

**“LE TALENT ET L’ILLUSTRATION” :
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROSOPOGRAPHY
OF THE SENATE OF THE FRENCH THIRD REPUBLIC**

Paul Smith
(*University of Nottingham*)

Writing in 1961, François Piétri remembered his former cabinet colleague Louis Barthou as one of :

The last champions of that form of conservative democracy that was, until 1936, the hallmark of the Third Republic, and which was built upon the wisdom and continuity of the Senate. [...] Barthou willingly professed the view that the Senate represented the strength and good health of a Republic that owed to its upper chamber its longevity of nearly seventy years, which no other regime since the Revolution had come even close to emulating. He even went so far as to regret, and not without reason, that the Senate no longer included, as it had done at its beginning, a significant number of life members, chosen for their renown or their experience. And when the question was raised, under the Doumergue ministry [of 1934], of revising the constitutional law of 1875 with regard to dissolution [of the Chamber of Deputies], not only was Barthou utterly opposed to the Tardieu camp that advocated dissolution without the approval of the Senate, but went as far as to envisage a reform, which he had mentioned to me on a number of occasions, that included re-introducing life senatorship by creating thirty or so seats for *ex officio* and co-opted members¹.

Barthou was one of the most prominent politicians of his generation. He was first elected deputy in 1889 for a department then known as the Basses-Pyrénées, down in the far southwestern corner of France, and which comprises the French Basque country in the west and the Béarn of Henri IV in the east. Minister on several occasions between 1894 and his death in 1934, head of the government from March to December 1913, he moved to the Senate in 1922. Barthou was, moreover, a bibliophile of international reputation, a writer and a

¹ François Piétri, ‘Souvenir de Barthou’, *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1^{er} mars 1961, p. 65-75, 74-5.

patron of the arts and sciences. Edmond Rostand, one of his many literary friends, called him the ‘ministre des poètes’ and in 1918, Barthou became one of the *immortels* in the Académie Française. To Barthou’s mind there should be no separation between the worlds of art, science and politics. According to one of his biographers, he believed ‘that France, and the French state in particular, should be in service to Art’, but he also believed that ‘Art should serve France’¹. His views on co-opted or nominated members of the Senate emanated, then, from both his long practical experience and from a profound sense that, in shutting out its most talented and illustrious men, the Republic had denied itself access to one of the very elements that made France both great and distinguished.

Barthou’s regret was by no means isolated : similar sentiments had been voiced by moderate republicans since the abolition of life senatorships in 1884. In January 1894, commenting on the latest Senate *renouvellement*, an editorial in the *Journal des Débats* complained that the upper chamber was ‘an assembly where men of talent become rarer by the day and mere hack politicians more and more numerous’². Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, a life senator himself, made a similar comment in his *Mémoires d’un sénateur dreyfusard*, and in 1903 *Le Temps* expressed the fear that the growing trend for deputies to move on to the upper house was transforming the Senate into nothing more than a Chamber of Deputies *bis*³.

Each of these views carries the obvious hallmark of political nostalgia for the ‘heroic’ age of the early Third Republic, a sentiment intensified rather than dissipated by abolition of life senatorships. At their origin lies a misguided belief that life senators, who were supposed to ensure the representation of ‘le talent et l’illustration de la nation’, really were talented and illustrious, and that their presence in and leadership of the embryonic upper chamber lent it greater moral authority, raised the Senate above the mundane level of daily politics and, in so doing, elevated the purview of their fellow ‘departmental’ senators. Now, although there were undoubtedly men of outstanding talent and ability among the 116 *inamovibles* elected between 1875

¹ Robert J. Young, ‘Cultural Politics and the Politics of Culture : The Case of Louis Barthou’, in *id.*, *An Uncertain Idea of France. Essays and Reminiscence on the Third Republic*, (New York, Peter Lang 2005), p. 140-153, 146-7.

² *Le Journal des Débats*, 8 janvier 1894 (‘une assemblée où les hommes de talent deviennent chaque jours plus rares et les simples politiciens de plus en plus nombreux’)

³ *Le Temps*, 7 janvier 1903.

and 1884 – an Emile Littré, an Edouard de Laboulaye, a Marcellin Berthelot or a Paul Broca, for example - each was elected primarily because of his political position, seldom for his ‘brilliance’ alone. Most of ‘les immortels du Sénat’ were, themselves, provincial politicians¹.

