the vitriol they generate—is not only the possibility of an objective and comprehensive understanding of the facts themselves, but the justification for undertaking of the research in the first place."<sup>3</sup> But then, quite disappointingly, he does not engage the research I present in my article in *French Historical Studies*. In fact, he avoids altogether the historical and textual evidence that I advance regarding the *ajiste* movement and the essays "Provence" and *Triomphe de la vie*, and he recycles entire paragraphs from his previous publications, with which I am familiar and to which I responded more

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Golsan, "Literary Collaboration at *La Gerbe*," *Journal of European Studies* 23 (1993): 41.

<sup>2</sup> Meaghan Emery, "Cultural Studies and the Dual Requirement of Reading," *Profession* 2008, "Letters": 262-66.

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Golsan, "Of Jean Giono and Collaboration: A Response to Meaghan Emery," *French Historical Studies* 33:4 (Fall 2010): 608.

thoroughly in my article on Giono in the *Journal of European Studies*: “Jean Giono: The Personal Ethics of an Author Writing Under the Occupation.”<sup>4</sup> Instead of reproducing the bulk of those arguments here, I would direct the reader to this article.

Rather, I would like to pick up from the conclusion of the *French Historical Studies*’ article, in which I wrote the following:

Indeed, the fact that his [Giono’s] return-to-the-land philosophy has since been suspect of an inherent sympathy with Vichyist reactionaryism or Nazi ideology not only communicates a profound misunderstanding between urban and rural France, as well as an overly reductive view of a plural Provence, but also indicates the recuperative power of nationalist discourses. (603)

Rather than meeting Giono on his own grounds, looking into the author’s cultural context for clues, and testing the validity of his theories there, Golsan seems to prefer to glean anecdotal “evidence” and second-hand accounts from Giono’s Parisian enthusiasts, including in his response to my article. On the one occasion that Golsan refers to the writings of one of Giono’s friends, or spiritual peers, the Breton Jean Guéhenno’s *Journal des années noires*, Golsan sums up Guéhenno’s complex assessment of Giono and his 1942 essay *Triomphe de la vie* with one excerpted passage: “France’s defeat is Giono’s victory...We remained friends as long as he [Giono] remained simply a poet. But the prophet, the demagogue, and the liar increasingly took possession of him, and we have separated.”<sup>5</sup> But Golsan fails to take into account passages immediately following in which Guéhenno expresses his pleasure in reading the second half of Giono’s essay. Consider, for instance, this excerpt from Guéhenno’s diary:

Such an admirable taste for things appears, what pleasure is taken in naming them: by simply naming them, he [Giono] seems to feel them, caress them with his big Godly fingers, literally create them. Poet! What a marvelous sense of life. Life is not truth. And if he [Giono] is lying, it is because life lies.<sup>6</sup>

Although Giono’s integral pacifism led to a separation between the two beginning in 1938, Golsan neglects to state that Guéhenno and Giono reconciled shortly after the end of the war and that Guéhenno even spoke in Giono’s defense at the latter’s 1945 trial. The relationship between these two authors, who had a lot in common including their provincial origins, their fathers’ craft (cobblery), their experience of combat in World War I, and their pacifism, cannot accurately be summed up in such succinct remarks.

My analysis of Giono, which has appeared in two published articles, looks into the author’s Parisian image and persona: Giono’s meeting at the Institut Allemand with Nazi Germany’s cultural officials Karl Epting and Gerhard Heller (the latter of whom was a Francophile and advocate for French culture); accounts of other authors—whether first-hand as in the case of Alfred Fabre-Luce or second-hand as in the case of Denis de Rougemont—that spawned and/or perpetuated the notion of Giono’s philo-Nazism or collaborationism; the appearance of his photos, literary works, and interviews in the collaborationist press (*La Gerbe*, *NRF*, *Signal*, Grasset Editions); his diatribes against his former fellow Contadourians who had taken up arms; and his crassness toward the plight of the Jews. I do not offer excuses. I am not a Giono fan but rather took up this case because I sensed there was more work to be done. The Giono case indeed raises issues that have ramifications extending beyond this single author, which is why I also found it necessary to research Provençal history, particularly that of the Basses-

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<sup>4</sup> See Emery, “Jean Giono: The Personal Ethics of an Author Writing Under the Occupation,” *Journal of European Studies* 38:3 (2008): 277-310.

