

Name: Lucy Schwob

Born: 25 October 1894 (France) – 8 December 1954 (Jersey)

Lucy's Story

Lucy was born in Nantes, France, in 1894 to a Catholic mother and Jewish father, who was the editor of the city's newspaper. With her life partner and step-sister, Suzanne Malherbe, the two are better known by their artistic pseudonyms of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore. The two women moved to Jersey in the 1930s.



Lucy was an avant-garde artist, poet and writer, known for her photographs and photo-collages. Suzanne Malherbe was a graphic designer and illustrator and was her artistic collaborator. Before the war, both were anti-fascist campaigners and believed that artists had a duty to make a stand. In addition to their fame as Surrealist artists, Lucy and Suzanne are remembered in Jersey for their role as a two-woman resistance organization which went under the name of *die Soldaten ohne Namen* (the nameless soldier). Their aim was to liberate Jersey without bloodshed by persuading German soldiers to lay down their arms.

They started their resistance work in a small way in 1940 and developed it gradually. In 1942 they launched a news leaflet for the benefit of German troops, based on BBC broadcasts supplemented by political commentary, and translated into German by Suzanne. This leaflet purported to be the work of an anti-Nazi German soldier and was distributed several times a week for two years. Leaflets were left in cigarette packets and matchboxes, in cafés and shops, and pushed through the windows of empty military vehicles. They urged the troops not to fight, emphasized the brutality of the Nazi regime, and contrasted the sufferings of German soldiers and civilians with the privileges of the Nazi elite. The two women also left messages on German graves in the cemetery near their house.

In July 1944, after they had been distributing leaflets in St Helier, the Island's capital, the bus on which they were travelling home was stopped for a random search. They did not have their identity cards with them and were warned that the *Feldpolizei* (field police) would visit them at home later. When this happened, their leaflets, a radio, a typewriter and a revolver were discovered and they were arrested. They were placed in Jersey Prison and, in November 1944, tried by military tribunal. They were sentenced to death for inciting the troops through propaganda. They were also given a six-year sentence for illegal possession of a radio, arms and a camera. In February 1945, Alexander Coutanche, Bailiff of Jersey, pleaded for their lives and they were reprieved although kept in prison. We are fortunate that Lucy was a prolific writer and left a detailed account of the couple's experiences during the Occupation.

Things to discuss

- How did Lucy's Jewish heritage inform her political principles?
- Lucy's Jewish heritage made it more dangerous for her to carry out acts of resistance. Why was this? Why do you think that Lucy was still prepared to take the risk?
- How did Lucy and Suzanne's gender and age protect them from discovery for so long?