The upper chamber was the keystone of the compromise struck in 1875 between republicans and moderate constitutional monarchists to give the Third Republic permanent institutions. It has been described as a present given by the republicans to the conservatives², but it was certainly the sort of present the republicans would have liked to receive themselves. The conservatives proposed a Grand Council of Notables, a mixed assembly of approximately 350, comprising *ex officio* members (cardinals, marshals and admirals), 150 government nominees, 10 seats in the personal gift of the head of state and a further 150 elected by departmental colleges comprising bishops, senior officers, local councillors and higher rate tax payers. The provision of so many *ex officio* and nominated seats underlined the monarchists’ wishes to see the upper house represent not just local notabilities, but also the great and the good. The political and social tide had turned against them, however, by 1875, and the conservatives were bargained down by moderate republicans to a Senate of 300, comprising 75 life senators and 225 departmental members who would sit for nine years. Despite conservatives’ attempts to have the life seats nominated by the government and/or the head of state, the republicans successfully insisted that these should be elected, in the first place by the National Assembly (the single chamber elected in 1871) and thereafter, as vacancies arose, by the Senate itself. The departmental seats were shared out in a very uneven and pseudo-federal manner. Each of France’s 87 metropolitan departments was allocated a minimum of two senators, except for the tiny territory of Belfort, which had one³. The more populous departments received extra seats, though in a rather arbitrary way, up to a maximum of five,

¹ Mathias Bernard, ‘Le poids de la province’ in Jean-Marie Mayeur, Alain Corbin and Arlette Schweitz (eds.), *Les Immortels du Sénat – Les cent seize inamovibles de la Troisième République*, (Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), p. 115-124.

² Robert Gildea, *The Third Republic from 1870-1914*, (London, Longman 1988), 11.

³ Adolphe Thiers, the head of state, negotiated with Bismarck for France to retain the town of Belfort and its hinterland, which had previously been part of the Alsatian department of Haut-Rhin. In exchange, the victorious German army was allowed to parade down the Champs-Élysées.

so that the balance of power lay overwhelmingly with rural France¹. The colleges were comprised of two categories of electors : members of the departmental (or general) council, the district councils and its deputies were *ex officio* members, while the nearly 37,000 municipal councils elected delegates. In 1876, when the first full election took place, and at the first two *renouvellements* in 1879 and 1882, each commune elected just one delegate, irrespective of its size. In 1884 the republicans made the first and last changes to the Senate. The life seats were abolished, though they were only phased out as their incumbents died, and were re-allocated to the departments. At the same time a sliding scale was introduced to determine the number of municipal delegates, based not on the population of the commune but on the size of the municipal council. The same principle is still used today².

In most respects the Senate's powers were the same as those of the Chamber of Deputies. The two met together, as the National Assembly, to elect the President of the Republic and to revise the constitution (under the title of Congress). The Senate had the same legislative powers as the Chamber, except that the budget must be presented in the first place to the lower house and voted on there before being presented to the upper. It was unclear whether the Senate had the right to amend the budget, but senators claimed the right anyway. The Senate could not be dissolved : its members were elected by thirds every three years in what were known as 'series' of departments, organized in alphabetical order. The Chamber, in contrast, could be dissolved, but only upon the Senate's approval (*avis conforme*) of a Presidential writ, a power that was exercised just once in the lifetime of the Third Republic. Senators also had to be aged 40 or over, compared to 25 for the Chamber. The Senate, Léon Gambetta declared, would not be a Grand Council of Notables, but a Grand Council of the Communes of France, the 'very guts of French democracy'³. And to those who still doubted, in 1876 he promised

¹ There was also one seat each for the three Algerian departments of Alger, Constantine and Oran and for the 'vieilles colonies' of Réunion, Martinique, Guadeloupe and French India, though not for Guyane.

² Lionel Jospin's 'plural left' administration made an unsuccessful attempt in 2000 to replace it with a system linked directly to each commune's population.