<sup>5</sup> Golsan, “Of Jean Giono,” 609.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002): 248. (My translation)

Alpes, Giono's family history and the experience of Italian immigrants, and the average soldier's experience of the Great War. This background gave me insight into Giono's later political positions and writings during the 1930s and 1940s, and it also made the Paris-Provence schism all the more apparent to me. Hopefully, my articles will serve to shed some light on France's regional and intellectual diversity.

One cannot study Giono without taking into account the author's deep cynicism. He was wary of political parties, leaders, and governments of all shades of gray. He escaped nihilism, however, through his dreams of idyllic inhabited pastures, his search for life's meaning among the towering mountains and forests, and what he called "human grandeur"—inspiring one to rise above pettiness and greed and to avoid the temptation to dominate but rather to become one with the natural surroundings—a dream that he aspired to convey to others. The fresh air of the plateau gave him respite from the toils of human activity and, in the senseless context of war, local reprisals, and bloodshed, from what appeared to him to be the increasing futility of "poetry" or grand ideological statements. All of this is conveyed not only in Giono's essays, such as "Provence," and independent reports, but also in many of the author's fictional works. Both in his life and in his writing, Giono increasingly withdrew, however, from "poetry in action," whether in the form of travel, official gatherings, or prepared pronouncements either written or spoken. As I have argued, when the French nation no longer appeared viable to him in late 1943, he focused exclusively on family and his local community.<sup>7</sup> This individual case is very much in keeping with a more general cultural phenomenon, according to historian Robert Gildea.<sup>8</sup>

Also, because in the latter years of the German occupation writing no longer appeared to Giono a viable medium for conveying his political philosophy, Giono's *Journal de l'Occupation* (September 1943 – September 1944) offers a privileged view of the author's mindset at this time. As I wrote in the earlier article:

I propose that the *Journal de l'Occupation* allows the reader to witness the death of Giono's ruralist dream of a peasant "race," that is, the ruin of his communal imagining, so central to his pre-war essays and novels. Indeed, Giono's brooding and expressions of grief are a common theme in the diary. The civil conflict appears the most tragic turn of events, even more so than German occupation and the onslaught of propaganda and coercion, which coincided with increasing violence in the Basses-Alpes region and the genesis of his diary in September 1943. Even so, the diary also communicates Giono's fear, anguish and a forced political detachment—emotions that are more prevalent than visceral reactionary impulses. While both attitudes are symptomatic of a troubled French identity during the period in question, the ramifications of the two are very different. In favor of the cultivation of one's garden, however compelling the external circumstances, Giono rejects the greater political project and the excesses of revolution, while a reactionary impulse would tend to participate in them, if only vicariously.<sup>9</sup>

Golsan apparently agrees that the *Journal de l'Occupation* is a reliable tool for scholars attempting to decipher Giono's motives and beliefs. Surprisingly, however, this is the sole publication of Giono's that he analyzes in *French Historical Studies*. When reading Golsan's response, I was quite puzzled by the statement that "the individual's politics and his or her aesthetic or philosophical accomplishments ultimately have nothing to do with each other," for Golsan has written the contrary: "[Giono's]"

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<sup>7</sup> Emery, "Jean Giono: The Personal Ethics," 290-93.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Everyday Life in the French Heartland under the German Occupation* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Emery, "Personal Ethics of an Author," 285.

collaborationism was inspired in the final analysis as much by literary and aesthetic considerations as it was by political and ideological ones.”<sup>10</sup> Further on he states, “Ultimately, the best sources for understanding Giono’s politics during the Occupation are of course his own statements and writings of the period.”<sup>11</sup> I agree with Golsan’s prior assessment, which had inspired me years ago to delve deeper into Giono’s writings of which I had limited knowledge. It also led me to read *Triomphe de la vie*, which Golsan had discussed in prior articles in his examination of Giono’s beliefs and motives. Why does Golsan now retract from that position?