³ Paul Smith, *À History of the French Senate Volume One The Third Republic 1870-1940*, (Lampeter and Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 73.

republicans that in a few years ‘we will all defend the Senate with light hearts’¹.

Gambetta was soon proved right : republicans came quickly to appreciate the Senate. The nine-year term of office, compared to just four for the Chamber of Deputies, offered the emerging local elites a comfortable parliamentary platform, while the electoral colleges crystallized the existence of the *Republique municipale* : the new regime did not herald the end of notability, but rather its usurpation by local republican magnates. The Senate sat at the apex of the system, straddling local and national representation and a seat in the upper chamber came to represent the pinnacle of ambition and achievement among the political caste.

Naturally, senatorship became the subject of intense rivalry and struggles for patronage, which culminated with the assembly of the whole college in the departmental capital (the *chef-lieu*) once every nine years (by-elections apart). Attendance was compulsory and absentees were liable to a fine, though these were hardly necessary : to be one of *les grands électeurs* as members of the college are known, was considered an honour and a sign of status within both the commune and the department, while polling day marked an important moment of political visibility, for networking and for the notables to meet in an self-congratulatory *fête* of themselves as a caste apart, *les élus du suffrage universel* certainly, but also a latter day manifestation of the active citizen. Voting took place over three rounds : in the first two an absolute majority was required, in the third a relative one sufficed. And in between, if it were still necessary, all sorts of further horse-trading would take place : the break for lunch, after the first round, was when business became deadly serious. Camille Pelletan, whose father Eugène was one of the few men to have been a departmental and then a life senator, commented upon his own elevation to the upper chamber in 1912, that Senate elections were utterly corrupt². Not financially corrupt perhaps (though that possibility should not be excluded) but corrupted by the promises of preferment and other favours that candidates made to individuals or groups of electors.

¹ *Id.*, 145

² *La Dépêche de Toulouse*, 11 January 1912. Elected for Bouches-du-Rhône in 1876, Pelletan père became a life senator in June 1884. Camille Pelletan was senator for the Bouches-du-Rhône until his death in 1915.

Becoming a senator required more, however, than an ability to keep promises. Though they represented the whole department, the study of senators of the Third Republic shows that individual senators very often represented a specific geographical, mental and/or cultural subdivision of their department, or a particular economic interest – and often all of these things combined. The Senate has a reputation for being one enormous chamber of agriculture, largely because, nationally, rural France was over-represented. But that suggests that all senators were elected for the same reasons in all departments, whereas no two departments quite resemble one another. Still, in the popular (and literary) imagination, Senate elections were a mix of Gabriel Chevalier's *Clochemerle*, set in rural Burgundy (admittedly at the time of the Fourth Republic) and even featuring a rather venal, though not unsympathetic senator, and the impenetrable, complex and deadly business of the protagonists of Zola's Rougon Macquart *roman fleuve*. To become a senator required the ability to marshal and to maintain robust and reliable personal and political networks, access to considerable personal resources (and resourcefulness), well-placed friends and abundant guile : not for nothing were senators known as 'les crocodiles'¹.

Here, however the question on which we must focus is whether the Senate, shorn of the *inamovibles*, amounted to something more than an assembly of intellectually limited provincial landowners, industrialists and hacks, who resembled nothing so much as the self-absorbed local notables, concerned with pork-barrel politics, *questions du clocher* and the price of agricultural produce, who elected them in the first place ? It would be impossible, here, to offer an account of the lives of all 1630 departmental senators elected between 1876 and 1940. I would like, however, in the remainder of this article, to offer a handful of particular cases, some well known, others less so, whose presence in the upper chamber suggests that, despite Barthou's regret, both the Senate and the electoral colleges could find space for men of talent, ability and originality.

The first batch of 75 life senators was elected by the outgoing National Assembly in December 1875, so it followed some kind of logic that the remaining members of the new republican upper house should be elected before the deputies². This had the additional effect

¹ On the requisite qualities for senatorship, see Smith, *op.cit.*, ch. 3, p.73-108.

² The Senate was elected on 30 January 1876 : the general election followed a month later and the new parliament assembled for the first time in March 1876.

of allowing outgoing *représentants* to try their luck among the *grands électeurs* before having to face trial by universal suffrage and, not surprisingly, a very large number chose to do so: 136 of the 225 departmental senators (or 60 %) had sat in the National Assembly. The election to the Chamber of Deputies thereby functioned as an election *de rattrapage*: under the Fourth and Fifth Republics, the reverse was the case, and clearly indicated the reduced status of the upper house.

Towering above his peers, in reputation at least, in that first Senate election was Victor Hugo. Connoisseurs of political irony will be pleased to learn that Hugo, who had sat in the Chamber of Peers under the July Monarchy, upon his election to the National Assembly joined the far-left radicals and opposed the upper house: 'We forbid you to park a Senate on the constitution'. Hugo realized, however, that he stood little chance of being elected by universal suffrage and accepted the endorsement instead of the 216 *grands électeurs* for the Seine (Paris and the neighbouring districts of Saint-Denis and Sceaux). But Hugo was by no means the only man of letters elected on 30 January 1876. On one level, Louis Foucher de Careil possessed the typical curriculum vitae of a senator of the early Third Republic. A moderate opponent of the Second Empire, he had rallied to Adolphe Thiers in 1871, who in return appointed Foucher prefect for the Côtes-du-Nord in northern Brittany, then Seine-et-Marne (to the east of Paris) in the early years of the regime, before he was removed by the Moral Order, led by Duc Albert de Broglie and which overthrew Thiers in May 1873. Foucher was also a landowner and president of the republican Société Nationale d'Encouragement à l'Agriculture, all of which made him an ideal candidate for senatorship among the moderately left-wing *grands électeurs* of Seine-et-Marne in 1876 (and again in 1882). But Foucher was just as well-known among his contemporaries for outstanding works on Leibniz, Spinoza and Hegel. Nor was he the only philosopher among the class of 1876.

Paul Challemel-Lacour's pedigree was equally difficult to fault. If one believed everything written in the two *Dictionnaires des parlementaires* that cover the Third Republic¹, deputies and senators were almost without fail all brilliant students, but Challemel really was. He was admitted to the École Normale Supérieure in 1846 at the

¹ Adolphe Robert and Gaston Cougny (eds.), *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français de 1789 à 1889* and Jean Jolly (ed.), *Dictionnaire des parlementaires 1889-1940*.

age of 19 and two years later was participating in political meetings that followed in the wake of the February Revolution and made his first public speech in 1849, at a banquet marking the first anniversary of the declaration of the Republic. In the same year he graduated in first place in the *agrégation* in philosophy. He was teaching at Limoges when Louis-Napoleon seized power through a *coup d'état* in December 1851, and attempted to raise local resistance, an act that cost Challemel eight years in exile, during which he linked up with the leading republicans Edgar Quinet and Etienne Arago and spent time working with Schopenhauer in Germany. Amnestied in 1859, he became a regular contributor to *Le Temps* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. In 1868 Challemel founded the *Revue politique* with Gambetta, who on becoming interior minister on 4 September 1870, appointed Challemel prefect for the Rhône. Intellectual and literary brilliance, alas, do not necessarily great prefects make. The appointment was not a success and he resigned in February 1871, a fortuitous decision as it turned out, because it meant his successor, Edmond Valentin, was left to handle the outbreak of the Lyon Commune. Valentin became senator for the Rhône in 1876.

Returning to Paris, Challemel helped to found *La République française*, which became the mouthpiece of the Gambettiste wing of the republican movement. Adopted as a far-left deputy for the Bouches-du-Rhône from 1872, he was elected senator for his adopted department in the distinguished company of Henri Esquiros and Eugène Pelletan in 1876 and was re-elected with ease at every subsequent *renouvellement*. Ambassador to Switzerland, then London, in 1883 Jules Ferry made him (briefly) foreign minister. Challemel's intellect, the power and clarity of his oratory and his political cunning made him one of the most respected figures in the Senate. His report on the budget of 1889, presented at the height of the Boulanger affair, was so eloquent an apology for Opportunist republicanism that his colleagues immediately voted for it to be posted in every *mairie* in the land. A vice-president of the Senate from 1890, he would have become president in February 1893, but for Ferry. Defeated in the general election in 1889, Ferry had returned to parliament as senator for the Vosges in 1891, when his brother stood aside. Ferry's opponents feared his election to the upper house marked the beginning of a comeback that might lead to the Elysée : they were given further cause for concern when Ferry was elected president of the Senate in February 1893 in succession to Elie Le Royer. In the event their

concerns and Challemel's disappointment were short-lived. Ferry died of a heart attack a month later and Challemel was duly elected to succeed him. In March 1894 Challemel added the further honour of entry into the Académie Française, to replace Ernest Renan.