In spite of Giono’s very conscious decision to remain emotionally detached from the human tragedies that befell Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, he nonetheless cared about those closest to him.<sup>12</sup> Giono does not speak of THE Resistance as a whole. Nor does he speak about THE Milice as a whole. He speaks about individuals who are familiar to him. Golsan refers to Giono’s acerbic response to news of the resister Alain’s arrest and imminent execution at the hands of the Gestapo; and he discusses at length Giono’s one-sided account of the Voiron murders. He uses these examples to suggest a deep-seated antipathy toward the Resistance. However, in doing so, Golsan overlooks Giono’s very real grief for the young local Roger-Paul Bernard, an aspiring poet and *réfractaire*/resister who is found assassinated in Manosque.<sup>13</sup> Golsan also neglects to investigate any number of possible explanations for Giono’s reactions to the former two instances, including Giono’s personal relations, fear of raising the Germans’ already brewing suspicion of him, or his high expectations of the “great people” of France who have qualities that far surpass those of the Germans.<sup>14</sup> I examine all of these possibilities in my two articles before concluding that there is legitimacy to the claim that Giono was not an ideological collaborator.

Golsan goes on to say, “It is worth noting that nowhere in the *Journal de l’Occupation* does Giono criticize the German occupants for episodes in which they displayed disrespect or brutality.” I am left wondering: does Golsan not take into consideration that Giono was living under the very real fear of having his house searched, his diary seized, and any anti-German statements discovered? At least Golsan allows that Giono makes “a realization many must have had during the Occupation and Liberation: ‘Truly, I am hardly courageous.’” Furthermore, Giono is most critical of those closest to him and with whom, I argue, he feels some degree of sympathy. If the Germans are not the most pointed targets of his condemnation, they are not the beneficiaries of his sympathy either. Golsan refers to this as well: “On 12 May two German soldiers visited Giono’s home, wishing to have their copies of books by Giono signed by the author. Giono states that he signed the books ‘coldly and simply...no more,’ underscoring his lack of sympathy for or complicity with the soldiers.”<sup>15</sup> Golsan’s basic premise overlooks clues that suggest inherent sympathy with the French, however; for example, when he reads the passage below as pro-German, anti-French, or perhaps anti-Liberation (I’m not sure): “But later, following the Liberation, while watching his fellow French jeer passing trucks full of German prisoners, Giono decries the mistreatment of the Germans and vehemently criticizes his countrymen for their actions. He [Giono] concludes: ‘A great people has other reflexes than these.’” Could it possibly be that

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<sup>10</sup> Golsan, “Myths of Apocalypse and Renewal: Jean Giono and ‘Literary’ Collaboration,” *Substance* 87 (1998): 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> See Emery, “Giono’s Popular Front: *La joie au Grand Air, Idéologie Réactionnaire?*” *French Historical Studies* 33:4 (2010): 581 n. 20, 593 n. 79, and 595 n. 90.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Giono, *Journal de l’Occupation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995): 450-51.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 476. See also 451-52.

<sup>15</sup> Golsan, “Of Jean Giono,” 620.