Two months before Challemel's elevation to the ranks of the *immortels*, the Senate had welcomed another parliamentary returnee : René Waldeck-Rousseau. Deputy for Ille-et-Vilaine from 1879 and a cabinet member under Gambetta and Ferry, Waldeck had been responsible, as interior minister in 1884, for guiding through parliament both the reform of France's municipal councils and of the Senate. In 1889 he resigned his seat to concentrate on his very successful Paris legal practice. He was coaxed back into parliament by Jean Audiffred, the *grand électeur* of the Loire. *Parachutage* usually went down badly in the colleges, but the Loire was reeling from the loss of two senators in quick succession (a third would die not long after the by-election) and the republicans needed a 'name' to rally waverers and hold off the radicals. Waldeck's reputation as a former minister and as a *gambetto-ferryste* fitted perfectly and he settled back into parliamentary life right away. He made a half-hearted tilt at the Elysée in 1895, but the Republic was not quite ready to elect a senator as President. Four years later things had changed, but it was Emile Loubet, senator for the Drôme, who inaugurated what was to prove an almost unbroken tradition of presidents of the Senate moving from their residence in the Petit Luxembourg to the Elysée Palace.¹ In June 1899, Loubet appointed Waldeck to steer France out of the storm of the Dreyfus Affair. Waldeck was by no means the first senator to head a cabinet : senators had dominated government between 1876 and 1879, but since then had generally been called upon only to play a caretaker role and no government had been headed by a senator since Loubet himself stood down in 1892. That was all about to change. France would be led by *sénateurs-présidents du conseil* for all but six months of the ten years following Waldeck's accession : Emile Combes followed in 1902, Maurice Rouvier (twice) in 1905. Jean Sarrien, then a deputy, presided over a government of talents

¹ Four of the seven Presidents to succeed Loubet followed this path (Fallières in 1906, Doumergue 1924, Doumer 1931, Lebrun 1932). Poincaré was premier and a senator when he was elected to the Elysée in 1913, though he was, arguably, the Chamber's candidate rather than the Senate's. The lower house provided only two more Presidents after the death of Félix Faure in 1899 : Paul Deschanel (1920) and Alexandre Millerand (1920-1924). Both men were elected to the Senate after leaving office.

following the 1906 general election, from which Georges Clemenceau, senator for the Var since 1902, emerged to take over in October¹. He remained at the controls until the summer of 1909. Waldeck's appointment had opened a breach that was never really closed again under the Third Republic, and indicated that being a senator was no obstacle to men ambitious for political power. Over the next half-a-dozen years, a raft of leading politicians moved to the Luxembourg Palace, including Clemenceau, Léon Bourgeois, Jules Méline and Raymond Poincaré. By the interwar period, government was as likely to be led by a member of the upper chamber as the lower, though in the long run this worked against the Senate's reputation after the Liberation, when the failings of the Third Republic tended to be bundled up into a certain 'senatophobia'.

Waldeck set about resolving the crisis into which he had been pitched by establishing a government of 'republican defence', a broad left and centre-left coalition, and included in his cabinet the Socialist Alexandre Millerand. He also sought to mark a decisive step in the clerical/anti-clerical feud by passing, in 1901, a law which still provides the framework for all forms of public association in France today. Waldeck's shift to the left divided republican opinion and one of its first electoral tests came in the Senate *renouvellement* of January 1900. Overall the results were about even, but the opposition was delighted to count among the new senators Francis Charmes, political correspondent of the moderate *Journal des Débats* and a contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and one of the most outspoken critics of 'défense Républicaine', elected in a by-election in the Cantal. Charmes was just one of a large number of prominent journalists who found their way to the Senate, from Octave Depeyre, editor of the Orleanist *Moniteur universel* in 1876, to *L'Humanité's* Marcel Cachin, who became the first Communist senator when he was elected for the Seine 60 years later.