Giono expected more restraint and sober decorum from the French, whom he describes as a “great people”?<sup>16</sup>

I also recall Golsan’s final analysis of Giono’s novel *Les Cavaliers de l’orage*, serialized in *La Gerbe* in the latter half of 1942. According to Golsan, it “contains no clear political message” in spite of the fact that although the novel was begun before the war, the contract had been signed in 1941 and the text hastily finished in December 1942, nine months after Giono’s “damning” interview with Châteaubriant for *La Gerbe*.<sup>17</sup> If Giono were meaning to support either Vichy or the Nazi regime, surely he could have slightly altered his pre-war aesthetic by introducing some clear ideological messages.

Nevertheless, the claim against ideological collaborationism does not exempt Giono from the charge of economic collaboration. Nor does it soften the charges of irresponsibility, escapism, occasional crassness and insensitivity, and passive complicity, all of which I too impute to the author. I moreover accuse Giono’s “intellectualism and political aloofness” of making him vulnerable to the “risk of the ivory tower and noncommittal politics.”<sup>18</sup> In spite of this, I still give stock to Julian Jackson’s overview of publishing during the German occupation: “The problem with publishing anything was that compromises were almost inevitable.”<sup>19</sup> For Giono, it meant self-censorship and compliance with the protocol of his Parisian publisher, Bernard Grasset.<sup>20</sup> “As a result,” I assert, “the tendency of scholars to divide Vichy-era authors into resisters or collaborators, when the reality for most of them was much more complex, is best avoided.”<sup>21</sup>

Golsan now appears to admit—at least partially since he concludes that “the ‘case’ of Jean Giono remains open”—to the difficulty of the self-appointed task of French literary fascism scholars of assigning guilt. He acknowledges that much of the case against Giono is based on “indirect,” second-hand accounts and “circumstantial” evidence. In fact, much of what Golsan considers to be facts I would like to have clarified, especially since he himself acknowledges that those he advances could be construed differently. This is often the pitfall of using journalistic writings as historical sources. As Golsan has stated, “But denunciations and imprisonments do not necessarily constitute proof of guilt, nor does the fact that Giono was admired by the Nazis and Vichy, both for his writing and the values he supposedly espoused.”<sup>22</sup> Curiously, however, Golsan avoids, or dismisses, the first-hand evidence readily available in Giono’s essays and short stories, published in 1942 and 1943. Giono’s anti-Hitlerian and anti-Vichyist comments in *Triomphe de la vie*, “Provence,” “La vie de Mlle Amandine,” “Aux sources mêmes de l’espérance,” or “Le poète de la famille” do not enter into any of Golsan’s analysis, even as something to refute in his response to me in *French Historical Studies*. When I first read *Triomphe de la vie*, I was immediately struck by what I perceive to be Golsan’s misinterpretation of it. Or perhaps, as was the case for Guéhenno, the first fifty pages put him off?<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 620-21.

<sup>17</sup> Golsan, “Myths of Apocalypse and Renewal,” 25, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Emery, “Jean Giono’s Popular Front,” 587.

<sup>19</sup> Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 314.

<sup>20</sup> See Emery, “Jean Giono: The Personal Ethics,” 281-82.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>22</sup> Golsan, “Myths of Apocalypse and Renewal,” 21-22.

<sup>23</sup> See Guéhenno, *Journal des années noires*, 248.

Specifically regarding Golsan's overall reading of Giono's *Journal de l'Occupation* and his response here, Golsan argues—in reference to my assessment that in late 1943 “he [Giono] could no longer hold off Nazism's threat as a remote abstraction”—the following:

This is certainly not the thrust of the opening passages of the *Journal de l'Occupation*. What one finds instead is, first, the expression of regret that a friend from the Contadour days, whose convictions were “pacifist and human,” has succumbed to “the crossfire of competing propagandas” and joined the “dissidents”—that is, the Resistance—where he reputedly distributes machine guns to young people hiding in his department. Reflecting on this development, Giono states: “There is evidently a very great seduction in our modern, mechanized world to quickly [*brusquement*] become a partisan of a war or of a religion. This must give the impression that one is, in spite of everything, a thinking person.” Warming to his subject—and focusing his sarcasm and condescension more directly on the Resistance—Giono compares those who join the latter to foolish modern day knights-errant, their heads in the clouds, charging blindly, their helmets made of newspaper (the most benighted with their helmets made from “clandestine” newspapers) and listening to TSF. For his part, Giono considers that the most important thing under the circumstances is to not become “a dupe” such as those he is describing, but instead “to preserve the right to laugh, and to comfort myself in practicing a disdain *precisely* [*exactement*] applied.” And the targets of this disdain: “British generosity; American civilization.”<sup>24</sup>

There are many more targets of Giono's “disdain” [“mépris”].<sup>25</sup> But beyond this fact, I am astonished that Golsan bases his refutation of one of my central theses on a single diary entry. There are hundreds of pages in the *Journal de l'Occupation*, and September alone occupies twelve Pleiade pages, in small print. October, nearly twenty. Can my thesis be so easily overturned? Does it not require a deeper or broader inquiry into the author's state-of-mind? While it is indeed possible to pick and choose potentially damning passages when viewed separately, I assert that it is necessary to take the entire diary into consideration when piecing together one's thoughts into a cogent argument.

In fact, the diary's second entry, dated 21 September 1943, demonstrates Giono's disillusionment before the shortcomings of the National Revolution:

It was necessary to respond to material victory by rising above our conqueror spiritually [“par l'esprit”], and above what we had ourselves been, instead of being conqueror in turn (the chain of wars). It should have been the moment for great visions. But there weren't any quality minds.<sup>26</sup>

Rather than sympathy for Vichy ideology, this is evidence that Giono no longer believed, if indeed he ever did, that the National Revolution could lead to social renewal. If Pétain's nationalist myth perhaps seduced Giono, Vichy only figures in the diary as an implicit cause for disappointment, which Giono again expresses in the third entry, that of 22 September 1943. At this moment the Provençal countryside is bitterly split by civil conflict, and in the following passage Giono is unambiguous in his expressed disgust for Vichy Radio's nationalist propaganda:

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<sup>24</sup> Giono, *Journal*, 311, 312. The entire passage is excerpted from Golsan, “Of Jean Giono,” 617-18.

<sup>25</sup> See Emery, “Jean Giono: The Personal Ethics.”

<sup>26</sup> Giono, *Journal*, 315-16.

Everything proves to us that this [talk] has nothing to do with [war's] grandeur: its facileness, its recourse to falsehood, to betrayal, the scorn in the spoken words, the "the ends justify the means," the death of heroism; it isn't even of national interest, they aren't defending their fatherland. This is clearly expressed and explained every day with a stentorian voice but it only falls on deaf ears. No one hates war.<sup>27</sup>

This reference to Vichy's anti-Resistance radio characterizes Vichy's propaganda onslaught as unpatriotic and treacherous "lies," "clearly expressed and explained every day with a stentorian voice" and fuelling the burgeoning civil war. These passages reveal that Giono's "sarcasm," "condescension," and "disdain" were just as precisely applied to Vichy's propaganda machine and repressive policies as they were to those Giono viewed as opportunists, betraying or taking advantage of people's faith.