If Charmes and *Le Journal des Débats* had been critical of Waldeck, they were openly hostile to the government led by his successor, Emile Combes, and his Bloc des Gauches coalition. The 1903 *renouvellement* gave the government the opportunity to strike back at Charmes and his fellow Cantalais senator, dissident Radical Albert Baduel. The man chosen to derail Charmes was Eugène Lintilhac, *chef de cabinet* to Waldeck's education minister Georges Leygues. Though a native of Aurillac, Lintilhac had no local political

¹ Sarrien became senator for Saône-et-Loire in 1908.

base to speak of in the Cantal, but with the interference of the prefect, reminiscent, Charmes complained, of the worst days of the Moral Order, if not the Second Empire, Lintilhac pushed Charmes into second place and ended Baduel's Senate career. So what? one might ask. Well, in addition to his former role as Leygues' assistant, Lintilhac was an academic with considerable works on French poetry and theatre, notably on Lesage and Beaumarchais, already to his name. During his first term of office he found time to complete and publish a three-volume study of the history of the French theatre. Despite these distractions, Lintilhac's mandate was renewed in 1912, when he successfully disposed of Charmes, and he continued to sit in the Senate until his death in July 1920, on the eve of publication of his essay on the Revolutionary orator Vergniaud, entitled *Vergniaud et le drame des Girondins*.

Lintilhac's department fell into series A and was not part of the *grand renouvellement* that took place in January 1920, when the Senate caught up with the two elections lost in 1915 (series B) and 1918 (series C) and a large number of by-elections that it had been impossible to hold. Altogether, 240 of the 314 seats (300 existing seats and 14 for the recovered territories of Alsace and Moselle) were to be contested, including the replacement of the last two life senators, who had died in 1915 and 1916¹. The Luxembourg Palace welcomed 157 new senators, a cohort that deserves an article all to itself and which elected as its president the upper chamber's second Nobel Peace Prize winner, Léon Bourgeois². The class of 1920 was marked by an influx of such denizens of the politico-industrial elite as Paul Lederlin, Ernest Billiet, Lazar Weiller and Paul Dupuy, as well as Etienne Clémentel, a former and future minister whose career and ideas are in serious need of reassessment. Two other republican industrial dynasties returned to the Luxembourg Palace. Jules Scheurer, younger brother of Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, was elected for Haut-Rhin and in Paris André Berthelot secured a seat in the assembly his father Marcelin had graced as a life senator. André Berthelot inherited his father's brilliance: he was *agrégé* in history at the age of only 22 and a deputy for Paris by 26. In 1902 he stood down to concentrate on his business interests and he gained a such a reputation that it is claimed he provided the model for the character

¹ Smith *op.cit.*, p. 330-4.

² The first was Paul d'Estournelles de Constant (Sarthe 1905-1925), who shared the 1909 prize with the Belgian Auguste Beernaert.

Ferral, the unpalatable capitalist central to André Malraux's *La Condition humaine*¹. Notorious, then, rather than illustrious. Tempting as it might be to examine these elections and others during the course of the 1920s, I shall fast-forward to two senators elected a decade later : Eugène Rouart and Gustave Gautherot.

Most contemporaries knew Eugène Rouart as a landowner, agronomist and agrarian reformer : that is how his career is recorded in the *Dictionnaire des parlementaires*, which also claims that he too was a brilliant student. The truth, alas, is different. Rouart graduated 58th of 69 candidates from the École Nationale d'Agriculture at Grignon in the mid-1890s.² After a brief experiment with a group of fellow graduates in managing a farm near Autun, in 1902 he took on a farm at Bagnoles-de-Grenade, near Toulouse. Three years later, in slightly clouded circumstances, he became mayor of the neighbouring commune of Castelnau d'Estrétefonds and in 1910 was elected to represent the canton of Fronton on the departmental council³. In the meantime, he had served as *chef de cabinet* to Jean Cruppi, deputy for the department and minister of trade under Clemenceau. Rouart contributed to the creation of regional schools of agriculture across France and also to the setting up of the Institut Agricole at Toulouse University⁴. In 1927, his good works brought him to a seat on the Conseil Supérieur de l'Agriculture. A long-standing vice-president of the departmental assembly for the Haute-Garonne, he made an ideal candidate for senatorship and he was duly elected in the autumn of 1932. Up to this point, his profile resembles in almost every respect that of many a provincial politician.