There is also the question of historical hindsight that needs to be addressed. Regarding the 1938 Munich Accords, Golsan fails to view Giono in his historical and cultural context and, specifically, Europeans' general enthusiasm over the Accords. There is also Golsan's questionable understanding of "race" in 1930s France, a term that also grew from class prejudice. Jean Renoir's films of the time period, notably *La grande illusion* and *La règle du jeu*, delineate the fractures within traditional French society, separating the nobility, the *parvenus*, and the commoners. The term "race" also distinguished Paris from the provinces and native French from immigrants, notably Italians in the early twentieth century, in addition to exposing nationalist, ethnic, religious, and also nativist bigotry directed at Jews, North or black Africans, and Asians. Giono's use of the term "race" displays a ruralist consciousness and represents, as I state above, a communitarian "dream."<sup>28</sup> Nothing in Giono's writings suggests that he excludes Jews from this dream with the important caveat that Giono's attitudes do demonstrate cultural chauvinism. His historical ruminations on the French, the English, the Italians, and the Jews, the last feeling particularly vulnerable at the time of the Occupation, were a reflection on the characteristics of "nationalities," a term used at the time. Today, one would likely use the term "cultures." His view on the Jews in this passage in the *Journal de l'Occupation* betrays not only his insensitivity toward the direness of their situation but also his anti-multicultural and pro-assimilationist republican bent and belief that all citizens should participate in the life of the nation.<sup>29</sup> With regard to assimilated, well-integrated Jews, he would likely have included them in the French nation, just as he at an earlier point in the diary chides Epting for excluding German-Jewish poets from the anthology of German poetry. Otherness did not receive the attention it does today; and excluded minorities were—with terrible consequences presently clear to us—viewed as responsible for their own perceived difference. Giono's views are similar to those of the majority of his contemporaries, even though the time period's sensibilities are shocking to today's readers.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to the Spanish Civil War, the following passage strikes me as particularly illustrative of Golsan's tendency toward historical hindsight: "Finally, the irony of Giono's attitude toward the conflict in Spain is evident in the fact that it was precisely the European democracies' official policy of *non-intervention* that virtually guaranteed Franco's victory as well as Germany and Italy's impunity for their actions." The philosophy and practices of those committed to pacifism and communism barely enter into Golsan's discussion (case in point: his perplexity before Giono's statements on Switzerland and Russia), and I would charge that these missing components present a lacuna in Golsan's

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Citron, *Giono, 1895-1970* (Paris, 1990): 187.

<sup>29</sup> See Emery, "Jean Giono: The Personal Ethics," 293-97.

<sup>30</sup> A helpful resource in regard to this matter is Pierre Laborie, *L'Opinion française sous Vichy* (Paris, 1990) especially 270-80.

argumentation.<sup>31</sup> Rather Golsan's analysis seems to adopt as a starting point the view that the world is a battlefield:

One could argue, of course, that by 1938 the Spanish Republic was dominated by Communists, and that Giono's militant and at this stage visceral anti-Communism led to his apparent indifference to the Spanish Republican cause. But it is also true that the Communists gained ascendancy in the Republican camp precisely because the European democracies failed to intervene to help the Republic.<sup>32</sup>

Giono did not look at the world in this macro or geopolitical strategic way. He focused on the micro—the basic elements of human life, which made him a fellow traveler of the Communist Party in the mid-1930s and a longtime advocate for the proletariat. Although he did not adopt the Spanish Republican cause, he did shelter republicans who escaped from Franco's Spain. His actions speak louder than words when it comes to the democratic principles he holds true, foremost of which are respect for human life and quality of life. Golsan also seems to downplay the fact that Third Republic France was indeed a bellicose state, deemed even more dangerous than Germany in the 1920s. For Giono and for others of the Dreyfus generation, French nationalism was not to be underestimated.<sup>33</sup> In my understanding, Giono was wary of a possible military dictatorship in 1930s France, and the French leadership, embodied in Pétain, was initially a source of relief for him as it was for the majority of the French population.<sup>34</sup>