In fact, Eugène Rouart's career is an important warning of the necessity to reach behind the official biographies and notices, for he was considerably more than just a landowner and an agronomist. Rouart came from a wealthy and well connected family. His father Henri Rouart was a prominent industrialist, an amateur painter and a professional art collector, especially of works by the Impressionists. The young Eugène tried his hand at painting too, but had rather more

¹ Jean-Noël Jeanneney, *L'Argent caché. Milieux d'affaires et pouvoirs politiques dans la France du XX^e siècle*, (1984), p.118-68.

² David H. Walker (ed.), *André Gide Eugène Rouart – Correspondance* 2 vols. I 1893-1901, II 1902-1936 (Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2006). I am deeply indebted to Professor Walker for alerting me to Rouart and for kindly allowing me to read proof copies of his introductions to both volumes.

³ Walker, *op.cit.*, II, p. 23.

⁴ Walker, *op.cit.*, I, p. 89.

talent for writing and it was through a mutual acquaintance and fellow writer, Francis Jammes, that he first met, in the early 1890s, André Gide. The two men struck up an instant friendship and two volumes of correspondence attest their closeness, particularly during the 1890s.¹ Rouart wrote while pursuing his studies and also published, and though his works are little known now, Gide thought them to be of some considerable merit.

Like Gide, Rouart was homosexual, but like Gide he also hid behind a facade of respectability by marrying, in 1898, Yvonne Lerolle, daughter of the painter Henri Lerolle, through whom he became acquainted with many figures in the French symbolist movement. Another artist, Jacques Emile Blanche, captured the likenesses of the Rouart and Gide, along with a group of fellow writers, in his *André Gide et ses amis au Café maure de l'exposition universelle de 1900*, which, like much of Blanche's work, today hangs in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Rouen². Later, Rouart made the acquaintance of Picasso, who jotted his name down in one of his sketchbooks for 1907 and to whom Rouart later sold a set of Degas brothel monotypes. One art historian has conjectured that if Picasso already knew the Degas monotypes, they might have had some influence *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*³. Though their paths diverged with the course of time, Gide remained fond of Rouart and even used some of his character traits, and not always the most flattering ones, in his literary work. For his part, through his friend, Rouart met Gide's uncle, the economist Charles Gide and became a passionate advocate of the latter's ideas on co-operatism.

Less mystery surrounds Gustave Gautherot, though he probably deserves to be better known⁴. Born in 1880 in the Doubs, in 1908 and at the age of only 28, he became professor of the history of the French Revolution at the Institut Catholique de Paris, a post intended as a counterpoint to that created in at the Sorbonne in 1891. His 1908 work *La Démocratie révolutionnaire* was commended by the Académie

¹ See note 18 *supra*.

² The painting can be viewed by visiting 'Histoire par l'image' web site, <www.histoire-image.org> and following the links via the artist's name.

³ John Russell, 'Art view ; Picasso's genius glows in his sketchbooks', *New York Times*, 27 April 1986, from :

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0DE4DD113BF934A15757C0A960948260&sec=&pagewanted=print>>, consulted on 1 June 2006.

⁴ I am indebted to Dr Richard Clay of the Department of History of Art at the University of Birmingham for reviving my interest in Gautherot.

Française, though he remained a largely marginal figure in the academic mainstream, at the time dominated by Alphonse Aulard, the first holder of the Sorbonne chair, described by Robert Gildea as the Radical Party's 'in-house historian', and his disciples¹. Gautherot's impressive body of work, nevertheless, provides an important and underrated counter-reading of the Revolution and its historiography². In some ways it prefigures the much more recent and critical work on the provincial experience of the Revolution carried out by Pierre Chaunu and Reynald Secher.³ Gautherot's *Le Vandalisme jacobin* (1914) remains a reference (though not an unproblematic one) for art historians researching the fate of objects, archives and monuments during the Revolution, but historians of the Third Republic will immediately detect an underlying, subtextual critique of the Separation of Church and State and the subsequent inventories of Church property. Aged only 34 at the outbreak of war, Captain Gautherot was called up and served throughout the First World War. The emergence of Bolshevism after 1917 gave him a new target and in the 1920s he produced a steady stream of anti-Bolshevik books and pamphlets and collaborated in various anti-Communist groups and organisations. He was active in the Catholic branch of the Esperantist movement, graced the right-wing Conférence Olivaint and became involved with the conservative Fédération Républicaine, eventually joining the party's executive committee. All of this activity made Gautherot a leading candidate for parliament, but he bided his time until the right seat came along. In June 1932, there was a by-election in the deeply conservative Loire-Inférieure to find a replacement for the Comte de Landement, one of the last remaining monarchists in the upper house. He won the June by-election in the first round and strengthened his position in the *renouvellement* that followed in October, when he was re-elected alongside the Nantes lawyer Louis Linÿer and another academic senator, François de Saint-Maur, who taught at the law faculty in Angers⁴.

This handful of examples is little more than a *mise en bouche* of the rich pickings to be had for the historian willing to delve into the

¹ Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994), p. 41.

² Cf. Raphaël Bourgois, 'Gustave Gautherot, un historien de la Révolution française', *mémoire de maîtrise*, Université de Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne, 2003.

³ Gildea, *The Past in French History*, p. 16.

⁴ From 1930, *renouvellements* took place in the October preceding the beginning of a senator's term of office.

propospography of the Senate. And they are by no means isolated examples. I have said nothing of the likes of Charles Couyba, in one guise professor and senator for the Haute-Saône, but as Maurice Boukay, *chansonnier* and popular playwright. Nor has there been time to speak of Gustave Denis, Protestant industrialist and philanthropist, director of the Toiles de Mayenne, responsible for the construction of the worker village at Fontaine Daniel. Denis had the remarkable and unique record of being elected senator three times, in 1879, 1897 and 1920, as well as losing three elections (1888, 1906, and 1907). His death in 1925 saw the passing of the last senator who could recall when the upper chamber still sat at Versailles. I might have recounted the tale of the Rouland dynasty in Seine-Inférieure, represented in the Senate by Gustave Rouland from 1876 to 1878, his son Hippolyte from 1892 to 1898 and grandson Julien from 1912 until 1927. (Other contributors to the present volume tackle the importance of family ties in French departmental politics.) I could have signalled the election, in 1933, of Georges Portmann, the leading ear, nose and throat specialist of his age, the only man to sit in the upper chamber under all three modern Republics and the stalking horse sent out in the autumn of 1965 to try and unseat Gaston Monnerville. And what of the delightfully named professor of law Léopold Thézard, senator for the Vienne, or the senator from Savoie whose parents, Monsieur and Madame Empereur, could think of nothing better to call their son than César Auguste ?

Of course, Rouart was not elected senator because he was a friend of André Gide, nor Couyba because he had written *Le Chat noir*, though one could argue that Hugo, Challemeil and Gautherot owed their elections, in some part at least, to their pens. These examples, and many others, show that the *grands électeurs* in their departmental colleges were able, on occasion at least, to elect to the Senate men of ability and originality. How they performed when they got there is, of course, an altogether different matter.

Conclusion

The conference version of this paper was given at the Sorbonne, where, in the *cour d'honneur*, stand statues of two of France's most illustrious sons ; Victor Hugo and Louis Pasteur. I had never seen the statues before, but they reminded me that these two men have a senatorial link. In 1870, Pasteur had been nominated a member for life of the Imperial Senate by Napoleon III, but the outbreak of war with

Prussia prevented the decree being ratified and the fall of the Empire rendered it meaningless. Still, Pasteur decided, like Hugo, to stand for the upper chamber in January 1876, in his native Jura. His associations with the old regime and his Catholicism brought him into conflict, however, with the local republicans, marshaled by another local boy, the future President of the Republic, Jules Grévy. Pasteur was easily beaten in the first round and never did enter the upper chamber. Sometimes the colleges elected men of talent and renown : but not always.