Historical hindsight and a “battlefield” perspective likewise infuse Golsan's interpretation of Giono's views on World War II. “To all intents and purposes, Giono does not distinguish between democracies and dictatorships in this situation [of World War II], nor does he assign responsibility and blame to the instigators of the crisis,” argues Golsan. No, this was neither Giono's intent nor his purpose. He concerned himself with the micro (the consequences of carpet bombing on the ground), not the macro. Golsan's macro-view of France's 1940 defeat does not at all engage Giono's perspective: that people are essentially the same at their core; that humanity will win out since governments are not lasting. When it comes to how Giono viewed the United States and Britain, particularly their military achievements, he was probably not unlike the majority of his countrymen either. For Golsan, they should be revered as knights in shining armor, when, in fact, they represented a quandary—the U.S. being a brash new, therefore unknown and untested, ally and Britain being a former rival. In spite of his admirable research, Golsan's analysis lacks historical perspective. When Golsan questions Giono's anti-war diatribe in his diary entry of June 6, 1944, on what has come to be known as D-Day, he marvels over the author's lack of enthusiasm before “the prospect of liberation.” Golsan fails to take into account that prospects were not so rosy on that day, even from the Allied perspective. It would be nice to act with 20-20 hindsight vision, to which Golsan holds Giono accountable. Remember, however, that Giono credits the U.S. as the military power capable of restoring democracy to France more quickly than was post-war France left to its own devices. For all his lack of foresight, Giono was not totally blind.

That Golsan cannot look beyond his own perspective and research parameters makes his analysis limited. Similarly, he twists Giono's use of words to align them with “fascist discourse.” Giono did not, of course, invent new words. He used them differently (and uncovering how is one of scholarship's

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<sup>31</sup> Regarding Giono's comments see *Journal*, 451; and Golsan, “Of Jean Giono,” 613.

<sup>32</sup> Golsan, “Of Jean Giono,” 613.

<sup>33</sup> Among a number of works, I recommend Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919* (New York: Random House, 2002) as a good resource for the reader.

<sup>34</sup> See Laborie, *L'Opinion française*.

challenges and true pleasures, I might add). For the same reasons, Giono was wary of the manipulations of the Parisian intelligentsia who, he felt, did not understand him.<sup>35</sup> In frustration, Giono claimed to be too “simple-minded” to respond to his critics and, therefore, opted to steer clear of this kind of engagement—to focus on “cultivating his own garden.”

There are no heroics in this choice of action to be sure. But this behavior does not automatically call into question his motives or his philosophical thinking. Most French citizens responded in this way, moreover, as Gildea writes, all the while discreetly performing small acts of resistance. Indeed, no one is comparing Giono to Raymond Aubrac or any other Resistance hero. These two men saw the world very differently, and it is easy to understand why Aubrac found Giono’s behavior blameworthy and damning. In order to pursue his goals, the former required a more Manichean view of the world. The charge of Giono’s “lack of accountability,” therefore, only holds true in the universe of all-out engagement in the Resistance, whether Gaullist or Bolshevik. Giono was not a fighter, and expressly so. One cannot hold him up to the absolute standards of the “résistants de première heure.”

Clearly Dr. Golsan and I do not share the same approach to the Giono case. I sought to study Giono within his own context, using all available evidence, including his literary writings and essays, from which to draw conclusions. The conclusion to my article in *French Historical Studies* remains my conclusion here: taken from a Parisian perspective, much is lost in analyses of Jean Giono, a ruralist born, living, and writing in Provence. Golsan does not attempt to analyze Giono’s concerns for the spiritual and his condemnation of the material; nor does he investigate Giono’s ambivalent conception of the “poet.” Giono does not view the latter solely in a positive light, particularly when combined with “action.” I address this point in both of my articles. These discussions counter Golsan’s charge of “historical nihilism,” his interpretation of the recurring phrase, “Nothing will have served to accomplish anything. The dead will simply be the dead, that’s all.”<sup>36</sup> This passage does not suggest historical nihilism to me. Giono is clearly affected by the war, so much so that he writes of it, with his own sensibility to be sure. Regardless of how this sensibility strikes the reader, this is clearly an expression of regret over the human cost of war, especially when war, as Giono learned from World War I, does not solve anything but rather creates future conflicts as world powers maneuver according to their own interests and in spite of the people.

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<sup>35</sup> For instance, see Giono, *Journal*, 318.

<sup>36</sup> Giono, *Journal*, 355.

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